

PRESSURE GROUPS

The term 'pressure group' refers to any interest group whose members because of their shared common attributes make claims on the other groups and on the political process. They pursue their interests by organising themselves and by influencing the governmental policies. Their aim is to see that laws or government's actions are favorable to their interests.

Pressure groups are defined by three key features:

- They seek to exert *influence* from outside, rather than to win or 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 government.
- They typically have a *narrow* issue 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.

These groups influence both public policy as well as administration. They also contribute towards determination of political structure of society and the form of government. Any social group which seeks to influence the behaviour of any political officer, both administrative as well as legislative, without attempting to gain formal control of the government can be called a pressure group.

What are the differences between Pressure Groups and Political parties?

Pressure groups and parties may be confused for a number of reasons:

- *Many small political parties resemble pressure groups in that they have a narrow issue focus.*
- *Some pressure groups use elections as a tactical weapon.*
- *Parties and pressure groups may form part of larger social movements.*

But Pressure groups and political parties are different.

Political parties, in the strict sense of the term, are associations of individuals sharing common values and preferences. They are organised on ideological lines and present a vision for the future. They have well trained cadres who are engaged in continuous political mobilisation of the masses. They use all the political means available to capture the power and consolidate their position to attain or realise their ideological goals. In a broader sense they are also interest groups. They have a social base whose interests it must protect and promote. They may adopt pragmatic approach and operate only in the immediate context. They may, sometimes, degenerate to the level of a pressure group to extract benefits for their group. In such a situation the distinction between a pressure group and political party may even disappear.

The pressure groups unlike the political parties are formed to solve their immediate problems. They are relatively more temporary than political parties. A pressure group may appear for a short time if it does not present any long-range programme. However, where the interests of the group are of long-range, the pressure group may also last longer. In such cases it may even project the sectarian interests as general or universal

interests. It depends on the imagination of their leadership. The pressure groups may have a well-knit organisation and organised membership. Generally they do not have cadres and do not directly deal with people. In most of the cases they deal either with the political parties or governmental apparatus. The pressure groups have far greater flexibility compared to political parties as they do not go to people and stake their claims for power. It is precisely this process that distinguishes political parties from pressure groups.

The difference between political parties and pressure groups is as follows:

- Political parties are aggregates of interests, organised on a territorial basis. Their main aim is to attain political power in central and local government.
- Pressure groups are based on interests or issues and causes and are organised on a functional basis. Their main aim is to influence the decisions of those who have political power, but not to seek it for themselves.
- Pressure groups are sometimes referred to as interest groups or lobbies.

Types of Pressure Group

Although they can be distinguished in a variety of ways (including local/national/transnational groups and temporary/permanent groups) the most common distinctions are between:

1. Interest and Cause Groups

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:

- a. They are concerned to protect or advance the interests of their members
- b. Membership is limited to people in a particular occupation, career or economic position
- c. 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.

Cause groups activities range from charity activities, poverty reduction, education and the environment, to human rights, international development and peace. Cause groups have the following features:

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

Specific examples of cause groups include the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Amnesty International, etc.

2. Insiders and outsiders

Insider groups are groups that are consulted on a regular basis by government. They operate ‘inside’ the decision-making process, not outside. Their degree, regularity and level of consultation varies, of course. ‘Ultra-insider’ groups are regularly consulted at ministerial or senior official level within the executive. They may also sit on government policy committees and agencies and have links to parliamentary select committees.

Outsider groups, by contrast, have no special links to government. 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.

Pressure groups can be seen as providing an additional form of representation within the political system and an additional channel of political communication.

Classification of Pressure Groups in India

There are pressure groups in every country and India is no exception. They influence decision making to serve their own interests. Broadly they can be put into four categories according to their aims and objectives which are given below :

1. **Professional Pressure Groups:** This category includes the pressure groups that are formed by the employees of a particular occupation or profession for the protection of their interests. The big business houses with their vast outlay of resources, availability of technical and managerial personnel and due to close links with elite groups in government, media, administration and opposition parties have always had the most organized and powerful pressure groups at their command. Several big business houses have a powerful lobby in the Parliament and in the legislature. They also have representatives and Public Relations Officers who keep in touch with administration and top bureaucracy. The largest and the most influential organization of private capital in India is the FICCI. It represents more than 40,000 firms. It has a large business corporate world with it. The political parties are dependent on it for funds. In turn, they serve their interests in giving them the concession in the form of trade, tariff, investment tax, etc. In the contemporary scenario of globalisation and liberalization, the role of FICCI is all the more important. The government seeks the suggestions and advice of this group particularly on major policy issues of economical and commercial nature. The other known business groups like ASSOCHAM, i.e., Associated Chambers of Commerce, Confederation of Indian Industries. (CII), the Tatas, Birlas, DCM, Dalmia and Hindustan Lever, etc. try to influence the industrial policies and laws of the government.

Professional pressure groups also includes Trade Unions, Peasant Organizations, Teachers and Students Organizations and also other association like All India Medical Association, All India Postal & Telegraph Workers Union, etc. Thus, the influence of big business on financial, industrial and commercial politics of the country over the years has been considerable. The history of Trade Unions and Peasant Organisations dates back to the period before independence. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in 1920 with the objective to promote socio economic interests of the working class. Hind Mazdoor Sangh, Centre of India Trade Unions (CITU) are the examples of these types of trade unions. The other trade unions in other parts of the country in electricity, water, banks, insurance etc. are somewhat affiliated to the All India Organisations. It has been observed that political parties have been exploiting the farmers and the peasants for their own interests. So there was a call for them to unite to get their interests fulfilled. They all want their interest in the field of agriculture to be duly protected. Their chief objectives include getting higher prices for agriculture products, subsidy for fertilizers availability of loans and manures, etc. Farmer's organizations like Bhartiya Kisan Union in Haryana, U.P. and Punjab, Karnataka, etc., influence the decisions of the government in the agricultural field. They also contribute to the sharpening of national awareness and class- consciousness. They do not have the money power of the capital but have the will and solidarity to work for the upliftment of the downtrodden. In the educational field also the students, the teachers, non-vocational staff (school, college, university) have their unions to mobilize the public opinion and also to influence the government for their protection of their interests like, P.F., gratuity, bonus, LTC facility, leaves, opening of more professional institutions, adequate transporation facilities, fee structure etc. For e.g. National Students Union of India, Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha, All India Teachers Association, All India Students Association, Delhi University Students Union etc.

2. **Socio Cultural Pressure Groups:** There are various kinds of socio cultural pressure groups which are concerned with community service and the promotion of the interests of the whole community. Also there are a few for the promotion of their language and religion. Examples are given below: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Jan Sewa Sangh, Rama Krishna Mission, Arya Samaj, Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, Parsee Anymans, Young Men Christian Association, Bajrang Dal, Sanskrit Sahitya Academy, Panjabi Academy, Marathi Sangh, Bhartiya Adim Jati Sangh, Sernarhi of People Society.
3. **Institutional Pressure Groups:** There are certain pressure groups that are working within the governmental machinery itself. They influence the government policies in their favour without directly getting involved in the political system. The pressure groups like Civil Services Association, Police Welfare organization, Gazetted Officers Union, Defence Personnel Association, Army Officers organizations Red Cross Society etc., all came under this category. The decision on matters such as transfers-leave rules, adequate D.A. due to inflation, allocation of duties, etc., are influenced by these pressure groups. Although their activities are public, they remain very active within the system.
4. **Adhoc pressure Groups:** Some pressure groups come into existence for a very short period with the objective of pressuring the government for a specific task. Once the purpose is served, they cease to exist. In case of any urgency, natural calamity or adversity, these pressure groups pressurize or influence the government policies in their interest. Example of this type of pressure group are Orissa Relief Organisation, Bhoodan Anuyojna, Kaveri Water Distribution Association, Gujrat Relief Association, etc.

Role of Pressure Group in Developing Countries

Pressure Groups play a very important role in every political system and in any part or regions of the world. Be it a developed Society or Developing Society, the role of pressure groups has been immense. However, their effectiveness and capabilities cannot be the same and so their role differs from society to society and country to country.

In Developing Countries, pressure groups assume different dimensions and plays different roles.

1. Since, most of the developing countries are having a transitional type of Government after their freedom from the shackles of the imperial powers or in other words, in a transition towards the democratic form of Government, pressure groups in different countries plays an important role in achieving a more stable government and pulling their countries towards a democratic Government. Pressure Groups like Generation Students in Myanmar are still fighting for the re-establishment of Democracy in a military ruled Myanmar. They played a prominent role in Pro-Democracy campaign inside the country. In Cambodia, SMD, Student Movement for democracy played an important role in shaping the course of the political system in the country. Students' Movement for Democracy (SMD) is a non-political and most active youth organization in Cambodia. It was established in 1998 after the unfair, unjust and manipulated election result was released by the CPP. And many countries are shocked by the often takeover of the governance in the country by the military personnel. In such times, the pressure groups have played an important role in bringing back the country to a more democratic way of governance.
2. Many of the pressure groups in developing countries fought against the economic and market policies of the government. Such pressure groups are usually Trade Unions. One powerful pressure group or to be more specific, Trade Union is Nigeria Labour Congress. Is an umbrella organisation for trade unions in Nigeria. It was founded in 1978 following a merger of four different organisations: Nigeria Trade Union Congress (NTUC), Labour Unity Front (LUF), United Labour Congress (ULC) and Nigeria Workers Council (NWC). Its founding President was Wahab Goodluck. During the course of its history, it has a

conflict with the military regime in the country. Recently, the organisation has a conflict with the Nigerian Government over the higher fuel prices.

3. Some pressure groups played a very important role in the socio-political and cultural reformation or change in the country. They are fighting against the evils that befall the society. Congress of South African Trade Unions played a leading role in the struggle against apartheid.
4. Significant gains in public health have been achieved because of efforts by pressure groups, including important changes and advances in public health issues such as tobacco control, occupational health and safety, air pollution, and HIV/AIDS. South Africa has one of the largest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world, with a 2005 estimate of 5.5 million people living with HIV — 12.4% of the population. The trade union movement has taken a role in combating this pandemic. COSATU is a key partner in the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), a registered charity and political force working to educate and promote understanding about HIV/AIDS, and to prevent new infections, as well as push for greater access to antiretrovirals. COSATU passed a resolution in 1998 to campaign for treatment. “It was clear to the labour movement at that time that its lowest paid members were dying because they couldn’t afford medicines,” says Theodora Steel, Campaigns Coordinator at COSATU. “We saw TAC as a natural ally in a campaign for treatment. We passed a formal resolution at our congress to assist and build TAC”.
5. The Condition of women in developing countries are relative weaker as compared to those in the developed society and hence, pressure groups played a big role in lifting the poor women conditions and strengthening their status. The Gibraltar Women’s Association was founded on the 15 February 1966, by Mrs Mariola Summerfield and Mrs Angela Smith. It was originally known as the Gibraltar Housewives Association, and subsequently, in the early eighties it was changed to the Gibraltar Women’s Association keeping in with more modern times that not all women were solely housewives.
6. Many pressure groups in developing countries started to give out their concerns over environmental issues and gay, lesbian and transgender rights. Most of the developing countries and in transition from traditional to modern society and such type of pressure groups which took such issues became very important. Equality Rights Group, In Gibraltar is one example of such pressure groups.
7. One remarkable features that emerges since the 1990’s is the emergence of pressure Groups with an approach to take up the issues in which the government are weak. There was a tendency among the people in the developing countries to say, ‘Let the Government do it’. That attitude has now beginning to change. Now, they didn’t wait for the Government to come up with some welfare measures and policy. They (pressure groups) push the government and even in some issues, they tried to satisfy themselves by a means they developed. One example could be taken up from the case of Pakistan. For a country, where once the attitude prevailed of ‘*Let the Government do it*’ it is heartening to see that since the 1990s there has been proliferation of NGOs devoted to various sectors of social and human betterment, human rights, democratization, women’s empowerment, and low-income housing.

Functions of Pressure Groups in India

Pressure groups have become a very important part of an administrative system. These groups try to pressurize the administrative and political system of a country either to ensure that their interests are promoted or to see that at least their interests are not relegated to the background. No system can function effectively without taking their viewpoint into consideration. In developing countries like India where there is a scarcity of various resources on the one hand and acute poverty and deprivation on the other, the pressure on administrative system is bound to be very heavy. The pressure groups arise in different forms in different walks of life. They

provide a stabilising mechanism and form a crucial component of the structural equilibrium which means that they perform the system maintenance function. The functions are described as below:

1. 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 parts, because groups are concerned with the specific rather than the general. Whereas parties attempt to broaden their appeal, trying to catch (potentially) all voters, pressure groups can articulate the views or interests of particular groups and focus on specific causes. Some have even 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 groups to carry out representation:

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

2. Education

Pressure Groups play a very important role in the Indian political system. They act as a link and source of communication between the masses and the political parties. They sensitize the public towards various socio economic issues thereby educating them politically. They produce very effective leadership and also as a training platform for future political leaders. It also bridges the gap between various traditional values in the society.

Many pressure groups, indeed, operate largely through their ability to communicate with the public and raise political consciousness. Groups therefore often devote significant resources to carrying 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.

However, the effectiveness of groups in stimulating political education has also been questioned.

- a) Pressure groups are every bit as biased and subjective as political parties, and there are few checks or constraints on what a pressure group spokesperson may say.

3. Policy formulation

Although pressure groups, by definition, are not policy-makers, this does not prevent many pressure groups from participating in the policy-making process. In particular, 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. *The RTI Act is an example of how citizens groups can significantly affect government policy.*

However, questions have also been raised about the role of groups in formulating policy:

- a) Only a small body of privileged groups – ‘insider’ groups – are involved in policy formulation.
- b) Many have argued that groups should not influence the policy process because they are not elected and so are not publicly accountable.

4. 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. The best example of this is the National Farmers' Union (NFU), which works with the Department for Rural Affairs (Defra) in implementing policies related, for example, to farm subsidies, disease control and animal welfare. 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:

- a) Some have criticized such groups for being over-close to government, and therefore for endangering their independence.
- b) Others have argued that policy implementation gives groups unfair political leverage in influencing policy decisions.

How is public participation through pressure groups possible during the process of lawmaking?

Step 1: *The role which can be played by citizen groups before and while the Bill is being drafted.*

The case of the Right to Information Act is an example of citizen groups coming forward to participate in legislative the process of lawmaking. Beginning with a movement started by a group of citizens, the law eventually became operational in October 2005.

Step 2: *When the government asks for public feedback on a Bill*

Even before a Bill has been drafted, the relevant ministry might choose to advertise and seek inputs from experts and citizens. This, though, is a rare occurrence. In some cases, the concerned ministry drafts a new legislation and seeks public feedback before sending it for Cabinet approval.

Step 3: *Engaging with Standing Committees.*

After a Bill has been introduced, it is usually referred to the concerned Standing Committee which invites various stakeholders and experts for their suggestions.

This provides another opportunity for civil society and the public to get involved in legislation. Fifteen witnesses deposed before the Standing Committee on Rural Development while it was preparing the report on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill. All Standing Committee meetings are closed door sessions which are not open to the general public or the media. Citizens groups can approach the relevant Committee to ask to be allowed to depose before it.

The government is not bound to accept the recommendations made by the Standing Committee. In the case of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, the government did not accept any of the Committee's recommendations.

Even after the Standing Committee has finalised its recommendations, there is scope to reach out to Members of Parliament and political parties. There are a number of instances in which political parties – allies in the ruling coalition or the opposition parties – have been able to prevent a Bill from being passed in Parliament or by forcing the government to make amendments to the Bill before being passed.

Step 4: *After the Bill is passed by both the Houses and goes to the President.*

In some rare cases, the President may ask Parliament to reconsider a Bill.

Step 5: *After the President of India has assented to a Bill and it is notified as an Act.*

After an Act is passed by Parliament, it can still be challenged in the courts on grounds that it violates the provisions of the Constitution of India.

Step 6: *When the rules and regulations to the Act are being drafted.*

The government may ask the public for comments and suggestions before framing rules and regulations under the Act.

During the process of drafting and the Bill being considered in Parliament, a variety of stakeholders may be involved. The final Act is usually a compromise between competing interests. Despite this, there is every reason for concerned citizens and groups to make every effort possible to engage with the process and ensure that they are able to make their voices heard.

Pressure Group Methods

The pressure groups adopt various methods to influence the process of the government. These methods are dependent on the nature of political system and the type of society in the country. They send petitions and request letters for the fulfillment of their demands. They are always making efforts of keeping public opinion in their favour. The mass media both electronic and print is very commonly used by the pressure groups for conveying their feelings and opinions to the government. They try to mould or influence the public opinion by using various publicity measures. The pressure groups, through lobbying try to exert their pressure on the government. The pressure groups have opportunities of influencing the judiciary also to some extent. They try to influence the selection of judges and launch campaigns to influence the judicial decisions. Therefore it can be established that pressure groups have become an integral part of every democratic political system. They also maintain the democratic spirit and ethos of a nation. Pressure groups have also been criticized on certain grounds specially of their tactics and double standards to corrupt the bureaucracy. The powerful groups manage to get their demands fulfilled while the weak groups are not even heard. Sometimes, the trade unions and the other associations get even unjust demands fulfilled due to their influence. Actually, the influence of a pressure group depends on the factors like its own organizational strength, discipline, commitment of its members, capacity to collect the people's sympathy and support, and financial position, and above all its access to decision making bodies.

The pressure groups working for the political cause, persons, etc., adopt some extremist measures like rallies, dharnas, demonstrations and hunger strike, etc.

The pressure groups working for human causes like peace, environment protection and human rights, etc., adopt a method of building enlightened public opinion and creating a good sense of compassion and reasoning. They work through organizing occasional national campaigns and international solidarity activities. Movement against AIDS, terrorism, nuclear bomb, etc., are the examples of such campaigns.

Pressure Groups and Democracy

Pressure groups have played a significant role in those developing countries which have a more stable government and political system or which have adopted democracy as its system. The role of pressure groups in a developing countries with a stable political system are listed out in the following :

- They balance the national and particular interests. They constitute links of communication between the citizens and the state.
- They render a necessary service by making much valuable data available to governmental agencies and to the public in general. They supply necessary information and accurate statistic to policy-makers. With the

help of the data supplied by the pressure groups, the pressure groups can support the necessary arguments. Thus, from a mass of conflicting information and views, the truth can always be discerned.

- A democracy which permits its citizens to express their varying interest and desires thereby gain a sort of 'Build In' protection against the emergence of a single, dominant social force. Businessmen, workers, farmers, social groups, women and religious groups- all seek to advance their own interests, but they are forced to compete with one another. The inevitable result is that they balance each other's demands and this countervailing tendency protects the society against the threat that an individual group will come to wield total power.
- Pressure groups keep democracy alive during the interval and during the elections, and constitute a barrier against inter-regnoms. They supplement the party system and the formal instruments of government by serving as spokesman of special interests within society.
- Pressure Groups have become a legislature behind a legislature. By their zeal and enthusiasm, their expertise knowledge and specialised skills, they influenced law-making on the floor of the legislatures.
- The powers and functions of the government are increasing day by day. The theory of the welfare state and the method of planned development are the new phenomenon which have led to growth of government power. Socialism and Positivism have increased them considerably and today we need 'Groups' as a shield against the sword wielded by the government.

Pressure groups promote democracy in a number of ways, discussed as follows:

1. By supplementing 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 have replaced political parties as the main way in which people express their views and interests:

- *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 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.

2. 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 politics. This, however, is very effectively combated by the growth in the number and size of pressure groups. As discussed earlier, 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.

3. 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' communication technologies 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.

4. Benefits of competition

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. As pluralists would argue, there is no such thing as a 'power elite'. Instead, as one group becomes influential, other groups come into existence to combat them and offer rival viewpoints. This is what pluralists call the theory of 'countervailing power'.

Trade unions developed in response to the growth of business power. Pro-abortion groups developed against anti-abortion groups and so on. In this way, public policy is developed through an ongoing debate between rival groups that ensures that political influence is widely and evenly dispersed. Group politics is therefore characterized by a rough balance of power. This is the essence of pluralist democracy.

Pressure groups threaten democracy in a number of ways, discussed as follows:

1. Increases 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. For instance, the influence of major corporations cannot, in most cases, be compared with the influence exerted by, say, a trade union, a charity or an environmental group. Pressure groups therefore strengthen the voice of the wealthy and privileged, giving those who have access to financial, educational, organizational and other resources and special influence over the government.

By the same token, there are significant, and sometimes large, sections of society that are effectively excluded from the pressure-group universe. This is usually because they are difficult or impossible to organize and so must, at best, rely on others to protect them. Examples of such groups include children, asylum seekers, the homeless, the elderly and the mentally ill.

2. 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.

3. '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. This is unaccountable power. Not only does this contrast sharply with the workings of representative bodies such as Parliament, but it also diminishes Parliament and 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, and the House of Commons does not get to discuss.

4. 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. Therefore, as pressure groups become more powerful, elected governments may find it more difficult to serve the public interest and to do what is best for society as a whole. This problem of the 'tyranny of the minority' is most extreme when pressure groups use direct action to achieve their objectives. Through the use of strikes, blockades and even intimidation and violence pressure groups, in effect, 'hold the country to ransom'. Once pressure groups start to operate outside the established legal and constitutional framework they are also operating outside – and arguably *against* – the democratic process.

Criticism of Pressure Groups

Pressure group in India are basically criticized on the following grounds-

1. **Focus on parochial interest-** Pressure group getting influence by their sectional and local interest more as compared to their common interest.
2. **Lack of effective membership-** Pressure groups do not have well developed infrastructure which can help them in regular way pursuing their interest.
3. **Dominance of single party system-** In India for long time there have been single party dominance and this powerful political party do not want to be ruled by any pressure groups.
4. **Lack of autonomous existence-** Most of the pressure groups except business groups does not have an independent autonomous existence of their own. Most of them dominated by political parties, which tries to divide each pressure group and have strong hold over one group at least.
5. **Varying life span-** In India we have loose and disorganized multiparty system, hence, even pressure group appears big and small with varying life span that appears and disappears.
6. **Unstable-** Pressure group lacks stability and commitment which results in shift in their loyalties according to changing political situation.

7. **Ineffective for interest articulation-** Pressure group like trade union in India lacked trained and competent functionaries. They have been not an effective agents of interest articulation in India.
8. **Use of unconstitutional method-** Pressure groups in India tries to influence the government mainly through various unconstitutional method as strikes, agitation, demonstration, lockouts etc.
9. **Sometimes led to mass violence-** Pressure group involves with protest and certain radicalization of political life results into mass violence. For example, Naxalite movement starting after fourth general election of 1967 in West Bengal.
10. **Threat to democratic setup-** The tendency of pressure group to resort to coercion to secure the solution of a socio-political problem in streets could be regarded as a serious threat to democratic set up.

Conclusion

But despite of all these major criticism the existence of pressure group are now indispensable and helpful element of democratic setup. Pressure group promotes national and particular interests constitute a link of communication between citizen and the government. They provide necessary information and keep the nation politically alive.