



- Political parties provide the critical link between citizens & the govt in a democracy.
- Modernization has a widespread belief that the conditions of life can be altered through human action.
- But modernisation is also associated with economic & social changes like industrialisation, urbanisation, modern education, spread of public communications etc.
- These changes lead to an increasing diversity of life conditions which results in the formation of large numbers of special interest groups.
- Most democracies provide scope for such special interest groups to express their needs.
- These groups, commonly identified as interest groups" or „pressure groups", seek to protect or advance their collective interests & also to obtain public policy outcomes favourable to them by pressurizing the government & other state apparatus.
- Such groups have come to play an important role in the political system by organising individuals into groups and then linking them with the political system.
- In this sense, pressure groups act as mediating institutions between the govt & the governed in a democratic polity.

DEFINING PRESSURE GROUPS

- "Organised groups possessing both formal structure and real common interests in so far as they influence the decisions of public bodies" -W.J.M. Mackenzie.
- "Organisations trying to influence the policy of public bodies in their own chosen direction, though never themselves prepared to undertake the direct Govt of the country" - Samuel Finer.
- "An association of individuals joined together by a common interest, belief, activity or purpose that seeks to achieve its objectives, & enhance its status in relation to other groups, by gaining the approval & cooperation of authority in the form of favourable policies, legislation and conditions" -Peter Shipley.
- These are voluntary social groups characterized by persuasive activism to achieve a desirable change or to prevent an undesirable change.
- Their activism, often termed as "pressure politics" involves various methods to influence the govt & other state apparatus like legislatures, & executives & implementation of public policies.
- In the recent times, pressure groups also emerged in the form of social movements on issues like protection of environment, corruption, human rights, education, health, livelihood etc.
- For example, groups like Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) or India Against Corruption (IAC)
- Pressure groups vary in terms of size & influence as well as the area of operation.

- For example, groups like Confederation of Free Trade Union, Council of European Federation of Industry, Amnesty International, Anti-Apartheid Movement, Oxfam and Friends of Earth are some of the groups that operate across national boundaries
- Moreover, there are also collective groups like the "World Social Forum" (WSF) formed by different civil societies, advocacy groups, and social movements from different countries but operate at the global level.

ORIGIN OF PRESSURE GROUPS

- The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his book, "Politics", famously said, "Man is by nature a social animal".
- This behaviour of human incentivises them to form social groups in almost every sphere of life.
- According to scholars, ever since the inception of organized human society there had been groups in society whose character and activities were similar to today's pressure groups.
- In this regard, "groups" & "group politics" can be considered as old as the human society itself.
- People belonging to different sections of the society, be it religion, caste, ethnicity, profession, trade unions, farmers came together & Pressure Groups voluntarily organized themselves in order to advance their interests.
- Pressure groups gained prominence in the modern times, particularly after the American and French revolutions in the late 18th century.
- The spread of democratic rights, ideas & values led to an astonishing increase in the number of pressure groups.
- Minorities & women pressure groups are prominent nowadays – organised to demand social & political rights to ensure that they are not subjugated.
- For instance, the Abolition Society in Britain was founded in 1787 to oppose the slave trade.
- Similarly, the Society for Women's Rights was founded in France in 1866 with the purpose of exerting a worldwide women's suffrage movement
- Thus, by the end of the 19th century, many such groups asserting the interests of business groups, trade unions etc., had become operationalised in most of the industrial societies
- Despite the pressure groups coming to prominence in democratic politics, the discipline of political science had hardly given any attention to their role & influence in political processes.
- According to American social scientist Arthur F. Bentley, the founder of the group theory, one can achieve the true knowledge of govt only through the analysis of group activities (1908).

- In the mid-twentieth century, however the study of group politics began to attract political scientists.
- Some of the pioneers of group-centred approach in the study of politics are David B Truman, Earl Latham, WJM Mackenzie, S.E Finer, and Joseph La Palombara.

OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS

- There can be many kinds of groups in a political system which may be organized & cohesive such as interest groups, political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs) and so on.
- Although these groups exist to serve their common interests, they differ from what we identified as pressure groups.

PRESSURE GROUPS & INTEREST GROUPS

- Interest groups are possibly the closest to pressure groups.
- In fact, many scholars do not make a distinction between pressure groups & interest groups & they often treat the two as synonymous
- Alan R Ball (1994), puts pressure groups, interest group & attitude group etc. under the same category
- He defined these groups as “social aggregates with some level of chosen & shared aims which attempt to influence the political decision-making process”.
- According to Robert H. Salisbury “pressure group is only more pejorative but perhaps more familiar a term for interest groups”.
- Some scholars differentiates pressure groups from interest groups. According to them, pressure groups always attempt to influence the government’s decision-making process, whereas interest groups do not necessarily have the intention to do so.
- For these scholars, pressure groups are far more powerful than interest groups or any group of similar kind because they have the capability to pressurize the govt to get policy decisions favourable to them.
- Hugh A. Bone says, “every group is an interest group or a group with an interest, but not every group attempts to influence public policy”.
- It means, interest groups transformed themselves into pressure groups when they begin to influence the decision-making process.
- In other words , all pressure groups are interest groups but not all interest groups necessarily transform into pressure groups.
- Some scholars argued that the term “pressure group” carries a negative connotation as it insinuates the threat of use of force to achieve their objectives.
- Every type of group exists to serve their respective group’s interests & all of them in one way or the other exert some pressure on the govt (Watts 2007)

PRESSURE GROUPS & POLITICAL PARTIES

- In some respects, the roles of pressure groups are parallel to those of political parties—as agents of political mobilization & representation by linking the govt & the governed.
- But there are theoretical & practical distinctions between the two.

- While the objective of the political parties is to get into power & form the govt, pressure groups generally seek to influence & pressurize the govt. with the particular interests & aspirations of the people they represent.
- Pressure group focuses on only one policy area, while political party have broad programmes covering all policy areas
- For instance, trade unions or human rights groups are concerned with limited goals of protecting/promoting welfare of the workers or human rights. They rarely concern themselves with economic or external policies, except when those policies impinge on their interests
- However, this distinction becomes complicated when, some pressure groups are found to have close relationship with political parties.
- In fact, there are pressure groups which render support to certain political parties whenever they think their political purpose can be served by supporting them & vice versa.
- There are also pressure groups which have transformed into political parties. For example, the Labour parties in Britain and Australia had their origins in the working people’s movements.
- Likewise, in India, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi were pressure groups before they become political parties.
- However, in general, most pressure groups seek to keep some distance rather than to develop close links with political parties.

PRESSURE GROUPS & CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- Civil society organizations are organizations & associations set up by the citizens of a country to pursue certain interests.
- While some of the civil society organizations act as interest groups to promote their respective interests, others pressurize the govt to bring about certain public policies in their group’s interests.
- In India, civil society groups like Lok Satta, Janaagraha, and Foundation of Democratic Reforms (FDR) are persuading political parties to create avenues for legitimate funding to political parties with transparency and disclosure.
- The group FDR in particular, also works for transparency, right to information, speedy delivery of justice by the judiciary etc
- Pressure groups are more power-centric than CSOs which are interest oriented.
- Moreover, the domains of pressure groups are relatively restricted compared to CSOs whose arenas of functioning are usually vast & diverse.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

- Pressure groups came into existence to serve the interest of the community or group they represent.
- Therefore, their objectives & demands are different depending upon the collective interest of the particular group.

- They neither contest elections nor attempt to directly involve in the governmental affairs.
- They aim to pressurize govt agencies, bureaucrats & politicians to get public policies in their favour.
- While doing this political bargaining, pressure groups always try to maintain a neutral political position by concentrating on their specific demands
- So, pressure groups are sometimes considered as “apolitical” groups. However, they may enter into the arena of electoral politics by financing or supporting the party or candidate who they think will work in their interests
- In this regard, pressure groups also try to maintain good relationship with political parties, politicians or high-ranking executives of the government in order to win their co-operation or support in group’s interests.
- They have no permanent political affiliation & generally try to keep their group interest above political interests
- Since pressure groups emerged from specific sections of the society, their arena of functioning is generally restricted. However, their demands may be social, political or economic & they may vary from time to time while the group remains intact.
- This flexibility of demands & objectives is an important characteristic of pressure groups.
- Their emphasis on the need for a collective approach rather than an individualistic approach.

CLASSIFICATION OF PRESSURE GROUPS

- Pressure groups have been classified by several scholars into different categories on the basis of their structure and organization.
- Among them the four-fold classification given by Almond and Coleman is more suitable and widely applicable.

INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE GROUPS

- Institutional pressure groups are those groups which are formed in various institutions, including government institutions like schools, colleges, universities, judiciary, bureaucracies, hospitals, police etc
- Since these pressure groups exist within formal organizations formed by professionally employed personnel like doctors, lawyers, teachers, they are highly organized in accordance with proper rules and regulations.
- Therefore, they are also known as professional pressure groups.
- In India, groups like Civil Services Association, Police Families Welfare Association, Defence Personnel Association, Indian Medical Association, All India Bar Association, etc. all come under this category
- They are formed in order to serve their interests without directly getting involved in the govt. Since they are close to the govt, they can easily influence the government.
- Apart from articulating their own interest, they may also articulate and represent the interest of other groups. For example, a pressure group in the Ministry

of Agriculture can easily and effectively convince other ministries or bureaucrats on behalf of the interests of farmers.

ASSOCIATIONAL PRESSURE GROUPS

- These groups are highly organized & specialized groups formed to pursue limited goals.
- Associational pressure group includes organization of businessmen and industrialists like Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) etc.
- These groups, by virtue of their vast array of resources, technical and managerial knowledge and their close links with elite groups in the government are among the most influential pressure groups.
- Some of these groups are so powerful that even political parties are dependent on them for funds & other resources & in turn, govt sometimes serves them by giving concessions in the reduction of tax, tariff, trade etc.
- In some cases, the govt even seeks suggestions & advice of these groups on major policy issues of economic & commercial aspects.
- This category also includes workers & peasants’ unions such as All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and student’s organizations like National Students Union of India (NSUI).
- Therefore, this category is sometimes divided into different types such as business groups, trading groups, agrarian groups, worker groups, and student groups and so on.

NON- ASSOCIATIONAL PRESSURE GROUPS

- This category refers to those groups which are informal in nature brought together by religion, culture and traditions, kinship, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, or family ties etc
- There is no formal & structural procedure in their activities and demands.
- They do not have permanent demands or interests.
- Their demands and interests keep changing according to requirements of a specific situation
- They are mostly based on language, ethnicity, religion or any other socio-cultural aspects in the society.
- They are more concerned with community service focusing on protection & promotion of the interest of the whole community. Therefore, they are also known as socio-cultural pressure groups
- In India, religious based groups such as Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Samiti or caste-based groups like Lorik Sena, Bhumi Sena, Vaishya Samaj etc. are some examples of socio-religious and cultural pressure groups.
- These groups are formed with the aim of protecting and promoting the culture, tradition and beliefs of particular religious, ethnic or cultural communities

ANOMIC PRESSURE GROUPS

- These groups appear for a short span of time for specific objectives & purpose.
- In Almond's words, they are "more or less spontaneous groups, penetrated into the political system from the society".
- These groups are generally formed in response to unpredictable moments like, famine, drought, scarcity of resources or any similar kind of urgency
- Since these groups are spontaneous in nature depending upon the spur of the moment, they are not guided by any rule or procedural structure
- As a result, their behaviour & actions are also quite unpredictable which often turns violent.
- For example, famine relief groups like Mizo National Famine Front in Mizoram or the Asom Gana Parishad formed during the Assam Movement can be termed as anomic pressure groups.
- Once the purpose is served, most of them ceased to exist while others may transform into political parties like in the case of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra or the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram.

METHODS & TACTICS

- Their choice of tactics is determined by –
 - the nature of the political system,
 - attitude of the govt ,
 - the capability & strength of the particular pressure group
 - the availability & convenience of methods which the groups have at their disposal.
- They tend to use any possible methods that will provide maximum benefit in the group's interests.

LOBBYING

- One of the tactics employed by pressure groups is lobbying
- Lobbying refers to an effort made by pressure groups to influence government decisions.
- Lobbying is one of the most common & significant persuasive tactics used by pressure groups.
- The term "lobby" is derived from the lobby or the hall of Britain's House of Commons.
- Therefore, lobbying refers to any attempt or efforts made by individual members or groups, usually in the lobbies of parliament buildings, to garner support for their cause by influencing legislatures, or executives
- It can be conducted in multiple ways, such as direct personal contacts, sending delegations or representatives, writing of letters, telephone calls, email conversations or any other form of communication activity that can be used for persuasion
- Although the act of lobbying remains highly personal, basically associated with private activities of individual members of the group, in which they try to convince and persuade those who have the power to decide policy decisions such as member of the legislature, ministers or government officials etc.
- Pressure groups may also lobby through advertisement in popular media such as newspaper, radio, television etc. in order to convince those in the position of power.

- The process of lobbying may also include actions involving favours, inducements and offerings to lure the officials in order to get the work done.

SHAPING THE PUBLIC OPINION

- To highlight & convey their issues & concerns to the govt, pressure groups widely use the tactic of public-opinion campaigns.
- Such campaigns are basically geared to attract media attention & also to sensitize the public at large in order to gain wider influence.
- For this, they use platforms such as use of mass media, issuing press release, distributing pamphlets, organizing public meetings, social media & other digital platforms etc
- In doing such publicity exercise, pressure groups are able to shape public opinion in their favour & presents a criticism of the govt policy.
- The purpose of influencing public opinion is to alert the government thereby making their voice heard.

PUBLICITY & PROPAGANDA

- Pressure groups usually do this by propagating their interests through mass media, such as newspapers, radio, television, internet, and so on.
- Through this pressure groups can highlight their demands & opinions as well as inform and educate the government and the public at large on matters that are crucial for their collective interests.
- By doing this, pressure groups are able to attract and influence those in authority to accede to their demands.

STRIKES & AGITATIONS

- Usually, pressure groups use peaceful means to achieve their goals. But they may also resort to agitations to get maximum benefits of their demands.
- Such tactics include strikes, protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience
- Strike is a form of agitation which attempts for a temporary stoppage of work to force govt or those in authority to concede to their demands.
- Strikers often refuse to carry out their legitimate duties and may try to persuade others not to perform their duties.
- Though most forms of strikes are constitutional and peaceful, sometime go out of control and result in violent.
- Bandh & Gherao are other forms of direct-action methods.
- A Bandh is a combination of a strike & a shutdown or blockade.
- Participants refrain from economic activity and usually set up roadblocks or shut office, shops, public transport etc., to „enforce" the bandh.
- Gherao, involves the confinement of govt officials by members of pressure groups for forcing them to concede to their demands.
- It is similar to picketing in which people congregate outside a place of work or location where an event is taking place to draw public attention to a cause

- In India, most pressure groups rely more on direct action methods & less on techniques like lobbying.

PRESSURE GROUPS IN INDIA & THE WEST

- Western countries have differences between Presidential & Parliamentary forms of government.
- India has parliamentary democracy & is also at a different developmental level.
- Therefore, there are differences in the role of pressure groups.
- American pressure groups are regarded as the fourth organ of the govt but the Indian pressure groups are not yet able to play such a significant role in politics
- In India & Britain, the cabinet & 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 & its committees rather than the President for lobbying purposes
- In India, pressure groups based on caste, religion, region, etc – more powerful than the modern groups like business organisations.
- American pressure groups take interest in foreign policy issues while in India pressure groups are concerned more with domestic policy issues and problems, and less with foreign policy matters
- Despite these differences, democratic politics presupposes the crucial role of pressure groups for serving the interests of different sections of society

PRESSURE GROUPS IN MODERN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

- Group activity is a feature of democracy & of many authoritarian states as well.
- It is difficult to assess their role in a democracy due to the multiplicity & diversity of pressure groups.
- Number of such pressure groups are very high
- For those who take a positive view of pressure-group activity, these groups enhance our democracy & have an important role in the political processes.
- Pressure groups enable individuals to associate with one another and voice their interests and grievances
- Their activities give representation & voice to the minorities or the disadvantaged sections of the society who are not adequately represented in the govt.
- For instance, women, ethnic minorities, gays, transgenders that are inadequately represented by political parties, find opportunity to express any resentment about their treatments
- Pressure group activity also encourages wider participation in decision making process.
- Ordinary individuals participate in political life only during election time. Elections which are held once in four or five years may not allow voters to express a preference on individual issue.
- Pressure groups give an opportunity to individuals be politically active and to make a contribution to the working of democracy between elections.

- Pressure groups act as a link between the people and the govt, a useful intermediary between the electors and those whom they elect, allowing a variety of views to be expressed.
- They counter the monopoly of the political process by political parties. According to Baggott (1995) “The views which pressure groups convey are legitimate interests...Modern democracy would not exist without pressure groups. As a channel of representation, they are as legitimate as the ballot box.... They can mediate between the govt & the governed”
- Pressure groups often provide specialist information to the government & helps in the implementation of policy
- Some of the well organised pressure groups often participate in official consultative committees, advisory groups and commissions.
- Most govts rely on these groups for advice, information specialist expertise and help in implementing policies.
- Activities of pressure groups make the public at large better informed about public policies.
- These activities keep political system and government more responsive to the aspiration and demands of the people.
- According to critics the pressure groups can endanger and weaken the democratic process. They argue that – relatively small unelected groups of individuals, instead of elected representatives, are able to influence policies and laws.
- Marxist & Elitist theorists, argues that politics is always dominated by a small number of people.
- According to Marxist scholars, pressure groups reflect the prevailing power structure of the system in which few leaders from the capitalist class always control and dominate these pressure groups
- This class-based nature of pressure groups ensures the system in favour of the powerful and wealthy class while leaving less for the weaker majority
- Elitist theorists, Robert Michels called the “iron law of oligarchy” which claim that minorities, often called “oligarchs” always rule these organizations
- According to them, majority of the masses, particularly from weaker section of the society are largely unorganized, therefore, they are unlikely to emerge as leaders of pressure groups, because they neither have the resources nor the power to fight in the political battle against the powerful.
- Critics of group activity also contend that the methods and tactics used by pressure groups are often corrupt and intimidating.
- Sometimes direct actions methods go out of control, thereby resulting into violent clashes between the protestors & state machineries.