

Community partnership as a mechanism for restoring political trust and achieving political stability in Algeria

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Abstract This article examines voluntary work as a crucial means to build a culture of consensus and restore political trust in Algeria, linking active citizenship to both developmental and political processes. It argues that community participation, grounded in solidarity, cooperation, and shared responsibility, is essential for political stability and sustainable development, highlighting that fostering volunteerism and coordination between the state and civil society are key to achieving comprehensive and lasting progress.

Introduction

Political stability is essential for sustainable development and social cohesion, relying not only on institutional or security measures but also on a political culture that encourages participation, responsibility, and mutual trust between the state and society. In Algeria, declining political trust and weak interaction between state institutions and civil society have hindered development despite abundant human and natural resources. This raises the central research question of this study: To what extent can the culture of volunteerism contribute to restoring political trust and achieving political stability in Algeria? Sub-questions include how political culture affects the effectiveness of volunteer initiatives, how voluntary work can strengthen democratic participation and rebuild trust in institutions, and what conditions are needed to integrate volunteerism into the national development strategy.

The study argues that voluntary work in Algeria plays a crucial role in fostering political trust, promoting community development, and enhancing national stability by cultivating a culture of consensus and cooperation. It emphasizes that social culture, through active civic engagement and volunteerism, serves as a key driver of political development, helping to bridge the gap between the state and society and reinforcing citizens' sense of participation and responsibility in the nation's development.

Section one: Community partnership and political stability: A conceptual approach

1. The concept of community partnership

Participation forms the basis of the state-society relationship, fostering trust and citizens' sense of belonging. It drives collective action to shift political and economic power toward the public through collaboration among the public sector, private sector, and civil society.

a. Partnership between the public and private sectors

Successive economic, financial, and social crises have highlighted the need to reconsider the concept of the private sector and its evolving roles alongside the public sector within a framework of partnership and social responsibility. Public-private partnership does not imply privatization or the sale of state assets, but rather a contractual arrangement through which the private sector provides services or acquires new assets on behalf of the state. The effectiveness of such partnerships depends on transparency and the fair distribution of roles and responsibilities to achieve social objectives and complementarity between the two sectors (Abu-Ghazaleh et al., 2013, p. 10).

The public sector maintains a supervisory role to ensure fair competition, ethical conduct, and efficiency in economic and productive activities, while emphasizing alignment between universities, scientific disciplines, and labor market needs. These efforts operate within a social welfare framework that defines the core functions of social policy as developmental, preventive, therapeutic, and integrative, aiming to support comprehensive development and ensure the inclusion of all social groups (Abu-Ghazaleh et al., 2013, p. 202).

b. Community partnership within the framework of social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is closely linked to governance and reflects a continuous ethical commitment by companies to contribute to economic development while improving social well-being, an approach also captured by the concept of corporate citizenship applicable to all enterprises. Strengthening corporate citizenship supports community partnership between the public and private sectors, enabling active societal participation and reducing passivity and dependency (Sharabi, 1984, p. 76). Participation, as the foundation of the state-society relationship, enhances trust, reshapes power relations in favor of citizens, and positions them as central actors in development, thereby providing the sociological basis for sustainable and inclusive development (Abdel-Moti, 1990, p. 85).

2. The concept of political trust and political stability

a. The concept of political trust

Political trust is a core concept for understanding the relationship between rulers and citizens, especially in developing countries where recurring crises, legitimacy deficits, and instability are often rooted in the erosion of trust. Trust develops when citizens are satisfied with the performance of the political system, accept its principles, and perceive its institutions as effective, creating a positive cycle in which performance responsiveness enhances trust, support, and ultimately systemic stability (Crête, Pelletier, Couture, 2007, pp. 3–4).

Public satisfaction constitutes the foundation of political trust and legitimacy, reflecting a collective evaluation of political and governmental performance that encourages civic behaviors such as political participation (Ben Djilali, 2014, p. 68). Political trust is also shaped by political culture, confidence in institutions, and political socialization, and is measured through indicators such as government performance, policy fulfillment, political stability, and citizen participation (Ali Dawood, 2014, p. 90). When governance aligns with societal values and norms, political trust and legitimacy are strengthened, leading to stability grounded in justice, citizenship, and the rule of law.

b. The concept of political stability

Political stability is a fundamental objective of both society and the political system, arising from a balanced relationship between the state, its institutions, and citizens, and sustained by public acceptance and legitimacy. Instability emerges when harmony between rulers and the governed breaks down, particularly if governance fails to adapt to social demands or external pressures (Tilly, 2010, p. 348; Bastille et al., 1967, p. 26). Stability is achieved through an accepted regulatory system that governs relations among social forces, creating an implicit social contract that reinforces political trust and public support for political goals (Al-Saffar, 2005, p. 15; Quant, 1999, p. 110). Rather than relying solely on security power, political stability depends on democratic governance, inclusive political participation, and comprehensive political, social, economic, and cultural measures that guarantee rights, peaceful transition of power, and the system's capacity to manage change and crises effectively.

Section two: Voluntary work as an entry point for building a culture of consensus and restoring political trust to achieve development and stability in Algeria

Culture shapes social behaviors and ways of life, influencing conflict, competition, and consensus. Voluntary work, reflecting a culture of consensus, supports economic development, political stability, and the restoration of political trust in Algeria, with participatory development serving as a key mechanism for societal engagement.

1. Participatory development as an entry point for activating society's role and achieving political stability

a. Development policies as an expression of Algerian culture for activating participation

Algeria's political mindset reflects two contradictory attitudes toward authority: a desire for reform and change on one hand, and reverence for authority as the sole means to achieve societal progress on the other. Reformist approaches often rely on top-down measures imposed by the state rather than organically rooted in society, misaligning with social realities and threatening political stability. This underscores the importance of voluntary civic engagement and societal participation in genuine reform processes (Nasr, 2002, p. 27).

Post-independence development policies in Algeria have largely failed because they were misaligned with the country's cultural fabric. Development programs were often used as ideological tools serving the ruling elite, creating social apathy and disconnecting citizens from the political system. The dominance of a small political minority, largely concentrated in the capital, prevented equitable mobilization of society and led to perceptions that state projects primarily benefit the elite. Root causes such as poverty, lack of economic opportunities, social marginalization, and neglect of public services have reinforced disengagement and undermined both political and developmental participation.

Additionally, the top-down approach to institution-building and reforms, combined with rentier dynamics and the volatility of oil revenues, has eroded trust between citizens and the ruling elite, while discouraging broad participation. Short-term, reactive policy measures, often implemented without oversight or accountability, have undermined good governance, economic security, and political stability. Algeria thus faces an urgent need for development policies grounded in cultural realities, with citizens actively engaged as partners to achieve sustainable development and reinforce political stability.

b. Socialization as an entry point for promoting participation and achieving development

In Algeria, socialization institutions — such as the family and the school system — play a fundamental role in shaping the individual's attitudes and behaviors. However, the current educational and social framework tends to discourage individuals from trusting their own opinions, instead encouraging passive acceptance of others' views without question. This has resulted in the suppression of creativity and innovation, and the reinforcement of submission to authority (Sharabi, 1984, p. 41). As a result, individuals often abdicate personal responsibility, leading to a lack of self-criticism, initiative, and active engagement.

In Algeria, dependence on the state fosters conformity, passivity, and withdrawal, as many university graduates expect employment rather than creating opportunities themselves. This leads to disassociation from responsibility and a sense of helplessness in influencing economic

and political life. Consequently, citizens become passive subjects rather than active agents, with verbal participation replacing genuine engagement, and initiative giving way to submission and caution (Sharabi, 1984, pp. 68–69).

The country's heavy dependence on oil revenues has deepened the rentier nature of Algeria's economy while weakening its productive sectors. This dependence has led to economic vulnerability, increased unemployment, poverty, and social marginalization for large segments of society, while a small minority continues to benefit from rent distribution. These structural imbalances have made independent development a national necessity — an economic and social imperative aimed at freeing development decisions from both internal and external pressures, and ensuring fair distribution of economic growth (2011, p. 88) through the establishment of effective institutional systems centered on a broad understanding of human welfare as the ultimate developmental goal.

Achieving independent development requires empowering the Algerian economy with strong self-sustaining capacity, which involves transitioning from a rent-based economy to a productive economy. This shift entails reducing excessive dependence on imports — particularly of essential goods like grains — by expanding investment in agriculture and promoting self-reliance, both materially and humanly (Ake, 1996, p. 125). Strengthening human capital, developing education and training systems, and building a strong synergy between education, society, and the economy are essential steps. Education should be directly linked to development, including mechanisms to utilize the expertise of skilled Algerian professionals abroad.

Development cannot be achieved without combating corruption, adopting transparency and accountability measures, and ensuring a genuine political will to enforce them. Respect for citizens' fundamental rights and rejection of repressive practices are vital. Furthermore, development requires the construction and empowerment of key institutions — notably parliaments, the judiciary, and good governance structures — that play an active rather than symbolic role in democratic and developmental processes. Education and culture also form critical pillars of development.

Democracy requires learning and active practice, offering equal opportunities for all groups and perspectives. It thrives when civil society is strong and independent, supported by press freedom and access to information.

Development, therefore, is a comprehensive and ongoing process that unites the efforts of citizens and the government to improve economic, social, and cultural conditions within local communities. It facilitates their integration into national life and maximizes their contribution to the progress of the nation (Mutawe, 2002, p. 10). It encompasses economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, aiming to achieve continuous improvement in the well-being of all individuals and the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms (Fayeq, 2000, p. 101).

True development requires a decentralized approach, transferring decision-making authority closer to local information sources. Decentralization fosters a sense of community belonging, social participation, and social responsibility (Borsodi, 1948, p. 719).

Development requires a democratic state capable of mobilizing material and human resources to lead economic and social transformation. Strategic political decisions must ensure regional balance and address social needs through targeted investments that enhance national productive

capacities. Emphasis on rural production systems is essential, as they underpin broader social and economic progress.

With a democratically elected political leadership capable of organizing economic activities and managing national resources in an efficient and socially balanced manner, it becomes possible to liberate human potential, particularly among marginalized groups (Karim, 2004, p. 58). Within an active and independent civil society, this fosters the spread of a culture of rights and responsibilities and the creation of spaces for political and economic freedoms.

2. Voluntary work as a social culture for restoring political trust and achieving political stability

a. The culture of volunteerism and the restoration of political trust and stability

The relationship between culture and underdevelopment, culture and dependency, and culture and reform all stem from a cultural condition that has lost its creative vitality. It has fallen into a crisis, searching in its past for justification of its existence rather than focusing on its present and future — particularly on developing its moral and practical standards to face challenges and break the vicious circle of underdevelopment. A *cultural revolution* represents the historical moment needed to redirect the course of history and break the patterns of dependency and stagnation. However, this revolution remains hindered by a historical consciousness that resists breaking free from the glorified past, now mythologized as a “future of salvation.” This mindset obstructs the forward-looking determination necessary to overcome weakness and stagnation — which requires first acknowledging the need to turn the page of history and begin creating the present and future of the Algerian people through modern science, advanced technology, and innovative political, economic, and social ideas.

At its core, *development* is a deliberate process of change based on a program adopted by the ruling elite and its cultural, academic, and bureaucratic extensions. Its success depends on how well it aligns with the cultural fabric of society — on whether it speaks to the ordinary individual in symbols and terms that resonate with his worldview (Nasr, 2002, p. 128). This makes it imperative for any development program to emerge from within the society’s own culture, with the goal of mobilizing the Algerian people, motivating them to accept and participate in change, and bear its costs. When society is not a partner in transformation, it resists shouldering its burdens. Thus, development should be viewed as a *comprehensive cultural discourse* directed at society to persuade it, reshape its convictions into perceptions and behaviors, and translate them into concrete social and economic actions (Nasr, 2002, p. 129) — through knowledge that rebuilds and reshapes the community.

Culture encompasses the collective consciousness of society — from its religious foundations to its values, norms, behaviors, and way of life (Nasr, 2002, p. 127). The behavior and attitudes of individuals are determined by this cultural framework. Algerian culture, therefore, represents the Algerian way of life in all its diverse expressions. Algeria can be described as a *quasi-democratic*

state: it possesses democratic institutions and electoral mechanisms but lacks the *spirit of democracy* (Nasr, 2002b, p. 431). This is evidenced by the persistent challenge of developing a political culture conducive to true democracy.

Political culture shapes the relationship between the political system and the individual — it manifests in the individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the regime, depending on how much participation the system allows. When the political system reflects the genuine will of the people — as expressed through transparent elections — a bond of *trust* forms between citizens and the state. Political culture refers to the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that provide meaning and order to political life, offering stable norms that guide individual behavior within the political system. Political stability in Algeria can only be achieved when both rulers and citizens internalize this political culture.

The level of change in Algeria's political culture depends largely on economic, social, and political transformations, as well as the elite's attention to cultural reform. The shift toward pluralism is relatively recent, and political practice is expected to cultivate a new political culture in which citizens understand their role and pressure the system toward genuine participation — moving beyond apathy. Political stability emerges when citizens can elect representatives who prioritize the public good over personal interest. Conversely, when the regime resists popular will — through corruption, lack of transparency, and rigged elections — and adopts policies of evasion and superficial reform, distrust deepens, and political stability is threatened.

In contrast, a *participatory political culture* empowers citizens with political awareness — understanding their rights and duties, believing in their capacity to influence politics, and acting as active participants rather than passive observers (Al-Mughairbi, 1998, p. 219).

To achieve this, there must be a *moral reorientation* in dealing with political culture — one that builds a *culture of consensus* as an alternative to a culture of conflict, which weakens national unity. Disagreement should be expressed through democratic competition and majority rule, with an emphasis on collective over individual interests, integrity, transparency, and accountability. Education plays a crucial role as the foundation of this transformation — it is the key to cultural change, political participation, and sustainable development, which together create a climate of cooperation and trust between the state and its citizens.

Numerous volunteer initiatives in Algeria reflect this spirit of solidarity and citizenship, acting as catalysts for national development. For instance, the “Green Algeria” project, launched by environmental activist Fouad Maâla, aims to reforest urban and rural areas across the country. The campaign promotes awareness about the ecological importance of trees and provides guidance on suitable planting methods. What began as a small idea quickly became a national youth movement, supported by nurseries providing saplings for volunteers.

Maâla, now head of the Green Algeria Association, created a Facebook page titled “A Tree in Front of Every House,” which attracted over a quarter of a million followers and became a digital hub for environmental action. Volunteers planted over 20,000 trees in one week, and the initiative has since spread nationwide. The government, recognizing its potential, declared October 25, 2025, as a national volunteer day for planting one million trees, mobilizing all necessary resources.

In addition, projects like the “Green Dam 2” — designed to combat desertification by planting 4.7 million hectares of trees across 13 provinces — provide jobs and promote ecological sustainability by involving local communities. The Sonatrach Corporation also launched a \$1 billion reforestation initiative to plant 420 million trees over 10 years, reducing its carbon footprint and fostering a circular green economy.

These examples, alongside numerous grassroots efforts — such as youth-led campaigns to clean cemeteries and public spaces — demonstrate the Algerian people’s growing willingness to engage in volunteerism. They embody a deep-seated desire to serve the nation, strengthen social bonds, and contribute to political trust and stability through active citizenship.

Such initiatives awaken the latent energies of society and transform individuals into active participants within their communities. By engaging in these kinds of activities, citizens combat passivity and social deviation, developing a sense of belonging and responsibility. The individual begins to see themselves as an integral part of society — not only as a beneficiary but also as a contributor to the developmental process. This, in turn, helps build a culture of *work* and *productivity* rather than one of *laziness* and *apathy* toward development efforts.

Development, at its essence, is a *cultural phenomenon*. The presence of a developmental culture is a necessary condition for genuine progress. A successful development model must reflect the active participation of the people — their aspiration to improve their own conditions — so that it simultaneously expresses their identity and advances their culture. The essence of culture lies in a society’s ability to understand its own needs and mobilize action in response to its circumstances and challenges. True development thus involves the management of economic surplus without depleting it, ensuring its redistribution in favor of poorer social groups (Fathallah, 1995, p. 38).

The spread of a *volunteer culture* and the emergence of such cultural phenomena require a strong, purposeful media capable of framing and amplifying these initiatives. The media should inspire the public, channel their energy into productive action, and encourage the creation of new, impactful community projects.

For example, the “Ithar Association” in El Oued Province launched a charitable endowment project to plant 7,000 palm trees, with the goal of sponsoring 1,000 orphans. This initiative not only provides sustainable income for orphan care but also creates local employment opportunities for young people. Similarly, the “Al-Anwar Association” in Khenchela Province distributed 10 sewing machines to underprivileged families, empowering them to produce and sell clothing, thereby improving their living standards. In Mila Province, the “Do Good” Association launched the “Chicken Hatchery Project” to support productive families by providing 35 hens and several roosters to each household — an initiative that significantly increases their monthly income and self-reliance.

Expanding such initiatives nationwide would strengthen the foundations of development and help transform Algeria from a *rent-based society* into a *productive society*. It would also shift the collective mindset from a culture of dependency and the pursuit of quick profit to one of *productive engagement* and *sustainable contribution* to the nation’s overall economic and social growth.

b. Coordinating efforts and setting priorities to achieve development and stability

At its core, *development* is a societal process aimed at bringing about comprehensive transformation within Algerian society by advancing multiple sectors simultaneously. It seeks to mobilize and activate society through the empowerment of civil institutions, which serve as the essential shield for achieving a sustainable development model. Bridging the gap between the state and society — and fostering reconciliation between state institutions and social forces — is therefore of paramount importance for realizing *independent and inclusive development*.

This can only occur through the *expansion of freedoms*, which play a central role in the development process for two main reasons. First, freedom serves as a measure of developmental performance: any progress achieved must be evaluated based on whether people's freedoms have been strengthened and expanded. Second, freedom enhances the efficiency of developmental performance, as true progress can only be achieved through the active and voluntary participation of citizens, not by treating them as passive recipients of development outcomes.

Such participation helps ensure better coordination and understanding of local needs through *bottom-up communication*. Neighborhood committees, for example, could convey their priorities and ideas to local authorities, which would then aggregate these regional needs and report them to the national level. This participatory model prevents the imposition of uniform policies across all regions and allows for the identification of development priorities specific to each geographical area — north, south, east, or west.

Many of the inefficiencies observed in Algeria's development projects result from a lack of coordination. For instance, constructing housing complexes on agricultural land has contributed to urban sprawl at the expense of farmland. Similarly, road paving projects are sometimes followed by digging for water or sewage pipelines, leading to a waste of resources and duplication of effort. Greater involvement of local communities in decision-making could prevent such inconsistencies and ensure more coherent and cost-effective development.

Engaging the stakeholders of development also facilitates coordination and priority-setting, since freedom includes the capacity to make decisions and access real, equal opportunities. Expanding people's capabilities to lead lives they value — through access to education, knowledge, and political participation — enables them to choose their leaders, monitor authority, and hold officials accountable. Moreover, the just and equitable distribution of income and wealth fosters *satisfaction* and *active participation*, while inequality leads to alienation and political disengagement.

By encouraging participation and ensuring fairness, societies can strengthen trust, reduce corruption, and promote fiscal responsibility. Any viable development strategy must therefore draw its legitimacy and strength from *popular participation*. Development cannot thrive in an atmosphere of repression or in the absence of the *rule of law*, which provides the fundamental framework for exercising power — through legitimate authority, accountability, and transparency.

To complement this, a value-based transformation is essential. Building a *culture of consensus* as an alternative to a *culture of conflict* is crucial for reinforcing national unity. Disagreements should be resolved through democratic competition and majority rule, emphasizing collective over

individual interests. At the same time, the principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability must guide all forms of work.

Finally, education should be regarded as a *core cultural value* — the primary tool for achieving the cultural transformation necessary for development and political participation. These two pillars, when grounded in mutual trust and cooperation between the state and citizens, serve as the foundation for enduring *political stability* and *sustainable national progress*.

Conclusion

In light of the above discussion, it becomes clear that achieving development and political stability in Algeria cannot be realized solely through economic programs or institutional reforms, but rather through the revival of cultural awareness and the promotion of voluntary work as a societal value that strengthens cohesion and reinforces national belonging. Volunteering represents a practical embodiment of citizenship and shared responsibility, serving as a key mechanism to restore trust between the state and society and to overcome the prevailing culture of dependency and passivity.

Furthermore, voluntary initiatives have proven capable of mobilizing the creative and productive potential of individuals, transforming them from mere recipients of development policies into active participants in shaping and implementing them. These initiatives, when coordinated effectively and guided by clear priorities, can lay the foundation for a productive rather than rentier society, where development stems from within the community itself.

Therefore, building a genuine culture of volunteerism requires an integrated framework involving education, media, civil society, and state institutions — a framework grounded in transparency, accountability, and democratic participation. Only through this synergy can Algeria achieve a sustainable model of development based on justice, participation, and trust.

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