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Q6(b)

Explain how political parties and pressure groups are dialectically related to each other in terms of achieving their goals

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Politics and Society

Politics and Society: Sociological theories of power; Power elite, bureaucracy, pressure groups, and political parties; Nation, state, citizenship, democracy, civil society, ideology; Protest, agitation, social movements, collective action, revolution.

Core demand of the question

- Political parties and pressure groups are dialectically related. Elaborate
- Keep the elaboration within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Parties seek office; pressure groups seek influence.

- **They turn into each other:** movements become parties; parties grow wings.

Capture, co-optation, and coalition are the conflictual links.

Weber's party, Michels, Gramsci, and Indian caste-farm-business bodies illustrate.

Unorganised migrant labour shows what happens when the dialectic is missing.

Introduction

Political parties seek office and a general programme. Pressure groups seek to influence policy without necessarily fighting every election. They are dialectically related because each produces, limits, and turns into the other. The relation is conflictual interdependence, not a neat chart of two boxes.

Body

The two forms

- Maurice Duverger and later party sociology treat parties as organisations that nominate and govern.
- Pressure groups, in the line of Arthur Bentley and later Almond's **interest articulation**, organise a slice of interest: union, chamber, caste association, farmers' front.

Dialectic: from group to party

- A successful pressure group may enter the electoral field, as labour and agrarian movements have done.
- Caste associations in India have demanded tickets and, at times, become the social base of a party faction.
- The group's particularism and the party's need for a wider coalition contradict each other, forcing programme change.

Dialectic: from party to group

- Parties spawn student, labour, and cultural wings that act as pressure inside and outside the state.
- When a party is in office, yesterday's movement can become today's insider lobby. When it is out, the same network returns to the street.
- Pareto's circulation of elites often runs through this revolving door.

Conflict and complementarity

- Pressure groups can capture a party (Michels's oligarchy meets organised interest).
- Parties can co-opt or split groups. Farmer unions, trade unions, and industry bodies live this tension.
- Gramsci's civil society is the field where both organise consent, not a third saintly sector.

Indian and present illustrations

- Business chambers and farm unions pressure budgets; parties need their votes and funds.
- New social movements on environment or gender often refuse party colours, then still bargain with ministries.
- Lockdown labour had weak party voice; that absence is also a fact of the dialectic: unorganised interest is weak pressure.

Elaborate the law of the relation

- **Each needs the other:** parties need articulated interests; groups need access to the house of power, which Weber called party.
- **Each threatens the other:** groups can unmake a majority; parties can legislate groups out of the room.

Flow diagram

Pressure groups -> Parties
 Parties -> Pressure groups
 Pressure groups -> Influence without office
 Parties -> Seek office
 Wings capture cooptation -> Dialectic

Conclusion

Parties and pressure groups are dialectically related as mutual production and mutual constraint. Groups become parties; parties grow wings; each can capture the other. Duverger, Bentley, Weber, Michels, and Gramsci supply the tools. Indian caste, farm, and business organisations are the living cases.

Facts & figures

Interest articulation

Almond: the process by which groups state demands to the political system.

Michels

Iron law of oligarchy: organisation, including parties and unions, tends toward minority control.

Weber on party

Party as organised power-seeking, a third order beside class and status.

Civil society

Gramsci: the field of associations where consent is organised, including both parties' fronts and independent groups.

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