

The Option of Political Involvement in Governance and its Implications for Islamist Movements: A Case Study of the Movement of Society for Peace (1991-2012).

HASSAM Hakim¹

¹University of Algiers 3 (Algeria).

The E-mail Author: houssama2004@yahoo.fr

Received: 10/09/2024

Published: 05/03/2025

Abstract:

The study investigates the experience of involvement in governance led by the Movement of Society for Peace since the early 1990s. This experience made it possible for the movement to achieve a set of political goals. This includes forming a political alliance with the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Rally Party, which enabled it to participate in various national and local councils, in addition to some of its leaders holding ministerial positions. However, all party leaders didn't reach a unanimous agreement about the contents of this participation, especially after the death of Mahfoud Nahnah in 2003, leading to differing views and perspectives. Therefore, the study concludes that this involvement did not undergo a serious and comprehensive assessment due to major disputes between the two factions that contested the leadership of the party since 2003.

Keywords: Political Involvement, Islamist Movements, Interests, Authority, Ideology.

INTRODUCTION

One of the central issues that Islamist movements theorists have been studying and analyzing is the process of making change within Islamic societies and reforming them according to their different visions and doctrines. They have found that this process can only be accomplished according to four methods and overwhelming alternatives in Islamic work: military coups, mass organizational, preaching and guidance, and social services. (Arab, 2000, p. 76)

Preaching, social services, and mass organization have formed the basic operational foundation through which the optimum goal of Islamizing society and the state can be accomplished. This vision is highlighted by Said Hawwa, one of Islamist movements theorists, who believes in the necessity of involving and participating in various elected councils and state institutions, although they lack many Islamic characteristics. He cites as evidence the prophet Yusuf (Joseph) peace be upon him, who served as a minister to the king of Egypt in spite of the difference between the Egyptian legislative system with

its counterpart of the Israelis. Therefore, in his writings, he urges the Islamists, not to isolate themselves but to get involved in various electoral competitions and assume positions in public administration, parliament, and elsewhere. Along this line, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, established his reformist project on education as the foundation for formation, presenting his reform plan to King Farouk and Mustafa al-Nahhas in 1936.

As for the Movement of Society for Peace in Algeria, which ideologically belongs to the Brotherhood movement founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, it started practically embodying the option of political involvement in governance on the occasion of holding the National Reconciliation Conference, then the National Transitional Council in 1994, the presidential elections in 1995, as well as the legislative elections in 1997, and other political events, not to mention ministerial positions held in several sectors such as fisheries, small and medium-sized industries, labor, and some other non-sovereign technical ministries. Yet, this involvement in governance did not achieve consensus among the activists and leaders of the Movement of Society for Peace between those who consider it positive on different levels and those who see it as having more negatives than positives. Hence, this field study seeks to answer the following key question:

- Has the Movement of Society for Peace achieved all its goals by adopting the option of involvement in governance since the early 1990s?

Accordingly, the following sub-questions can be posed:

- Is there consensus among the activists of the Movement of Society for Peace on adopting a unified concept of involvement in governance?

- How do the leaders and activists of the movement see the desired goals of involvement in governance?

- Has the option of involvement in governance been seriously and objectively assessed?

As a preliminary answer to the aforementioned problem, the following two hypotheses were adopted:

- The accomplishment of the party's goals relates to the extent of harmony and strength of the leadership in negotiating with the ruling authority.

- Imposing the ruling authority's control over levels of involvement by preventing access to strategic positions has had repercussions on achieving the desired goals of involvement.

Obviously, a series of theoretical and methodological refinements are necessitated for the sociological approach to this topic. They are as follows:

2. Study Concepts:

2.1 Involvement in Governance:

When discussing involvement in governance, we definitely mean political involvement, as anything related to authority and governance always refers to the total implications linked to the political aspects, though the concept has other dimensions:

cultural, social, anthropological, etc. It often has the same connotations as political participation.

Political involvement is defined as "those activities carried out by citizens aiming, directly or indirectly, to influence the process of choosing rulers and the decisions or policies they make. It mainly relies on pluralism among all political spectrums that prioritizes the nation's interest over personal interests, and it consists of participation in elections, conferences, legislative councils, etc."(Al-Alawi, 2014, p. 58)

Sidney Verba defines political involvement as "the legal and legitimate activities carried out by a group of citizens aiming, directly or indirectly, to influence the process of choosing rulers, and the actions taken by this group towards this goal". (Abu Halika, 1999, p. 25)

Noticeably, Verba's definition highlights the necessity and indispensability of the legal and legitimate aspect without which political involvement cannot be attributed to anyone. However, some disagree with this definition, either concerning the legal and legitimate aspect as mentioned, or regarding the limitation of the process on participation in choosing rulers.

As for Samuel Huntington, political involvement is "the activity carried out by ordinary citizens aiming to influence the government decision-making process, whether this activity is individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, continuous or sporadic, peaceful or violent, legitimate or illegitimate, effective or ineffective"(Abu Halika, 1999, p. 26)

This definition allows for a broader and larger scope of interpretation concerning this concept, extending beyond the formal framework to the informal one. This means that political involvement encompasses both recognized official and non-official organizations.

Procedural Definition of Involvement in Governance:

- For the Movement of Society for Peace, the concept of involvement in governance in all its forms means entering into partnerships with other nationalist and secular parties on common interests or a common program, while maintaining distinction in principles, behavior, major goals, and strategic choices.

2.2 Islamist Movements:

The concept of Islamist movements or movements with Islamic reference is one of the most controversial and debated concepts, due to various factors and variables that have prevented reaching any kind of consensus, even relatively, allowing us to, precisely and objectively, use this concept. One of these factors is the clear bias of some Islamist movements' researchers, whether foreigners or others, who described these movements as extremist, terrorist, and radical on one hand, or reformist, revolutionary, or moderate on the other. These labels and classifications reflect the views of their proponents more from their positions and perspectives than the reality of these movements. Hence, the approach to the studied phenomenon is subject to a series of ideological or pragmatic considerations and assessments. Therefore, our definition choice seeks to precisely define the concept of these movements, viewing them as

"groups that share one aspect of Islam or its interpretations as their reference framework, whether for their existence or their goals, and they operate in various ways to apply the image they see of Islam in the societies, states, and fields where they exist. A number of criteria can be relied upon for classification: social origins, political perceptions, and movement methods. Yet, the intellectual basis remains the most suitable basis for classification."(Rashwan & al., p. 17)

3. Methodological Steps:

3.1 Study Methodology:

This study relied on the case study approach, which is based on "considering the individual, institution, community, or any group as a unit of study, delving into the study of a specific stage or all stages of the unit under study"(Badr, 1994, p. 305). The aim is to highlight the factors affecting it or to clarify the causal relationships between the parts of the studied unit.

3.2 Study Sample:

The study sample was selected purposively and consisted of six senior leaders of the Movement of Society for Peace who have held high positions, whether within the party hierarchy (National Consultative Council, National Bureau, or the position of party president and its deputies), or positions in state structures and institutions.

3.3 Data Collection Tools:

Based on the nature and type of research, the researcher found that the interview tool is the most suitable and effective solution for studying the research topic. It is "a conversation between one or more persons aiming at reaching a specific truth or position that the researcher seeks to know"(Obeidat & al, 1999, p. 55). The conversation touches upon most aspects related to the positions, backgrounds, and directions taken by political activists in the party.

3. Presentation and Analysis of Interviews:

3.1 Interview with Mr. Mohamed B.:

Mr. Mohamed B. considers that the path or option of involvement in governance has not gone through actual assessment. **"The movement proposed the idea of political involvement to preserve and reform the Algerian state as much as possible from inside and outside... What is the goal of involvement? Was it to occupy administrative or electoral positions in quantity and quality, or to achieve a reform project? I can't say that political involvement has failed because we got 04 ministerial seats instead of 10. The goal has been to preserve the state, uphold the constants of the Islamic nation and the Arabic language, and to protect the Islamist movement and project from attack or distortion by extremists. The path of political involvement has not yet gone through a serious comprehensive and objective assessment. We assessed it through the elected representatives, MPs, and ministers, as well as through the extent of the authorities' dealings with us. We didn't assess it according to the goals we set."**(B, 2014)

Involvement in governance has strategic dimensions, most notably preserving the Algerian state from collapse during the 1990s and defending the Islamic project from "the eradivative current". In addition, Mr. Mohammed B's testimony didn't mention other goals, such as training movement cadres to manage public affairs, combating prevalent corruption in state institutions, and others. Nevertheless, the Movement of Society for Peace, as a political party like others, aims primarily to assume power and occupy various positions in state institutions. It operates in a convergent way that makes the organization's goals and the activists' and leaders' achievable. However, if the focal is only on accomplishing the goals of the organization or the political party without considering the determined requirements of the activists in obtaining political benefits, whether material or moral, it will inevitably lead to exasperation. It will, also, lead to the creation of a different situation based on three new possibilities: either the split of a member or some influential members in the party and their inclination towards the creation of new political parties, as was the case with the former minister Amar Ghoul, who preferred to remain in his ministerial position and then established a new party called Rally of Hope for Algeria in 2012. In the second case, total withdrawal from the party and dedication to association work, preaching, or sometimes isolation into personal affairs. The last case consists of remaining within the party structures with the adoption of an opposing position to the policy of the current leadership. The three cases have been realized for the Movement of Society for Peace, admitting that the positions-related incentives are not the only main determinant of party work, but they are necessary for the movement's participation in the government.

Through a comprehensive and objective assessment process as mentioned in Mr. Boussadi's testimony, it would have been possible to identify the main benefits and accomplishments that the Movement of Society for Peace was able to gain through political involvement, but with regard to the numerous negatives of this involvement, some of which can be highlighted as follows:

- The party's endurance of the political system's failures politically, economically and socially.
- The alignment of the party's visions and positions to the point of conformity with the policies and decisions of the regime, which have negative effects on the party's militant and popular base.
- The exclusion of the party from having sovereign ministerial portfolios such as Foreign Affairs, Defense, Interior, and Justice, nor did the scope of benefits extend to Education, Culture, Higher Education, and Diplomatic Positions. It only settled for Tourism and Maritime Fishing.
- Internal disagreements arising due to differing visions between opponents and defenders of the current involvement.
- The significant gaps left, especially in the field of preaching and guidance or missionary work in general, due to the orientation towards political and party work.

The aim of highlighting some of the negative aspects of political involvement in governance and their impacts on the party and its activists, is to show the difference in

the activists' viewpoints regarding it, especially after the death of Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah and the assumption of leadership by Abu Jarrah Sultani as the head of the movement. It was one of the points raised by the wing led by Abdelmajid Menasra when he split from the Movement of Society for Peace in 2009. However, Mr. Mohammed B.'s testimony remains perplexing concerning the absence of a serious, comprehensive, and objective assessment of political involvement by the activists of the Movement of Society for Peace. According to Mr. Mohammed B., how could a national movement of this size, with its cadre, competencies, and experiences, in addition to its enormous organizational and institutional capabilities, fail to achieve this essential assessment process for any administrative or political institution?

Answering this question is mainly related to the extent of presence or absence of the principle of objectivity among those responsible for the assessment process. The process itself is related to the extent to which the goals set by the leaders and senior cadres of the party have been achieved since the inception of the involvement process in the early 1990s, rather than the extent of benefiting from various important positions and privileges, regardless of their nature.

Another important point should be discussed. It is the nature of the relationship between Islamist parties and existing political regimes. On the surface, it appears to be a win-win relationship from an economic perspective or at least that's how it appears in discourse. However, things are different from what is apparent. According to Nathan Brown, "Semi-authoritarian political regimes, as he calls them, allow some space for opposition to organize and compete, but deny them any possibility of establishing a government. Conversely, authoritarian regimes do not allow opposition to operate even according to these rules. Under quasi-authoritarianism, independent social organizations may emerge, even thrive, but they are not allowed to venture into the realm of politics without risking violence". (Brown, 2012, p. 34)

The ruling authority absolutely controls the rules of the game and there is no room for full integration of the Islamists. They participate to lose, not to win. They are part of a system in which they do not have the margin of freedom according to Michel Crozier, which allows them to maneuver and gain areas of doubt. Thus, their relationship with the ruling authority is governed by a kind of exchange, or what Samuel Huntington calls a trade-off between participation and moderation; within the framework of the democratic deal, opposition groups benefit from political openness in exchange for commitment to moderation in tactics and policies, rejecting violence, and accepting the existing form of social, economic, and political institutions. The facts that cannot be overlooked indicate that the integration of political Islam within the framework of the national state in its current form after the colonial period is extremely difficult, if not impossible, due to the difference between the two in terms of the reference authority. The modern Arab nation-state is based on nationalism, liberal democracy, left socialism, or a mix of these ideologies, while Islamist groups seek to Islamize the national state and model it according to their own vision. Hence, the national state always demands

compliance and submission to its conditions according to the logic of moderation, which means, in the context of the national state, adaptation and submission on one side only. The national state has always attempted to appear and stabilize, seek its legitimacy in Western secular national sources both in thought and institutions, and sideline Islamic reformers. (Essayed, 1997, p. 174)

This analysis may help in explaining the nature of the complex relationship within which Islamist movements are organized in the modern Arab state, and which the leaders of these groups should consider when assessing the option of engaging in governance, meaning that the process is not only related to the goals, strategies, and aspirations of the movement alone, but also to the plans and goals of the ruling authority.

3.2 Interview with Abd Al- Rahman S.

The testimony of Mr. Abd Al-Rahman S., former President of the Consultative Council, regarding this issue, is not far from the logic of interests and privileges that involvement in governance offers.

"What I heard is that involvement benefited some, but not others, and here is the point of interest in the subject... When a person is a minister and present at the time when Sheikh Abu Jarrah assumed the position of State Minister, some saw it as if the regime granted the position of State Minister to Abu Jarrah to strengthen this direction and this person. Those who objected to him as a state minister objected to his participation from this perspective. What I heard is that participation in authority has distanced us from the people, meaning affiliated with the authority, and the people are angry with us. Involving in governance is a responsibility, meaning we bear the mistakes of the authority and the government's positions. Come, let's sit down and form a multi-opinion committee to assess and build on this process, not directly reject involvement and participation, and we must withdraw from the government."(S, 2014)

Mr. Abd Al-Rahman S.'s testimony revolves around three significant points closely related to many of the issues related to involvement in governance. Firstly, the issue of not conducting an assessment process. Secondly, the issue of benefiting from the privileges and benefits of involvement and the extent to which all or most of the party elites benefit or not from it. Lastly, the issue of aligning with the authority and the resulting alienation from the people and societal groups.

Before analyzing the aforementioned three points, it should be noted that our interviewee, Mr. Abd Al-Rahman S., belongs to the faction that supported Abu Jarrah Sultani, despite being his direct competitor in the party presidency elections after the death of Mahfoud Nahnah in 2003. Thus, his approach to the subject stems from his position in the crisis that followed the split off in 2009. However, we can discern from some of the points in his answers a degree of objectivity, starting from the first issue related to the absence of objective assessment process of the political involvement since its inception. Instead, all that happened was that the split faction in 2009, which was in conflict with Abu Jarrah Sultani and his group, viewed involvement as serving one side against the other. Here, we come to the second issue related to positions, where the

presence of Abu Jarrah Sultani as a State Minister, close to decision-making circles with the possibility of having complex relationships, would enable him strengthen his position against his opponents. As a result, this position gives him significant political weight and influence that cannot be underestimated. This issue was specifically employed during the fourth conference in 2008 when the faction of Abd Al- Majid Menasra claimed that Abu Jarrah Sultani exploited his position and closeness to the ruling authority to influence the results of the fourth conference, whether by dealing directly with the Ministry of Interior, bypassing the conference committee's powers, or by summoning security personnel who "threatened some conference attendees from the opposing faction.

As for Mr. Abd Al-Rahman S., the issue is not about the legitimacy or appropriateness of combining the position of party leader with that of a State Minister without a portfolio. Rather, it is about the fear caused by Abu Jarrah's influence in this position, which weakens the other side. Consequently, the matter put down to the balance of power within the party and the intense competition between the two factions. Regarding the issue of only some benefiting from involvement, it implies the necessity of revisiting it to provide equal opportunities for everyone to benefit. The political activist in the party has a set of rational options related to collective activity by sorting through the total available privileges before them, whether material or symbolic, as Mancur Olson highlighted. The commitment to a specific issue does not constitute the main source for political mobilization. This is often due to that many political activists are unable to grasp the ideology and intellectual background existing within their party frameworks, particularly, low– class categories in the organization (Gaxie, 1977, p. 126), in addition to the nature of collective activity and its requirements according to Mancur Olson (Mancur Olsen). Despite his lack of focus on studying political parties in his research, it is unavoidable to draw from his theoretical efforts regarding party work as a primarily collectively activity.

Political parties seek to provide benefits and privileges to many of their activists or clients from various social and professional groups through elections. Nevertheless, despite the desire of the activists to obtain these privileges, they can't in collective work due to their awareness of the associated burdens. Rather, they prefer to delegate these burdens to others to focus on their personal goals. Conversely, it would seem unreasonable if a few individuals devoted all their efforts and time to defending their issues and bearing costly burdens, while everyone benefits from the same advantages. Therefore, this group finds itself in need of more work to gain individual privileges, considering that collective privileges don't satisfy or push them to make further sacrifices. As Olson says, "If members of a large group want to double their personal resources, they will not work to promote collective goals unless they are forced to do so by coercive force or by the presence of independent incentives."

According to Olson, independent incentives are largely driving political party leaders to involve in political work, with all its commitments, constraints and restrictions,

battles, and political struggles. Therefore, parties are considered one of the most important tools for assuming positions in state institutions, according to Max Weber's view: "The presence of political party leaders as political entrepreneurs mainly interested in political life, and desirably participate in governance, leads to the result that political organizations are strategic means to access positions in state structures. (Weber, 1971, p. 412)

From what has been presented, we can infer that involvement in governance for the Movement of Society for Peace is not only linked to accomplishing a set of political and ideological goals but also to the necessity of accessing channels that help obtaining the associated benefits, whether those within the organizational hierarchy of the party or those related to elected councils, and other political and administrative institutions. This is a highly legal action within the framework of achieving the goals that all political parties aim for, in spite of their variety and ideological backgrounds.

Regarding the third issue related to distancing from the general public and its societal components, we must address it by focusing on three fundamental aspects. The first aspect is considering the favourite method of change adopted by the Movement of Society for Peace's leaders, which prioritizes societal change at the cost of the state. The Muslim Brotherhood, despite their generational differences, prefer the mass political struggle approach in the path of change, or what is known as societal Islamization, followed by the state, and then the electoral process as a democratic mechanism, with gradual education without haste, i.e., through a long-term strategy (Aldalal, 2008, p. 31). This approach is termed by Islamist movement theorists as the "prospective theory," in contrast to the "infiltration theory," which favors force as a mechanism for change. Based on this, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood organization, established three stages to achieve this goal, starting from the cracks and divisions occurring in political and social institutions (Hamdan & Mahmoud, 2012, p. 28). It starts with propaganda work through introducing the idea to people of various societal strata, followed by the stage of selecting supporters, preparation, and mobilization, and then comes the practical implementation stage on the ground. Through this plan, the Brotherhood's orientation is determined by focusing on making change within society and then the state and its institutions.

Regarding the second aspect, which is the relationship between the party and citizens, as pursuing interests and benefits has become the axis of the relationship, after the initial dominance of ideal ideological thought. It transitioned from being a relationship between the group or organization and the citizen to becoming a relationship between the political party and the citizen, considering the party as an organization primarily aimed at gathering various factional interests in society. This relationship is extremely healthy, considering the goals and nature of political parties in political science and political sociology. Interests do not contradict at all with political party work; rather, they are one of its requirements if associated with realizing the idea and implementing it on the ground.

Some imbalances have surfaced in the relationship between the cadres, the party grass roots and various societal groups, as Abu Jarrah Sultani stated: "The leadership must instruct the party activists that when it opens up to society, it opens up a new path that has not been trodden, and it must inevitably commit some field mistakes during work and agree with them on the margins of this permissible error in the circumstantial variables without prejudicing the goals (Sultani, 2013, p. 06). The educational methods adopted by most Brotherhood organizations focus more on preparing the individual from a partisan activist perspective than from a social perspective. Therefore, the individual finds himself obliged to adhere to membership, loyalty, obedience, and implementation towards the dynamic leadership of the party, hampering the growth of his creative spirit and resulting in difficulty in social, intellectual, psychological, and cultural communication with the environment represented by the broader society. (Al-Nafisi, 2011, p. 05)

The third aspect which has a direct relationship with the repercussions on the political involvement in governance. It has manifested internally and clearly in some resignations or individual split. This process has been continuous since the founding of the party until after the death of the founding sheikh. It has also appeared in the clear decline of the electoral proportions, as well as at the level of the various elections' outcome.

3.3 Interview with Mr. Ahmed D.:

Mr. Ahmed D. sees, through his testimony, that the goals of involvement in governance were generally achieved, but he distinguishes between involvement in governance during the time of Sheikh Nahnah and during the time of Abu Jarrah Sultani. He states:

"Involvement during Sheikh Nahnah's time differed from that during Abu Jarrah's time. Involvement under Sheikh Nahnah began in a difficult phase, a phase marked by security challenges and conflict. The meaning of involvement for Sheikh Nahnah was to exit the transitional period, as he realized that the authoritarian regime benefits from crises and prolongs transitional periods. He first participated in the 1995 elections, and the second goal was to avoid turning the battle against Islam and Islamists. He recognized that there were nationalist elements within the regime, so involvement was viewed as supporting the nationalist faction within the regime. Of course, from 1996 when he entered the government until his death in 2003, involvement largely and strategically achieved its goals, despite some management errors. The first goal, exiting the transitional period, began to be achieved, despite forgery and mistakes. The second goal, avoiding turning the battle against Islamists, began to be achieved through reconciliation. However, Nahnah had a policy of take then demand, taking harmony and reconciliation and then demanding modification. That's how it went".(D., 2014)

Mr. Ahmed D. considers that involvement in governance during the time of Mahfoud Nahnah managed to achieve many of its major goals, including overcoming the

transitional period as quickly as possible and avoiding turning the battle against Islamists. This suggests that there was a “secular, eradicated” movement lurking for Islamist movements of all spectra to drag them into the quagmire of violence and confrontation with the ruling regime. Hence, the belief confirms that these parties, despite their difference in orientation, methods of work, struggle and even goals, were governed by a single and sole logic of violence as a tyrannical trait and as a tool to access authority. Although Mahfoud Nahnah managed to achieve these two goals in general, despite some marginal errors, there are a set of questions that need to be addressed regarding Ahmed D.'s testimony:

- What are the differences between involvement in governance during the era of Mahfoud Nahnah and its equivalent during the time of Abu Jarrah Sultani?

- Why is this involvement considered implicitly positive during the era of Mahfoud Nahnah whereas it wasn't during that of Abu Jarrah Sultani?

- Was everything really positive during the era of Mahfoud Nahnah?

To answer these questions, we must draw attention to the following facts:

The context in which the interview was conducted has some peculiarities. Mr. Ahmed D. was among the group that split off from the Movement for the Society of Peace in 2009, so he belongs to the faction that opposed Abu Jarrah Sultani. He was criticized for not dealing with the ruling authority as directly as Mahfoud Nahnah did. His speech became more royal than that of the king. Additionally, Abu Jarrah Sultani's appointment as a state minister without a portfolio was entirely unacceptable due to the sensitivity of the position. The head of the Movement of the Society for Peace holds a political, organizational, and spiritual position simultaneously and has a special status among its activists. Therefore, the founders of the split group, including our interviewee Mr. Ahmed D., considered that Abu Jarrah Sultani as an outsider to the party who did not receive his training within what is known as a family or incubator. He didn't digest the thought of the Muslim Brotherhood, nor is he familiar with the path that Mahfoud Nahnah followed. Additionally, he has relative tendencies to the Islamic Salvation Front as he previously ran on behalf of this party's list in the state of Tebessa. All of these matters are enough to make the issue of Abu Jarrah Sultani's presidency of the party a completely undesirable matter for the Abdelmadjid Manasra faction. Furthermore, the Movement of the Society for Peace is a political entity with two dimensions. The first represents the group (El-Jamaa), its branches, organizations, institutions, Brotherhood references, and its loyalty to the global organization of the Muslim Brotherhood through allegiance. The second represents the political party and its official organization based on regulations, laws, and consultative institutions, aiming to access authority and occupy leadership positions in the state as it is the goal of every political party, in spite of its reference and ideological background.

Given these two dimensions, there were those who prioritized the group or organization over the party, while others believed that the party must operate according to the conventions adopted by other parties, i.e., the existence of different currents within the party while adhering to the regulations and organizational texts regulating

the party. These differences in vision regarding party management explain the backgrounds, reasons, and formulations of the argument presented by our interviewee regarding the difference in involvement during the era of Mahfoud Nahnah compared to that during the era of Abu Jarrah Sultani.

It's worth mentioning that many cadres and leaders of the party, and even part of the split members themselves, were not in agreement with some of Mahfoud Nahnah's political decisions to the extent to doubt his political status, especially when his presidential candidacy was rejected in 1999. This was despite individual withdrawals that followed what was termed the adaptation period. The Consultative Council, given its significant powers, reserves the authority to make decisive decisions for the party, thereby reducing the dominance and influence of the party's leader within the party. The latter could not remove the vice president of the party, Mohamed Magharia, from his position in 1999, despite Mahfoud Nahnah's unique charisma. This was because Mohamed Magharia was elected by the Second Conference in 1998.

3.4 Interview with Mrs. Fatima S.:

Although, involvement in governance is of utmost importance for the cadres and leaders of the Movement of the Society for Peace, and it has brought benefits and privileges, it has some negatives and damages that have impacted the cohesion and independence of the party. For Mrs. Fatima S, involvement is important and dangerous at the same time:

"Involvement is important and dangerous at the same time; it is important. Why? Because being present in decision-making positions is crucial... We saw experiences where isolation didn't lead you to gain political experience, an experience that helps you in establishing a state. When Islamists rose in Egypt without having the experience and capabilities to establish a state, their exclusion was easy... So, when you participate in provincial and municipal councils and interact with other parties, listen to other parties and opinions, here is where we learn. As for the presence, it means accepting everything. When you become a member you submit to the matter, similar to when you are a member of the executive bureau, and cannot oppose. When you are in executive positions, it's difficult to oppose because the position prevents you from doing so. When you're in charge, you can't criticize the entity you're part of. Can a minister criticize his government? Of course not, even if he doesn't like it."(S., 2015)

Undoubtedly, involvement in governance is the optimal means to amass political and administrative experience for activists of political parties, regardless of their political and ideological orientations, especially young parties that have been founded only a few years ago. Therefore, its members need to be trained in the basics of political work, including maneuvering, negotiating, and adapting to developments and urgent circumstances, which require a certain level of experience and political savvy. This is precisely what Mrs. Fatima S. believes. She sees many of the defeats and setbacks attributed to the lack of experience among Islamists, as evidenced by the coup that

occurred in Egypt against President Mohamed Morsi in 2015 and the coup led by Sudanese President Hassan al-Bashir in 2000 against Ali Hassan al-Turabi, head of the National Islamic Front though he was his ally since 1989. These events might not have occurred if Islamists had possessed more experience. However, we can't enumerate all experiences due to their abundance. As these movements work to enrich their governance experience, political systems seek to capitalize on this aspect by integrating them into the existing political framework, as seen in Jordan, Yemen, and Lebanon. These political systems allow them to organize within existing party frameworks and join electoral competitions, and moreover, holding different governmental positions in many times. Assimilation involves in part employing these organizations to confront leftist Marxist and nationalist movements, or at least balance them in a way that reduces their impact. Just like what happened with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan where they allied with the Jordanian monarchy in his confrontations to opposing currents. The same happened in Yemen where Yemeni Congregation for Reform sided with the General People's Congress Party in opposition to the Yemeni Socialist Party. The same applies to the Algerian case when the Movement of Society for Peace was founded in alliance with the ruling authority after the abolition of the elections in 1992. Therefore, we are facing a reciprocal employment by both parties. (Qweisi & al, 2006, p. 74)

All the aforementioned supports Mrs. Fatima S.'s claim that political involvement is dangerous despite its significant importance. It is absolutely necessary to achieve the amass of political experience in the management of public affairs. However, it has burdens imposed on the party and its activists. According to Mrs. Fatima, this includes the commitment to governmental solidarity and refrain from criticizing the government. Indeed, the Movement of the Society for Peace has not been immune to disciplinary issues among some of its cadres and ministers who refused to abide by the party's decisions concerning withdrawal from the government, including former Minister of Commerce Mustapha Benbada and Minister of Transport Amar Ghoul. The process of overturning the party's decisions is often explained under the pretext of prioritizing the nation's interests at the cost of the party's interests, which had enabled them to assume high-ranking positions in the state. As a result, they found themselves torn between allegiance to the party where they were raised and received their political formation and allegiance to those who granted them privileges related to their positions and various interests that they couldn't easily give up.

3.5 Interview with Mr. Idris R.:

An important concept is presented by Mr. Idris. R. to understand the dimensions of involvement and the best way to achieve its goals. He states that: **“the political involvement is what distinguishes the Hamas movement compared to other Islamist movements in the arena. In this way, it means that the movement participates in the political decision-making in the country regardless to the size of participation. Participation in the decision means: no referendum or an order may be issued unless the movement has a role in their issuing. The movement may participate in the government, which is a form of political involvement. It may**

participate in political, cultural, and religious decisions as a form adopted by the movement. The movement participates in the government through ministers, meaning participation in the decision-making of political system and be present in its issuing. Sheikh Nahnah didn't hold any governmental position in Algeria, but he had a major role in the political decision. In fact, there is a difference in the application of involvement between submission to the other and the sense of pride in the idea, the project, and peer-to-peer interaction".(R., 2014)

Three key elements can be understood from Mr. Idris R. 's testimony:

First: Participation in Political and Cultural Decision-Making: meaning that involvement in governance should not be limited to holding ministerial positions, as authority and influencing domestic and foreign policies are not necessarily linked to holding governmental and administrative positions, despite the importance of the position as it is one of the four basic sources of authority, according to Michel Crozier. Mr. Idris R. cites the example of Sheikh Nahnah, who, didn't hold any official position, and yet he had a significant impact on national politics and was consulted on many issues of national concern. Of course, when discussing Mahfoud Nahnah, it is essential to consider certain factors that distinguished his approach to governance from other leaders, including his charisma and unique leadership spirit qualities, which qualified him to deal with the authority hierarchy in Algeria with unparalleled skill and finesse. Additionally, the political and security conditions in the early 1990s, where the Algerian political system urgently needed a moderate Islamist party to overcome the post-electoral phase, played a significant role.

Second: according to Mr. Idris R. broadening involvement beyond politics to include various other fields such as culture and religion is significantly important. For many Islamist movements, their primary goals include defending what they perceive as fundamental constants, such as Islam, Arabic language, and the principles of November 1st. Many leaders of these movements have faced political disputes over these issues in various media and during local and presidential electoral campaigns. This compelled the Algerian political system to enact constitutional amendments prohibiting the exploitation of national constants for partisan purposes. This led the movement to change its name from the Islamic Society Movement to the Movement of Society for Peace.

Third: The issue of peer-to-peer interaction with the political system formed the focal point of clear disagreement after the death of Mahfoud Nahnah, as the movement led by Abd Al-Majeed Manasra did not accept the way Abu Jarrah Sultani dealt with the ruling authority in many matters, such as holding the position of a Minister of State without a portfolio, which is not appropriate for the head of the Movement of Society for Peace, as it combines both presidency and spiritual leadership.

3.6 Interview with Mr. Abd Al-Majid. M.:

Finally, in this regard, Mr. Abd Al-Majid. M. considers that political involvement in governance has not been adapted according to the new stage:

“Through time, involvement in governance has used up its first goals which we participated for. However, with the increasing corruption in our presence, this is no longer acceptable. I personally raised the slogan and program of reforming the involvement before the fourth conference. Our involvement in governance should reform what others corrupt. If you are unable to reform little by little, or if corruption increases in our presence, then there is no persuading justification to prolong this involvement when there is no change. To partially accomplish partial reforms and contain corruption, this hasn’t happened. Therefore, the change we call for begins with the individual, the family, and society...” (Menasra, 2015)

Evidently, that plans, goals, and policies are subject to constant adjustment and change according to developments in reality. Dealing with national issues can’t always undergo the same manner and the same approach. Therefore, the political actor, whether a political party or otherwise, must possess the ability to adapt to new and emergent situations, enabling the exploration of alternatives and solutions to problems and obstacles facing any project or action plan despite its nature.

This is precisely what Mr. Abd Al-Majid. M. sees through his testimony. He considers that since the early 1990s, many changes have occurred, yet there has been no corresponding adjustment in the nature of political involvement. At first, the focus of involvement was to preserve the "Islamic project" from disappearance, especially after the tough and extremist stances in some decisions taken by leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front, and adopting options based on dispute and confrontation with the ruling authority. This gave the "secular extremist movement" the opportunity to attribute violence to all Islamist movements. Therefore, it became necessary for the party to refute this idea by accepting coexistence with various political movements, including secular, communist, nationalist, and others, while committing to dialogue with all active parties in the political arena. This could establish the parties as a credible political partner, believing in democracy and capable of coexisting with others, thereby getting rid of the stereotypical image portraying Islamists as lacking programs and policies, making it difficult to engage and coexist with them. On the other hand, the party must demonstrate goodwill towards the ruling authority by providing genuine guarantees that it does not seek to monopolize authority, but rather works with all other political elites.

Some of these goals have been achieved through party officials assuming ministerial positions and securing seats in parliament and the National Assembly. However, with time and with the party's horizontal and vertical expansion, and the spread of corruption in various national institutions (which necessitated the formation of a national anti-corruption observatory), it became necessary to reconsider this political involvement in a way that serves the party, society, and the state simultaneously. According to Mr. Abd Al-Majid M. this can only be accomplished through reform and review according to the requirements of the new phase. Otherwise, it will inevitably lead to the perpetuation of the current situation, affecting the movement's credibility towards society, voters, other social actors, sympathizers, and other supporting groups.

CONCLUSION

Based on the presentation and analysis of the respondents' testimonies, it becomes evident that the decision to involve politically in governance was made under exceptional circumstances existing in Algeria at the beginning of the 1990's. Mahfoud Nahnah was compelled to involve in partisan work due to two essential factors. First, the political power forced all organizations operating clandestinely before the 1989 constitution, which enabled the establishment of political associations, to work openly, whether within party or associative frameworks. Therefore, Mahfoud Nahnah found himself obliged to enter political life like others and conduct his party activities within the legal and constitutional framework existing at the time. Second, the emergence of the Islamic Salvation Front as a direct competitor to the Movement of the Society for Peace in leading the Islamist current. The Movement of the Society for Peace managed to achieve a set of goals, including amassing the necessary experience in managing public affairs and presenting a positive image of Islamist movements towards the political system and other political currents. It now has ministers, representatives, and heads of state and municipal popular councils. However, with time, these achievements no longer aligned with the aspirations of the activists and the status of the party in the political arena. In light of the spread of corruption in state structures and some negative phenomena such as electoral abstention and the huge gap between the population and the ruling authority made it necessary to reassess this political involvement objectively and seriously to formulate an alternative strategy that meets the requirements of the new phase. It enables to achieve equilibrium between the cost that the party can pay and the various benefits expected to be gained in reality. The absence of conducting this assessment process according to the respondents, led to the continuation of the same approach, thereby perpetuating the existing situation and melting into the political framework.

Moreover, we can't ignore the fact that the ruling authority, for its part, worked to reduce the party's opportunities to benefit from many key positions, such as sovereign ministerial portfolios, defense, foreign affairs, and interior, as well as those related to embassies and sensitive posts in state structures. This negatively impacted many party cadres and officials to seize opportunities in assuming positions (which is legitimate for political parties). This means that there is imbalance between the demand for the positions and the proportion of the available offers that didn't meet their share of incentives and benefits. This confirms what one of the interviewees saying that some benefited from political involvement in governance at the cost of others.

Another factor had an impact on the path of involvement in governance which is the void left by the death of the spiritual leader in 2003 and the absence of a similar charismatic personality. This ignited major conflicts and disagreements, which were unable to coexist except for less than six years, taking into account that many leaders in the Movement of Society for Peace are peers in general (this includes age, cultural level, expertise and experience). These circumstances would not have constituted a framework

through which finding consensus and harmony between the two conflicting currents gives the necessary strength to the party to negotiate with the political system.

5. Bibliography List:

5.1 Books:

- Abu Halika, S. (1999). *The Evolution of Social Thought in Sociology*. Cairo, Egypt: Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science, Arab League.
- Abu Raman, M. (2018). *Post- Political Islam: A New Stage or Ideological Illusions*. Oman: Friedrich Ebert Institution.
- Al-Alawi, Y. (2014). *Dictionary of Political Terms*. Bahrain: Bahrain Institute for Political Development.
- Aldalal, S. S. (2008). *Islamists and Contemporary Challenges*. Cairo: Arab Center for Human Studies.
- Al-Nafisi, A. (2011). *Islamist Movements: Gaps in the Road*. Kuwait: Afak for Publishing and Distribution.
- Arab, I. (2000). *Political Islam and Modernity*. Casablanca: East Africa.
- Badr, A. (1994). *Principles of Scientific Research and Methods*. Doha: Academic Library.
- Brown, N. (2012). *Participation, Not Domination: Islamist Movements and Politics in the Arab World*, translated by Saad Mahyu, 1st Ed. Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing.
- Essayed, R. (1997). *Contemporary Islam Politics: Reviews and Follow-ups*, 1st Ed. Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Book House.
- Gaxie, D. (1977). "Economics of Parties and Rewards of Activism". *French Political Science Review*, 27th year, Issue 01.
- Hamdan, R. M., & Mahmoud, A. M. (2012). "Social and Political Thought of Hassan al-Banna". *Journal of Islamic Sciences College*, Volume 6, Issue 12.
- Obeidat, M., & al. (1999). *Methodology of Scientific Research*, 2nd Ed. Amman: Wael Printing and Publishing House.
- Qweisi, H. A.-M., & al. (2006). *The Relationship between Arab Regimes and the Muslim Brotherhood: An Attempt at Interpretation*. Doha: Al Jazeera Research and Studies Network.
- Rashwan, D., & al. (n.d.). *Guide to Islamist Movements*. Egypt: Al-Ahram Trading Printers.
- Sultani, A. (2013). *Message to the Fifth Conference*. Algeria: Al-Khaldounia Publishing House.
- Weber, M. (1971). *Economy and Society*, Volume 1. France: Pion Bookstore.

5.2 Interviews:

- B, M. (2014, 12, 17). Interview with Mohamed B. Former Head of the State Office of the Capital and Former Member of the National Consultative Council. (H. Hassam, Interviewer) El Quba, Algeria.
- D., A. (2014, 10, 09). Interview with Ahmed D. Former Member of the Political Bureau of the Movement of Society for Peace and current Secretary-General of the National Construction Movement. (H. Hassam, Interviewer) Algiers, Algeria: National Construction Movement Headquarters.
- Menasra, A.-M. (2015, 03 09). Interview with Abd Al- Majid M. Former Executive Bureau Member of the Movement of Society for Peace and Current Leader in the Front for Change Party. (H. Hassam, Interviewer) Algiers, Algeria: Front for Change Party Headquarters in El Yanabee.
- R., I. (2014, 09, 10). Interview with Idris R. Former Member of the National Consultative Council of the Movement of Society for Peace and Responsible for Communication in the Front for Change Party. (H. Hassam, Interviewer) Algiers.
- S, A.-R. (2014, 12, 24). Interview with Abd Al- Rahman S. Former Chairman of the Consultative Council and Vice President of the Movement of Society for Peace. (H. Hassam, Interviewer) Blida, Algeria.
- S., F. (2015, 03, 09). Interview with Fatima S. Leader in the Front for Change and former member of the State Consultative Council of Algiers. (H. Hassam, Interviewer) Algiers, Algeria: Front for Change Party Headquarters in El Yanabee.