Chapter- 3

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK;

Political participation refers to all those voluntary involvement of individuals or groups at various levels of political process. In the opinion of Harbert Mc Closky it is the voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy.[1] Similarly, Conway defines it as "activities of citizens that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the politics of government. These activities either may be supportive of the existing politics, authorities, or structure, or they may seek to change any or all of these." Huntington defines it as those activities by private citizen designed to influence government decision-making. Nie and Verba believes that political participation includes those legal activities by private citizen which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selections of governmental personnel and the action they take.³

Thus, a definition of political participation is the active engagement by individuals and groups with the governmental processes that affect their lives. This encompasses both involvements in decision-making and acts of opposition. Acts of active engagement include conventional political participation (such as voting, standing for office and campaigning for a political party) and
unconventional acts, which may be legitimate (such as signing a petition and attending a peaceful demonstration), or illegal (such as violent protest and refusing to pay taxes).

Tocqueville argues that the willingness on behalf of citizens to participate fully in the governance of their own lives is central to a thriving civil society. Such participation was an expression of citizenship, and was crucial to engendering a shared political culture. The best definition of a democracy (one used by Abraham Lincoln) is that it is a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Implicit in this definition is the idea that most of the citizens of that democracy must participate actively in the system so that the policy decisions of that government reflect what a majority of people in that system want. But participation is not limited to democratic systems; at least some of the citizens from other systems can participate in the political process.

People with specific individual needs will contact government officials to get their needs taken care of. People with fewer unmet social and economic needs have little need to be involved in politics. Participation activities are not all equal; they have different opportunity costs for citizens. Citizens with limited time or financial resources may not be able to participate as much as they would like. Some people have been brought up with attitudes that support political participation or they are in social situations, such as being members of service organizations, where some types of political participation are expected. The use of direct mail to solicit funds, organized "get out the vote," and voter registration
drives is increasing. The media's coverage or lack of coverage of certain topics and their endorsements of candidates can stimulate citizen interest in elections. An election perceived as a closely contested will generate more interest and participation because voters think that their vote really counts.  

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The historical origin of the term ‘political participation’ can be traced back from the ancient Greek period. (the time of Socrates Plato and Aristotle) In Greek city-states, political participation embodied the citizen’s life in the ‘polis’. Greeks believed that citizenship means capacity to rule and to be ruled. In Athenian democracy an equation was developed between the citizens and the city-state. The citizen confirmed his life to the line of public law, which he himself had accepted, and which expressed his will. It is only because of Greeks abiding reverence for the city –state and law, democracy worked there.

Romans believed that political sovereignty not only resided in the people but the laws were made by magistrates in agreement with popular assemblies. The most important Roman writers like Cicero and Seneca argued popular participation in the government as the basis of democracy. The concept of popular sovereignty even became more established during the republican period and was theoretically accepted during the imperial period.

The term political participation also finds mention in the medieval period in the writings of Marshilio of Padua. (14th century) He wanted to liberate the
temporal authority from the domination of church. In the middle ages Ecclesiastical property was regarded as a grant or subsidy by the community. Even the doctrine of representation has its root in the medieval period. A representative was a trustee rather than agent of the people. However, Marshillio of Padua advocated the idea of representation and popular sovereignty in the modern sense.\footnote{5}

In the early modern period the English scholar John Locke nurtured the concept. He clearly advocated the doctrine of popular sovereignty as he provided people the power to remove the sovereign in case he could not perform his duty for which he was appointed. Rousseau, in his concept of general will gave a finishing touch to popular participation in the governmental affairs. However, it is true that in the earlier period, the term ‘political participation’ has a narrow meaning which dealt with the people’s participation in election process through voting, mobilising, canvassing, attending meetings and political discussions. Now it comprehends all those activities, by which subjects influence governmental process. (it may be in the form of protests, riots, debates or any other.)

Theories of political participation

There are three models of political participations;

Elitism;

Elitism believes that all societies, democratic or not, are governed by elites. The elite who govern are not typical of the masses who are governed. They possess more control over political resources and are drawn disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic strata of society. Agreement among scholars
breaks down, however, over the depth and range of conflict and competition within the ranks of the elite, and over the possible coexistence of elitism and democracy. Consequently, at least three models of elitism can be identified in the literature concerned with a democratic system. The following outline summarizes the major ideas expressed in these models.

**THE ELITE-CLASS/RULING ELITE MODEL;**

This type of elitism is associated with Plato, Mosca, Pareto, and Michels. Mosca, even put the anti democratic case in 1896 when he said that in all societies, from the dawn of civilization down to the most advanced, two classes of people appear, 'a class that rules and a class that is ruled'. Mosca targeted Marxist social democratic movements, but he was equally dismissive of liberal democracy. Elitism was not only tainted, its message was bleak. Mosca made some acute observations (the ruling class, he says, easily subverts liberal democracy by conducting elections to the music of 'clinking dollars'), but in the end elite theory was a better defense of elitism than explanation of how societies work. Following are the special features of this model.

1. Power is concentrated in few hands and stems from positions within the socio-economic system. People acquire power by virtue of occupying key positions in the corporate, professional, and educational sectors of society. Economic wealth, especially institutional wealth, is the sole source of political power.

2. There is considerable convergence at the top of the political system, with a single, small, dominate elite drawn from the "cream" of America's upper
class controlling all important sectors of individual's life. Governmental institutions are regarded as largely irrelevant since actual power exists outside the formal, visible structures of government.

3. Members of the elite may occasionally disagree, but consensus normally prevails about the value of the existing system and its important policies. The cohesiveness of the elite is partly a product of their common upper-class background.

4. The ruling elite is a closed group. Entry is not attained through the political process, but is a function of birth and "co-option" by the elite.

5. The elite is subject to little or no influence from the masses, whether through elections or any other means of political activity.

6. Public policy does not reflect the demands of the masses, but rather the prevailing values of the elite. These theorists therefore conclude that the state cannot possibly be classified as a democratic system.

THE PLURALIST MODEL/DEMOCRATIC ELITISM

'Democratic elite' theory sounds like a contradiction of elite class model. Democracy after all depends on empowering ordinary people. As presented by Eva Etzioni Halevy, however, democratic elite theory claims to be a progressive theory compatible with equality and the needs of the weak. Her version of elite theory does not divide society into the few with power, and the many without; does not necessarily identify with the interests of leading elites; and, compared with Marxism and pluralism, promises a superior explanation of power in liberal democracies. The theory's central proposition, its 'meta principle,' is the
importance for democracy of autonomous elites, autonomous from each other, and from (and within) the state. What makes multiple elites democratic is separation among them. This was the great insight, she claims, of Weber, Schumpeter, Aron, and the partially rehabilitated Mosca who, for all his doubts about democracy, saw the importance of separate, competing elites. Democratic elitism shares much in common with pluralism; the key difference involves the role of autonomous elites in protecting democracy from overly powerful governmental elites. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe before the 1989 revolutions anchor the argument. The characteristic features of this model are as follows.

1. Power is unevenly, but widely, distributed in America. Power is an attribute of individuals in their social relationships. Regardless of social position, an individual has power when he/she can induce another person to do something that person would not otherwise do. Power can be achieved through the skills of leadership, information, knowledge of political processes, charisma, skills in public relations, and ideology. Economic wealth is only one of many different kinds of resources which carry a potential for political power and influence.

2. There are multiple elite groups in American society. Interests that exercise power in one policy area may not exercise it in all other areas. No single group dominates. Governmental institutions are relevant, and are decentralized, with multiple points where organized interests can gain "access" to a share of power.

3. There is considerable competition and conflict among elite groups over a broad range of issues. With the exception of a consensus on the core
"democratic values" and the basic values of the economic system, there is no homogeneity of ideology or policy preference within elite ranks.

4. The governing elite is an open group in America. Entry is through the political process which provides a means of circulating persons into and out of their ranks.

5. The masses exert considerable influence over elites through elections and membership in variousorganized interests. Competition between elites for control of governmental positions and the "authority" vested therein, enables the masses to hold them accountable for the decisions they make.

6. While public policy may not necessarily represent majority preference, group demands are compromised and balanced so that policy does constitute a reasonable approximation of society's preferences.

Democratic elitists are primarily concerned with the problem of sustaining political stability while democracy is of secondary importance. They argue that enlightened leadership, sanctioned by minimal acts of participation by the masses, is the best way to maintain order. Since the masses are generally ignorant and apathetic, extensive participation by them will necessarily undermine stability, and therefore undesirable. An over-active citizenry is likely to make ill-considered, short-termite and generally populist policy decisions. They are liable to be manipulated by demagogues bent upon to overthrow of the system, and are prone to shift dangerously between periods of apathy and manic activism. It is desirable for policy-making to be left to those who are intellectually suited to the task. Responsible elite can then neutralize the worst excesses of the masses
through subtle manipulation. The art of governing is 'giving the people not what they want, but what they will learn to want'. Even if more extensive political participation was deemed desirable, it is argued to be impractical. Direct or participatory democracy requires millions of citizens to make all important decisions.⁶

Yet, if the masses cannot be trusted because they are so emotional and ignorant, why allow them even to choose who governs? The argument against direct democracy is logically an argument against any kind of democracy. The commitment of elitists to democracy is weak: even representative democracy is conceded only on the grounds of expediency. This allows for the possibility that democracy could be dispensed with altogether, if another way could be found to pacify the mass demands. The attacks against the masses' competence have often been made prior to extensions of participation rights to workers, women and minorities.

**THE HYPERPLURALIST MODEL:** The model is found particularly in America. It has following features.

1. Hyper pluralism is a perversion of pluralism. The model accepts most of the pluralist view of power in America and rejects the elitist notion of concentrated power.

2. The various and numerous organized interests have grown strong and unyielding and uncompromising with one another. There has been the advent of "single-issue politics" in America.

3. Governmental structure is relevant. Government is decentralized and fragmented, providing organized interests numerous points where they can gain access to power and "veto" policy with which they are opposed.
4. Government has thus grown weak relative to groups and can no longer contain and control the struggle among our various interests. Government has become excessively differential toward groups, treating essentially all group demands as equally deserving of governmental attention.

5. Public preferences are not translated into effective public policy. Consequently, a government which cannot act effectively cannot act democratically.

Commentators have been divided about the degree to which democracy can be reconciled with the existence of elites. Some have seen them as a threat to democracy; others, the "democratic elitists," have perceived their autonomy as a necessary ingredient of a democratic polity. It is not possible to generalize about the attitude of elites to democracy. Some of them, like the military, by virtue of their functions, have values which are unlikely to foster democracy; others have values and procedures which are congenial to the democratic ethos. Elite autonomy cannot be a meta-principle of democracy.

**Rational Choice Theory**

Rational Choice Theory is an approach used by social scientists to understand human behavior. The approach has long been the dominant paradigm in economics, but in recent decades it has become more widely used in other disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science, and Anthropology. This spread of the rational choice approach beyond conventional economic issues is discussed by Becker (1976), Radnitzky and Bernholz (1987), Hogarth and Reder (1987), Swedberg (1990), and Green and Shapiro (1996).
Rational Choice Theory generally begins with consideration of the choice behavior of one or more individual decision-making. The rational choice theorist often presumes that the individual decision-making unit in question is "typical" or "representative" of some larger group such as buyers or sellers in a particular market. Once individual behavior is established, the analysis generally moves on to examine how individual choices interact to produce outcomes.

According to rational choice theorists, a lack of willingness to participate by the majority is a sign not of their ignorance, but of their rationality. The rational individual will ask himself, 'What will I gain from the act of participation to that I would not gain if I fail to act?' The likely answer is 'Nothing!' This is the free-rider scenario where non-participation is the most rational option. The implication is that political movements will be led by those who personally gain from their involvement. Thus, for political elites participation is rational, because it gives them power and prestige. The mobilisation of other participants will depend upon convincing them that they will directly benefit from participating, and that any gains will outweigh the costs. This means that certain types of participation (such as voting in national elections) will be more easily undertaken because they are relatively costless, whereas canvassing for a political party will occupy many hours and incur some costs.

Yet, if individual self-interest is the only basis for political action, how can we explain the considerable time and effort citizens put into their membership of voluntary political associations? To be sure, without individuals taking their
citizenship obligations seriously, the basis for our freedom within the political community will be eroded. It may be therefore be wholly rational to participate in politics. The challenge for rational choice theory is to ask how notions of rationality interact with other motivational forces. The commitment of elitists' to democracy is weak.

**Participatory Theories of Democracy**

Both democratic elitism and rational choice are instrumentalist theories: with the former political participation is a means to achieve a more important end of maintaining political authority; and with the latter participation is a tool used by individuals to further their interests. In contrast, participatory theories see political involvement as developmental: participation is more than a method of governing; it serves the wider purposes of cementing civil society together, and educating citizens in the art of governance.

This means strengthening local government, and extending democratic practice into the institutions of civil society, as well as increasing opportunities for the use of national referendums and citizen-led policy initiatives. In a strong democracy, participation is not merely the defiance of an entrenched interest, but instead is a deliberative and public process that does not lay claim to any truth above what can be agreed consensually by its citizens.

The theory of participatory democracy deviates from this anti-institutionalist bias in modern democratic theory when it comes to the sources of political participation. It is by and large the only voice in democratic theory that
allows for a role of political institutions in explaining political participation. This is why any theoretical account on the issue of participatory engineering ought to be rooted in this strand of normative democratic theory. The main focus of participatory theory lies first and foremost in the critique of the liberal conception of democracy as a competition for political power among responsible elites. This critique originated in the late 60s and early 70s in the midst of a larger cultural quest for more democracy and social equality. Participatory theory envisions citizens engaging into political decision making in great numbers through multiple acts of participation such as voting, direct decision making and horizontal as well as vertical political communication. It also envisions a perfect fit between mass participation and other values of good governance. This fit is seen as being based on a shared sense of collective responsibility among all participants. Theorists of participatory democracy claim that this vision can be reached by increasing opportunities to participate through institutional reform (Pateman 1970; Cook and Morgan 1971; Macpherson 1977; Bachrach and Botwinick 1992). They claim that the institutional restraints impinging on political participation within the frame of liberal democracy lessen political engagement and spawn political apathy in the long term while different institutional impulses are assumed to engender contrasting behavioral effects (Walker 1966).

The strategy of integrative democratization describes the relationship between individual actors and institutions in distinct ways. According to its proponents, individuals are not born as citizens but have to be educated to become citizens.
From the perspective of participatory theory this can be ensured only through corresponding institutional frameworks that empower people. Authors such as March and Olson (1984) or Hall and Taylor (1996) reflect this particular perspective on political institutions in the context of institutionalist theory. They perceive institutions as independent factors that shape the very goals, perceptions and abilities of individuals.

Mark Warren (1992) has pointed out, that the notion of individual growth and self-transformation triggered through institutional context is probably a dominant paradigm among theorists of participatory democracy. It is at the same time the most difficult aspect of participatory theory to deal with in normative terms. This is because the notion of citizen-education has been perverted by dictatorships across the globe. However, there is a decisive conceptual difference between a totalitarian concept of education and participatory theory. It lies in the interrelationship between education and political choice. Participatory theory does not substitute political choice with self-transformation as totalitarianism does. It rather argues that expanding citizens' rights to affect policy choices has to be paralleled by a process of political socialization and self-transformation to balance the pursuit of private interest with a sense of collective responsibility. The notions of choice and education stand in a complementary relationship rather than being substitutes to each other. This is emphasized in particular by the pluralist character of this strand of participatory theory, meaning its emphasis on the group basis of politics. I will come back to this aspect in a moment.
The debate on participatory democracy generated other alternatives to the notion of “political efficacy”. Jane Mansbridge’s (1980: chapter 3) concept of unitary democracy stresses the idea of a “social urge”, which is defined as a focus on common interests and social cooperation on an equal basis as the most basic feature of the good citizen. Jürgen Habermas’ concept of individual autonomy combines both notions of individual empowerment and social responsibility. The Habermasian autonomous self is distinguished by a balance between self-referentialism and the capacity for internal and external reflection. The notion of internal reflection suggests that the self is critical toward his or her own impulses and motivations in the process of generating a preference. It touches upon the awareness that individual preferences have to be reconciled with other actors. For Habermas, from this balance – that can be considered a psychological state of mind - flows the ability to cooperate and to be part of a community that forms the basis of collective action. Despite these alternative conceptions of the democratic self, the concept of political efficacy has to be considered the most developed one in empirical terms.

While the theory of participatory democracy does not explicitly discusses problems of institutional design it makes an important statement regarding this very aspect. It stresses on the one hand that transformative environments, meaning environments that educate the self to become a citizens, can not be located at the level of constitutional structures. Quite the contrary, according to Barber (1984), political apathy is a consequence of ‘thin democracy’ that functions solely
through procedures and formal institutions at the constitutional and sub-constitutional level and that has no residual effect on the subjective dimension of democracy. The reason for this lack of impact on the part of constitutional structures is seen in the lack of microstructures that would be able to shape the daily experiences of citizens and to provide an infrastructure for political learning and political socialization. Participatory democratic theory stresses instead social groups as the core building bloc of democracy, since they affect the daily life of citizens in most immediate ways, and since they will be able to perform the function of political socialization. From this perspective the integration of individuals into the group is a central prerequisite for building the democratic self with a high level of political efficacy.

The most recent debate on electronic democracy emphasizes the internet and cyberspace as a new structural development in communications that will strengthen the prerequisites for alternative public spheres and the emergence of autonomous social movements (Rheingold 1993; Poster 1995; Zittel 2001). From this perspective, the internet could provide the vantage point for a new age of reasoning, a reincarnation of a critical public sphere in the Habermasian mould and thus a revitalization of emancipatory movements.

Political participation is seen as a good in itself; something that all individuals can play a part in and through which they develop not only their own political competence, but also forge the links that form civil society. Many of the normative arguments against participatory democracy are also arguments against
democracy itself, and can be discounted if we believe that some form of
democracy is desirable. It may also be possible to overcome the practical
objections to direct democracy through innovations of information and computer
technology (ICT) and new methods of citizen involvement (such as citizens’
juries or panels).

Participatory democracy theorists argue that democracy is not only an
expression of individual autonomy, but is also relational. It involves compromise,
tolerance of others and accommodation between conflicting views. Democracy is
the best chance that we have of reconciling the increased diversity of civil society.
Democracy is also the most secure way of converting power into authority,
because it entails citizens giving their consent to decisions made in their name.
Democracy values in equal measure the contribution of all members of civil
society. It therefore requires that wherever citizens themselves should take
possible decisions. Theories that suggest democracy is merely a method of
government that best preserves the status quo, or is more than the expression of
narrow, pre-determined interests, seem hallow and uninspired in comparison.

MARXIST THEORY
The Marxists view of political participation emphasizes on the ‘purposeful and
conscious’ participation of the multitude but does not allow a changing
ideologically established system. The Marxists view of political participation
enunciated by and Marx and Engel’s writings and further enlarged by Lenin and
Mao. Marxists deny political participation at individual level or multi-group level
or multi-party levels. They recognise in terms of class conflicts, which has got to be linked with single system. They hold that participation is just not to hold power and influence policies but to take purposeful and active interest in political process through a single party. In a socialist society, the communist party would act as the “vanguard of the proletariat” and the center for opinion aggregation. The party would be organized on the basis of ‘democratic centralism’, which implied every party organ was strictly bound by decision of anybody with a higher position in the party hierarchy.

Mao latter on suggested that proletariat would replaced by peasantry as the vanguard of the revolution. Involvement of the working class is ‘an essential process by which workers are educated to bring about the [socio-economic] revolution... raising them to the level of ruling class is to win the battle of democracy. However, the view has been only one sided, as in practice, it is the party which finally decides the policies and regulates the changes. The high percentage of voting in a socialist system does not actually reflect the influence of the voters on policies. The options before people were restricted.8

**Forms of Political Participation**

Political participation is much broader than simply voting for people who share policy beliefs. The list of all the types of forms of political participation would be almost endless but for illustrative purposes we can say that it includes a diverse range of activities at all levels of government such as writing your
parliamentarians, protesting in front of city hall, giving campaign contributions, writing political editorials or letters to the editor for newspaper, joining an interest group that lobbies for particular policies, speaking at a school board meeting etc. Some of these forms of political participation may be more important or more effective than others. Some may be immoral and/or illegal. Some may be open to some people but not others. But all represent forms of political participation.

Forms of participation may be divided along a number of dimensions. One key initial distinction is between legal and illegal forms of political participation. Secondly, forms of political participation may differentiate on the basis of their immediate target audience: governmental officials or the larger public (or segment of the larger public) who might influence these public officials. Third, forms of participation may be differentiated on the basis branch of government (executive, legislative, or judicial) or what level of government (federal, state, local) is central to making decisions on this issue. Finally, forms of political participation may be differentiated on the basis of when they occur; i.e. during the selection phase or the policy-making phase. Whether the action occurs during the selection of governmental officials (e.g. elections, appointments) or during the policy-making phases such as legislation or administrative hearings or court cases. It is useful to keep these various dimensions in mind when evaluating the efficacy and/or the morality of different forms of participation. What works in one context may not work in another or what you deem to be moral in some contexts may be immoral in others.
Illegal Political Participation:

I. Political Violence: Violence can be defined as an illegal activity designed to affect the political policies of the governmental authorities through the destruction or threatened destruction of property and/or people. Political violence can take a variety of forms.

1. Political Riots: are spontaneous, anarchic eruptions of lawless behavior that may be directed against property and/or people in response to an unwelcome political development. One thing that characterizes a true political riot is that it is not planned or coordinated and no group controls the direction of the political violence; it is anarchic. Sometimes riots are effective tools of political participation.

2. Political Violence against Property: includes any planned, political activity designed to destroy property or illegally impose a negative economic impact on the target. Such actions do not involve violence directed against people.

3. Political Violence against People: are illegal, planned, political activities that intentionally kill, maim, or physically harm targeted political victims to alter political policies of the larger community in one's own society. The best example of one such kind is Post-Godhra tragedy in Gujarat state.

4. Revolution: The most extreme form of political violence is a revolution. A revolution differs from more isolated actions of violence against people in the scope of its political objectives. Revolution is not issue specific; it does not just seek to alter one policy (e.g. abortion); it seeks to overturn the entire political
system by force. The United States was, of course, born as a product of this most extreme form of political violence. Indeed, one of our founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson said that occasional revolutions were necessary to preserve democracy.

*Civil Disobedience*

The first step in defining civil disobedience is to distinguish it from legal protests and illegal political violence. Civil disobedience, by definition, involves an illegal action of some sort. A protest can be totally legal - and if it is - it does not exemplify civil disobedience. A peaceful march or a strike can be illegal or legal forms of protest depending on whether or not they violate any laws or ordinances. Any form of protest that involves trespassing (such as blocking the entrances or exists of certain establishments or roads) is illegal and a form of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience never involves violence against people and it rarely involves violence against property.

Indeed, it is typically the case that the vast numbers of protestors use either legal protest or civil disobedience to make their points and it is only small, radical minorities who endorses or engages in political violence. Notwithstanding this fact, those in opposition to particular movements try to depict all or most protestors as endorsing political violence. This smear tactic was used against the US Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Viet Nam War protests of the 1960s and it is used today against the anti-abortion, pro-environmental, or Animal Rights Movements of the current era. You should resist the false claim that most environmentalists endorse the actions of ELF or most pro-life/anti-abortion groups endorse the murder of physicians who perform abortions. The
vast majority of the memberships of both groups are peaceful. Those who engage in civil disobedience may resist arrest - passively - e.g. going limp or chaining themselves to a tree - but they can not resist actively and still remain civil disobedience.

David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Vaclav Havel are of most widely known practitioners of civil disobedience. Gene Sharp is a current theorist\textsuperscript{11} of the practice of non-violent means of participation including civil disobedience. But while the tactics worked for Gandhi, King, and - they did not work for Thoreau who went to jail in an unsuccessful effort to stop the Mexican-American war, or for the Jews who sought to protest the Nazi Anti-Semitic Laws in Germany, or for Nelson Mandella and the ANC in South Africa. Mendella, for example, tried civil dissidence for a number of years and the ANC only turned to political violence when all efforts all civil disobedience (legal protest was never an option) were violently suppressed and Mandella was jailed. One might argue that in the case South Africa it was political violence (coupled perhaps economic sanctions) that ended apartheid - not civil disobedience.

\textbf{Legal Political Participation;}

There are a wide variety of legal activities one can participate in politics including the following illustrative examples such as use of the media advertising (television, radio, or newspaper ads or internet website); paying for research studies or public opinion surveys from sympathetic institutions to support your position; joining an interest group; encouraging "public opinion leaders"
(entertainment or sports figures, religious leaders, media columnists or tv anchors) to tout your point of view, planning some "consciousness-raising" event that will attract the media and draw public attention to the issue. Which of these will be the most effective form of political participation will depend on the issue and the political context.

**Lobbying Governmental Officials.** One major form of legal political activity is to directly lobby Government Officials on one or more policy issues. Often, individuals get involved in lobbying when they are encouraged to do so by particular interest groups who inform their members about impending policy decisions and who to contact about these decisions.

**Participation during the Selection Phase or the Policy-Making Phase:** people can also influence policy during the phase when the policy-makers are selected or during the policy-making phase. The form of participation varies with the phase. Obviously, voting, working in a campaign, giving campaign contributions, or running for office are forms of participation in the selection of elected officials. But one can attempt to influence the selection of nominated officials as well.

**Verba and Nie's six forms of participation**

a. **Inactives** - People who rarely vote, do not get involved in organizations, and do not even talk much about politics.(They account for about 22 percent of the population.)

b. **Voting specialists** - People who vote but participate in little else politically. They tend not to have much schooling or income, and to be substantially older than the average person.
c. Campaigners - People who not only vote but like to get involved in campaign activities as well. They are better educated than the average voter, but what distinguishes them most is their interest in the conflicts of politics, their clear party identification, and their willingness to take strong positions.

d. Communalists - people who tend to reserve their energies for community activities of a nonpartisan kind. Their education and income are similar to those of campaigners.

e. Parochial participants - People who do not vote and stay out of election campaigns and civic associations, but who are willing to contact local officials about specific, often personal, problems.

f. Complete activists - An individual, usually outside government, who actively promotes a political party, philosophy, or issue he or she cares personally about.[12]

Milbrath's Typology

Laster. W. Milbrath has developed a kind of typology which has a hierarchical order.[13]

1. Gladiatorial Activities; It includes;
   [a] Holding public and party office.
   [b] Being a candidate for the office.
   [c] Soliciting political funds.
   [d] Attending a caucus or strategy meeting.
   [e] Becoming an active member of a party.
   [f] Contributing time in apolitical campaign.

2. Traditional Activities; It includes;
   [a] Attending political meetings or rally.
   [b] Making monetary contribution to a party or a candidate
   [c] Keeping contact with a political official or political leader.

3. Spectator Activities; It includes;
   [a] Wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car.
   [b] Attempting to talk to another to vote in a certain way.
[c] Initiating a political discussion.
[d] Voting.
[e] Exposing oneself to political stimuli.

It is almost clear from above that the stages of political participation decrease according to hierarchical order. A study in the U.S. political participation reveals that about 60[\%] percent of people are involved in the spectator activities, while 7 to 3[\%] percent in transitional activities, and the percentage further decreases to 1 to 3 when it comes to gladiatorial activities. Milbrath suggests that his ordering involves a kind of logical natural progression of being involved in the political activities and that persons involved at one level are also likely to involve at “lower” levels. Central to this logic is the idea that ascending the hierarchy involves increasing cost in terms of time energy and resources and each level fewer people are able to and willing to make the necessary investment. However, the problem with this typology is that, participation is only possible when basic psychological and physiological needs of the person, such as food, sleep, safety etc. has been met with. Moreover, the model ignores such activities which are political in nature and are directed towards disruption of the normal process, examples being revolt, coup, agitation, strikes etc.

Rush and Althoff's Typology;
Rush and Althoff have also drawn a hierarchy regarding the typology of political participation. This includes most of the forms political participation. Such as--
[a] Holding political and administrative office.
[b] Seeking political or administrative office.
[c] Active membership of a political organization.
[d] Active membership in a quasi-political organization.
[e] Passive membership of a political organization.
[f] Participation in a public meetings; demonstrations etc.
[g] Participation in formal political; discussion.
[h] General interest in policies.
[k] Total apathy.

Participation, at the top of the hierarchy is enjoyed only by those who hold various types of offices within the political system. Persons participating at such levels can be distinguished from other political participants [to varying degrees] in that they are concerned with the exercise of formal political power. Power in itself may not reside in them but they are important because normally they are important because normally they are the formal reposition of power. 17

Recent Trends in Political Participation

Several interesting trends have been identified concerning the political participation in liberal democracies:

An increase in unconventional political participation.

Political participation and democracy more broadly, have become central to the recent discourse of social scientists, practitioners and the public at large. Addressed variously under the headings of civil society, social capital, protest politics and governance, this debate has lent renewed currency to the age-old democratic question of how to ensure the effective involvement of citizens in the life and decision-making of their social and political communities. New
generations seem to show considerable reluctance to engage in conventional
democratic politics. At the same time, new forms of social and political
involvement appear to emerge among them; in both respects, developments in
people political participation may well indicate a more fundamental
transformation of contemporary democracy over the years.

Developments in many countries in recent years have been hailed as a
triumph for democracy, with a sharp increase in the number of democracies in the
world following the collapse of totalitarian regimes that many scholars thought
would live forever. This development has opened up an important area for
research on new democracies and how these can survive. Yet the state of old
democracies has remained in focus as well, both as part of research agendas that
attempt to find formulas for what constitute successful societies in a very broad
sense as well as studies that are limited to specific aspects of society and political
systems. In an age of globalisation, much emphasis is put on economic variables:
competitiveness, productivity and economic growth. However, public interest as
well as scholarly attention has also been directed towards 'softer' indicators like
human development, quality of life, respect for human rights and – which is
closest to our research question – the trends of political participation in recent
times.

A drop in turnout rates in elections; At the mass level, scholars have
primarily studied political trust: support of democratic values, confidence in
institutions and trust in political leaders. Recently, political scientists have also shown a renewed interest in the study of trends in electoral turnout and other forms of citizen participation and involvement in advanced industrial societies as indicators of the state of democracy. Norris argues convincingly that we need to look beyond electoral turnout and include a larger variety of measures of political involvement and participation if we want to confront the thesis of civic decline. We generally use the broad concept of ‘participation and involvement’ to include both behavioural and attitudinal aspects of citizens’ political engagement.

Blais and Gray & Caul find that participation rates in national elections have declined in advanced democracies. The research of Norris is somewhat less conclusive, but her data shows that turnout declined in post-industrial countries in the 1990s. Similarly, Franklin finds a weak decline (5 percentage points) in turnout in established democracies from the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. Overall, he sees turnout for the whole postwar era as more or less stable. Interestingly, he uses Norway as an example of a mature democracy with a marked increase in turnout at a recent election and also finds that Norway is one of six countries (out of 22) with a positive trend in electoral turnout in the period 1945–1999. At the Storting election of 2001, the turnout of 75.5 percent was the lowest recorded in the postwar period, and the four most recent elections (1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005) all have a markedly lower turnout than the norm in the previous decades. The downward path is even more dramatic for local elections.
In the most recent local elections, turnout at county elections reached an all-time low with 56 percent compared to a peak of 71 percent in 1979\textsuperscript{23}.

\textit{A leaning towards local politics;} Research on trends of participation in local elections is more extensive, although studies have not given a clear picture of what causes the decline. Interestingly from this point of view, Bjorklund and Bjorklund and Saglie find that citizens increase their broader involvement in local politics at the same time as turnout declines.\textsuperscript{24} They also use some of the data from the longer series of national election studies to extend the findings from local elections. Having demonstrated that turnout in parliamentary elections has fallen to a level not seen since the period of 1950s, and that voters’ participation in local elections are steadily reaching new lows of participation rates for the postwar era.

\textit{Much stress on humanitarian and environmental issues;} Recent research has put much weight on issues and events that are not easily accommodated within the established political order – especially those associated with new politics: pro-environment policies, feminism, anti-nuclear policy and, more recently, anti-globalisation. These issues have often been linked to activity in direct forms of participation like the signing of petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, and, in some cases, occupation of buildings and other violations of property. The policy bases of protest politics are not restricted to new politics issues or leftist causes. Research findings from 1975 and 1990 show that political action has a diverse political origin, with environment, local and regional policy issues, the European
Union (EU), ASEAN, SAARC and economic issues are among important categories.

A decline of trust in effectiveness of political institutions;
Political participation through voting and other traditionally understood methods of political participation are eroding. Instead of communal and societal concerns, people are turning their focus towards their private lives. This change in peoples’ preferences has been witnessed and convincingly verified in many studies by social scientists. However, the public or political issues are not actually loosing their significance in people’s minds; as a matter of fact, politics still matters. Only the forms, and forums along with the concept of political activity and participation are changing, which is arousing concern among the political elite about the future of still dominant partisan politics.

In the current situation, two opposite discourses on political citizenship and participation are dominating discussion in the context of western liberal democracies. They can be labelled as administrational and actionist discourses. The first one aims to create and rationalise the practices of participation from above (e.g. the planning of land use and urban construction, good governance practices). The second discourse strives for bringing alternative meanings and practices from below (e.g. the criticism of ‘official’ influence opportunities, the inhabitants’ own initiatives and plans, citizens’ public action). Public authorities are involving citizens in decision-making, but the citizens have been active somewhere other than in the traditional sphere of institutionally organized
participation. Political environment has fractured into a diverse, complex and multi-spatial network.

* A decline in loyalty to traditionalism; In the modern era, the social cleavages are not as absolute or oppositional as they are in pre-modern. However, they exist, but emerge in more relative or conditional form. Characteristically politics, in the modern sphere, is balanced between mobilised activities led from above and below. Modern participation needs resources to mobilise citizens and leaders to direct, or more precisely to channel, the course of that mobilisation. This view implies that there should be established political structures, a meeting place of a kind in order to make political demands and a supply to meet. The ideal type of this market place of politics is usually regarded as being a representative democracy in which every citizen may find his/her political home. To facilitate that participation and the pursuance of different political objectives there ought to be a variety of political groupings from which to select the most suitable political opinion, and then support it by various means of action. To handle these groups and to generate differing political ideologies and programmes there need to be political leaders, who are in charge to direct the interests and desirable goals of their supporters. Activities (actions) in politics, and particularly in representative democracy, are in many senses brought about by the sensitive balance of mobilisation from above and participation from below. How much immediate participation by citizens to influence the politics of their own favourite political group should there be?
In recent years, especially in western democracies, there has been much talk and analysis in public, concerning how citizens and particularly young citizens are not interested in political participation. Researchers and other commentators have exhorted parties to sharpen their visionary messages in order to be more appealing in the eyes of voters. For example, the Finnish government has started a special programme –The Civil Participation Policy Programme that “aims to reinforce the functioning of representative democracy and encourage civil participation” Despite its aims, the publications related to this policy programme tend to treat civil participation as a form of party democracy.

To overcome political apathy and alienation (as the phenomenon is named), it has been suggested that parties ought to organise different policy alternatives and bring more and bolder visions into public debate during election campaigns and more systematic civil education within the schooling system. If the purpose of the civil participation policy programme is really to enforce party democracy, these suggestions and the realisation of them might cure the disease of political apathy. This ongoing discussion of political alienation among political scientists and politicians is an expression of concern about the unpopularity of political participation. However, in this discussion, there are certain points that deserve a closer look. In research and inquiries that have been done about people’s attitude and stance concerning politics, the findings are not too flattering about the image of politics. Young people tend to position politics on the dark side of life. The notion of politics receives such attributes and epithets as: dirty game, self- interest
motivated or deceitful activity, incomprehensible monastic Latin. On the other hand, if we analyse the situation in regard to voting, political participation and level of activity, and the width of the gap between citizens and between parties in Finland, and compare it with other Nordic Countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark [excluding Iceland] are traditional comparisons to Finland due to similitude of social fabric), it has been found that Finns are in general performing more poorly and scoring lower points in these matters.29

Citizen Participation in the Digital Age: A Comparative View of the State of the Art;

Online citizen participation mechanisms present an unprecedented opportunity to break away from traditional legislative-political practices to the extent that said mechanisms constitute a more practical and equitable means of subjecting law and policy making and safeguarding processes as an input to an expanded range of citizens. Mexico analysts and researchers have, in this regard, been quick to point out that the information and communications benefits which flow, in theory, from this opportunity can help bring about the development of the vigorous civic culture. This is required for the establishment of a viable check against the power and influence of narrowly focused interest groups and the displacement of state’s deeply entrenched disposition towards democracy inhibiting trust. This will lead to the inculcation of democratic values and practices, which are the organic outgrowth of Mexico’s historic experience and contemporary reality.
Responding to the demands of local constituents, governments around the world have taken steps to develop and implement citizen participation and democracy enhancing digital spaces and mechanisms. For example, detailed information regarding the lawmaking and leadership activities, committee memberships (where applicable), and individual voting records (also where applicable) of elected or appointed officials is increasingly available online. Government web sites and portals also function to make available official reports and briefings. This potential is illustrated by the way in which over 20 million U.S. citizens used the Internet to gain access to the Starr Report (presenting the findings of the special prosecutor’s investigation into former President Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky) within 24 hours of its release. Focusing, more specifically, on the legislative function of government, many national congresses, parliaments and legislative bodies at the sub-national levels of government have used ICT to make it possible for citizens to "attend" virtual public hearings and/or subscribe to and receive electronic bulletins pertaining to specific committees or issues. And, in what represents the strongest manifestation of ICT enabled citizen participation, national, state, and municipal governments are demonstrating a greater willingness to accept the proactive presentation of legislative proposals by citizens and/or conduct online plebiscites, referenda, and votes.

As a result of the introduction of these services and features, citizens are, without regard for the urban-rural nature of their domicile, increasingly informed about and involved with the domestic and international issues, which bear on their
lives and businesses. Conversely, governments are in a better position to promulgate laws and formulate policies, which more rationally relate to the needs and realities of their intended beneficiaries. This final outcome is particularly desirable in so far as those nations, who has a long tradition of capital based law making by political elites who do not fully grasp the needs and realities of citizens from different segments of society or regions of the country
References:

1. McClosky H; "Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences" Vol. 2 Edition 2; Published by Macmillan Reference USA. 1968. p-252


4. Ibid., p-120


7. Ibid. p. 58, 154-155.


13. Laster, W. Milbrath, “political participation” Chicago, Mac Nelly and Company 1965, p_18


16. Ibid-p-76


21. Ibid p-101

22. Ibid p- 176


28. ibid. p- 122.

