



Strategies of Civil Society Organizations in Encouraging Youth Participation in Algerian Political Life

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Abstract:

Civil society organizations in Algeria are regarded as active members in engaging and building Algerian society. The youth's disaffection to engage in political participation has its causes from their perspective. With all their social movements, civil society organizations have played a role in consolidating political participation among Algerian youth. In addition to the diversity of its organizations, our study focuses on the concept of civil society and its theoretical approach. It also determines its role in fostering political participation among Algerian youth with higher education degrees.

This is mainly relevant given the reasons behind the lack of political participation. The study aims to achieve empowerment goals to reaffirm the principle of advocating for political, social, and cultural rights and promoting democratic principles.

Keywords: Civil society - Youth - Strategy - Motivation - Political life –
Political participation .

I. INTRODUCTION

Civil society is regarded as the guarantor of the continuity of the democratic transition process in Algeria, attracting the attention of political and academic circles, mainly due to its multiple social, cultural, and political roles. Media, whether visual, auditory, or written, frequently discuss what is now known as "Civil Society," including different informal organizations that operate at the state level. When we talk about the role of civil society in policymaking, the immediate partner that comes to mind is the primary actor in the policymaking process, which is the state. The policymaking process is one of the essential tasks of any state. However, this process does not do so in a vacuum; it is a dynamic process resulting from the interaction of various governmental and non-governmental, internal and external parties, including consultations, participation, communications, and pressures. This research paper addresses a significant social and political issue: youth abstaining from political participation. We explore the roles of civil society, some related to democratic transition and others to policymaking. This research is divided into three axes: understanding civil society by defining it and outlining its characteristics, components, functions, and theories. The second axis studies the relationship between civil society and politics, while the third axis delves into why youth abstain from political participation. The fourth axis addresses the role of civil society in consolidating political participation among youth.

- We aim in our study to address the problem that revolves around answering the following research question:

What are the reasons for the Algerian youth's withdrawal from political life, and what is the civil society's strategy to motivate youth participation in political engagement ?.

The main question branches into the following two sub-questions, which are:

- 1- What are the reasons for youth reluctance to participate in political engagement?.
- 2- "What is the civil society's strategy to motivate youth to engage in political life?.

First: The Nature of Civil Society (Its Concept - Historical Evolution - Components)

1. Civil Society Concept: Defining civil society is controversial among researchers, especially given its diverse intellectual approaches and use by different multidirectional forces. However, the most commonly accepted definition, adopted by many researchers, is as follows: "Civil society is a network of voluntary organizations that fill the public space between the family and the state. It works to achieve its members' material and moral interests, defending them within the framework of commitment to values and standards of respect, consensus, intellectual and political tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and peaceful management of conflicts and differences."

One of the most common definitions of civil society is by Saad Eddin Ibrahim, who defines it as "a group of organizations that emerge by the free will of their members, filling the public space between the family, the market, and the state, to serve an interest, cause, or expressing shared feelings officially, respecting others' right to do the same (Civil Society and Governance in Egypt and the link, 2018)

Nahed Azzeddine also defined *civil society* as "one form of organizing societies that achieves cooperation between individuals and groups in economic, social, and cultural fields to safeguard the rights and interests of diverse groups and reconcile them, based on mutual respect and balancing between private and public interests, away from any government intervention (El-Din, 2000).

The Encyclopedia of Democracy defined *civil society* as "a specific pattern of relationships between the state and social formations such as families, business organizations, associations, and movements that work independently of the state. This specific pattern of relationships exists in different political systems and is regarded as a requirement for establishing democratic systems. It also plays a critical role in transitioning from authoritarian and inclusive systems to democratic ones (El-Din, 2000)

2 - Historical Evolution of Civil Society Schools:

The concept of civil society varies with different intellectual schools. We can determine and review three primary schools of thought that deal with the idea of civil society from various perspectives:

2.1 - Classical Liberal Concept of Civil Society: The origins of the classical concept of civil society trace back to the early fifteenth century, deriving from the Latin term "Civilis." (Black, 1984) However, the renowned Roman philosopher Cicero indicated the meaning of civil society as early as the first century BC (Miller, 1987). Notably, the classical concept of civil society was also affected by the social contract philosophy, especially John Locke's (1632-1740). Locke highlighted the close relationship between civil society and the philosophy of the social contract, assuming that individuals in the state of nature can meet their needs freely and with dignity. They can do the same within the framework of civil society organizations. However, Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) emphasized the sanctity and elevation of the state over other organizations, including civil society organizations. Therefore, he emphasizes not relying on independence as a classic condition for the emergence of civil society. Hegel, within his philosophical framework emphasizing the elevation of the state over civil society, relies on the dialectical approach. He believes civil society is a contradictory idea to the family and claims that the state is the alternative or virtue for the family and civil society. Suppose an individual can achieve emotional well-being and happiness within the family. In that case, they can pursue their interests within civil society and security and tranquility within the framework of the state. It is evident from the above that the early concept of civil society meant the political society, i.e., society and the state together. However, it later evolved to mean economic and social organizations independent of the state or government. The early concept of civil society also entails the living conditions of the civilized political community, which includes cities or states with their legal systems. Therefore, systems lacking urbanization and legal codes are not regarded as civil societies according to the classical liberal concept of civil society (Miller, The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought, 1987).

The classical liberal concept of civil society generally reflects two primary dimensions (Neera Chandhoke, 2002):

a - Community Environment" space":

Civil society is independent of the state, the family, and the market economy. Individuals join civil society organizations to achieve expected benefits and gains since civil society includes different subgroups and organizations united by common goals and interests. According to civil society's environmental or spatial criterion, the classical concept recognizes specific features rather than a unified nature, unlike the blood ties found within the family.

The variation in the civil society environment from one place to another indicates the absence of specific stable characteristics. Therefore, the characteristics of civil society in one country may not necessarily match those in another location or environment. Thus, civil society reflects its environment's aspirations, goals, and conditions, meaning that civil society in developing countries should be something other than a copy of what exists in Western countries.

b - Value System:

The prevailing "value system" in society primarily reflects the ideological principles of liberalism and capitalism, especially those related to freedom, openness, and transparency. Regarding freedom, individuals are considered free to join or not join civil society organizations. However, when these organizations are established voluntarily, their distinguishing characteristic is the combination of openness and transparency, based on the understanding that the political process entails dialogue and acceptance of others' viewpoints. Since liberal ideology lies in individual freedom, it recognizes this freedom as a fundamental requirement for forming civil society organizations. The foundational values of civil society involve the voluntary establishment of these organizations and entail additional characteristics, such as openness to others and transparency.

2 - 2 Marxist Concept of Civil Society:

The nature of the civil society environment in socialist systems generally differs from that in liberal systems. This difference arises because socialist systems highlight collective interests over individual interests and claim state intervention in all political, economic, and social aspects. The Marxist ideology refuses civil society, prohibiting its organizations and institutions from operating within the framework of communist systems. This refusal is embedded in the dominance of the collective over the individual and the historical emergence and development of civil society within the context of liberalism and capitalism.

The Marxist concept of civil society originates from the assumption of the influence and dominance of economic factors on social history. It observes that the bourgeoisie's control over the means of production implies their impact on state institutions, civil society organizations, and bureaucracy. The Marxist concept generally aligns with class struggle dominance alongside establishing a proletarian state, representing the permanent disappearance of class systems, implying no need for civil society organizations. Suppose civil society means the cohesion of different societal segments in organizations that achieve their interests. In that case, the socialist transition stage embodies a homogeneous working class that does not require a civil society like the one in sharply divided capitalist societies. Likewise, the communist stage, theoretically achieving the principles of equality and anti-classism, also does not require the existence of civil society organizations. This is based on the notion that everyone's interests are realized in this stage. (Thorson, 1973).

To protect the community's interests, Marxism highlights the necessity of state control over different aspects of life. Hence, civil society organizations, such as workers' unions and interest groups, are consistently subject to state surveillance and control. Indeed, civil society organizations, particularly the Church and many interest groups, were under the scrutiny of communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries before their collapse in the late 20th century. (Thorson, 1973)

The Marxist rejection of the civil society concept is generally grounded in several factors, some of the most notable : (Thorson,1973)

❖ **Continuation of Class-Based System:** The persistence of a class-based system where a particular class possesses power and control, indicating that civil society organizations will avoid dominance and subordination to the more powerful class, especially those holding wealth and influence.

❖ **Absence of Social Justice:** The absence of social justice represents the continuation of class struggle, meaning that civil society organizations will vary concerning allegiance, cohesion, and favoritism towards one class.

❖ **Class Divisions and Lack of Social Justice:** Class divisions and the absence of social justice mean that there is no need for civil society organizations since they would be tools subservient to the minority dominating the economy and politics.

❖ **Monitoring by the State:** If civil society organizations exist within socialist and communist systems, they must be monitored by the state to prevent deviation from fulfilling their goals, which should reflect the significance of the community's interests over individual or minority interests.

2-3. The New Liberal Concept of Civil Society:

The new liberal concept of civil society is represented by inclusivity, wherein the term "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) is used instead of the concept of civil society. Therefore, this new term contains all non-governmental organizations, including profit-seeking companies and family units based on blood relations. Expanding the concept of civil society to include all non-official organizations not only reduces the role of the state or government in society as a whole (Lame, 1971) ,but also regards these non-governmental entities as mechanisms that limit the contemporary state's power on the one hand and act as an alternative performing many functions that the state used to undertake in the past on the other hand.

The London School of Economics conducts the new liberal trend. David Held highlights that informal or non-governmental organizations reflect the classical concept of civil society. Consequently, proponents of the new liberal concept use the term "political community" instead of the term "political society," which was emphasized by advocates of the classical liberal concept. The new liberal concept includes civil organizations at sub-regional, regional, and

global levels, indicating the existence of a regional and global civil society alongside the local one. (Anheier, 2002).

The requirements of globalization, the communications revolution, and information technology play an essential role in the emergence of a civil society that does not adhere to national borders. Therefore, its organizations are characterized as non-national. David Held asserts that non-governmental organizations, such as the environmental movement, the global women's movement, and the Catholic Church, are not confined by recognized national borders, as their activities extend to all countries worldwide

From the above, it is clear that the concept of civil society extends not only to the political community composed of all non-governmental organizations but also transcends the level of the state to the global system. The concept of global civil society emerged at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century. Civil society is a network of social institutions embodying economic, familial, tribal, civil, and other socially affiliated relationships, all of which fall under the influence of political institutions. According to democratic theory, social institutions possess an independent character, particularly in their founding and exercise of activities.

Since the new liberal concept uses the term "non-governmental organizations," it is essential to clarify this term to understand the different patterns of these civil-oriented organizations. Thus, non-governmental organizations are international or informal and civil associations that include groups of individuals or civil links in related fields, representing solidarity on a national or international level. In other words, there is solidarity between civil or private associations regardless of political and administrative boundaries between countries. In such cases, borders do not prevent the formation of international non-governmental organizations due to solidarity and agreement on goals among their members.

The activities of international non-governmental organizations generally span diverse fields, including political, legal, economic, social, cultural, sports, civil, tourist, and other domains.

International non-governmental organizations share, in general, a set of features with governmental, international organizations, which can be summarized in the following points:

- Regular defined meetings for their members.
- Each adopts a specific agreed-upon mechanism for the decision-making process.
- Each possesses an organizational structure with a secretariat or general secretary.

Much like the different categories of governmental international organizations, there exist several types of non-governmental international organizations, such as:

❖ **Trade Organizations:** Projects aimed at profit-making through the transfer of technology, capital, and management, such as companies, commercial associations, international unions, and arms export companies.

❖ **Media Organizations:** Free or non-government-controlled visual, auditory, and print media, including global media networks with branches and correspondents worldwide, such as Al Jazeera, CNN, and BBC.

❖ **Academic Organizations:** Universities with branches in multiple countries and global research centres.

❖ **International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs):** Political parties like the Socialist International, global trade unions such as the International Federation of Trade Unions, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and other non-governmental political entities.

❖ **Religious Organizations:** Non-governmental organizations with international branches affecting global politics, with examples including the Catholic Church, especially the Vatican, which has a unique international status under the Lateran Treaty of 1929.

❖ **Humanitarian Organizations:** Particularly active during natural disasters and wars; examples include the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) founded in 1863 by Henry Dunant.

❖ **Scientific Organizations:** Engaged in disarmament, peaceful use of nuclear energy, or environmental protection from pollution, particularly nuclear pollution.

❖ **Youth Organizations:** Sought at creating relationships and interactions among youth worldwide, including the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Union of Students, and the World Youth Association.

3. Pillars of Civil Society:

3-1. Organizational Institutional Pillar: Civil society contains a set of institutions and organizations voluntarily established or joined by individuals. Examples include political parties, professional and labor unions, civil associations, federations, clubs, social and intellectual forums, cultural and youth associations, women's and student movements, professional guilds, non-governmental research centers, and non-state-affiliated religious institutions, as well as chambers of commerce and industry, among others. All these institutions and organizations represent various social formations and categories, working to fulfill their material and moral interests and defend them, whether against the state or other forces and institutions within civil society.

3-2. Independent Voluntary Action: Civil society institutions and organizations are established by individuals based on their free will or voluntarily joined under certain conditions adhered to by all (such as profession, age, etc.). An individual can belong to more than one institution within civil society, being a member of a political party and a professional union, a sports union, or a civic association simultaneously.

3-3. Independence from the State: One of the main pillars of civil society is that its institutions and organizations enjoy absolute independence from the state's authority, whether in financial or administrative-organizational aspects, possessing a margin of freedom that the state does not interfere with.

3-4. Non-Seeking of Profit: Civil society institutions are not based on a commercial basis aimed at profit, as in the private sector. Their goal is to protect the material and moral interests of their members. Even in cases where some institutions may generate profits through their activities and services, they do not distribute them to their members but use them to expand, support their activities, and enhance their levels and performance.

3-5. Value Framework:

The value framework consists of values and standards that civil society institutions and organizations adhere to, whether in managing relations among themselves or between them and the state. These standards include tolerance, mutual respect, acceptance of diversity in thoughts, perspectives, and interests, adherence to laws, a sense of belonging to the homeland, and resorting to peaceful conflict and dispute management methods. Some may refer to these standards as "civil culture." With its mentioned elements, this definition remains theoretical, and the value framework remains an ideal pattern for what civil society should be. Therefore, the reality of civil society, in terms of its composition, the number of its institutions, its strengths or weaknesses, and its commitment to the mentioned value standards, as well as its relationship with the state apparatus, varies from one region to another and from one country to another, depending on its natural, historical, cultural components, and the nature of its political system. In this context, the diversity of interpretations concerning the nature of institutions falling within the framework of civil society can be understood.

Secondly: Political Participation

Political participation refers to the intentional activities by citizens to directly or indirectly influence the selection of rulers, affecting decisions or policies they make. It also means the process where individuals play a role in the political life of their society, having the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of the society's general goals and determining the best means to achieve them. It can occur through political activities. Participation activities can be categorized into two groups.

1. Traditional Classical Activities:

Traditional political activities include voting, following political affairs, engaging in political discussions with others, attending seminars and public conferences, participating in election campaigns through financial contributions and advertising, joining interest groups, becoming a member of political parties, communicating with officials, running for public positions, and holding political offices. Besides, voting is regarded as the most common form of political participation, recognized by both democratic and non-democratic systems, albeit with differences in importance and impact. In democratic systems, it serves as a mechanism for choosing between candidates and selecting political officeholders with a substantial degree of freedom. However, in autocratic systems, elections may serve as a tool for those in power to promote propaganda and gain support and legitimacy, more than being a tool for conscious

political choice and influencing governance and policy affairs by the public. Therefore, abstaining from voting may be considered a form of silent protest.

2. Non-traditional Activities:

Some of these activities are legal, such as filing complaints, while others are legal in some countries and illegal in others, like protesting, striking, and other negative behaviors.

Political participation is a form of education where citizens learn about their rights and responsibilities, leading to a complete understanding and important awareness of these rights and duties, contributing to more realism and flexibility in the demands of these citizens. Political participation is linked to social responsibility, based on balancing rights and duties, making it a characteristic of democratic systems. The growth and development of democracy depend on the extent of participation, turning it into rights enjoyed by every individual in society. Furthermore, participation leads to more stability and order in society, expanding and deepening the sense of the system's legitimacy. As participation gives the public a democratic right to hold officials accountable for their actions if they fall short in performance.

Citizens with knowledge about the workings of government can effectively judge the quality of government performance. Moreover, participation strengthens the relationship between the individual and their community, reflecting their sense of belonging to their larger homeland. It also reflects the desire to turn their goals into tangible reality.

3. Forms and Levels of Political Participation:

Political participation generally refers to those optional or voluntary activities through which citizens contribute to public life. The levels of citizens' participation in public life vary from one country to another, over time within the same country, and depend on the conditions that enable or restrict participation and citizens' willingness to contribute to public affairs.

3-1. Levels of Political Participation:

- **Highest Level:** Practitioners of political activity fall into this level, meeting three out of six conditions: membership in a political organization, donation to an organization or candidate, frequent attendance of political meetings, participation in election campaigns, sending messages about political issues to the legislative council, speaking with those in political positions or the press, and engaging in political discussions with people outside the immediate circle surrounding the individual.

- **Second Level:** Politically relevant people, including those who vote in elections, generally follow what occurs on the political scene.

- **Third Level:** Spurs to political action, including those not interested in political affairs, do not lean towards political activities or allocate any time or resources to them. Some may be forced to participate to some extent during crises or when they feel their direct interests are threatened or their life circumstances are at risk.

- **Fourth Level:** Excessive participation, involving individuals who operate outside existing legal frameworks and resort to violent methods. Individuals who harbour hostility towards society in general or the political system, in particular, may either withdraw from all forms of participation and join the indifferent or turn to forms of participation characterized by intensity and violence.

4. Stages of Political Participation:

A. Political Interest:

This interest falls within mere concern or attention to public issues. It varies over various periods, extending or contracting. It includes following political events, with individuals inclined to participate in political discussions with family members or colleagues. The level of interest tends to increase during crises or election campaigns.

B. Political Knowledge:

It refers to knowledge about political figures playing roles in society, whether at the local or national level, such as members of the local council, members of the parliament and advisory council in the district, and national figures like ministers.

C. Political Voting:

It involves participation in election campaigns through financial support, funding campaigns, assisting candidates, or participating in the voting process.

D. Political Demands:

These demands manifest through contacting official bodies, filing complaints and appeals, and joining political parties and volunteer associations. Political participation exists in different political systems, becoming more evident and explicit in expressing itself under democratic systems which provide more important spaces of freedom, respect for human rights, and periodic free and competitive elections, enabling active citizen participation in political life. Participation also makes the public more aware of the issues related to their society and the available possibilities, opening the door to constructive collaboration between the public and governmental institutions. Genuine participation often reinforces government thinking, with many valuable public opinions unaffected by bureaucratic traditions and boundaries. It leads the public to organize themselves in civil associations, supporting governmental bodies in meeting the general needs of the public. Participation through volunteer organizations opens up new areas for services and activities. Moreover, it increases public awareness, compelling those in charge to continually explain the dimensions of services and projects to encourage public participation and contribution.

Moreover, civic participation instills citizens a sense of responsibility towards public funds, a problem prevalent in most developing countries. Public funds often face wastage and misuse by citizens who perceive them as emanating from their private resources. They consider improper use of public facilities or neglecting maintenance inevitably shortens their lifespan. Therefore, citizens bear the financial burdens required for these facilities' maintenance, renewal, and reconstruction. Through mass participation, all societal goals can be achieved in a way that ensures maximizing benefits and aligns with the needs, desires, and capabilities of the masses. Participation also contributes to strengthening the connection of the masses with the system and its goals, elevating loyalty, influence, and responsibility. It improves efficiency, raises the level of performance, achieves social adaptation, eliminates power abuses and alienation, and upholds the values of equality and freedom. The significance of participation lies in being a process to convey and communicate citizens' needs to the government. However, it also seeks to influence the behavior of rulers by providing information about the priorities favored by the masses and exerting pressure on these rulers to work according to these priorities.

This expands the opportunities for participation, reducing power abuses and feelings of alienation among the masses and realizing the values of equality and freedom, conducting general stability in society, helping to achieve social, cultural, and political conditions for the success of different development plans. Hence, participation is a fundamental principle of community development. Genuine and successful development can only occur with participation, considered the best means to support and develop a democratic personality at the individual, group, and societal levels.

At the same time, it is one of the most straightforward rights of the citizen and an essential right that every individual living in their society should enjoy. Their right is to choose their rulers and deputies who oversee the rulers and guide them in the people's interest. Through participation, individuals can play a role in their society's political, social, and economic life, striving to achieve comprehensive development goals. Every citizen should have the opportunity to contribute to defining and setting these goals and determining the best means and methods to fulfill them. In this context, citizen participation should be based on their willingness to take on this role without pressure or coercion from authorities.

In this case, participation translates the citizens' sense of social responsibility towards their society and everyday problem (El-Soufi, 2018).

Thirdly: The role of civil society in solidifying youth politics.

While state institutions provide security, promote economic development, reduce unemployment rates, curb inflation, and improve education, health, and other societal issues, the partnership between civil society organizations and the state does not deny their role but complements it. The role of civil society acts as a partner and extension of the state's role in managing challenges and crises. It may even go beyond the state's role in addressing social, political, and economic issues. Therefore, it is not merely complementary.

The progress of development relies on the collaboration between the state and society, emphasizing the crucial role of human resources, particularly the youth, as the main catalyst for successful advancement. As contemporary Arab societies witness revolutions and political transformations, youth have emerged as a new influential force on the political landscape and government practices. This power presents multiple challenges that necessitate youth inclusion in the development process and encourage the nation and its standing.

Highlighting the unique relationship between youth within civil society organizations and development emphasizes the importance of these organizations in nurturing young leaders in various fields, fostering a sense of national belonging, establishing democratic values, and respecting human rights. Furthermore, empowering youth through their integration into comprehensive development paths is crucial.

We must also question why some youth hesitate to engage in leading civil society and actively participate in its institutions. Some reasons for this hesitance are attributed to factors such as the lack of elite work, the aging of leadership, the marginalization of productive youth, excessive guardianship imposed by elites, the absence of laws and regulations that facilitate the formation and effectiveness of civil society organizations, as well as the entrenchment of the politicization of civil society alongside the promotion of partisan and sectarian affiliations, which override national allegiance neglecting national interests in favor of narrow partisan and sectarian interests. Besides, the youth may abstain from assuming responsibilities in society. All these causes contribute to the reluctance of youth to engage in leading civil society (Bshara, 1998).

The conditions for youth leadership in civil society institutions lie in encouraging and allowing them to express their aspirations and opinions. It is essential to increase the openness of leadership in change projects to the ideas and ambitions of youth, propelling them towards effective developmental initiatives. Emphasis should be placed on the necessity of integrating them into national change and reform projects, along with raising their level of participation in the leadership of these projects. Efforts should be made to eliminate theories of exclusion and marginalization, enhance the independence of belonging and citizenship, and prompt governments to reconsider the speed of legislating laws governing the civil society movement. On the other hand, it is incumbent upon the youth to launch projects, be influential and effective in society, and participate in various development projects.

II. Conclusion:

The success of development in any nation depends on the involvement of the youth with all their affiliations and segments, adopting a participatory democratic approach. Any marginalization or neglect of this new influential force in the current development is a setback for its future. Just as civil society organizations strived to institutionalize politics among the youth and engage them in shaping the destiny of their country, the role lies in the official state institutions embracing these youth, instilling trust in them, and benefiting from their intellectual capacities in envisioning the future.

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