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Q7(c)

Illustrate with examples the role of pressure groups in the formulation of social policies.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 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

- Illustrate with examples the role of pressure groups in the formulation of social policies
- Keep the illustration within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Pressure groups influence policy without always seeking office.

They set agendas, draft, protest, litigate, and threaten votes.

Mandal caste associations, Chipko, **Narmada**, unions, SHGs, RTI, and corporate lobbies are examples.

The organised are heard first; gig and care workers often last.

Oligarchy inside groups and capture of the state are the limits.

Introduction

Pressure groups are organised interests that influence policy without necessarily seeking office. In a democracy they supply information, votes, money, and disruption. Social policy on caste, labour, environment, and welfare is routinely written under that pressure, not only in a planning office.

Body

How they enter formulation

- **Agenda setting:** a group names a harm as a public problem, as MKSS did for secrecy before the Right to Information Act, 2005.
- **Drafting and committee capture:** industry associations and professional bodies sit on expert groups. **Weber's** parties and status groups meet here.
- **Street and court:** Chipko and **Narmada** moved forest and dam policy through protest and litigation, not through a ministry memo alone.
- **Electoral threat:** caste associations after Mandal shaped reservation policy by promising or withholding blocs of votes.

Indian illustrations

- Caste associations, as the **Rudolphs** noted, bargain for education, jobs, and names in the OBC list. Policy on reservation is unreadable without them.

- Trade unions shaped labour codes, and their weakening shaped the later ease-of-doing-business turn.
- Farmers' unions have entered minimum support price and farm-law debates as classic sectional pressure.
- Women's groups and SHG federations pressed for domestic-violence law, micro-credit architecture, and local representation.
- Disability and patient groups have shaped rights statutes through a mix of NGOs and courts.
- Corporate lobbies shape CSR rules under the Companies Act and environmental clearances, which is pressure from capital, as **Marx** would insist.

What the examples show

- Pressure groups pluralise policy, which Tocqueville would count as association.
- They also skew policy toward the organised. Unorganised gig workers and unpaid carers enter late, which NFHS and labour surveys still under-voice.
- **Michels's oligarchy appears inside groups:** office-bearers bargain, members may not.
- Habermas's public sphere is healthier when arguments, not only money, travel; capture is the pathology.

Role, stated cleanly

- They formulate by defining the problem, supplying drafts, blocking alternatives, and monitoring implementation.
- The state is not a neutral umpire. It selects which groups get a chair.

Flow diagram

Pressure groups -> Agenda
 Pressure groups -> Drafts committees
 Pressure groups -> Protest courts votes
 Agenda -> Social policy
 Drafts committees -> Social policy
 Protest courts votes -> Social policy

Conclusion

Pressure groups write social policy by agenda, draft, protest, and vote. Caste associations and Mandal, Chipko and **Narmada**, unions, SHGs, RTI campaigns, and corporate lobbies are the Indian set. They deepen voice for the organised and can silence the unorganised unless counter-groups form.

Facts & figures

Mandal and caste associations

Group pressure that reshaped reservation as social policy.

RTI Act, 2005

Campaign pressure, notably MKSS, that turned secrecy into a citizen right.

Narmada

Movement pressure on displacement and dam policy through protest and courts.

Rudolphs

Caste associations as modern pressure groups, not mere relics.

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