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Q1(b)

"Political parties and pressure groups are sine qua non of democracy." Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Politics of Representation and Participation

Politics of Representation and Participation: Political parties, pressure groups and social movements in advanced industrial and developing societies.

Core demand of the question

- "Political parties and pressure groups are **sine qua non** of democracy." Comment
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Schumpeterian democracy is a party contest for the vote.

Almond split aggregation to parties and articulation to groups.

Dahl's polyarchy needs organised opposition, which parties supply.

Groups carry specialised claims between elections.

Mere organisation is not democracy; pluralism and contest are.

Introduction

A **sine qua non** is a condition without which the thing does not exist. Competitive democracy needs organised choosers and organised claimants. Parties and pressure groups are those organisations.

Body**Why parties are necessary**

- Joseph **Schumpeter**'s thin democracy is still a contest of teams for the vote. Without parties, the voter faces names, not programmes.
- **Gabriel Almond** treated interest aggregation as a party function: many demands become a ticket that can govern.
- Robert **Dahl**'s polyarchy needs contestation. Parties supply the opposition that can replace the cabinet.

Why pressure groups are necessary

- **Almond's** interest articulation is the group's job: unions, chambers, caste associations, and professional bodies speak between elections.
- They specialise. A farmers' union can know a subsidy that a catch-all party blurs.
- Without groups, the State hears only officials and patrons.

The limit of the slogan

- One-party States and fascist syndicates also have organisations. The democratic test is pluralism, exit, and a free press, not the mere existence of a party office.
- Money and closed groups can strangle the same democracy they inhabit.

Flow diagram

Parties -> Aggregate programmes
Pressure groups -> Articulate demands
Aggregate programmes -> Competitive democracy
Articulate demands -> Competitive democracy

Conclusion

Parties and pressure groups are necessary to competitive democracy because they aggregate and articulate interests. They are not sufficient. Pluralism and open contest make them democratic rather than ornamental.

Facts & figures

Almond

Parties aggregate; interest groups articulate. Both are system functions of a working democracy.

Schumpeter

Democracy as competitive struggle of leadership teams for the people's vote.

Dahl

Polyarchy requires contestation and inclusiveness; parties are the usual vehicles of contestation.

Sine qua non

A necessary condition: without organised parties and groups, mass democracy has no working intermediaries.