

# Power Group Politics in India and their Modus Operandi for Different Objectives

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## Abstract

In modern democratic states, there are groups of persons organized on the basis of common vested interests. They are neither political organization, nor do they contest elections to achieve power but endeavour to influence the course of public policies in order to achieve their objectives. Such groups are known as pressure groups. At the outset, pressure groups are also called as 'interest groups' as well as the 'influence groups.' They are not solely political organizations and unlike political parties, they do not put up candidates for elections. We may also call such groups as 'private associations formed to influence public policy'. They are medium through which people with common interests may endeavour to affect the course of public affairs. In this sense, any social group which seeks to influence the behaviour of administrators and parliamentarians, without attempting to gain formal control of government, can be designated as a pressure group. There are many similarities between an interest group and a pressure group. However, a distinction is sought to make between both to show that they are, in operation, dissimilar entities. In any society, there exist a number of interests or shared attitudes, some are organized, and others are not. Therefore, an interest group is a "shared attitude group, which makes certain claims upon other groups in the society. For example, trade unions and manufacturers' associations are interest groups, when they interact with each other over questions, like, hours of work and wages. But when they try to influence the content of legislation by acting through or upon the institutions of government, i.e., when they assume direct political significance, they become pressure groups. Francis G. Castle argues that pressure group is a broader term which subsumes interest groups and attitude groups.

**Keywords:** Subsume, Servitude, representative government, resolutions

## Introduction

A pressure group is an organized association which primarily aims at influencing the policies or actions of government. No society- democratic and sometimes even totalitarian is free from the pressure groups. In some societies, they are more formally organized and articulate while in others, they function behind the stage and are faceless. The nature and form of groups is shaped by the environment in which they originate and work. The structural feature of politics, government and society shape interest group configurations in a given political system. Groups conform their organizations and styles of action to significant features of the environment in which they must function.

Four environmental features play, particularly, a critical role in shaping group behaviour: the level and the process of modernization of society, the political culture, the structures of decision making and public policy. These environmental or systematic factors help explain the origin and types of groups in the society; the attitudes, the values

and rules of the game which regulate group behaviour; and, the focal points of governmental action. While talking about the significance of such groups, Myron Weiner has rightly observed, “Nothing can be more destructive of democratic culture than a conception of national interest which deprives special interests of the opportunity to bargain, to be heard, to enter creatively into the flow of demands and policies of the political process.”<sup>1</sup>

It would be important to note that the interest in pressure group studies is contemporaneous with two significant developments in the field of politics. One of these is the pluralist conception of society which posits a number of mediating groups between state and citizen. Such groups came to be considered by some circles as the only protection of defenceless citizens from the modern omnipotent state. The other simultaneous development has been the growth of big business and big labour, large corporations which came in some cases to rival the power of the state.

So much of theorizing about pressure groups in earlier writings has been about their desirability or undesirability. Pressure groups are inevitable and they must be recognized. There is no longer any contradiction between pressure groups and democracy. If democracy is to survive, it can only survive by striking a balance between pluralism and unity. Pluralism can be achieved by encouraging pressure groups and the unity, with which it has to be balanced, lies in an integration of results. It is only then that a consensus is achieved in any plural society and it is mainly this consensus which forms the basis of public policy.

Pressure groups have existed all along but it is the activities of these groups over the last few decades that have created a new awareness and their growing acceptance in social and political circles as a major force within a democratic set up. With life becoming more and more complex due to advances in science and technology, planning, legislation, etc., pressure groups have acquired growing importance in any representative government. Both political parties and pressure groups work as channels of communication between the rulers and the masses. However, the later i.e. pressure groups, are more important for the transmission of political ideas from the mass of the citizenry to the rulers, they act as a buffer between the government and the people, help to check demands made by others, provide for factional representation, comport mentalist access to the decision makers and provide people with emotional outlet. It is true that changes in the structure of government or distribution of power within that structure influence the patterns of interest articulation within the society and the channels of access available to them. Pressure groups may well seek to protect interests of particular sections without damaging the national interest. Besides the specialized knowledge, which pressure groups possess, can be of much use for the government and they can serve as important link between government and people to whom it is responsible. It is now almost universally recognized that decision-making is the essence of political dynamics, and that the efficiency of a political system is to be measured in terms of its capacity to make decisions that are widely accepted. Decisions involve compromises among conflicting interests of pressure groups and the interplay between social configuration, ideology, and government organs.

The organized pressure groups try to maintain close contact with government agencies with a view to influence the legislation and administration. They also strive to influence public policies by winning the support of public opinion. They are concerned with specific issues. They use their means and persuasive powers to obtain certain political decisions

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<sup>1</sup>.Myron Weiner (1962), *Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.6.

without having or seeking the power to make them.

It is worthwhile to enumerate the basic factors of pressure groups to highlight their different dimensions. In the first place, pressure groups are concerned with specific issues and self interest is the basic cause of their formation. Secondly, pressure groups, with a few exceptions, are non-political entities. They are informal and privately organized groups of people with common interests. Thirdly, they are involved in political process but are not willing in forming a government. They have no political program as such. Fourthly, pressure groups usually try to mould public policy in the way to fulfill their own objectives. Fifthly, pressure groups are not solely political organizations and they do not put up candidates for elections. Sixthly, the process by which individuals and groups make demands upon the political decision makers is called interest articulation. And pressure groups are the medium through which the function of articulation is performed in a political system. Seventhly, pressure groups are an anonymous empire. They play the role of hide- and- seek in their being non-political entities.

According to Kehar Singh, “Our interest in pressure groups, as political scientists, is mainly defined and limited by the fact of their role in a political system. Generally, the focus of pressure group studies is the points where the pressure groups and political system interact and influence each other. The underline presumption in pressure group studies is that it is worthwhile to identify a pressure group as a politically relevant group distinct from a political party and to take note of its functions, strategies and influences. Such kind of study stresses the fact that there is, after all, an ‘anonymous empire’ in a society that cannot be located within the formal structures of politics.”<sup>2</sup> Interest groups, barring business, bureaucracy and few others, that pressurize the government are still in their infancy in underdeveloped countries. But in developed countries like, U.S.A., U.K., Japan, France and Italy, not only do these groups wield considerable influence over public policy; they have even embarked on forging new alignments that are likely to have a far-reaching impact on the working of democratic systems of government.

### Meaning and Definition of Power Group

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At the outset, pressure groups are also called as ‘interest groups’ as well as the ‘influence groups.’ They are not solely political organizations and unlike political parties, they do not put up candidates for elections. We may also call such groups as ‘private associations formed to influence public policy’. They are medium through which people with common interests may endeavour to affect the course of public affairs. In this sense, any social group which seeks to influence the behaviour of administrators and parliamentarians, without attempting to gain formal control of government, can be designated as a pressure group.

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<sup>2</sup>. Kehar Singh (1990), *Farmers’ Movement and Pressure group Politics*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, p.1.

which makes certain claims upon other groups in the society.”<sup>3</sup> For example, trade unions and manufacturers’ associations are interest groups, when they interact with each other over questions, like, hours of work and wages. “But when they try to influence the content of legislation by acting through or upon the institutions of government, i.e., when they assume direct political significance, they become pressure groups.”<sup>4</sup> Francis G. Castle argues that, “pressure group is a broader term which subsumes interest groups and attitude groups.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Odegard, etal “An interest group is a formal organization of people who share one or more common aims or concerns and who are trying to influence the course of events, in particular, the formation and administration of public policy by government- so as to protect and promote their interests.”<sup>6</sup>

## **STRATEGIES, TACTICS AND METHODS OF PRESSURE GROUPS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PCCTU**

Every organization has certain goals, aims and objectives. For the advancement of these, such an outfit has to adopt certain strategies, tactics and methods. The PCCTU (Punjab and Chandigarh College Teacher Union), in order to advance and protect the interests of the teaching community has had to follow many a strategies and methods. In its long history of struggle for the advancement and protection of the interests of the teachers, it has adopted the following strategies/ tactic and methods:

Protest Convention at the zonal level and at state level to which government officials are called to convey the demands and grievances of the teachers; Union Deputation, calling on Education Minister or Chief Minister or Director Public instructions (C), etc., as per the situation; dharnas in the colleges in front of Principal's office or at district level or in front of D.P.I (C) Chandigarh on the state level; deputations of district leadership calling on Deputy Commissioner and presenting memorandums to be forwarded to the State Government; zonal rallies and state level rallies to highlight the demands; lightening Strike/Token Strike; post Card Campaign through the members of the PCCTU, addressed to the Chief Minister, Education Minister, etc.; telegrams by all the units of PCCTU to the Chief Minister, Education Minister, etc. for the acceptance of their genuine demands; signature campaign to acquire the maximum signature of the general public in favour of PCCTU demands; observing protest days in the colleges, by hoisting black flags; wearing of the black badges by all the college teachers on a particular day to stress their grievances and demands; cease work by taking mass casual leave by the teachers; violating section-144/mass arrests by the college teachers; one period/two periods strike daily for one week or two weeks in the colleges; indefinite strike; gherao of Ministers at the time of election, in their constituencies; help from other trade unions, students’ unions and political parties in favour of their demands; different deputations calling on MLAs of different political parties requesting them to speak/write in support of their demands.

In this way, the PCCTU employs diverse strategies/ tactics and makes use of different channels of access to the strategies. As a matter of fact, the course of action is charted out after the deep deliberations. In other words, a number

<sup>3</sup>. David B. Truman (1963), *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>. Stephen K. Bentley (1970), *American Politics and Government- Essays in Essentials*, Oxford and IBH, Calcutta, Indian Edition, p.144.

<sup>5</sup>. Francis G. Castles (1967), *Pressure Groups and Political Culture*, London, Routledge and Keg and Paul, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>. Odegard (1961), and Others, *American Government*, New York, pp.149-50.

of factors determine the course of action of a pressure group. The government, is, therefore, unsympathetic to mass deputation, public relations, campaigns, the organizations, strikes, Satyagrahas or hartals but is willing to listen to private deputations or resolutions proposed by particular groups. The PCCTU understands that the state government has the prime in this way pressure tactics mainly relate to the relations of PCCTU with the state government. In its long-term strategy, the PCCTU emphasizes that the state government to be more responsible for the improvement of higher education.

The pressure groups play an important role in the politics of Union of India and its Units i.e. the States. Therefore, their study becomes very crucial to fully understand the politics of the country and its Constitutional units. In Punjab, a number of studies have, already, been conducted regarding the farmers', workers', employees' and students' pressure groups.

### CONCLUSION:

Pressure groups are the outcome of industrial society. With the advent of democracy, in the European countries, pressure groups emerged in almost all of the industrialized countries as like the political parties. Pressure groups are the voluntary organizations of each and every organized section of any society. Pressure groups are often taken as synonym of interest groups but both of these categories, despite have been similarities are, have different from each other in certain aspects. In India pressure groups fall mainly into two categories, in the first category these pressure groups are based on ethnic identity and in the second place, pressure groups like in any other industrialized or modern society are based merely on economic or professional interests. In Punjab too, there are pressure groups of both of the above said categories. In other words, there are ethnic, religious, economic, occupational etc. groups in the state.

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