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Q4

How do pressure groups influence Indian political process? Do you agree with this view that informal pressure groups have emerged as powerful than formal pressure groups in recent years?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS II · 10 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- Explain how pressure groups influence the Indian political process, and say whether informal pressure groups have become more powerful than formal ones in recent years
- Distinguish unions, business chambers and statutory bodies from movements, media and identity networks

Revision summary

Pressure groups shape Indian policy through consultation, strikes, donations, litigation and identity politics.

Formal groups are registered unions, cooperatives and industry chambers with a seat in ministry talks.

Informal groups are movements, media swarms and identity networks that can force the weekly agenda.

Recent years have raised informal visibility, especially after anti-corruption and farmer mobilisations.

Durable economic law is still often written with formal groups in the room; both need transparency, not a ban.

Introduction

Pressure groups try to influence policy without themselves forming the government. [Article 19\(1\)\(a\)](#) and (c) protect speech and association, so lobbying, strikes, petitions and campaigns are part of constitutional politics. In India both formal organisations and informal networks now shape the political process; the second half of the question asks which of the two has more bite in recent years.

Body

How pressure groups influence the process

- **They set the agenda:** farmer unions, industry chambers and caste associations decide which Bills, subsidies and reservations reach the Cabinet and the street.
- They bargain inside parties and legislatures through donations, vote banks, and membership on standing committees and ministry consultations, which the [Second Administrative Reforms](#)

Commission treated as a normal, if poorly regulated, part of governance.

- They use industrial action and bandhs under the **Trade Unions Act, 1926**, and the **Industrial Disputes Act, 1947**, as INTUC, BMS, CITU and AITUC have done on labour-code and public-sector issues.
- Business groups such as **FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM** shape finance Bills, GST design and sector regulation through formal consultation and through informal access to ministries.
- Professional bodies - the Bar, medical councils, and teachers' associations - influence appointment, education and ethics laws.
- Identity groups (caste mahasabhas, religious organisations, language movements) influence delimitation debates, personal law, and reservation lists under **Articles 15, 16 and 340**.
- Direct action, public-interest litigation, and media campaigns turn a group demand into a court or **Election Commission** issue, as seen in environment and anti-corruption politics.

Formal and informal groups

- Formal groups have a registered constitution, office-bearers, and a recognised bargaining status: trade unions, cooperative federations, chambers of commerce, and statutory consultative bodies.
- **Informal groups are networks without a lasting legal personality, or with a thin one:** street movements, social-media swarms, khap and caste panchayats, celebrity-led campaigns, and ad hoc business lobbies.
- The India Against Corruption movement around the Lokpal demand, farmer sit-ins, and online campaigns on women's safety showed that a loosely organised crowd can force the legislative timetable faster than a registered union.
- 24-hour television and later social media lowered the cost of informal mobilisation; a hashtag can outrun a memorandum from a recognised federation.

Have informal groups become more powerful?

- **In visibility and agenda-setting, yes:** informal movements often decide what Parliament must discuss this week, while formal unions have lost density after informalisation of work.
- **In durable policy capture, not always:** Finance Bills, GST rates, and labour codes are still heavily shaped by formal chambers and recognised unions that sit in the room when the file is written.
- **Informal power is spiky:** it peaks during a scandal or a farm law protest and fades when the camera moves; formal groups remain in the rules of business of ministries.
- **Unregulated informal pressure also has a dark side:** paid news, anonymous troll farms, and extra-legal caste councils can coerce without the disclosure that the **Representation of the People Act** and company law try to impose on formal actors.
- A balanced answer therefore agrees that informal groups have become more powerful in public opinion and in forcing ordinances and repeals, but it does not write off FICCI, CII or the central trade unions, which still structure economic legislation.

Flow diagram

Article 19 association -> Formal unions and chambers
Article 19 association -> Informal movements and media
Formal unions and chambers -> Bills subsidies regulation
Informal movements and media -> Bills subsidies regulation
Bills subsidies regulation -> Political process and policy

Conclusion

Pressure groups influence Indian politics by agenda-setting, bargaining, strikes, litigation and identity mobilisation under **Article 19**. Informal groups have grown stronger in the street and on the screen in recent years, yet formal chambers and unions still write much of the economic detail. Healthy politics needs both voice and rules: disclosure of lobbying, not a ban on association.

Facts & figures

Article 19(1)(c)

Fundamental right to form associations or unions, subject to reasonable restrictions, which is the constitutional base of pressure-group activity.

Trade Unions Act, 1926

Statute for registration and legal personality of trade unions, the classic formal pressure group in industry.

FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM

Peak business associations that consult on Union Budgets, GST and sector regulation.

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

Anti-corruption statute whose passage was driven in large part by an informal mass movement rather than by a single registered union.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission

Discussed civil-society and interest-group participation in governance and the need for transparent consultation.

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