PRESSURE GROUPS

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1. What is a Pressure Group?

A pressure group is an organized group of people that aims to influence public opinion or policies/actions of government. It includes churches and charities, businesses and trade associations, trade unions and professional associations, think tanks of various complexions etc.

Purpose of a Pressure Group

Although some pressure groups were set up for the specific purpose of influencing government, many pressure groups exist for other purposes and only engage in politics as a secondary or associated activity. As pressure groups exert influence on government from outside, they do not therefore put candidates up for election. In that sense, they are part of civil society. These groups use various methods to achieve their aims including lobbying, research campaigns, media campaigns, policy briefs and polls.

Pressure groups can therefore act as a channel of communication between the people and government.

Pressure groups are defined by the following key features:

- **External to the Govt.**: Pressure groups do not make policy decisions, but rather try to influence those who do (the policy-makers). In that sense, they are ‘external’ to government.
- **Narrow Domain**: They typically have a narrow issue focus. In some cases, they may focus on a single issue (for instance opposing a planned road development).
- **Shared beliefs or interests**: Their members are united by either a shared belief in a particular cause or a common set of interests. People with different ideological and party preferences may thus work happily together as members of the same pressure group.
- **Protection of interests**: Each pressure group organizes itself keeping in view certain interests and thus tries to adopt the structure of power in the political systems. In every government and political party there are clashing interest groups. These groups try to dominate the political structure and to see that groups whose interests clash with theirs are suppressed.
- **Use of modern as well as traditional means**: They try to follow modern means of exerting pressure, without fully giving up the traditional or old ways of operation. They adopt techniques like financing of political parties, sponsoring their close candidates at the time of elections and maintaining relations with the bureaucracy. Their traditional means include exploitation of caste, creed and religious feelings to promote their interests.

2. Types of Pressure Groups

There are various ways to classify pressure groups on the basis of their structure and organization such as-

i. **Interest Groups and Cause Groups**

ii. **Insider and outsider groups**

i. **Interest and Cause Groups**

The interest/cause classification is based on the purpose of the group in question. It therefore reflects the nature of the group’s goals, the kind of people who belong to it, and their motivation for joining.

**Interest groups** (sometimes called ‘sectional’, ‘protective’ or ‘functional’ groups) are groups that represent a particular section of society: workers, employers, consumers, an ethnic or religious group, and so on.
Interest groups have the following features:

- They are concerned to protect or advance the interests of their members.
- Membership is limited to people in a particular occupation, career or economic position.
- Members are motivated by material self-interest.

Trade unions, business corporations, trade associations and professional bodies are the prime examples of this type of group. They are called ‘sectional groups’ because they represent a particular section of the population. Some of the examples of interest groups are FICCI, CII, AITUC etc.

While sometimes, the terms interest groups and pressure groups are used interchangeably, there are following differences between the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest Group</th>
<th>Pressure Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formally organized</td>
<td>Strictly Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-oriented</td>
<td>Pressure-focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May or may not influence the policies of the government</td>
<td>Must influence the policies of government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softer in outlook</td>
<td>Harsher in attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More or less protective</td>
<td>Protective and Promotive</td>
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Interest groups can be classified into four categories:

i) **Institutional Interest Groups**: These groups are formally organised which consist of professionally employed persons. They are a part of government machinery and try to exert their influence. But they do have much autonomy. These groups include political parties, legislatures, armies, bureaucracies, churches etc. An example of institutional group can be the West Bengal Civil Services Association. Whenever such an association raises protest it does so by constitutional means and in accordance with the rules and regulations.

ii) **Associational Interest Groups**: These are organised specialised groups formed for interest articulation, but to pursue limited goals. These include trade unions, organisations of businessmen and industrialists and civic groups. Some examples of Associational Interest Groups in India are Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Indian Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions such as AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress), Teachers Associations, Students Associations such as National Students Union of India (NSUI) etc.

iii) **Anomic Interest Groups**: These are the groups that have analogy with individual self-representation. In such type of groups, perpetual infiltrations such as riots, demonstrations are observed. These groups are found in the shape of movement demonstrations and processions, signature campaigns, street corner meetings, etc. Their activities may either be constitutional or unconstitutional.

iv) **Non-Associational Interest Groups**: These are the kinship and lineage groups and ethnic, regional, status and class groups that articulate interests on the basis of individuals, family and religious heads. These groups have informal structure. These include caste groups, language groups, etc.
**Cause groups** (sometimes called ‘promotional’, ‘attitude’ or ‘issue’ groups) are groups that are based on shared attitudes or values, rather than the common interests of its members. The causes they seek to advance are many and various. They range from charity activities, poverty reduction, education and the environment, to human rights, transparency in governance etc.

Cause groups have the following features:

- They seek to advance particular ideals or principles.
- Membership is open to all.
- Members are motivated by moral or altruistic concerns (the betterment of others).

Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) can be cited as a prime example of a cause group as it seeks to promote transparency in governance, for example, by creating pressure for the introduction of right to information to citizens. Other examples could be PETA, India against Corruption etc.

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**ii. Insiders and Outsiders**

The insider/outsider distinction is based on a group’s relationship to government. It therefore affects both the strategies adopted by a group and its status i.e. whether or not it is considered ‘legitimate’ or ‘established’.

**Insider groups** are groups that are consulted on a regular basis by government. They operate ‘inside’ the decision-making process. They may also sit on government policy committees and agencies and have links to parliamentary select committees. Therefore, the insider pressure groups have a better chance of creating an impact on how the policy shapes up, as they are consulted at various stages of policy formulation. Some of the examples of insider groups are National Advisory Council, CII etc.

**Outsider groups**, on the other hand, are the ones that are not so closely involved with the decision makers and who find it harder to get their voices heard in the higher echelons of policy making. They are kept, or choose to remain, at arm’s length from government. They therefore try to exert influence indirectly via the *mass media* or through public opinion campaigns. One of the examples of an outsider group is the **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** which has been pushing for reforms in the way representatives are elected by the citizens of India.

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But at times many groups employ both insider and outsider tactics. This certainly applies in the
case of high-profile insider groups, which recognize that the ability to mount public-opinion and media campaigns strengthens their hands when it comes to bargaining with government.

3. Roles/Functions of Pressure Groups

Pressure groups carry out a range of functions including:

**Representation**

Pressure groups provide a mouthpiece for groups and interests that are not adequately represented through the electoral process or by political parties. This occurs, in part, because groups are concerned with the specific rather than the general. In other words, while the political parties attempt to broaden their appeal in order to attract all voters, the pressure groups articulate the views or interests of particular groups and focus on specific causes. It has even been argued that pressure groups provide an alternative to the formal representative process through what has been called *functional representation*.

*However*, questions have also been raised about the capacity of pressure groups to carry out representation:

- Pressure groups have a low level of internal democracy, creating the possibility that they express the views of their leaders and not their members.
- The influence of pressure groups on government does not always reflect their membership size or their popular support.

**Political Participation**

Pressure groups have become an increasingly important agent of political participation. In UK, 40–50 per cent citizens belong to at least one voluntary association, and a large minority (20 per cent) belong to two or more. Moreover, a range of pressure groups, mainly outsider groups, seek to exert influence precisely by mobilizing popular support through activities such as *petitions, marches, demonstrations* and other forms of political protest. Such forms of political participation have been particularly attractive to young people.

**Education**

Much of what the public knows about politics is through pressure groups of one kind or another. Many pressure groups operate largely through their ability to communicate with the public and raise political consciousness. Groups, therefore, often devote significant resources to carry out research, maintaining websites, commenting on government policy and using high-profile academics, scientists and even celebrities to get their views across. An emphasis is therefore placed on cultivating *expert authority*.

**Policy Formulation**

Although pressure groups, by definition, are not policy-makers, this does not prevent them from participating in the policy-making process. The pressure groups are a vital source of information and advice to the governments. Many groups are therefore regularly consulted in the process of policy formulation, with government policy increasingly being developed through *policy networks*. An example of such group is *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, which works on policy issues primarily related to foreign affairs.
Policy Implementation

The role of some pressure groups extends beyond trying to shape the content of public policy to playing a role in putting the policy into practice. Not only do such links further blur the distinction between groups and government, but they also give the groups in question clear leverage when it comes to influencing the content of policy.

However, questions have also been raised about the role of groups in implementing policy. Some have criticized such groups for being very close to government and thereby endangering their independence. Others have argued that policy implementation gives groups unfair political leverage in influencing policy decisions.

4. Pressure Groups and Political Parties

Pressure groups and political parties greatly resemble each other. Both of them are channels through which public can communicate with the government. Prima facie, both of them carry out representation, facilitate political participation and contribute to the policy process. However, in reality, groups and parties are very different from each other.

Conventionally, political parties are the bodies which are regarded as providing the way through which people’s interests are represented in the political system. They also function as a means of political communication, since individuals can express their own views to politicians by becoming members of political parties and can represent their party’s viewpoint to others in the community.

On the other hand, pressure groups can be seen as providing an additional form of representation within the political system and an additional channel of political communication. Some of the differences between Political parties and the pressure groups have been mentioned below:

There are several reasons why political parties are often confused with the pressure groups such as-

- Many small political parties resemble pressure groups in that sometimes they may have a narrow issue focus. For example, the British National Party (BNP) is primarily concerned with issues of race and immigration. The Green Party, despite developing wide-ranging manifestos, places greatest emphasis on environmental issues such as pollution, economic sustainability and climate change.

- Some pressure groups use elections as a tactical weapon. Any group that puts candidates up for election is technically a party, not a pressure group. But some pressure groups use
elections as a means of gaining publicity and attracting media attention, with little or no expectation of winning the election.

The relationship between the pressure groups and political parties is an interesting one. A pressure group with a close relationship to a political party may work to its advantage. But this can be harmful at times, especially when the opposing party comes to power, as the pressure group’s influence on policy formulation is bound to decrease. National Students Union of India (NSUI) provides future leadership to the Congress while the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthis Parishad (ABVP) does so for the Bharatiya Janata Party. While some pressure groups are linked to particular political parties, there are many which have no linkages to any political party.

5. How Pressure Groups Exert Influence?

The choice of targets and methods used by the pressure groups depends on two factors.

First, how effective is a particular strategy likely to be?

Second, given the group’s aims and resources, which strategies are available?

Pressure groups can exert influence through a variety of ways, such as:

Ministers and Civil Servants

Ministers and civil servants work at the heart of the ‘core executive’, the network of bodies headed by the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which develop the government policy. This is where power lies. Many groups therefore aspire to get in touch with senior civil servants and ministers to get some sort of influence over the policies while they are being implemented.

Although such influence may involve formal and informal meetings with ministers, routine behind-the-scenes meetings with civil servants and membership of policy committees may be the most important way of exerting influence.

Parliament

Groups that cannot gain access to the executive may look to exert influence through Parliament. In some cases, groups may use parliamentary lobbying to supplement contacts with ministers and civil servants. Although less can be achieved by influencing Parliament than by influencing the executive, changes can nevertheless be made to the details of legislation or the profile of a political issue. This can happen through influence on, for instance, private members' bills, parliamentary questions (written and oral) and select committee enquiries.

Political Parties

The most obvious way in which groups influence parties is through funding and donations. Influencing party policy can lead to influence on government policy.

Public Opinion

These strategies are adopted by outsider groups, although high-profile insider groups may also engage in public-opinion campaigning. The purpose of such strategies is to influence
government *indirectly* by pushing issues up the political agenda and demonstrating both the strength of commitment and the level of public support for a particular cause. The hope is that government will pay attention for fear of suffering electoral consequences. **Association for Democratic Reforms** has helped in shaping public opinion to some extent by putting up details of political representatives of various political parties from each constituency on www.myneta.info.

**Direct Action**

Direct action as a political strategy overlaps with some forms of public-opinion campaigning. However, whereas most political protests take place within the constitutional and legal framework based on established rights of freedom of speech, assembly and movement, direct action aims to cause disruption or inconvenience. **Strikes, blockades, boycotts and sit-ins** are all examples of direct action. Direct action may be violent or non-violent. A non-violent example of direct action is the protests organized at Ramleela Maidan by **India Against Corruption (IAC)**.

### 6. Pressure Groups and Lobbying

People often confuse pressure groups with lobbying but both of them are not one and the same thing. Lobbying takes place when a few members of the pressure groups loiter in the lobbies of legislatures/public offices with a view to securing an opportunity to interact with them and to influence their decision. Lobbyists are representatives of particular interest groups. Lobbying is a communication process used for persuasion, it cannot be treated as an organization. Lobbying is different from pressure groups in a sense that pressure groups are organized groups and lobbying is just one of the functions performed by them.

**Global Experience with Lobbying**

Many countries see lobbying as an integral part of democratic functioning that allows individuals and groups to legitimately influence decisions that affect them. No country in the world, including India, has banned lobbying. In fact, a few countries even regulate the activity, prominent among these are USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and Taiwan. These countries treat lobbying as a legitimate right of citizens. Regulations serve as a tool to enhance transparency in the policymaking process rather than restricting access to policymakers. In fact, that is one of the key reasons why the UK regulates the lobbied rather than lobbying. The effectiveness of the law largely depends on how it defines lobbying and lobbyists. In USA, lobbying is regulated under the Lobbying Disclosure Act, 1995. This Act requires lobbyists to register and report lobbying fees above a certain amount. It also requires companies to report all the lobbying expenditure along with the list of issues, lobbyists involved and the public officials and offices contacted.

**Lobbying in India**
In India, where there is no law regulating the process, lobbying had traditionally been a tool for industry bodies and other pressure groups to engage with the government ahead of the national budget. For decades, organisations such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), among others, have worked hard on behalf of their members to influence key ministries and policies. In recent years, the need for this continuous engagement has increased and so has the sophistication.

**Why Lobbying is equated with corruption in India?**

Lobbying is arguably one of the most controversial activities in modern democracies. Lobbyists provide governments with valuable policy-related information and expertise but if the activity is not transparent, *public interest may be put at risk in favour of specific interests*. It is easy to equate lobbying, which is an attempt to influence policy through legal and ethical means, with corruption in India because a large chunk of the population believes that almost every dealing with the government requires bribes to be paid to officials. Lobbying is a dirty word in India, one reason being that lobbying activities were repeatedly identified in the context of corruption cases. *For example*, in 2010, leaked audio transcripts of conversations of an influential Indian lobbyist, Nira Radia, revealed suspicious dealings between the government and several business groups, reinforcing public perceptions about lobbying.

In reality, lobbying is not corruption; at least not the western model that is increasingly gaining traction in India, as an open economy pulls in new rules of engagement from developed economies. Given that most foreign companies have to follow strict anti-corruption laws in their own countries, few are keen to come under the lens of their regulators, lose face and pay fines. The Indian government itself spends millions of dollars every year to influence the U.S. government and other interest groups there. *Few examples* include:

- Ranbaxy paid $90,000 to Patton Boggs to preserve access to affordable generics.
- Wipro, like many Indian software firms, lobbied in the U.S for favourable visa policies.
- Not only private companies but even Indian government has been paying a fee every year since 2005 to a U.S firm to lobby for the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal. As reported by the Daily Mail in November 2012, Washington-based Barbour Griffith & Rogers (BGR), hired by the Indian embassy, also used to seek media interviews for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and get Congressional resolutions passed in his support ahead of a US visit.

While lobbying is not a new phenomenon in India, it is *largely unregulated*. There are no laws that defined the scope of lobbying, who could undertake it, or the extent of disclosure necessary. Companies are not mandated to disclose their activities and lobbyists are neither authorized nor encouraged to reveal the names of clients or public officials they have contacted. The distinction between lobbying and bribery still remains unclear.

**A private member’s Bill to regulate lobbying, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities Bill, 2013,** was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo, which defined the term as “an act of communication with and payment to a public servant with the aim of influencing” legislation or securing a government contract. The Bill required lobbyists to register with an authority and declare certain information.

It is not lobbying that is the problem, but the lack of transparency, lack of comprehensive regulations and lack of mechanisms to monitor the activities of the powerful that is at the root of the problem. Right to Information Act (RTI) is a good step in this direction. But until comprehensive levels of transparency are achieved, legalising lobbying would mean no good. Also, regulations need to evolve and be documented in an iterative manner before embarking upon such a move. India needs to determine a regulatory model that suits its socio-political needs. Furthermore, it should tread a fine line while drafting the disclosure requirements. Very high disclosure requirements could drive lobbyists underground while very low penalties may not act as sufficient deterrent for law-breakers.
Controversy regarding Walmart Lobbying

In 2012, as part of a routine disclosure under U.S. law, Walmart revealed it had spent $25 million since 2008 on lobbying to "enhance market access for investment in India." This disclosure, which came weeks after the Indian government made a controversial decision to permit FDI in the country's multi-brand retail sector, created uproar in India. Groups protesting against FDI in multi-brand retail used Walmart's disclosure to advocate their case. The US retailer's lobbying had drawn sharp criticism from the opposition parties, forcing the Indian government to order an inquiry by a former Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court Mukul Mudgal but the report of the panel remained inconclusive due to alleged non-cooperation by Walmart.

Views in favour of Lobbying

- Proponents of lobbying feel that it is inherent in any democracy to convince a policy maker of a particular position.
- Industry chambers such as FICCI and ASSOCHAM feel that business groups should be entitled to voice their concerns related to a particular policy matter with the government if they feel their interests may be jeopardised.
- It is argued that making lobbying and advocacy legal would lead to a clean way of approaching the policymakers and lawmakers if they have any legitimate and genuine interests.

Views against Lobbying

- Critics argue that corporates or people with mighty socioeconomic power, by themselves or through their industry bodies, corrupt the laws to serve a self-serving agenda by bending or deflecting them away from general fairness to majority of the population.
- It would also be against the right to equality guaranteed to citizens of the country, as businessmen with extensive money power can indulge in lobbying and get things done. While common man has to wait for hours or days to meet his MP/MLA. Thus, those with (financial) resources will win and those without cash will lose.

7. Are Pressure Groups Becoming More Powerful?

Not all debates about pressure-group power focus on the power of individual groups. Others address the overall power of groups, and whether or not they have generally become more powerful. Commentators increasingly argue, for instance, that pressure groups have become more influential in recent years, perhaps even more influential than political parties.

The rise of pressure-group power

Those who argue that pressure groups have become more powerful usually draw attention to one of three developments:

1. The growth of cause groups - Looked at simply in terms of political participation, groups certainly appear to be becoming more important. This is best demonstrated by the growth of cause groups in particular. Some of the reasons cited for increase in the number of pressure groups are:
i. Increased leisure time, both in terms of the shorter working week and more early retirement, has increased the number of people with time to devote to such activities.

ii. Higher educational standards have increased the numbers of people with the organisational skills to contribute to pressure groups.

iii. Changes in gender roles have removed many of the barriers to participation by women in pressure group activity.

iv. Membership of political parties has declined. It has been argued that this reflects the failure of the political parties adequately to reflect the needs of different groups of people in society, and that cause groups offer a more promising route for bringing about political change.

2. The widening of access points through devolution – A variety of pressure groups have benefited from the fact that new pressure points have emerged in politics, such as:

   I. Devolution has allowed pressure groups to exert influence through the local/grassroots level, especially after the 73rd/74th Constitutional Amendment Act.

   II. The passage of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, has substantially increased pressure-group activity focused on the courts. This has especially benefited groups that represent the interests of religious or ethnic minorities, and groups that have an interest in civil liberties issues (such as Liberty).

   III. Similarly, the Right to Information Act, 2005 has also enabled more pressure groups to grow stronger and ask tough questions to those in power.

3. Globalization - Globalization has strengthened pressure groups in a number of ways. In particular, there is general agreement that business groups have become more powerful in a global age. This is because they are easily able to relocate production and investment, so exerting greater leverage on national governments. Such trends have strengthened pressures on governments, for instance, to cut business taxes and reduce corporate regulation.

   Another feature of globalization has been the emergence of NGOs, such as the World Development Movement and the World Social Forum, as major actors on the global stage. Some 2,400 NGOs, for example, took part in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The decline of pressure groups

However, not everyone believes that pressure groups have become more important. Some even talk in terms of the decline in pressure-group power in recent years. Such arguments are usually based on one of two developments:

1. The end of corporatism. For some, the high point of pressure-group influence came in the 1970s, especially in the case of developed countries. This was a period of so-called tripartite government or corporatism. Economic policy was therefore developed through a process of routine consultation and group bargaining. However, corporatism was dismantled in the 1980s and it has never been re-established.

   'Corporatism' refers to the close relationship between the government and economic interest groups (trade unions and employers' organisations) in decision making on economic matters.

2. A decline in meaningful and active participation. An alternative explanation of the decline of pressure groups challenges the idea that recent years have witnessed an upsurge in group activity. This suggests that while group membership may have increased, these members have become increasingly passive.

8. Pressure Groups and Democracy

8.1. How Pressure Groups promote Democracy?

Pressure groups promote democracy in a number of ways, such as:
Supplement electoral democracy

Pluralists often highlight the advantages of group representation over representation through elections and political parties. Pressure groups may either supplement electoral democracy (making up for its defects and limitations) or they may replace political parties as the main way in which people express their views and interests:

- **Pressure groups keep government in touch with public opinion in-between elections.** One of the weaknesses of elections is that they only take place every few years. By contrast, pressure groups force the government to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the people, in which the interests or views of the various sections of society cannot be ignored.
  - *IAC’s anti-corruption movement* was one such example where the pressure groups made the government aware of rising sentiment in general public against corruption in public life.
- **Pressure groups give a political voice to minority groups** and articulate concerns that are overlooked by political parties. Elections, at best, determine the general direction of government policy, with parties being anxious to develop policies that appeal to the mass of voters. Pressure groups are therefore often more effective in articulating concerns about issues such as the environment, civil liberties, global poverty, violence against women and the plight of the elderly.
  - Women’s organizations such as *SEWA, NCW* have campaigned for women-friendly laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
  - In the North-Eastern State of Manipur, many groups including ‘Just Peace’, Apunba Lup (students’ organization) and Meira Paibis (women’s groups) are trying to influence the government to listen to people’s genuine grievances. Together, these groups are associated with Irom Sharmila, a civil rights activist known as ‘the Iron Lady of Manipur’ who has been on a hunger strike since November 2000.

Widen political participation

The level of political participation is an important indicator of the health of democracy. Democracy, at heart, means government by the people. Pressure groups have become increasingly effective agents of political participation. Not only has single-issue politics proved to be popular but the grass roots activism and decentralized organization of many campaigning groups have proved to be attractive to many young people and those who may be disillusioned with conventional politics.

Ensure competition and debate

Pressure groups help to promote democracy by widening the distribution of political power. They do this, in part, because these pressure groups compete against one another. This ensures that no group or interest can remain dominant permanently.

Promote education

Pressure groups promote political debates, discussions and arguments. In so doing, they create a better-informed and more educated electorate. This, in turn, helps to improve the quality of
8.2. How pressure groups threaten democracy?

Some political scientists and politicians have taken the view that pressure groups are non-democratic, or even anti-democratic, in the sense that they intervene in the political process, which is based on electoral accountability. A 2014 Intelligence Bureau report had also highlighted that foreign-funded NGOs were “negatively impacting economic development” in India. The ways in which the pressure groups threaten democracy are listed below:

**Increase political inequality**

A central argument against the pluralist image of group politics is that, far from dispersing power more widely and empowering ordinary citizens, pressure groups tend to empower the already powerful. They therefore increase, rather than reduce, political inequality. Pluralists argue that political inequality is broadly democratic, in that the most successful groups tend to be ones with large membership, and which enjoy wide and possibly intense public support. This is very difficult to sustain. In practice, the most powerful pressure groups tend to be the ones that possess money, expertise, institutional leverage and privileged links to government.

**Exert ‘behind the scenes’ influence**

Regardless of which groups are most powerful, pressure-group influence is exerted in a way that is not subject to scrutiny and public accountability. Pressure groups usually exert influence ‘behind closed doors’. This particularly applies in the case of insider groups, whose representatives stalk the ‘corridors of power’ unseen by the public and away from media scrutiny. No one knows (apart from occasional leaks) who said what to whom, or who influenced whom, and how.

Not only does this contrast sharply with the workings of representative bodies such as Parliament, but it also undermines parliamentary democracy. Insider links between groups and the executive bypass Parliament, rendering elected MPs impotent as policy is increasingly made through deals between government and influential groups that the Parliament does not get to discuss.

**Exercise non-legitimate power**

Critics have questioned whether pressure groups exercise rightful or legitimate power in any circumstances. This is because, unlike conventional politicians, pressure-group leaders have not been elected. Pressure groups are therefore not publicly accountable, meaning that the influence they exert is not democratically legitimate.

This problem is compounded by the fact that very few pressure groups operate on the basis of internal democracy. Leaders are very rarely elected by their members, and when they are (as in the case of trade unions) this is often on the basis of very low turnouts. Indeed, there has been a growing trend for pressure groups to be dominated by a small number of senior professionals. Some pressure-group leaders may, in fact, be little more than self-appointed political spokespeople.
Lead to the tyranny of the minority

Pressure groups, by their very nature, represent minorities rather than majorities. For pluralists, of course, this is one of their strengths. Pressure groups help to prevent a ‘tyranny of the majority’ that is, perhaps, one of the inevitable features of electoral democracy. However, pressure groups may create the opposite problem. Minority views or ‘special’ interests may prevail at the expense of the interests of the majority or the larger public.

9. Pressure Groups in India

9.1. Nature of Pressure Groups in India

The different types of pressure groups found in India are business groups, trade unions, peasant groups, student groups, teachers’ association, caste and religious associations, women’s associations, etc.

Business Groups

- The Business Groups are the most important and organised pressure groups in India. They are also most effective. They are independent of the political parties that exist and they have enough resources with which they can safeguard their interests. Business associations have existed in India even before Independence.
- The important business groups include the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Associated Chamber of Commerce. They exert varied kinds of pressures, they try to influence planning, licensing bodies and economic ministries.
- The businesspersons are usually present in different legislatures at the Central as well as State level. Every Ministry of the Government of India has some kind of consultative committee and business groups are represented there. During pre-budget meetings the Finance Ministry interacts with the groups, to secure suitable inputs which helps in budget formulation.

Trade Unions

- The trade unions in India have been present since even before the Independence such as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), which was established in 1920 and the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) established in 1947. The emergence of the communist movement also played an important role in the growth of trade unions in India.
- Trade Unions in India are closely affiliated with the political parties; many national political parties have got their own federations of trade unions. In fact, very little amount of independence from political parties exists in trade unions. They seem to have been able to exert significant pressure at the policy formulation level and their strength is well recognised by political parties and government.
- The trade unions when required can be very vocal and militant in their actions to meet their demands. They work through the weapon of strike and have been able to achieve monetary gains in terms of wage increase, bonus, change in wage structure, etc. These types of pressure groups have been able to encourage class consciousness and class solidarity among the workers.
- India has witnessed the trade unions resorting to demonstrations, during the disinvestment by the government in public sector undertakings over the past few years. Despite certain institutional limitations, such as, ideological differences, internal splits, external pressures, lack of international backing, the trade unions exert significant pressure at various levels of policy formulation.

Peasant Organisations

- The rise of peasants groups in India has been mainly due to factors such as abolition of Zamindari System and other land reform measures, implementation of Panchayati Raj, and
Green Revolution Movement. They gained huge power since 1960s. Although, the peasant organisations such as the All India Kisan Sabha (1936) have been existing since pre-independence.

• Different parties have got their own peasant organisations. **Like the trade unions, there is no peasant organisation, which may be independent of party control**, though at the state level, their organisations are non-political, independent of the political parties and homogenous.

• Even though there are some important All India Kisan Associations like All India Kisan Congress, All India Kisan Kamgar Sammelan, Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, peasant groups have been **mainly organised on territorial basis rather than on all-India basis**. Their **demands** relate to procurement prices of agricultural products, fertiliser subsidy, tenancy rights, electricity charges, etc.

• The Bharatiya Kisan Party (BKP) in Western U.P. is considered the most significant pressure group. The **interplay of language, caste factor, weak financial positions, etc.** have been greatly responsible for lack of emergence of multiple national level peasants’ pressure groups.

**Student Organisations**

• The student organisations in India have acted as pressure groups both prior to Independence and after Independence. Some **pre-independence student organisations** were the All Bengal Students Association formed in 1928 and All India Students Federation (AISF) in 1936.

• **After Independence** the political parties continue to be affiliated with student organisations.
  o The All India Students Congress and later on the National Students Union of India (NSUI) is affiliated to the Congress Party.
  o The All India Students Federation and Students Federation of India (SFI) is associated with the Communist Party of India.
  o The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) etc. is affiliated to BJP.

• Their activities are not just confined to educational issues. They try to pressurise governmental policy on various crucial issues such as fees, hostel facilities, curriculum etc.

**Community Associations**

• There are various community associations in India. These community groups are organised on the basis of caste, class and religion.
  o Some examples of **caste organisations** are Scheduled Caste Federation, Backward Caste Federation, etc.

• Amongst other organisations there are some like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Northern and Southern India Christian Conference, etc. which represent interests that are supposed to **safeguard their respective religions**.

**Civil Society Organizations**

• India has a very **large number of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)** i.e. organizations established by citizens of the country, to pursue certain interests. Many of these organizations act as pressure groups on the government, to promote implementation of policies in their areas of concerns.

• These organizations are **run by ordinary persons** who feel strongly committed to certain issues. Many ordinary persons come together informally or formally to share their feelings about different issues and prevailing social injustice. People take up issues of gender discrimination, child labour, street children and so on, and contribute through individual and collective action. Such organizations are able to mobilize public opinion because these issues are relevant to many people in society.

• Some of the **Civil Society Organizations** include Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS,
Rajasthan), People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), National Alliance of People’s Movements (NAPM), National Alliance of Women’s Organizations (NAWO), Medico Friends Circle (MFC), and many others.

- Such organizations put pressure on the government for changing policies on many important issues such as corruption, human rights, livelihood of different people, environmental protection, women empowerment, educational and health issues. All these organizations involve a large number of people who struggle to bring about changes in State policies. Many of the organizations and groups believe in following non-violent methods.

9.2. Methods of Operation of Pressure Groups in India

The pressure groups adopt different methods to achieve their goals. These methods range from cordial rapport with the political party in power, to resorting to agitational methods.

The pressure groups finance the political parties during the election time and sometimes even during the non-election times. They control the parties through this funding mechanism. Once the parties receive financial support, they cannot oppose these groups and their interests. On the other hand, they have to promote their interests.

The pressure groups also maintain close rapport with the State apparatus, viz., the bureaucratic machinery. The organised pressure groups maintain a relationship with the key bureaucrats. The liaison officers are appointed to take care of the bureaucrats, particularly when they are stubborn. The lobbyists, middlemen, etc. have acquired enough of skills to manage them. This has also given rise to favouritism, corruption and other maladies in bureaucracy.

While one cannot find anything seriously wrong with the pressure groups, it is the methods of operation which have become controversial. Although all the pressure groups use identical methods, there are some groups which are far more effective than the others.

The capacity of a pressure group is determined by following factors:

**Leadership**

- Leadership is one of the essential components of pressure groups, as it has the prime responsibility to protect the interests of the group. The leadership should regularly communicate to the political parties, policy-making agencies and the public. The support of all these three forces is essential.
- The leadership should be able to establish credibility and be able to carry public opinion. The leadership should, therefore, capable of communicating the viewpoint of their group orally, in writing and through dialogue. In short, the success of leadership lies in universalising the particular interest.

**Mass Media**

In India, the mass media is gaining increasing importance. The newspapers are by and large owned by the major industrial houses. Now, the regional newspapers are also becoming influential. The print as well as the television in present time, through their skills of communication, create powerful public images and
through continuous debate and propaganda influence the public opinion. The political parties and policy-making agencies are sometimes kept on tenterhooks by the media.

- For example, in the post-Independent India one issue on which government had to retreat is the issue of freedom of press. Whenever the bills were introduced either in the state legislatures or Parliament, they had to be withdrawn. Enough public pressure could be built on this issue. Therefore, this is a major weapon in the hands of the industrial houses or private sector to influence the policy-making process.

Organisational Abilities

There is a need for an extensive organisational network for building capacity of pressure groups, especially in a country like India with its size and magnitude. These organisations are needed for two reasons:

- To associate the various facets of the pressure groups and consolidate them.
- In a highly diversified society, communication should take place at multiple points so that rapport with different agencies at different levels is maintained.

The size and organisational strength can always play a significant role in terms of the response of political system to the demands that the pressure group puts forward.

Economic Power Base

The influence a pressure group commands is proportionate to its economic strength. From financing the elections and party funds to carrying propaganda, the economic power of the group plays an important role. Due to their economic might, the industrial and trading houses in India have been far more influential and powerful than the farmer’s associations, despite farmers being spread all over the country. It is clear that without adequate economic resources, the pressure groups cannot exert enough and sustained pressure.

Mobilization Techniques

Effectiveness of the pressure groups also depends on their capacity to mobilize the people. The pressure groups not only create public opinion but sometimes draw the general masses into agitational and protest politics.

- For example, if they want to set an industry in a particular area, they create the necessary climate and make the people of the area demand for the industry. If they want infrastructure facilities, they pressurise the government through its network at first and through public demand and an agitation, later, if necessary. This is how a major irrigation dam can also be demanded and realised.

In a society where the majority is semi-literate and semiconscious, private interests can always be converted into public interests.

10. Limitations of Pressure Groups

- **Focus of the pressure groups:** In India, organised groups largely influence the administrative process rather than the formulation of policy. This is dangerous as a gap is created between policy formulation and implementation.

- **Issues raised by pressure groups:** Many a time issues dominated by caste and religion eclipse those related to socio-economic interests. The result is that instead of serving a useful purpose in the political administrative process, they are reduced to work for narrow selfish interests.

- **Lack of resources:** Many of the groups have a very short life because of the lack of resources. This explains the reason for the mushroom growth of pressure groups as well as
their withering away as it becomes difficult to sustain the interest of the persons, initially attracted to form these pressure groups.

- **Serving political interests**: In a country like India, the tendency to politicise every issue, whether it has social, economic, cultural import, restricts the scope, working, and effectiveness of pressure groups. Instead of exerting influence on political process, the pressure groups become tools and implements to subserve political interests.
- **Low level of internal democracy**: Pressure groups have a low level of internal democracy, creating the possibility that they express the views of their leaders and not their members.

### 11. Comparison of Indian and Western Pressure Groups

India and most countries of the West are democracies with either Presidential or Parliamentary form of government. India, a parliamentary democracy, differs from countries of the West in terms of development. Therefore, there are some differences in the role of pressure groups.

- **Significance of pressure groups**: The American pressure groups are regarded as the fourth organ of the government but the Indian pressure groups are not yet able to play such significant role in politics.
- **Targets of pressure groups**: In India and Great Britain the cabinet and civil service are the main targets of pressure groups for lobbying purposes rather than the Parliament. However, the targets of American pressure groups are the Congress and its committees rather than the President for lobbying purposes.
- **Themes or issues raised**: Indian pressure groups based on caste, religion, region, etc. are more powerful than the modern groups such as business organisations.
- **Foreign policy**: A significant feature of American pressure groups is that their pressure groups take interest in foreign policy issues while in India pressure groups do not seem to have interest in foreign policy matters. Comparatively, the Indian pressure groups are concerned more with domestic policy issues and problems.

However, in general, despite the differences, democratic politics presupposes the crucial role of pressure groups for serving the interests of different sections of society.

### 12. Conclusion

Pressure groups are now considered as an helpful and indispensable element of the democratic process. The society has become highly complex and individuals cannot pursue their interests on their own. They need the support of other fellow beings in order to gain greater bargaining power. This gives rise to pressure groups based on common interests.

For a long time, these groups remained unnoticed. Initially they were considered as harmful for the democratic process, but now their role in the political process has become very important. Democratic politics has to be politics through consultation and negotiation and some amount of bargaining is also involved as well. Thus, it is very essential for the government to consult these organised groups at the time of policy formulation and implementation.

### 13. UPSC Previous Years’ Questions

1. Pressure group politics is sometimes seen as the informal face of politics. With regards to the above, assess the structure and functioning of pressure groups in India. (2013)
2. How do pressure groups influence Indian political process? Do you agree with this view that informal pressure groups have emerged as more powerful than formal pressure groups in recent years? (2017)
14. Vision IAS Previous Years’ Questions

1. Discuss the role of Pressure Groups in Indian polity. Are they strengthening or hindering our democracy?

Approach:
Discuss briefly what pressure groups are. Then analyze how they affect the major aspects of Indian democracy. Their strengthening and hindering roles can be covered separately.

Answer:
A pressure group is an organized group of people that aims to influence the policies or actions of the Government. Pressure groups can therefore act as a channel of communication between people and the government.

Pressure groups are defined by three key features:

- They seek to exert influence from outside, rather than to directly exercise government power. Pressure groups do not make policy decisions, but rather try to influence those who do (the policy-makers). In that sense, they are ‘external’ to the government.
- They typically have a narrow focus. In some cases, they may focus on a single issue (for instance opposing a planned road development).
- Their members are united by either a shared belief in a particular cause or a common set of interests. People with different ideological and party preferences may thus work happily together as members of the same pressure group.

Pressure groups promote democracy in a number of ways:

- Supplementing electoral democracy
- Widening political participation
- Promoting education
- Ensuring competition and debate

Supplementing electoral democracy - Pressure groups supplement electoral democracy (making up for its defects and limitations) through the following:

- Pressure groups keep government in touch with public opinion between elections.

One of the weaknesses of elections is that they only take place every few years. By contrast, pressure groups force the government to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the people, in which the interests or views of the various sections of society cannot be ignored.

- Pressure groups give a political voice to minority groups and articulate concerns that are overlooked by political parties. Elections, at best, determine the general direction of the government policy, with parties being anxious to develop policies that appeal to the mass of voters. Pressure groups are therefore often more effective in articulating concerns about issues such as the environment, civil liberties, global poverty, abortion, violence against women and the plight of the elderly.

Widening Political Participation

The level of political participation is an important indicator of the health of democracy. Democracy, at heart, means government by the people. If this is the case, declining electoral turnout and steadily falling party membership highlights a major ‘democratic deficit’ in Indian politics. In this context, pressure groups have become increasingly effective agents of political participation. Not only has single-issue politics proved to be
popular but the grass roots activism and decentralized organization of many campaigning groups have proved to be attractive to many young people and those who may be disillusioned with conventional politics.

**Promoting Education**

Pressure groups promote political debate, discussion and argument. In so doing, they create a better-informed and more educated electorate. This, in turn, helps to improve the quality of public policy. Without pressure groups, the public and the media would have to rely on a relatively narrow range of political views, those expressed by the government of the day and a small number of major parties. Pressure groups challenge established views and conventional wisdom. They offer alternative viewpoints and widen the information available to the public, especially through their access to the mass media and the use of ‘new’ communications technology such as the Internet. Pressure groups are therefore prepared to ‘speak truth to power’. In many cases, pressure groups raise the quality of political debate by introducing specialist knowledge and greater expertise.

**Ensuring Competition and Debate**

Pressure groups help to promote democracy by widening the distribution of political power. They do this, in part, because groups compete against one another. This ensures that no group or interest can remain dominant permanently. Group politics is therefore characterized by a rough balance of power. This is the essence of pluralist democracy.

However Pressure groups also threaten democracy in a number of ways. They:

- **Concentrate power.** Groups widen political inequality by strengthening the voice of the wealthy and the privileged: those who have access to financial, educational, organizational or other resources. Other groups are poorly organized, lack resources or are ignored by government.

- **Narrow self-interest.** Groups are socially and politically divisive, in that they are concerned with the particular, not the general. In defending minority views or interests, pressure groups may make it more difficult for governments to act in the interest of the larger society.

- **Unaccountable power.** Being non-elected, groups exercise power without responsibility. Unlike politicians, group leaders are not publicly accountable. Pressure groups usually lack internal democracy, meaning that leaders are rarely elected and so are unaccountable to their members.

- **Undermine Parliament.** Groups undermine parliamentary democracy by bypassing representative processes. They also make the policy process ‘closed’ and more secretive by exerting influence through negotiations and deals that are in no way subject to public scrutiny.

2. **Compare pressure groups in India with those in the west.**

**Approach:**

- Briefly write why there are differences
- Then write the differences.

**Answer:**

Within western countries there are differences between Presidential and Parliamentary form of government. India though a parliamentary democracy differs from west in terms of developmental levels. Therefore there are some differences in the role of pressure groups. Some of the differences are:
The American pressure groups are regarded as the fourth organ of the government but the Indian pressure groups are not yet able to play such significant role in politics.

In India and Great Britain the cabinet and civil service are the main targets of pressure groups for lobbying purposes rather than the parliament. However, the targets of American pressure groups are the Congress and its committees rather than the President for lobbying purposes.

Indian pressure groups based on caste, religion, region, etc. are more powerful than the modern groups like business organisations.

A significant feature of American pressure groups is that in the USA, pressure groups take interest in foreign policy issues while in India, pressure groups do not seem to have interest in foreign policy matters. Comparatively, the Indian pressure groups are concerned more with domestic policy issues and problems, and less with foreign policy matters.

However in general, despite the differences, democratic politics presupposes the crucial role of pressure groups for serving the interests of different sections of society.

3. The capacity of a pressure group to promote its interests is contingent upon a number of internal and external factors. Discuss.

Approach:

- Very briefly describe pressure groups.
- List out the internal and external factors that influence it, with suitable examples wherever possible.

Answers:

Pressure groups are groups which may be profit or non-profit based and usually voluntary organization whose members have a common cause for which they seek to influence political or corporate decision makers to achieve a desired objectives.

Numbers of internal and external factors that influence the promotion of these interests are:

**Internal Factors**

**Wealth**

- They can have high public profile, access to media, can run expensive advertising campaigns.
- They can also meet huge electoral expenses and manipulate the electoral results in their favor. E.g Corporate and media lobbies have a better influence than trade unions specially in U.S.A.

**Size**

- Large groups can claim to represent public opinion; hence it can have a major electoral impact.
- Many groups can manage their finances with the help of its huge group and its financial support itself.

**Organisation and its leadership**

- Organized groups are more powerful and more efficient than the less organized groups.
- A good leadership can also provide better concerted efforts and better management and channelization of resources, towards success of the group. E.g
Kailash Styarthi as a Nobel Laureate can better advocate and champion the cause of Child rights.

- A good leadership can also provide the organization with:
  1. Acute political Skills
  2. Contacts
  3. Developed media Skills
  4. A high public profile.

External Factors

Public support

- Groups with high level of support from public also enjoy higher political influence.
- E.g. India against Corruption could gain huge popularity because of anti-corruption sentiments boiling in the country at that point.

Views of the Government

- Groups which have their interests and ideology coinciding with the goals of the government enjoy greater influence. E.g Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh during BJP government.
- Groups with interests antithetical to government interests, have least chances of meeting their interests.

Opposition Groups

- Where an interest group is lucky enough not to face serious opposition from other interest groups they may have better chances of meeting their political demands.

Source of funds

- In the needs of the funds the pressure groups are many a times forced to also further the interests of their financers.

Thus the performance and influence of the pressure groups are not just determined by the legitimacy of their demands but also by other internal and external factors that are used to manufacture the consent and put pressure on the government to push forward their demands.

4. *Pressure groups ensure that an individual’s democratic rights are not confined just to the act of voting. Discuss.*

*Approach:*

- Introduce by defining pressure groups.
- Then discuss how pressure groups facilitate citizens’ involvement in democracy-through education, representation, policy formulation, policy implementation etc.

*Answer:*

A pressure group is an organized group of people that aims to influence the policies or actions of government. The pressure group universe may include churches and charities, businesses and trade associations, trade unions and professional associations, think tanks of various complexions, and so forth.

Pressure groups help in citizens’ participation in democracy in following ways:

- **Representation:** Pressure groups provide a mouthpiece for groups and interests that are not adequately represented through the electoral process or by political parties.
• **Education:** Much of what the public knows about politics it finds out through pressure groups of one kind or another. Many pressure groups, indeed, operate largely through their ability to communicate with the public and raise political consciousness.

• **Policy formulation:** Pressure groups are a vital source of information and advice to governments. Many groups are therefore regularly consulted in the process of policy formulation, with government policy increasingly being developed through policy networks.

• **Policy implementation:** The role of some pressure groups extends beyond trying to shape the content of public policy to playing a role in putting policy into practice.

Pressure groups keep government in touch with public opinion between elections.
Pressure groups give a political voice to minority groups and articulate concerns that are overlooked by political parties.

Democratic politics has to be politics through consultation and negotiation. The society has become highly complex and individuals cannot pursue their interests on their own. Pressure groups ensure that an individual’s democratic rights are not confined just to the act of voting.

5. **Compare and contrast pressure groups with political parties. Describe the different techniques through which pressure groups influence policies in India.**

**Approach:**
- Firstly, define pressure groups.
- Then elaborate upon their differences from political parties.
- Lastly discuss various techniques that they use like electioneering, lobbying etc.
- Conclude by commenting on their role in a democracy.

**Answer:**

A pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. They try to influence public opinion as well as government policies. It is not necessary that they will exert any ‘pressure’ (such as through protests) to influence the decision. They may resort to mass communications, advocating, lobbying, etc. to achieve their aims.

**Pressure Groups and Political Parties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure groups</th>
<th>Political Parties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressure groups do not seek direct power; they only influence those who are in power for moulding decisions in their favour.</td>
<td>Political parties operate and seek political power to translate its policies into practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure groups do not contest elections; they may support political parties of their choice.</td>
<td>Political parties nominate candidates, contest elections, and participate in election campaigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure groups do not necessarily have political ideologies. They may seek to influence economic or cultural policy based on their needs.</td>
<td>Ideology for political parties is very important as they organize people around them based on ideology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure groups are not based on personality of an individual.</td>
<td>Apart from ideology, personality cult of individual leaders is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interests of the pressure groups are usually specific and particular. Their activities are confined to the protection and promotion of those interests only.</td>
<td>The political parties have policies and programmes with national and international ramifications.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Student Notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Their membership is limited</th>
<th>The membership is very broad based.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressure groups resort to agitation a politics like marches, demonstrations, strikes, fasts etc.</td>
<td>Political parties use Constitutional means to achieve their aims.</td>
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</table>

Techniques used by Pressure Groups

- The pressure groups influence the policy-making and policy-implementation in the government through legal and legitimate methods like lobbying, correspondence, publicity, propagandising, petitioning, public debating, maintaining contacts with their legislators and so forth.
- However, sometimes they resort to illegitimate and illegal methods like strikes, violent activities and corruption/bribing which damages public interest and administrative integrity.

Pressure Groups can enhance as well as distort the political system. Because of the complexities of modern government, and the pluralistic nature of Indian society, pressure groups provide a means by which ordinary citizens can participate in the decision making process, as well as maintaining a check on government activity. Similarly, governments can be better informed of the electorate’s sensitivities to policies, because of the pressures articulated by these groups.

6. Illustrate how pressure groups have emerged as a strong mechanism for making democracy participatory and responsive.

Approach:

- Briefly, write about pressure groups.
- Explain the role of pressure groups in making democracy participatory and responsive.

Answer:

A pressure group is a interest group organized to promote the interests of its members and influence the policies of the government without seeking themselves to exercise the formal powers of government. They use instruments like lobbying, campaigns and polls.

Role of pressure groups in making Democracy Participative:

- Democracy enables citizens to participate in election; however, it limits citizen participation after formation of government. Civil society and pressure groups fill this void in a democratic polity.
- Provides representation to a wide range of diverse interests and opinions which modern political parties often fail to do due to socio-political compulsions.
- Keeps government in touch with the public opinion in between elections. For e.g. Anti-corruption movement, 2011 led to passage of the Lokpal Act.
- Gives political voice to minority groups and articulate their concerns like Naz Foundation’s fight for rights of LGBT community.
Role of Pressure groups in making Democracy Responsive:

- Provide alternative platform to citizens to redress grievances and hold government responsible.
- Single-issue politics has led to mobilization of pressure groups and public on issues like environment, transparency etc. For e.g. Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan led the people’s movement, which got the government to bring about the law on ‘Right to Information’.
- Grass root activism and decentralized groups provides an alternative to youth disillusioned with conventional politics.
- Promote political education through political debate thus creating a better-informed and educated electorate and improving the quality of public policy.
- Competing pressure groups ensure that no group or interest remain dominant or dormant permanently.

Further, pressure groups also happen to be an indicator of political maturity and accommodation in a political system, for only in a truly democratized country, would such groups be allowed to have a say in the policies of the government.

7. **Delineate the differences between pressure groups and interest groups. Citing examples, elaborate on the ways in which pressure groups influence government decisions and policy making in India.**

**Approach:**

- Briefly introduce the answer with interest groups and write the difference between interest and pressure groups.
- Mention the different techniques and methods used by pressure groups. Provide relevant examples.
- Conclude appropriately.

**Answer:**

Interest Groups basically are organized groups of people which seek to attain certain interests. Their goal could be a policy that exclusively benefits group members or one segment of society (e.g., government subsidies for farmers) or a policy that advances a broader public purpose (e.g., improving air quality).

Pressure groups are a sub-type of interest groups. While interest groups vary widely in their form, focus area and organization, pressure groups are rather formally organized and focus more on engaging with political actors. While all pressure groups are interest groups, not every interest group is a pressure group.

Pressure groups make use of different techniques and methods to achieve their objectives. Some of the most common techniques are as follows:

- **Lobbying:** This includes making representations to the legislature or other departments of governments in order to influence public policy in favour of themselves. For instance, organizations like CII and FICCI often make representation to government to influence economic policies.
- **Strikes and demonstrations:** This involves using non-violent methods in order to influence decision-making. For instance, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan organized public hearings, strikes for demanding Right to Information Act.
- **Physical demonstrations and violence:** These methods are employed by anomic pressure groups. For instance, use of violence by Naxalites, ULFA.
- **Association or affiliation with political parties**: Examples include trade unions, student organizations etc.
- **Propagandizing**: Influencing the public opinion by publishing information in mass domain using media and other means.
- **Use of traditional social structure**: This include communal groups and religious bodies which seek to influence government decision making. Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), All India Muslim Personal Law Board are examples of such a pressure group.

Pressure groups are now considered as an indispensable and helpful element of the democratic process. The society has become highly complex and individuals cannot pursue their interests on their own. They need the support of other fellow beings in order to gain greater bargaining power; this gives rise to pressure groups based on common interests.

Democratic politics has to be politics through consultation, through negotiation and some amount of bargaining is also involved. Thus, it is very essential for the government to consult these organised groups at the time of policy formulation and implementation.
Heartiest Congratulations to all successful candidates

7 IN TOP 10 SELECTIONS IN CSE 2019
FROM VARIOUS PROGRAMS OF VISION IAS

2 AIR
JATIN KISHORE

3 AIR
PRATIBHA VERMA

6 AIR
VISHAKHA YADAV

7 AIR
GANESH KUMAR BASKAR

YOU CAN BE NEXT

9 IN TOP 10 SELECTIONS IN CSE 2018

1 AIR
KANISHAK KATARIA

2 AIR
AKSHAT JAIN

3 AIR
JUNAID AHMAD

4 AIR
SHREYANS KUMAT

5 AIR
SRUSHTI JAYANT DESHMUKH

7 AIR
KARNATI VARUNREDDY

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