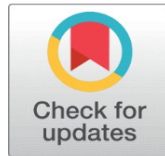
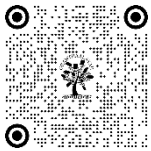


INTEREST GROUP AND LOBBYING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Interest groups are the intermediate agency between people/society and the state; they carry the interests of the people and pressurize the state to fulfil the same. The methods that they use to pressure the state to fulfil their interests are called lobbying. This paper tries to understand the nature and mechanism of Interest Groups and the methods they employ to lobby for fulfilling their demands.

Keywords: Democratic State, Positive Techniques, Negative Techniques, Contract Lobbying, Indirect Lobbying

1. INTRODUCTION

Meaning and Definitions: Interest group means, as the name itself suggests, Interest + group. It is a group consisting of individuals who have specific interests or interests to fulfil. Then, the question arises of what type of interests there are and who needs to fulfil them. These interests are not personal interests of a particular individual, which can be fulfilled by themselves or the family. These interests are the collective interests of a group or society, and they need to be fulfilled by the state.

Interest groups act as an alternative bridge between society and the state. Because, it is the political party, being a representative group, acts as a preliminary bridge between society and the state. In a liberal democracy, this is not a sufficient channel to represent all the demands of the people in the society. So, an Interest group emerges as an alternative bridge/channel for the people to represent their interests to the state. Political parties are internal parts of the Government / State. However, interest groups are not part of the government, nor do they have any interest in becoming part of the government. They only focus on fulfilling their demands through the contacts they have in government or legislature, otherwise through pressurising the decision-making institutions.

Definitions: Almond and Powell argue that “The process by which individuals and groups make demands upon the political decision-makers we call interest articulation”. Here, they are making it clear that interest articulation is the sole purpose of interest groups, and they articulate their demands before decision-makers (Government) either through temporary groups (Individuals) or groups (more permanent structure). Echoing the same opinion, Hitcher and Levine

define “An interest group is a collection of individuals who try to realise their common objective by influencing public policy”. It means the group of individuals who have come together to realise their interest by influencing the lawmakers to frame public policy in tune with their interest.

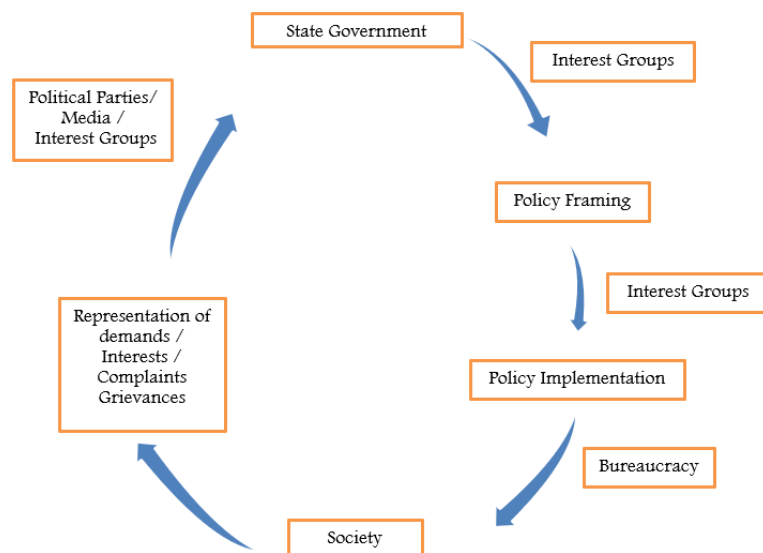
H. Zeigler defines it as “an organised aggregate which seeks to influence the context of governmental decisions without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities”. In this definition, Zeigler is arguing that interest groups are aggregates of individuals who exist to assert pressure on the government but not become part of the government. They are pressured to fulfil their demands.

La Palombara opinions that “A Conscious desire to have a public policy of authoritative allocation of values move in a particular, general or specific direction”. The Government, being a representative institute to re-distribute the nation's resource, is being influenced by the interest groups to allocate the resources to fulfil their demands, and sometimes interest groups pressurise the government not to allocate resources to a particular policy or a project as it hurts the interest of its group members.

Stages of development of Interest groups: In the growth of interest groups, we can recognise four important stages. They are:

1) Formation of Democratic State: Democratic states initially emerged in Europe and America; later, it spread to the Asian and African continent in the 20th Century. The democratic state provides space and freedom for ‘Interest Groups’ formation and activities. Democratic states want active people’s participation in policy formulation and its implementation. So, interest groups become an instrument for ordinary people to actively participate directly or indirectly in the government activities.

In a Democratic state policy formation, implementation, and feedback activity happen as explained in the below given diagram:



In a democratic state, policies are being framed by the government and implemented by the bureaucracy. If the stakeholders or people, who are at the receiving end of the policy implementation, have any grievances regarding the same, they cannot get a solution from the Bureaucracy as it is the implementing agency because it is not responsible to them. Bureaucracy is legally responsible to their higher officers and the minister. So, it creates a vacuum between the people and the State. It is the opposition parties, media and interest groups which carry the grievances and demands of the people to the government. In this regard, interest groups play both forward and backward mechanism roles.

- **Forward Mechanism:** It carries the demands and grievances of people over a policy to the government. Interest groups pressurize the government to address those grievances and also frame policies to satisfy the demands of the people. They also provide technical and ground-level information for the government to frame a public policy. They do not stop once the policy is framed. They either pressurize or work along with the bureaucracy in the

implementation of the policy. In case the Government does not heed their demand, they approach the court of law for justice.

- **Backward Mechanism:** Interest groups also pressure the government, sometimes approaching the court of law or creating public opinion to stop some of the decisions being taken or some of the development projects being implemented in environmentally sensitive areas. They also block development projects or policies, which leads to large-scale displacement, leading to the suffering of a large number of poor and needy people. So, democratic states with many activities provide an alternative channel for interest groups, political parties, and media.

Interest groups also survive in authoritarian, communist and dictatorial governments. However, the difference is that in democratic countries, interest groups voluntarily engage in influencing the activities of the government. In authoritarian, communist and dictatorial governments, most of the time, interest groups are formed by the government, and they are made to do activities guided by the government. So, interest groups are continuously under the watch of the government.

2) Industrial Revolution: During the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century Industrial Revolution began in Europe. This ended the medieval period and brought modernisation to the world. Moreover, industrial society gave much more importance to science and technology in organising society's activities. This resulted in two important changes: firstly, Society became more complex in structure and activities. Secondly, it increased the powers and functions of the market and the State at a later stage. These two important changes provided fertile ground for the interest groups to thrive and succeed. Because a complex society means diversified and specialised activities of the society get increased. This, in turn, provides an opportunity for the functioning of diversified and specialised interest groups. Moreover, the increase in power and functions of the market and state made interest groups actively work as a link between society and the State.

3) Welfare State: Another important factor for the growth of interest groups is the welfare state. In 1929, the Great American Economic Depression happened, and the cause for this was found in an unregulated market. So, economists, mainly John Maynard Keynes, argued for the increased activity and control of the state in market activities. Adding to this, the Second World War from 1939 to 1945 devastated the basic infrastructure in Europe and also pushed people to economic suffering. These things pushed the government to play an active role, as private players were not capable enough to play a positive role in the economic crisis. Mainly due to these two incidents, welfare states gained momentum in Europe. The welfare state not only increased the activities of the state but also made people dependent upon the State for their survival and prosperity.

After the Second World War, many of the Afro-Asian countries became independent, and they adopted democracy and a welfare state model. So, most of the countries across the world became welfare states during 1950. The welfare state increased the powers and functions of the state and also made people to be dependent upon the State. This provided fertile ground for the survival and expansion of interest groups, and it provided an inevitable alternative channel for the people to depend on to represent their interests to the government along with political parties and media.

4) Globalisation: The welfare state model, which became popular after the Second World War, started showing negative indications of economic crisis during the 1970s. Because, in the welfare state model, the government spends on various schemes and programmes, but there is no return in terms of financial gain. This makes the state not only economically weak but politically unstable. So, Britain and America initially in the 1970s introduced globalisation, privatization and liberalisation. The state directly handled some preliminary functions like managing currency, defence, security, etc., and other areas were allowed for complete private investment or collaboration with the government.

With the ushering in of globalisation, the market became powerful, and the state played a supportive role in the market. This situation not only brought changes in the structure and functions of interest groups. However, Interest groups related to the market and powerful industrial groups became more prominent compared to interest groups working in other areas. In the globalised world, interest groups working on market, environment, gender and economic issues have become more prominent as they are interconnected.

Factors Influencing Interest Groups: Four important factors have a deeper influence on the structure and functions of the interest groups. Those factors are explained below:

1) Nature of Political System:

- **Democratic political system:** There are two types of democratic political system:

Parliamentary democracy: In this system, whichever party has a majority in the legislature will form the government. So, parliamentary system interest groups are more interested in influencing the executive rather than the legislature. Because executive usually controls the legislature, e.g., India, Britain, etc.

Presidential Democracy: In presidential democracy, separate elections are held for legislature and executive. Legislature approval is essential for all the major decisions of the President. So, interest groups are more interested in influencing the legislature than the executive. Moreover, in presidential democracy, interest groups, if they fail to influence the legislature or executive, approach the judiciary to block the decisions of the legislature or executive, e.g., America.

- **Communist states:** In communist states, the party is more powerful than the three organs of the government, and the communist party controls the entire state machinery. Moreover, even the interest groups are formed and guided by the party itself. Interest groups function according to the guidance of the party, e.g., Communist China.
- **Authoritarian System:** In the authoritarian system, rulers feel that freely organised interest groups are a potential threat to their power. So, they support those interest groups that support the authoritarian ruler. Moreover, the authoritarian ruler constantly observes the workings of these interest groups and will curtail or eliminate the interest groups if they work against the interests of the ruler, e.g., Military rule in Burma.

2) Political Culture: Interest groups function differently in different political systems. Even in democratic states, interest groups function differently because of the varying political cultures that exist in these countries. These varying political cultures can be divided into four categories namely:

- **Active Political Culture:** In countries where citizens actively participate in government affairs and play a prominent role in interest articulation and interest aggregation, e.g., America.
- **Colonised /Post-Colonial Political Culture:** These countries are usually colonised or post-colonised countries. Here, the political culture of the colonising country influences or is forced upon the colonised country. Most of the time, colonised countries' local political culture gets mixed up with the colonising countries' political culture, giving it a new form. In these countries, interest groups are neither active participants in political culture nor idle. Interest groups play a role but have not played it in a very open or completely closed way, e.g., India.
- **Non-Active Political Culture:** In Non-Active Political Culture, because of lack of education and basic needs of life, people struggle for survival, and they do not actively participate in the affairs of the state, nor are they aware of it. So, in these countries, interest groups are not very active, nor do they play an important role in the affairs of the State, e.g., Somalia.
- **State-Centred Political Culture:** In Authoritarian and communist states, political power is completely controlled by the State. So, the political culture is nurtured and shaped by the State itself. Moreover, Interest groups also function according to the directions of the State, e.g., earlier Cuba.

3) Issues: Interest groups are mainly organised on two bases: a) Closed Membership

Groups; and b) Open Membership Groups.

- **Closed Membership Groups:** These groups aim to protect and promote a selected group's interest. For example, farmers' groups put pressure on the government to frame or implement policies that protect the interests of the farmers. In the same way, labour union groups lobby on the bureaucracy or legislature to protect the interests of the labourers.
 - **Open Membership Groups:** These groups have a cause that generally impacts everybody. So, they do not protect or promote the interest of a particular group, like farmers or labourers. But they try to protect the interests of people in general, e.g., environmental groups, the protection of the rights of the people in a democracy, etc.
- 4) Ideology:** Political ideology is an important factor influencing the interest groups' role and functioning. In a liberal democracy, interest groups based on liberal ideology gain more importance than groups based on communist ideology. The exact reverse is true in communist countries; groups based on communist ideology or groups which are not critical of communist ideology gain prominence.

In a democracy like India, interest groups whose ideology is the same as the ruling party ideology will gain prominence. For example, student interest groups like ABVP are linked to the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party; NSUI is linked to the ideology of the Indian National Congress, and SFI's ideology is linked to the ideology of the communist party of India (Marxist). Whichever party comes to power, their student's wing will gain more power than the other groups.

These are the four important factors influencing the interest groups' role and functioning.

Lobbying: Interest groups use various lobbying techniques to pressurise the three organs of the government. Interest groups use lobbying techniques with the legislature and executive rather than the judiciary. The judiciary is the last resort for the interest groups to fulfil their demands.

Meaning: Lobbying is a technique used by interest groups to pressurize the government to fulfil their demands.

Types of Lobbying: There are mainly two types of lobbying, namely:

Involved Lobbying: In this type, the concerned interest groups directly or indirectly pressure the government to fulfil their demands.

Direct Lobbying: In involved lobbying, interest groups exert pressure on the three organs of the government directly, namely:

1) Legislature: In a presidential system, especially in countries like the U.S.A., interest groups exert pressure on legislative members, especially those members of legislative committees. Here, Interest group members' intentions can be positive and negative. Sometimes, they want certain legislation to be passed keeping in the interest of the members of the interest groups. They sometimes do not want a particular policy to be passed in the legislature as it hurts the interests of group members.

Moreover, while framing a particular policy, interest groups also provide necessary information and statistics to prove why the policy is required and the components necessary for framing the policy. In order to do this exercise, they work along with the bureaucracy, which frames the draft of the policy, and also they create awareness among the concerned legislators and people about why a particular policy is required.

- **Political Parties:** Interest groups also meet the ruling party's prominent leaders as well as opposition leaders to convince them of the interest they are representing. Pressuring political party's changes from system to system. In a parliamentary system, interest groups are more interested in influencing the ruling party. Sometimes, they approach the opposition parties to put pressure on the government. In the Presidential system, they are more focused on influencing powerful party persons who are members of powerful legislative committees and powerful senate members.

In authoritarian and communist systems, interest groups are controlled and managed by the ruling party.

2) Executive: In the parliamentary system, authoritarian system or communist system, interest groups are interested in pressuring the executive. They directly meet the ministries concerned or the prime minister and provide them with all necessary information and statistics. They try to convince them why a particular policy needs to be framed or stopped from being framed or implemented.

- **Bureaucracy:** Interest groups are aware that in any system, bureaucracy plays a crucial role in framing and implementing a policy. Without the support of bureaucracy, it is difficult to alter any policy or programme. Moreover, many middle and small-level interest groups will not have the capacity to reach the level of Ministers or Prime Minister. So, they meet bureaucrats, especially higher-level bureaucrats, to exert pressure.

3) Judiciary: When they fail to influence the legislature or executive, interest groups approach the court of law to find a legal remedy. Interest groups usually approach the court of law to block or stop a policy framed by the legislature or implemented by the executive. Comparatively, interest groups concentrate their activities largely on the legislature and executive. As a last resort, they approach the court of law. However, there are interest groups who concentrate only on filing a case or petition in court rather than approaching the legislature or executive.

Indirect Lobbying: Interest groups do not use direct lobbying methods. Sometimes, they use indirect lobbying methods depending on the situation. When they use the indirect lobbying method, they approach the political party/party's prominent members and exert pressure on them to exert pressure on the government on their behalf. Sometimes, interest groups help party members by funding them in the election. Once they get elected, they use them to exert pressure on the government. Here, one should not get confused. The political parties are used for both direct and

indirect lobbying. In direct lobbying, political party members are in the seat of power or legislative committees, and their decision directly affects the policy. But, indirect lobbying these political party members even though they are prominent, but they are not directly involved in policy framing or decision making. They only pressurize the government on behalf of the interest groups. Indirect methods are used by the interest groups because it is not always easy to approach the people who are directly involved in decision-making.

Interest groups also use mass media to create awareness among the people and build strong public opinion. This acts as a strong pressuring tool on the government to fulfil their demands, for example, environmental rights groups, gender rights groups, etc. Moreover, interest groups also conduct awareness programmes for the people to make them understand the relevance of their demands through the collective opinion of the general public; they pressurize the government.

- **Contract Lobbying:** Interest groups, instead of lobbying, directly employ professional individual, groups or organisations to lobby on their behalf. These individuals or organisations have well-established contact with the bureaucracy and the government. These individuals or professional organisations charge for lobbying, and this will be paid by the interest groups. Usually, these individuals or organisations consist of people who have served in the government. So, they have good connections inside the bureaucracy or government circle. Using this connection, they get services for interest groups that hire them.

Techniques Used in Lobbying: The technique used in lobbying can be broadly divided into two parts: a) Positive Techniques and b) Negative techniques.

- 1) Positive Techniques:** Positive techniques mean when interest groups use legal methods to pressurize the government to fulfil their demands. Methods like meeting the Bureaucrats or Politicians and explaining the necessity of their demand. Adding to this, providing necessary information and statistics needed by the bureaucracy to frame the draft of a policy concerning the demand of the interest groups. Interest groups also help the bureaucracy implement the policy.
- 2) Negative Techniques:** Negative techniques mean when interest groups use illegal methods to pressurize the government to fulfil their demands. Interest groups use illegal methods like corruption, threatening with dire consequences, sponsoring the candidate in the election, and getting favourable recruitment or promotion in the bureaucracy. Sometimes, it blocks the policy of public interest as it hurts the interests of the group members, etc. Moreover, influencing or pressurizing the government to frame a policy goes against the foundational value of equality in democracy.

In conclusion, Interest groups' working nature changes from political system to system. Because different political systems have different political cultures, the working nature of the interest groups is directly impacted. Moreover, interest groups' model and operating styles also change when they operate at a different level.

Interest groups that operate at the local or state level work differently compared to interest groups working at the national level in terms of resources, methods and techniques of lobbying. At the international level, when interest groups operate, sometimes nations themselves or through their special agencies act like interest groups when dealing with other nations and international agencies. Adding to this, international interest groups are working on environmental issues, gender issues, peace initiatives, poverty alleviation programmes, etc., operate in different countries as well as with international agencies like the U.N.O. So, interest groups are non-political groups have no desire to be an integral part of power politics.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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