

**A WAY TO DEMOCRATIC QUALITY FOR WOMEN:  
'COUNTERPARTIZM' BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study of relationship between civil society and political participation as a way of democratic quality for women is a living subject by gaining depth and strength through regular applications. An understanding of what political participation with civil society support means is advanced, optimistically, regularity in all settlements of the world. This research highlights the complex and fractured nature of political participation, particularly for women, and depicts how the 'counterpartizm' between civil society and political participation is essential and pre-requisite as a commodity of democratic quality and consolidation. In this context, it should be emphasized that 'counterpartizm' is a brand-new term which was discovered and labeled by ourselves as a representative of political participation in the heart of civil society to ensure democracy. Thus shaping the web of civic participation emphasizes the new means of democratic accretion through civil society. Civil society is accepted by most scholars of democratization as an essential component of democratic consolidation. Such judgments are seldom based upon empirical evidence from developing democracies. Although civil society cannot be defined as a cause of democracy by some scholars, we will try to explore through this research that it at least serves as a breeding ground and as a way of democratic quality for participation in the activities of political society, such as voting, participation in political organizations, and other activities that contribute to the health of democratic governance.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Participation, Civic Participation, Civil Society, Counterpartizm.

*"The key to effective political representation and meaningful participation in a democracy at work is to engage all citizens, so that they feel that they are a part of society and its institutions."*

**ODIHR Director Ambassador Christian Strohal (OSCE, 2007)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In places close to home--so close and so small that cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet, they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he/she lives in; the school or college he/she attends; the factory, farm, or office where he/she works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the large world (Roosevelt, 1958).

The study of relationship between civil society and political participation as a way of democratic quality is a living subject by gaining depth and strength through regular applications. An understanding of what political participation with civil society support means is advanced, optimistically, regularity in all settlements of the world. This research highlights the complex and fractured nature of political participation, and depicts how the ‘counterpartism’ between civil society and political participation is essential and pre-requisite as a commodity of democratic quality and consolidation. In this context, it should be emphasized that ‘counterpartism’ is a brand-new term which was discovered and labeled by ourselves as a representative of political participation in the heart of civil society to ensure democracy.

Although civil society participation appears to have an impact on political participation, it does not always appear to be associated with support for democracy. Such judgments are seldom based upon empirical evidence from developing democracies. Its reason is that there is considerable ambiguity in the concept of civil society as it is used in the discipline of political science. Part of this ambiguity arises from its origins in revolutionary movements against non-democratic regimes. Thus the concept becomes more problematic in the context of democratic consolidation. Some of the major proponents of civil society enhance those ambiguities by suggesting that the relationship between civil society and democracy is one of correlation, not causation.

From the dawn of politics, democracy is a resource of attended-life with no substitute: it cannot be secured in sufficiently large quantities through fake political deals and discourses; and, due to the interconnectivity of the participation system, the actions of civil society in its democracy management have a direct bearing on the interests of its folks regarding political participation. Therefore, political participation is unique and must for democracy since democracy and political participation go along hand-in-hand, in other saying, brothers-in-arms against all sorts

of fanaticism. One of the main guidelines of democracy is civil participation in political decision-making. Civil participation necessitates the consolidation of democracy through civil society. Civil society is accepted by scholars of democratization as an essential component of democratic consolidation. We define 'civil society' as the arena of the polity that includes groups, movements and associations, independent of the state and economic units, that act as bridges between the state or political society and the family unit of social organization.

Thus shaping the web of civic participation emphasizes the new means of democratic accretion through civil society. Although civil society cannot be defined as a cause of democracy by some scholars, we will try to explore through this research that it at least serves as a breeding ground and as a way of democratic quality for participation in the activities of political society, such as voting, participation in political organizations, and other activities that contribute to the health of democratic governance. Because, one of the often-raised questions concerning democratization and democratic consolidation is whether the elites or the public make and consolidate democracy. The role of elites in creating democracy has been emphasized in many studies. Likewise for democratic consolidation, which, as one study suggests, depends on the emergence of a unified elitist group that commits itself to democratic rule (Diamond, 1999: 218).

This research aims to investigate the conceptual and material bases of women's historic exclusion from the formal arena of politics; analyze strategies adopted around the world to promote women's political participation/representation; identify internal and external conditions and factors that facilitate or hinder the creation of an enabling environment for women's political empowerment; and finally draw policy recommendations for the national and international actors. The development context of women's political participation at the community and national levels will be reviewed for nuanced understanding of the nature of women's participation and their share in development processes and outcomes (Bari, 2005).

## **OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The objective and evidence of this research study suggests that 'counterpartism' is associated primarily with democratic quality as being between civil society and political participation. Although civil society participation appears to have an impact on political participation, it does not appear to be associated with support for democracy. The paper is based on findings of a research which tries to contribute to the debate on 'counterpartism' between civil society and political participation as a way to democratic quality.

The study is qualitative and explorative in nature. Secondary data sources are used. For secondary data, along with relevant scholarly literatures, it used the relevant documents such as

books, articles, memories, historical documents, theoretical studies and all written documents that could be reached by the authors.

### **Conceptualizing Human Rights, Citizenship, and Civil Society**

The study of human rights and its protection, promotion, and enhancement, is a living subject; gaining depth and strength by daily application. An understanding of what human dignity means is advanced, optimistically, everyday in the towns, villages, and cities of our world. Since the inception of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the international community has been steadily interpreting and advancing these principles in inter/intra state and national legislation, local legal systems, multi-national corporations, and individual lives. As concepts of human dignity are challenged, amended, and expanded, the global human rights vision matures. Most critical to the philosophy of human rights is Eleanor Roosevelt's assertion –as a woman- that it is in the expression, the accessibility, and the use of human rights in daily lives that matter most and that provides dimension to the Universal Declaration.

Why did this situation, where half of humanity was without international human rights consideration or protection, occur? How could such an obvious exclusion, particularly among the parties, activists, and academics committed to and impassioned by the promotion of human dignity ignore slightly more than half of the world's population? Eleanor Roosevelt speaks of 'concerned citizen action' as the catalyst towards global-local human rights recognition. "Citizen action." or just "Citizen". It is in the definition of this small, but powerful word, that women's marginalization has been sanctified. The infamous public/private divide of men as citizens, public decision-makers, and women as private property, outside of state affairs, hidden in the home, has been part of the Western concept of citizen since Socrates sent his wife, Xanthippe, home.

Since women have historically not been considered citizens of the state, until very recently, women have been immune from the privileges, duties, and protection of national and international law intended for citizens and consequently outside the realm of human rights concepts and laws. Thus, it is only through an inclusion of women in political decision-making process, through women as public citizens of the state, that women's human rights will attain application and enhancement; subsequently having meaning at the international, national and local level for women (Han-Woo, 1999: 24-25).

There is considerable ambiguity in the concept of civil society as it is used in the discipline of political science. Part of this ambiguity arises from its origins in revolutionary movements against non-democratic regimes. The concept becomes more problematic in the context of democratic consolidation, even though Linz and Stepan (2001) suggest that conditions must exist

for a free and lively civil society in order for democratic consolidation to take place. Contrary to Schmitter's (1997) assertion that civil society contributes to consolidation of democracy, Berman (1997) argues that, in an already democratic regime, civil society can be a fertile ground for organizing totalitarian regimes, as in Nazi Germany at the time of the Weimar Republic.

Another ambiguity in the concept comes from its overlap with social capital. Putnam (2000) describes participation in organized groups and movements as a form of social capital, and this phenomenon seems remarkably similar to Linz and Stepan's version of civil society. In many ways, it appears that civil society is a form of social capital, the latter concept including other social assets, such as levels of education and social solidarity. Some of the major proponents of civil society enhance these ambiguities by suggesting that the relationship between civil society and democracy is one of correlation, not causation. Schmitter (1997), for example, notes that the 'resurrection' of civil society occurs after transitions to democracy and is not necessary either to the demise of autocracy or for transition to democracy. Even Linz and Stepan (2001) treat civil society as an indicator of democratic development rather than a cause.

One might wonder how appropriate a social movement taken from a revolutionary context might be for the transition to democracy - to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, and other characteristics of democratic consolidation that require a great deal more than revolutionary fervor. Linz and Stepan (2001) affirm the value of the styles of civil society in helping to consolidate democracy, but both Schmitter (1997) and Linz and Stepan (2001), indicate that civil society must be characterized by 'civility', a far cry from its development under the non-democratic regimes of Eastern Europe and Latin America as an instrument of democratic resistance.

The concept of civil society faces even more problematic receptions when transported into the Asian context. In analyses of Thailand, for example, civil society is still viewed as an agent of political resistance (Girling, 2002; Ockey, 2002; Hewison, 2002; McCargo, 2002). In Asia, in general, civil society is invested with a Gramscian vision of a constant struggle for political and policy power in any society threatened with abuse of power by the state. Thus the overall impression left by this literature is that agendas of civil society are somewhat at odds with concepts used in the context of democratic consolidation.

Because civil society is based in the attitudes and orientations of ordinary people, theoretical treatments from macro-level perspectives seem somewhat airy and detached from their fundamental context in individual behavior. Belief in civil society as an unmitigated good ignores warnings that it can also serve as a vehicle for totalitarian movements (Berman, 1997). Its transformation into 'good governance' provides civil society with an emotional appeal

implying that it is a core institution for political reform. What is missing from the discourse is an empirical analysis of civil society as it lies in the behavior and attitudes of citizens in emerging democracies.

Theories of civil society are silent as to causes of civil society participation in individual behavior. More specifically, they do not suggest whether civil society is a trait associated with rural or urban populations. Because scholars tend to conceive urban society as containing more complex forms of social organization, one would anticipate higher levels of civil society in urban areas. However, urban society also encourages isolation and anonymity in ways that may produce opposite effects. Because cleavages between rural and urban society are so prominent in the undeveloped or developing countries' context (Laathamatas, 1996; Albritton and Bureekul, 2002), the analysis also examines plausible hypotheses connecting civil society with its locations in rural or urban environments.

Civil society is a public space between state and citizens. Does it mean all types of intermediary institutions between state and citizens are civil societies? The pioneer writings on the origin and evolution of civil society in the West, i.e. John Locke's 'civil state', Hegel's 'ethical life' and De Tocqueville's 'associational life' loosely incorporated all types of citizens' groups in the basket of civil society. Theorists of social capital, i.e. James Coleman and Robert Putnam broadened the boundary of civil society. Its meaning gets complicated since it is a new phenomenon to rename as civil society to those associations which were conceptually dealt with distinct meaning as interest groups, pressure groups, professional/occupational groups, ethnic groups etc. in the text of political theory of the 1960s and 1970s. The core notion of civil society varies from one world to another. In the West, civil society is a means of rejuvenating public life; in the East, it means- besides political and civil liberties -private property rights and markets; and in the South, it refers to those forces and agents which oppose the state and its efforts at regulation (Khilnani, 2002). Putting such varieties into one basket, it obviously enlarges the concept and scope of civil society. So for an elastic definition of this concept, two statements are cited below:

The elements of civil society range from groups based on religion and ethnicity to more fluid voluntary associations organized around ideology, professionalism, social activities or the pursuit of money, status, interest, or power. They range from circles of friends... to single purpose political advocacy groups. Civil society also includes communities, like formally organized religious settlements, with their implication of primary socialization, strong attachment, and common history and expectations (Post and Rosenblum, 2002: 3).

Nor is there any disagreement about including in civil society the great variety of social movements, village and neighborhood associations, women's groups,



religious groupings, intellectuals, and where they are reasonably free, the press and other media, civic organizations, associations of professionals, entrepreneurs, and employees, whose purposes and direction are not controlled by the institutions of state (Hawthorn, 2002: 276).

Definitional problem is somehow sorted out in two ways, listing organizations that are not civil society and qualifying virtues of civil society. Those excluded from civil society are: organizations form within state structure and market (Young, 1999) and primordial kinship groups or institutions (Mouzelis, 1996: 52). Civil association is not enterprise association (Oakeshott, 2000: 139). Civil society is not the sum total of the non-governmental organization (NGO) community (James, 1995: 69). A strong civil society entails a) the existence of rule of law conditions that effectively protect citizens from state arbitrariness, b) the existence of strongly organized non-state groups, capable of checking eventual abuse of power by those who control the means of administration and coercion, and c) the existence of balanced pluralism among civil society interests so that none can establish absolute dominance (Mouzelis, 1996: 52). Schmitter (1995: 59) viewed that to be qualified an intermediary organization as a civil society requires four characteristics: its dual autonomy from both the state and primary social units of production and reproduction; its capacity for collective action in defense of the interests and passions of its members; its self-limitation with regard to governing the polity as a whole; and its willingness to act in a civil fashion. Distinction of a civil society from other intermediary organizations, i.e. interest groups, pressure groups, NGOs, community based organizations (CBOs), religious organizations, ethnic organizations, professional associations etc. calls a tight definition. Civil society is a secular forum that crosses religious, ethnic and political boundaries, and its backbone comprises independent, conscious and educated people.

Relation between civil society and state is conceptually contested. Marxism and Liberalism stand on two opposite poles. For Marxists, civil society is an outcome of transformation of state and society from feudal to capitalist world. Civil society did not exist in feudalism as economy, state and politics all fused. This argument is close to liberal interpretation, for instance Hegel stated, *“the creation of civil society is the achievement of the modern world”* (quoted in Post and Rosenblum, 2002: 10). Marxists and Liberals clash in views of civil society’s relations with state. For Marxist, civil society is a bourgeoisie space and anti-proletarian articulation. In the context of communist upsurge in Central Europe in the post-First World War period, Gramsci, a communist intellectual, concluded, *“the revolutionary wave was defeated by a combination of bourgeois state and bourgeois civil society”* (quoted in Gibbon, 1996: 28). The communists, therefore, believe that civil societies play an organically conservative role by serving as a barrier protecting the state from spontaneous popular impulses. In liberal philosophy, civil society is primarily seen as a guard of citizens’ rights and interests against state as the idea of civil society

was “developed along the tradition of European anti-absolutist thinking” (Chatterjee, 2002: 171). In the context of transforming the West into modern world and in consideration of Western political system as the most advanced democracy, has civil society retained anti-state posture as it was at the time of its birth? The reality lays on what some said in suggestive form, “civil society must not develop simply in antagonism to the state; some elements of positive engagement with the state is essential. “Society against the state” should be matched by “society for the state” (INPR, 1995: 6; Young, 1999: 161; Post and Rosenblum, 2002: 23). Civil society-state relations are mixture of both conflict and cooperation.

In the new discourse of civil society, anti-state authority approach is more pronounced. In fact, rediscovery of civil society is associated with the ‘third wave’ of democracy in Asia, Africa and Latin America, particularly the resistance movements of the ordinary citizens in voluntary associations against communist regime in East European countries. “The return of civil society to political vocabularies has in part been the result of neo-liberal projects such as privatization, de-nationalization, deregulation and de-stabilization which seek to roll back the state” (Chandhoke, 1995: 10). Much weight is given to civil societies of newly established democratic countries as an important instrument for the consolidation of democracy, linking them with global project of good governance and democratization.

After the collapse of different forms of dictatorship, logically civil societies of the respective countries should go back or move forward in different direction semblance to Western world. But it does not happen mainly because of the threat of reversal to democracy and baggage of authoritarian legacy carried out by new rulers under democratic tag. In many third wave democracies, it is generally observed, civil society organizations have had difficulty in overcoming the old uncivil structures and habits of the past, and in moving beyond simple opposition politics (INPR, 1995: 6). Civil societies of new democracies are functioning mainly as opposition to the state authority rather than developing themselves as apolitical organizations. For several reasons, it is unlikely that civil societies of new democracies will develop in the western model. Civil societies in the West are largely apolitical but those in new democracies are highly influenced by uneven political developments in their respective countries. High voting turn out in Third World countries is an indication about the location of civil societies in new democracies different from the Western world. Decline of volunteerism and increasing dependency on foreign donors also make differences between civil society of new democracies and established democracies. Civil society in new democracies is broadening its scope to arrest new social movements against injustice and for promotion of particular interest of a group bound together by common history, culture and language (Hachhethu, 2006).



At this point, OSCE comes to our minds to evaluate its deeds in this context. Maybe we should conduct via NGOs a range of activities aimed at increasing the participation of citizens - especially women- in the democratic process, while also paying particular attention to under-represented groups. Particularly OSCE states should be assisted with democratic institution-building, so the aim of the OSCE should become to help governments become more responsive, responsible, and representative in this context.

Responsiveness means that governments are able to react to the demands and needs of society at large, are open to effective interaction with civil society and interest groups, and are able to take a variety of views and interests into consideration in the policy- and law-making processes. In this respect, transparency in the work of governments is critical to making them responsive. To assist governments in enhancing their responsiveness, the OSCE supports the improvement of legislative processes to ensure that relevant stakeholders, including civil society, play a part in debating and commenting on draft legislation, so that it reflects public needs. In addition, the OSCE is prepared to lend assistance to political parties in their attempt to be more responsive to their membership and to help build co-operative relationships between governments and civil society, enabling non-governmental organizations to become a trusted and reliable source of advice, thereby enhancing the responsiveness of governments.

Responsibility is another important issue to emphasize. It means that governments can be held accountable by their own societies. While this is most visible at the time of elections, it is a defining feature of a democratically governed country. Responsible governments govern in accordance with the rule of law, where laws are open, well-known, and apply equally to all. Procedures should ensure that political minorities can contribute effectively to an inclusive law-making process and that a culture of boycotts and non-participation is avoided.

Last but not the least, representativeness means that, while governments are responsive to public needs, they also represent distinct political interests, values, ideas, and programmes, not only during election periods, but also between elections. Representative governments work on institutionalizing political life and public political participation through legitimate institutions such as political parties (Hofmeister and Grabow, 2011), thus simplifying and clarifying the political choices faced by individual citizens. In its work on the participation of women in democratic processes, for example, the OSCE encourages politicians to incorporate the concerns of women into their pre-election agenda and then to implement that agenda once voted into office rather than abandoning it in favour of more popular or parochial issues. Similarly, in its work on promoting multi-party democracy, the OSCE assists parties in the development and clarification of their platforms so as to make clear to the public what ideas and values they represent (OSCE, 2007).

### **Conceptualizing Contemporary Democracy and Political Participation**

Democracy is a political system based on (1) representative government; (2) citizen participation in the political process; (3) freedom (in the wide sense; basic freedoms of citizens); (4) transparency of political acts and process in general. If you ask a political scientist what are the main characteristics of democracy, among all these principals it is quite probable to hear also the fact of existing developed civil society. And this answer will be as far logic as civil society is considered to be a “product” of democracy because it is the system that provides all the necessary terms and conditions for civil society institutions and also the people who make them work. So, while saying that citizen participation in the political process is one of the main principals’ democracy built on, we should remember that citizen participation is also the basic feature of functioning effectively civil society.

In democratic societies, citizens’ participation is of crucial importance. But in today’s western European societies, the willingness to participate politically seems to decline. As a consequence, political parties try to re-mobilise citizens. In this context, also theoretical discussions and ideological struggles have become stronger in the last decades. In political theory and in the public debate, there are two opposing concepts on what participation is good for. One strand highlights a civil society that articulates political interest and is system-critical; the other focuses on system maintaining participation and on a common good (Pausch, 2012).

The issue of political participation has been a substantive area of interest for both sociologists and political scientists, mainly because it pertains to the quintessential act of democratic citizenship -voting at election for the House of Representatives. While elections and voting behavior attract the attention of many social science researchers, various manifestations and forms associated with political engagement in a broader sense have also received extensive study.

If we aim primarily to critically present a selection of contemporary approaches and methodological tools for investigating political participation, then we would take it for granted that this is already an enormous area of research being conducted, and also it is unrealistic to expect a fully-fledged examination of all works published so far. For the twofold purpose of this research it suffices (1) to discuss a wide range as possible of quite different conceptualizations and definitions of political participation, while (2) attempting to show that the typological division between conventional and unconventional political participation is often artificial and elusive.

As liberal democratic culture and values have blossomed in Western societies, it increasingly became axiomatic that broad participation in the decision-making processes is a prerequisite for

proper democratic governance (Dahl, 1971, 1998; Pateman, 1970). Political theorists claimed that all individuals ought to have an appropriately equal opportunity to influence decision-making processes (Verba et al. 1978). While electoral turnout and voting, which is the cornerstone of the democratic political process, has been reportedly decreasing over the last decades in almost all European states (O'Toole et al. 2003), academic experts and technocrats have been exploring alternative participationist activities that could influence and shape decision-making processes, within a variety of social and cultural contexts. As a result, political participation has been proven to take incredibly diverse forms such as being a member of a political party or community-based organizations, displaying an active role within a range of cultural or leisure interactions, contacting a politician to express ecological concerns, suggestions or ideas, signing a petition, setting public buildings on fire and even shooting at policemen during demonstrations and riots (Bourne, 2010).

Although there is no universally accepted definition in this particular research area (Uhlener, 2001), political participation is often being referred to as "*political engagement*" or "*public involvement in decision making*". As Riley et al. (2010) have pointed out; political engagement has traditionally been thought of as "*a set of rights and duties that involve formally organized civic and political activities (e.g., voting or joining a political party)*". Diemer (2012) referred to political participation as an "*engagement with traditional mechanisms in the... political system, such as voting in elections and joining political organizations*". Munroe (2002) defined political participation in terms of the degree to which citizens are exercising their right to engage in political activities. Such definitions capitalize on the lawful nature of political praxis, in other words, they clearly establish a frame of reference with the available repertoire of political praxis within the conventional political norms, although these norms are not necessarily uniform across countries or across time.

Alternatively, some researchers do not focus on the praxis but only on the telos, primarily by defining political participation as a set of activities aiming to influence political authority. For example, Huntington and Nelson (1976: 3) defined political participation as an "*activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making*" whereas Verba et al. (1995: 38) characterized it as an "*activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action - either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies.*" The praxis does not seem to be important enough in the context of these definitions in as much as they are mainly teleological in nature. Such definitions, therefore, may imply that the telos is achieved through some form of "pre-specified" praxis which is acceptable and lawful.

Some researchers stick to a hierarchy of political engagement by drawing a sharp distinction between “legal” and “illegal” political participation, and suggesting that evaluating the nature of the praxis determines its qualitative place on the participationist map. This dichotomous distinction between formal and informal (or legal and illegal) political action has an academic prehistory of many decades. Thus the orthodox approach referred to “*democratic participation (conventional and unconventional methods of legal political activity in democracies) and aggressive participation (civil disobedience and political violence)... [as] analytically distinct types of political behaviour.*” (Muller, 1982: 1) Similarly, scientists employed an analogous terminology to capitalize on the differences between democratic and aggressive participation (Opp et al. 1981), yet newer studies also lay emphasis on the distinction between legal and illegal activities (Lavric et al. 2010). So the dilemma remains: Should European democracies proceed to accommodate the political telos of an activity ignoring the potentially violent nature of the praxis? In other words, is the telos sufficiently important to excuse the unpredictability and impulsiveness of any praxis?

Research on political participation since the 1970s has often distinguished conventional and unconventional political actions depending on the qualitative attributes of the praxis. As shown above, a specific praxis can qualify as an act of political participation if it serves the concept of “telos” in the decision-making process or, at least serves the need of publicizing information or views related to an issue of public concern. Conventional forms of participation are far more structured and normally lawful, e.g. being a member of political party, voting, lobbying, campaigning, attending political meetings, contacting officials, etc. In this context, one refers to forms of participation which are intrinsically embedded in the accepted boundaries of institutional politics. Such activities, in this respect, might be called “formal” (Henn and Foard, 2012). Yet, less traditional or non-institutional forms of participation such as participating to a protest march, signing a petition or boycotting products have also received much attention in the past few decades. Recently, Bourne (2010) presented the following list of participation activities as being unconventional: protests, demonstrations, barricading a community, firing at the security forces, blogging and using the social commentaries on talk radio. Marsh (1990) described such activities as “elite-challenging”, probably insinuating confrontational participation, although unconventional practices do not necessarily have to be illegal or unlawful. Opp et al. (1981) and Muller (1982) defined some of those activities as “aggressive”, whereas other scholars simply called activities such as “writing graffiti” and “damaging property at political gatherings” as illegal (Lavric et al. 2010).

Today, in addition to the categorization of political activities as conventional and unconventional (including unorthodox, aggressive, extreme, illegal activities, etc.), other forms of participation have been specified and characterized in terms of “alternative participation” because they take an

“aloof” stance towards official institutions. For example, Riley et al. (2010) explore electronic dance music culture as an alternative (and certainly unconventional) form of political participation which does not have a social change agenda. Such alternative forms of participation have also been defined as unofficial and informal by other researchers (Gill, 2007; Harris, 2001). This development, however, introduces a minor complexity in our original definition of political participation because it asserts that operating within the context of changing things does not always have to be the telos of a political activity. Reconsidering this minor complexity should be integral to redefining “political participation” in as much as there is already an accumulated literature regarding unofficial/informal/alternative political participation. Although achieving a consensus on an explicit definition of political participation has proved to be a complex enterprise, this did not prevent researchers from trying to identify how political participation (in light of a variety of definitions and tools of measurement) relates to other important variables, such as age and gender. In the next section, we will discuss how political participation was investigated in relation to other important variables.

Political participation is not static; it is a very dynamic and evolving social phenomenon. At various times, people are more likely to be more or less politically active. For example, Riley et al. (2010) suggested that we are currently experiencing a period of alienation from traditional politics. They cited Coleman and Götze (2001) and Griffin (2005) to suggest that distancing from traditional politics and structures is part of the rapid transformation of the political landscape. Alienation from politics does not seem however to be such a wide-ranging phenomenon: it does not affect uniformly all people and all societies at the same time. A number of factors have been identified as being related to political participation. Vecchione and Caprara (2009) found that gender, education and age are significant factors affecting participation levels. More specifically, they found that more educated people, along with males and older people are more likely to engage into political activities as compared to other groups. Further, they found that income rate was not significantly related to political participation. Stolle and Hooghe (2009) -in agreement to previous research- identified relevant variables like gender, education and age that have an impact on political participation. Also, Verba et al. (1995) suggested that education is a dynamic predictor of political participation whereas Conway (2001) claimed that, although gender gaps in political participation are shrinking, male population is still more actively engaged than females.

Age as a determinant of political involvement has been a very popular theme in participation research. It has been argued that a number of young people may feel isolated and even excluded from a political system which tends to be self-reproduced and often self-serving. Lister (2007) argues that since young people are often considered to be immature and continue to be financially dependent on their parents, they are often not treated as equal members of the

planning process and power arrangements. However, marginalisation by adult political structures seems to a certain extent to be enforced on young individuals -they do not distance themselves out of a voluntary choice. It has been argued that existing political systems cannot decode how alienation mechanisms work in relation to young people (Russell et al. 2002). Along the same lines, Smith et al. (2005) maintain that many young people are led to understand political participation as predominantly the province of adults. There is a steadily increasing corpus of research which suggests that young people are not generally “disengaged” from politics, but instead that they have a critical attitude towards institutional politics (Briggs, 2008; Henn et al. 2002, 2005; O’Toole et al. 2003; Phelps, 2004, 2005). It has been suggested that *“feelings of political efficacy are ineluctably bound in with perceptions of the responsiveness of political institutions to the presence of citizens as significant actors in the political process.”* (Coleman et al. 2008: 772) Participation perceptions never exist in a vacuum. There is evidence that young people did not enjoy a high status when affiliated with mainstream political parties as compared with other age groups, e.g. more mature voters (Kimberlee, 2002). For example, Mycock and Tonge (2012: 138) mentioned emphatically that *“Political parties... have... been historically reluctant to engage with young people or represent their interests..., instead prioritising older voters. However, the political resonance of issues linked to youth citizenship and democratic engagement has risen recently as political parties have sought to address steep declines in levels of civic and civil activism and the preparedness of young people to vote in elections.”*<sup>1</sup>

### **‘Counterpartism’ between Civil Society and Participation for Women’s Political Participation<sup>2</sup>**

In this section, we will firstly examine the relation between civil society and gender. The concept of civil society (CS) is used throughout the European history, but gained more prominence when philosophers began to consider the foundations of the emerging nation state in the 17th and 18th century. A key assumption for the concept of CS was the Christian notion of human equality. At that time, it was linked with the idea of right-based society in which rulers and ruled were subject to the law, based on the social contract. It is a complex and contested concept with multiple interpretations. It has long history in western political thought (Ehrehburg, 1999). An important feature of the academic debate on CS, despite its diverse trends, how is gender as a domain of power continues to be treated in parallel to CS, but not as an integrated element (Rahman, 2013).

As mentioned by Howell (2007), the tendency to keep the family outside of the CS arena is a persistent weakness in the CS debate, despite the recognition of women’s collective action. Most

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<sup>1</sup> For this section of the research, we extensively made use of the source; (see Lamprinou, 2013). We appreciate and thank very much to the author for that valuable study.

<sup>2</sup> For this section of the research, we extensively made use of the source; (see Rahman, 2013). We appreciate and thank very much to the author for that valuable study.



CS theorists treated family merely as boundary marker to the CS, their primary concern being the state and CS relation. In Gramsci's view, CS is the field in which the struggle for hegemony unfolds. Therefore, it provides an opening for counter hegemonic projects to gain strength (Hodgkinson and Foley, 2003: xix). In contrast, Habermas (1992: 453) views the CS as an institutional core constituted by voluntary associations outside the sphere of the state and economy. These associations could be like church, cultural association, sports clubs, and debating societies to independent media, academics, groups of concerned citizens, grassroots initiatives, and organizations of gender, race and sexuality, occupational associations and political parties and labour unions. Habermas engaged more systematically with family in relation to the CS. He distinguishes family from CS (understood as the domain of commodity exchange and social labour) and state. The family is both precursor of CS and a site of intimacy (Habermas, 1989: 46-47 in Howell, 2007: 420).

Extending from this view, Cohen (1998: 37), and also Cohen and Arato (1995: 631) propose to view the "family" as the first association of CS. To their idealized depiction, family is assumed to be an egalitarian social unit, which provides an arena where the principle of "horizontal solidarity, collective identity, and equal participation" are first experienced and constantly reproduced. They gave justification for their positioning of the family in relation to the CS. Such principles revolve from the substratum of other associations of CS and democratic political life. However, this picture of the family glosses over the unequal power relations and hierarchies ubiquitous within families, often haggard along gender and inter-generational lines and underpinning processes of exploitation, violence and abuse within families.

Concern about gender as analytic category has emerged in the late twentieth century and remains confined in women and gender studies. This may partly explain why it is not being considered in major bodies of social theory on CS. The term "gender" is part of effort by contemporary feminist to stake claim to a specific definitional ground, to insist the insufficiency of existing theory for explaining persistent inequality between women and men. The use of word "gender" has significantly emerged at a moment of great epistemological turmoil (Rahman, 2013). Yet as Howell (2007: 416-417) pointed out, CS theorists have paid very little attention to the gendered nature of CS, at the same time, feminist theorists have involved very limited in CS theorists. *"Feminist theorists have used the frameworks of social movements, voluntary action, rights, equality, civic engagement, and emancipation to understand women's political struggles, while CSOs have pointed to women's activism to illustrate the vibrancy of actual civil societies. The problem is rather that the way CS s conceptualized is not through the lens of gender and that how gender relations are explained has not led to a re-evaluation of CS theorists from a gender perspective."*

To deepen the understanding of gender in CS, a thick concept of gender is necessary. Scott (1988: 31) proposed an understanding of 'gender' as way of denoting the "cultural constructions"- the social creation of ideas about suitable roles for men and women. It is actually a way of indicating to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. Therefore, gender is a category imposed on sexed body. The definition of the term has two parts and several subsets. Though these are interconnected, but must be analytically different. *"The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive component of social relationships based on perceived differences between the men and women; gender is the primary way of signifying relationship of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way"* (Scott, 1988: 42-43). Since gender is perceived to be the differences between the sexes, and as constitutive elements of social relationships, it comprises four interrelated elements: first, culturally available symbols that evoke multiple and often contradictory. Second aspect is normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meaning of the symbols that tried to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities. The third aspect is gender relationship. Gender is constructed through kinship, though not exclusively, but it is constructed as well in the economy, and in the polity, which in our society at least, now operate largely independently of kinship. The subjective identity is the fourth aspect of gender. In the definition of gender all these four elements consist and no one operates without others. They do operate simultaneously, with one simply reflecting others (Scott, 1988).

In this part, we will recount on some situations, issues, and challenges about women's political participation.<sup>3</sup> With an increasing recognition among international community of women's historic exclusion from structures of power, a global commitment has been made to redress gender imbalance in politics. Women's enhanced participation in governance structures is viewed as the key to redress gender inequalities in societies. The global debate on the promotion of women's political participation/representation has been surrounded by intrinsic and instrumentalist argument. The former argues for equal participation of women in politics from the human rights perspective. Women constitute half of the world population and therefore, it is only fair that they should have equal participation and representation in world democracies. Instrumentalist argument pushed for women's greater participation on the essentialist ground that men and women are different. Women have different vision and concepts of politics owing to their sex and their gender roles as mothers. Therefore, it is assumed that women in politics will bring a special caring focus and female values to politics. There is an extensive research

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<sup>3</sup> For this section of the research, we extensively made use of the source; (see Bari, 2005). We appreciate and thank very much to the author for that valuable study.

literature produced in support of the varied rationale or theoretical approaches to women's inclusion in politics. However, without debating the merit and demerit of various approaches, this paper is grounded in the broad agreement that proponents of varied approaches have arrived at -women must be included in politics. The challenge facing all advocates of gender equality in politics today is the wide gap between shared values reflected in the national and international policies and practices (Bari, 2005).

Before identifying the key strategies for the promotion of women's political participation and the vital elements in the enabling environment for women's political empowerment, we need to strive for a deeper understanding of the structural imperatives of a society in which women's political participation is instituted. Women's historic exclusion from political structures and processes is the result of multiple structural, functional and personal factors that vary in different social contexts across countries. However, beyond these specificities of national and local contexts, there is a generic issue in women's political participation that relates to the wider context of national and international politics, liberal democracy and development. It is, therefore, imperative to critically review these constructs and decode the gendered nature of Democracy as well as Development, which poses limitations on women's effective political participation. The elements of enabling environment for women's participation in politics and development cannot be discussed and identified without putting the current development and political paradigms under scrutiny.

Development today as Jahan (2000) maintains has brought tremendous benefits to people all around the world who have gained in terms of education, health and income. But at the same time development leaves behind 2.5 billion people who live on less than \$2 dollars a day. There are glaring disparities among and within countries. 40% of world population accounts for 5% of global income while 10% richest account for 54% (UNDP, 2015). Presently, the mainstream development paradigms based on capitalist relations of production thrive on opportunities created by gender relations for power and profit (Connell, 1987: 104). There is an intrinsic link between women's domestic labor with capital accumulation. Leacock further elaborate the same point as "*...the inequalities between men and women could not be understood in isolation from polarizing tendencies of the capitalist mode of production which places the 'peripheral' countries of the Third World in a relationship of dependency with the metropolitan centers of the First World. Within an egalitarian world order, so called development could not release women from oppressive social, economic and political institutions; it merely defines 'new conditions of constraints'*" (Leacock, 1977: 320).

It is imperative for gender equality advocates to focus on the gendered nature of development and challenge the capitalist paradigm of international development that creates and recreates

gender disparities, while at the same time working towards creating an enabling environment for women's participation in development. Women's mere participation in mainstream development cannot automatically lead to their advancement and gender equality unless the contradiction in the development claim for equality and justice and the practice is eliminated. The level and nature of participation is equally important to determine whether women are able to share development gains. Another contextual issue in women's political participation relates to the nature of politics in general and the liberal democracy in particular. Democracy has historically served men better than women. As a political system from the ancient Greece to the modern times of the 21st century, it has built on the public-private dichotomy and excluded women from citizenship. Women have been kept outside the public domain of politics as most of the political thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Lock, Thomas Hobbes and Hegel considered women fit only for domestic roles in the private sphere and maintained that there was no place for women in politics because of their suitability in caring roles as mothers and wives. The public-private divide remains as the foundation of the various forms of world democracies (Phillips, 1998; Rai, 2000).

This is one of the reasons that the normative political theory considered private sphere as non-political and did not make any effort to explore the political nature of the private life. The ancient and modern democracies failed to recognize women as citizens. Therefore, they sidelined them and their concerns in its theory and practice (Bathla, 1998: 39). It was only the liberal political philosophy of the 19th century that promoted the idea of 'free and rational' individual which was used by suffragists to demand for the right for vote. However, as Rai (2000: 2) maintains the conceptual basis of liberal theory is inherently gendered in ways, which perpetuates patterns of patriarchy and ignores gender subordination in both polity and society. Feminist theorists also challenged the notion of abstract individual in liberal theory and argued it is not a gender-neutral category. This is why despite women had the right to vote they were not able to impact public policy and could not bring private sphere in the preview of the public. Even western democracies left them dislocated on many fronts. When women enter politics within this patriarchal context of modern democracies, they are unable to play a role to radically change the sexual politics rather they largely play political roles on male's terms. The fundamental assumption in liberal democracies needs to be changed in order to create genuine political space for women within.

Women's participation and access to formal political power structures vary across countries. There is a steady upward trend in women's political participation and representation in developed countries particularly in Nordic countries. Out of twelve countries where women representation in parliament is more than 33%, nine of them are ranked in the high human development category. However, the improvements in medium and low human development countries are not significant. The structural and functional constraints faced by women are

shaped by social and political relations in a society. The common pattern of women's political exclusion stem from (a) social and political discourses (b) political structures and institutions (c) the socio-cultural and functional constraints that put limits on women's individual and collective agency (Bari, 2005). So, when we attempt to emphasize factors hindering women's political participation, we can mention some factors as follows:

- **Ideological Factors:** Patriarchy as a system of male domination shapes women's relationship in politics. It transforms male and females into men and women and construct the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged (Eisenstein, 1984). Rich (1977: 57) defines patriarchy as: "*A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.*" The gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere. This is one of the vital factors that shape the level of women's political participation globally. However, this ideological divide is not reflective of the reality. The boundaries between public and private are often blurred in the daily lives of women. Nonetheless, domestic domain continues to be perceived in the North as well as in the South as the legitimate space for women while public space is associated with men. Women have to negotiate their entry into and claim on public space according to the discursive and material opportunities available in a given culture and society. Although the gender role ideology is not static rather remained in a flux while intersecting with economic, social and political systems of a particular society, women continue to be defined as private across countries which resulted in their exclusion from politics.

- **Political Factors:** The nature of politics is an important factor for the inclusion or exclusion of women in politics. Randall (1987) defines politics as an "*articulation, or working out of relationships within an already given power structure*", which is in contrast with the traditional view of politics that defines it as an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation in the process by which resources are allocated among citizens. This conception of politics restricts political activity only in public arena and the private sphere of family life is rendered as apolitical. This public-private dichotomy in traditional definition of politics is used to exclude women from public political sphere and even when women are brought into politics they are entered as mothers and wives. Male domination of politics, political parties and culture of formal political structures is another factor that hinders women's political participation. Often male dominated political parties have a male perspective on issues of national importance that disillusions women as their perspective is often ignored and not reflected in the politics of their parties. Also women are usually not elected at the position of power within party structures because of gender biases of male leadership. Meetings of councils or parliamentary sessions are held in odd timings

conflicting with women's domestic responsibilities. The larger democratic framework and level of democratization also impact women's political participation. Secular democracies in Europe and also in some of the developing countries have created relatively more space for women's participation in politics as compared to countries where religious orthodoxy has been shaping politics and democracy.

- **Socio-Cultural Factors:** The subordinate status of women vis-à-vis men is a universal phenomenon, though with a difference in the nature and extent of subordination across countries. Gender role ideology does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity, it also places them in hierarchal fashion in which female sex is generally valued less than male sex because of their socially ascribed roles in reproductive sphere. The gender status quo is maintained through low resource allocation to women's human development by the state, society and the family. This is reflected in the social indicators which reflect varying degrees of gender disparities in education, health, employment, ownership of productive resources and politics in all countries. Additionally gender is mediated through class, caste and ethnicity that structure access to resources and opportunities. The socio-cultural dependence of women is one of the key detrimental factors to their political participation in public political domain. Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. With their primary roles as mothers and wives and competing domestic responsibilities and care work, they are left with little time to participate in politics. In some of the countries, particularly in South Asia, women also face cultural constraints on their mobility. The mechanisms of sex segregation and *pardah* are used to restrict their mobility. Politics requires women's exposure to interact with male and female constituents and address public meeting.

- **Economic Factors:** Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized. More and more money is needed to participate in politics. Women lack access to and ownership of productive resource, limiting the scope of their political work.

- **Lack of Social Capital and Political Capacities:** Women often lack social capital because they are often not head of communities, tribes or kinship groups, resulting in the absence of constituency base for them and means of political participation such as political skills, economic resources, education, training and access to information.

Therefore, if we attempt to emphasize some ways in enabling environment for women participation in politics and development, we can say that in the interconnected world of today, external factors such as globalization, international trade and economic policies impact the development policies of the nation-states. Therefore, the creation of enabling environment for women's participation in politics and in development cannot be viewed only within the



boundaries of a country. It must be linked with global factors. Thus, the responsibility to create supportive environment for gender equality and advancement of women as shared responsibility falls equally on the national and international communities.

Interlocking layer of gender inequalities are rooted in the power structures at the national and international levels. Development and the globalization policies have led to increased poverty, exclusion and marginalization. Structural forces must be challenged and transform by linking them with the rights of people. Without changing socio-cultural, political and economic structural barriers at the national and international levels, the goal of gender equality or women's equal participation in politics and development will remain impossible to attain. Another important element in the enabling environment relates to the nature of democracy and the level of democratization in society. The participative and decentralized form of governance creates greater space for citizens to participate in governance processes and structures. It also creates space for greater interaction between the state and the society.

Human capacities are dependent on the availability of resources such as education, health and employment that build capabilities and enlarge human choices. Access to education, health and employment is directly linked with women's ability to create space for themselves in politics and development. Women's consciousness of their political rights is another critical element for women's individual and collective agency. Political consciousness through building transformative communities is the sustainable way to transform politics and development. A strong women's movement and civil society is another condition of enabling environment that can influence the direction of politics and development in favor of women. Triple roles of women in productive, reproductive and community management spheres must inform the efforts for creating supportive environment for women's political participation. Provision of childcare and care work is vital to enabling women to participate in the development processes (Bari, 2005).

## **CONCLUSION**

Collective civic action has two broad aspects. The first is cohesion –the ability of a community to coordinate and to manage its own affairs on matters that are relatively independent of states and markets. The second is the ability of a community to represent its collective interests to the agents of the state and persuade the state to be more responsive to its needs. If as the research shows there is a strong connection between political participation and civic engagement, precisely is the message for progressives?

For instance, the lessons from the recent elections in the United States point to the significance of mobilisation at the level of community. The so-called moral majority were able to utilise single issue pressure groups and fundamentalist faith based groups to get their message across. In

the end it was the ‘moral agenda’ that won the day. Now more than ever progressives need to step back and assess more closely how and why people engage politically. This in turn requires consideration of the relationship between formal citizenship and formal, or what some call passive political participation (voting). It requires unpacking the relationship between democratic citizenship and substantive political participation (active engagement with political parties, engaging with the policy process as part of the policy community; ensuring that all have a voice in political decision making; advocating for electoral equity etc) (Conway, 1991). Progressive political parties need to identify the systemic barriers to political participation by members of marginalised and historically disenfranchised communities. They have to assess whether the institutions of political life equitably reflect the diversity of society. And they have to learn more about patterns of diverse community participation in building social capital through volunteerism, social movements and advocacy -be it in trade unions, churches, mosques, temples, or national rifle associations. Progressives need to look very closely at the relationship between formal political participation and participation in civic organisations. Research points to the positive correlation between formal political participation and the number of civic organisations. This network of interrelated civic organisations represents a form of social capital as groups that were highly organised and interrelated also reported a high degree of trust in the local government and a high level of political interest. Other research has found a strong correlation between the number of civic organisations and the level of political participation and political trust. Social capital, information flows and political knowledge which derive from social and organisational networks all play important roles in enhancing political participation and political mobilisation.

Democracy and the very institutions of democracy, including political parties, institutions of governance and the illusion of political participation via a ballot cast every four or five years need to be democratised. Progressives need to start promoting notions of ‘democratic citizenship’, the ‘democratisation of democracy’, and inclusive political practices; therefore, they need to promote strong organisations in civil society. Progressives also need to be far more assertive about their conception of the developmental state as a corrective to the excesses of the marketplace and as the legitimate repository of the will and aspirations of the majority (Pahad, 2005).

To sum up, we should say that citizen participation in political process is always not only the proclaimed right written in the Constitution, but also the personal willingness to participate. Exported by the Western development discourse, the concept of CS is linked up with donor-driven norms like GG. Since the global Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are the financier and patroniser of the national CS, therefore, they have the legitimacy to introduce issues (term and definition both) on the basis of their political agenda and priority. It is well figured out by the

respondents in this study. Though UNDP defines governance as exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage country affairs at all levels, but the respondents (especially women) of the CSOs mentioned very specifically some aspects crucial to their lives, such as; tolerance, women friendly administration, effective measures to reduce social injustice and patronizing by ruling political party (/parties) over the administration. The daily experiences, priorities and expectations of women in respect to GG are not reflected in the global CS's agenda of GG. Externally imposed notions of GG could not produce a gender neutral space, rather it creates hindrances towards women's spontaneous potentials in participating social activities based on their preferences. The experiences of respondents in the context of Kishoreganj suggest that *"just as there is antagonistic relationship exists between state and women's interest"* (Basu, 2003), so two CSOs and the space they provide for participation also bear gender norms. Women's scopes to participate in the CSOs are embedded in institutional structures, which limit their choice and political agency (Rahman, 2013). Our findings tell us that in all CSOs or NGOs, people want to ensure participation, especially women's participation which has become another window of popular discourse. Yet women's participation is very much confined with the specific tasks which are basically related with programme implementation, not designing it or having control over decision making forum or activities. As long as their activities remain at this level everything is fine with the society, but when their actions challenge male dominated structural power, they encounter problems.

Last but not the least, the study of relationship between civil society and political participation as a way of democratic quality for women is a living subject by gaining depth and strength through regular applications. An understanding of what political participation with civil society support means is advanced, optimistically, regularity in all settlements of the world. This research highlights the complex and fractured nature of political participation, particularly for women, and depicts how the 'counterpartism' between civil society and political participation is essential and pre-requisite as a commodity of democratic quality and consolidation. In this context, it should be emphasized that 'counterpartism' is a brand-new term which was discovered and labeled by ourselves as a representative of political participation in the heart of civil society to ensure democracy. Thus shaping the web of civic participation emphasizes the new means of democratic accretion through civil society. Civil society is accepted by most scholars of democratization as an essential component of democratic consolidation. Such judgments are seldom based upon empirical evidence from developing democracies. Although civil society cannot be defined as a cause of democracy by some scholars, we will try to explore through this research that it at least serves as a breeding ground and as a way of democratic quality for participation in the activities of political society, such as voting, participation in political organizations, and other activities that contribute to the health of democratic governance.

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