How did Voter Outreach by Civil Society Organisations enforce Self-governance during the 2014 Elections in Tunisia?

Introduction

Tunisia witnessed internationally accepted elections in 2014. The elections encompassed the legislative vote, the first-round presidential vote and the run-off election.

Civil society organizations were involved during the entire election process.

➡ This research aims to examine how the organizations **Mourakiboun** and **Pôle Civile** enforced self-governance during the elections by practicing voter outreach.

➡ This research defines
- **self-governance** as conceptualized by Dahl 1989 and Przeworski 2008 and;
- **voter outreach** as monitoring electoral procedures and raising voter awareness.

Theory

In a democratic system, the right to self-governance entails **individual autonomy** and **substantive societal power sharing** (Dahl 1989). However, no single government can represent the interests of all the people. Instead, successive governments can support the interests of different people in turn, which comes as close as possible to fulfilling the ideal of self-governance (Przeworski 2008).

➡ Therefore, a regularly occurring election cycle is needed to guarantee that self-governance is continuously reinforced.

When institutional bodies such as the Tunisian Independent Election Commission (ISIE) organize elections, civil society organizations are actors capable of supplementing their work.

➡ Civil society organizations can support and encourage individual autonomy and substantive societal power sharing by practicing voter outreach.

1. An analysis of **voter outreach methods** and **statements from interview partners** will reveal characteristics of individual autonomy and substantive societal power sharing.
2. A final **assessment** will determine if these characteristics enforced self-governance during the 2014 elections in Tunisia.

Pôle Civile

Mourakiboun

Voter Outreach Methods

Mourakiboun

6000 volunteers
↑
Monitored the elections using the method of Parallel Vote Tabulation
↓
5000 volunteers

Pôle Civile

Observed and cooperated with ISIE

Published voting outcomes (online database)

Published election reports daily (TV/Website)

Observed registration process, proposed improvements

Distributed educational leaflets

حراير الحرة ...
حاضرين كل مرة ...

Leaflets addressing marginalized groups: Two journalists meet women in different regions of Tunisia from diverse professional and educational backgrounds. Despite their differences, they all go to the election ballots to have a say in Tunisia's future.

Statements from Interview Partners

Mourakiboun

Reasons for Concern
- A lack of communication between various civil society organizations led to inefficiency.
- There were more voters in 2011 than in 2014.

Reasons for Optimism
- "Each one fails when working alone" ➡ "best to work together from the beginning"
- "There was a national consensus to have successful elections after the hard time with the political assassinations."

Pôle Civile

Reasons for Concern
- Parties and politicians didn't work to integrate youth in the political process.
- ➡ So the youth were frustrated and did not show up at the election ballots.

Reasons for Optimism
- The organization was successful at reaching the people living in marginalized regions.
- Elections were omnipresent: "Nous avions eu un an des élections."

Assessment

Regarding the **methods** used by civil society organizations to execute voter outreach, certain characteristics of individual autonomy and substantive societal power sharing are revealed:

1) A fair amount of cooperation;
2) Inclusion of broad segments of society through the dissemination of data and information over various channels; and
3) Involvement by civil society organizations during the entire election process.

The **statements** reveal a more nuanced perception of characteristics of individual autonomy and substantive societal power sharing:

1) Cooperation existed but it was at times inefficient and insufficient.
2) Efforts were made to include all segments of society, but marginalized groups (e.g. the youth) were not motivated.
3) Organizations did voter outreach during the entire process, but voter turnout decreased from 2011 to 2014.

➡ Voter outreach methods reveal that civil society organizations made efforts to enforce self-governance during the 2014 Tunisian elections; however, the statements from interview partners make it apparent that there are still obstacles to overcome.

"Go vote… Don't lose your voice."

Sources:
Dahl, R. A. (1989) *Democracy and its critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Przeworsky, (2008) *Self Government in Our Times*. European University Institute: MWP-LS 2008/07.

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