# BLOCK II

# Representation and Political Participation

# REPRESENTATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

As individuals, few of us have much influence in politics. In order to have an impact on policies, we join others with like-minded interests or programmes. We use our democratic rights of assembly and freedom of speech to create or join groups to influence public policies or acquire power to shape those policies.

In this block, we turn to another equally significant aspect of Comparative Politics, institutions and processes that link society and the governments. The first three units of this block examine the role of two major actors, political parties and pressure groups, and the last unit focuses on how electoral systems affect the actors involved in the political process.

Political parties are the most organised, the most powerful and seemingly inevitable organisations. Though they do not find a formal mention in most constitutions, they have become vital to a democracy. How did political parties come to occupy such an important position in modern political systems? How are they different from other political groups in society? What are party systems and what accounts for their variations? These are some of the questions taken up in **Unit four and five** of this block.

Another important institution that bridges society and the government is the pressure group. Unlike political parties, pressure groups seek to influence the powers which shape public policy rather than capture power. What are these organisations or groups? What methods do they adopt to influence public policy? What is their role in democratic politics? Do they have a role in non-democratic politics as well? These are the questions taken up in **Unit 6**.

A hallmark of modern democracy is the holding of free and fair elections. This means that the right to vote (suffrage or franchise) is open to all citizens and that votes are counted fairly. This having been said, there are clearly variations. **Unit 7** of this block discusses the complicated question of electoral rules, which decide how votes are cast, counted, and translated into seats in a legislature. As you will notice, these systems vary widely and make a huge difference in the distribution of political power.

# UNIT 4  FUNCTIONING OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES*

**Structure**

## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

Political parties have become indispensible for the existence and functioning of modern political society. In this unit, we examine the meanings, origins, characteristics, role and functions of political parties in different political systems of the world. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of a political party

- Explain the origin of political parties

- Describe the functions performed by a political party

- Explain the functioning of political parties under different types of political systems

- Identify the challenges faced by political parties in contemporary times.

---

* Dr. Vikash Chandra,Assistant Professor, Dept of Political Science, Kashi Naresh Government Post-Graduate College, Bhadohhi, Uttar Pradesh

# 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Modern democracies have representative governments, i.e., a government where citizens elect people to represent them and make laws on their behalf. Elected representatives are held accountable by the people for their activity within government. It is in this process of representing the opinions of citizens and acting as the agencies of people's political participation that political parties perform the role of intermediaries, facilitating the relationship between citizens and institutions of the states.

Underscoring the importance of the political parties, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) noted that "a party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life." Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), a founding father of the United States of America, similarly acknowledged the importance of political parties when he wrote: "if I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all."

In performing the mediating function between the citizens and institutions of the state, political parties also find a place in non-democratic systems. Authoritarian and totalitarian governments such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Communist Soviet Union and China are identified with single political parties. On the whole, political parties have become the *sine qua non* in any modern political system.

# 4.2 POLITICAL PARTIES: MEANING AND ORIGIN

Political parties have been understood and defined differently. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), an Irish statesman, defined a political party as "a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed." In the 20th century, scholars have advanced a variety of definitions of a political party. German political scientist Sigmund Neumann (1904-1962) referred to political parties as "the articulate organization of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views.It is the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community"(1969, 71).The Italian scholar and staunch advocate of political parties, Giovanni Sartori (1924-2017), defined a political party as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections candidates for public office" (1976, 62).Similarly, American political scientist Robert J. Huckshorn(1928)regarded a political party as "an autonomous group of citizens having the purpose of making nominations and contesting elections in the hope of gaining control over governmental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of the government" (Katz 2020: 214).

While these definitions demonstrate difference in the interpretation, we can identify five distinct elements of a political party from them. First, the presence of a **group of people** is a necessary condition for a political party. The

membership of a party varies from a few hundred to millions according to the appeal of the party and the size of the country. Secondly, principles, norms and ideas are core element of a political party. Political parties are propounded on and **represent a particular ideology, identity, region and issue**, which provide a normative and ideational foundation to political parties. It is the adherence to principles which distinguishes a party from another. While earliest political parties such as the Liberal Party, Labour Party, Conservative Party, Socialist Party and Communist Party were based on ideology, political parties in the Developing World and newer parties of Europe and America are based on distinct identities and issues such as ethnicity, race, and region and environment. Thirdly, political parties generally have **a permanent organisation** with authorised members holding official positions in the organisation. The officeholders may be selected by top leadership or elected by party members. But there is continuity in the organisation, i.e., the life span of an organisation goes beyond the life of the current or one generation of leadership. Fourth, political parties come into being with **specific goals**. The main goal of a political party is to capture political power through the electoral process. To achieve their goals, they strive to gain and retain a degree of popular support. Finally, political parties seek to form government and control political power by **constitutional and legitimate means,** i.e., by contesting elections and not through extra-constitutional means like a coup.

Contrary to this Liberal viewpoint of party as an agency of organized public opinion that takes part in electoral struggle for power, a Marxist views it in terms of 'class' antagonism. Citing the example of the Communist Party, the leader of the Russianrevolution, Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) characterized party as "a small compact core, consisting of reliable, experienced and hardened workers" whose basic aim is the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeoisie class and establishment of dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin regarded the communist party as "the vanguard of a class, and its duty is to lead the masses and not merely to reflect the average political level of the masses."

Political parties come into beingat a particular historical juncture of the development of a state. American political scientists Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner argue that a political party emerges when the political system reaches a degree of complexity. They argue that "the political party materializes when the tasks of recruiting political leadership and making public policy can no longer be handled by a small coterie of men unconcerned with public sentiments." (1969: 04).Political parties also come into being when the ruling class begins thinking that people should participate in the system. The change in the thinking of the ruling elite may come as a result of the rising democratic consciousness, the increasing desire to select leaders or to control people uprising against them.

Along with the'when' question, it is also crucial to understand 'how' parties are established. French political scientist and politician Maurice Duverger (1917-2014) has given an authoritative explanation of the historical origin of political parties in his book *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activities in the Modern State* (1954). He offers a two-fold explanation of the origin of political

parties. The **intra-parliamentary origin** orwhat he calls "the electoral and parliamentary origin of parties" refers to those parties which have an origin within the parliament and assembly. Here a group of parliamentarians come together to maximise the prospect of winning the election, and form an electoral committee at the election time. These practices get institutionalised, eventually leading to the foundations of a political party. The**extra-parliamentary origin**refers to those parties which have their origin outside the parliaments and assemblies. They come into being when economic, religious and gender restrictions from voting rights are removed. Social groups such as philosophical societies, workers union, and newspapers associations played a significant role in establishing such political parties. The British Labour Party, for example, was created in 1899 by the Trade Union Congress as its electoral and parliamentary organisation. Similarly, agriculture and peasant organisations played a significant role in establishing parties in Austria, Canada, Switzerland, central European and Scandinavian states. European socialist parties and nationalist parties like Indian National Congress were also born out of social movements and struggles.

## Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is a political party?

.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................

2) How do parties of intra-parliamentary and extra-parliamentary origin differ?

.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................

## 4.3 FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties perform a wide range of functions which have been organised and discussed by different scholars. The American political scientist Charles E Merriam (1894-1953) has identified the five distinct functions of the party as follows: selection of official personnel; formulation of public policies; conductors or critics of government; political education including nationalization of opinion; and intermediation between individual and government. (Scarrow 1967: 770) In the same way, British scholar Alan R. Ball has clubbed the functions of political parties into four groups: representative functions; electoral functions, governing function, and formulation of policy, (1987: 3-5) while Italian political scientists Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair have grouped the functions of parties into two broad categories: representative and institutionalfunctions.

## 4.3.1 Organisation and Modernization of Traditional Societies

Organising diverse and fractured societies and their modernisation is a crucial function of political parties. Modernisation is a process in which a society marches from the traditional to the modern stage of development. In this process, a traditional society tries to inculcate the defining economic, social and political attributes of modern society. The modernisation function of political parties begins with organising a fractured society into an organised polity. To this end, they bridge the differences among people and social groups. In other words, this function starts when a party starts nation-building in a fragmented or loosely organised society. Once the polity is organised, the political parties play a linchpin role in selecting the model of modernisation and political development. The path or model of economic, social and political development a newly established state will adopt is decided by political parties. The Indian National Congress (INC) is a familiar example. Since its establishment in 1885, the INC played a pivotal role in organising deeply divided Indian society to fight against the British colonisers. In the post-Independence period, the INC determined India's modernisation path.

However, it is not only a case with the post-colonial states. In Europe and America, parties have shaped and determined their modernisation in the 17th and 18th centuries. Expanding onthe political party's role in organising a fractured polity, nation-building and its modernisation, American scholar Robert Dix opinion that "institutionalization of parties and party systems is crucial in the maintenance of the tenuous new democracies" seems to hold true.(Dix 1992, 490).

## 4.3.2 Political Socialization

Political parties are regarded as agents of political socialization. Political socialisation is a process in which people are familiarised with the political culture, political norms and values of their country and these virtues are transferred from one generation to another generation. Political parties function as a channel that communicates political culture from one generation to another. They educate people in various ways. First, at the time of election, political parties and their representative meet voters to inform them about their programmes and policies to convince them to vote in their favour. Secondly, ruling parties make people aware of the government's programmes and policies on any given issue. In recent years, social media has emerged as a crucial tool of political socialisation. Thirdly, through agitation, *dharna*sor protests, the opposition parties point out the shortcomings of the government's programmes and policies and present alternatives to the government's policies. This enables people to become aware of the government and its policies. Fourth, the political socialisation function is also performed by leading and participating in debates on television and radio and advertisements in electronic and print media. Fifth, by issuing the election manifestos before the elections, political parties let people know what they intend to do if they win the election. Through these practices, people become aware of their political system, its institutions and processes.

### 4.3.3 Political Recruitment

Political recruitment is the function of political parties in which they select people from society for a political role in the party and government. The process of political recruitment begins with political socialisation and providing formal membership of the party. The recruited members are trained in the party's ideology and later selected for contesting elections. These members hold official positions in government when the party wins general elections. Formal recruitment begins with the filing of nomination for contesting the election by the party member. This function "selection of leaders" is not limited to the democratic political systems. Underlining the comprehensiveness of the political recruitment functions of the political parties,Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner note that "whether the country is relatively democratic India or relatively un-democratic Ghana, a long-established democracy like Britain or a thriving totalitarian state like the Soviet Union, the party is likely to be intimately involved in political recruitment—the selection of the political leadership" (1969: 03).By political socialisation and recruitment functions, political parties make the polity more inclusive and representative.

### 4.3.4 The Formation and Running of Government

The formation of government is the ultimate goal of a political party. This function differentiates political parties from other social groups like interest groups or civil society organisations. To capture political power, political parties enter the election process andcontest elections. In this process, they field candidates and campaign in their favour. They strive to form a government by achieving wide public support. If they fail to gain a majority on their own, they try to form a government by forming coalitions with like-minded parties. Such coalition forming function can be seen widely in India, Australia and Brazil. Given their social diversity, electoral system and multi-party system, obtaining the desired majority by any party has become difficult. Once political parties gain a required majority in elections, they strive to form a government. They appoint elected members in the ministries and departments. In this way, the elected members of political parties run government and directly participate in the government's policies and programmes making process.

### 4.3.5 Making and Shaping Government's Policies

At first glance, it seems that policymaking is the government's function. However, a close look reveals that people occupying political positions in the government come from the ruling party. In this sense, the government can be called 'party-government.' At the broader level, the government's programmes and policies on critical issues are made according to the broader consensus reached in the party, reflecting their ideology and policy consensus. Alan R. Ball has rightly described "the formulation of policy" as an essential function of political parties.

Policymaking and policy-shaping are two distinct functions. In policymaking, political parties are directly involved in the process, though they perform this

function behind the scenes. In policy-shaping, parties influence the policy-making process. The ruling party exclusively performs the policy-making function, while both the ruling and opposition parties perform the policy-shaping function. In general, the ideology of the ruling party plays an important role in policy formationwith most Left and Centre parties preferring proactive intervention in economy and social welfare and the Right and Far-Right parties preferringliberalization and privatization.

## 4.3.6 Coordination

Political parties perform coordination or mediating function between government and society. Through the coordination function, political parties provide stability to the political system and establish and maintain coherence in the society and government. The coordination function takes place at least at three levels: coordination between government and society, coordination within government, and coordination within society. According to American scholar Kay Lawson, the coordination between society and government takes four forms: electoral linkage, participatory linkage, clientelist linkage and directive linkage(Pettitt 2014: 14). Details of these four linkages can be seen in the functions of political parties in the democratic political systems in section 4.5. The coordination within government occurs at two levels: among the three organs of thelegislature, executive and the judiciary and among national, regional and local levels of the government. Coordination between ministries and organs of government is realised through bodies like party meetings, parliament and its committees and policy committees, while coordination between different levels of government takes place in inter-governmental bodies like India's National Development Council and Australia's Premiers Conference and party meetings organised at various levels in the party. There are many civil society organisations like interest groups and non-governmental organisations that coordinate society. Along with other civil society organisations, parties function as a mechanism of coordination within society. Modern political parties have different occupational wings such as trade unions, farmers, women and the youth wing which are indulged in this process. These specialised occupational wings offer coordination among voters of that particular occupation with the party.

## 4.3.7 Representation

In modern states, people do not have time, training and ability to represent themselves in diverse aspects of political and social life. Therefore, political parties function as agents of the masses and represent them. They speak at various places and forums like media, parliaments, assemblies and electoral campaigns on behalf of their supporters and party members. The representation function of political parties is close to the "interest integration function" described by Almond and Powel, the American political scientists who came up with a variety of cultural and functional ways to measure the development of societies. Through common programmes, political parties bring many interest groups together. The success of the government formation function largely depends on the interest integration function of the political parties because if they

fail in getting votes from diverse interest groups in their fold, they will fall short of the required majority.

The representative function of political parties is extensive and diverse because the representation takes many forms: ideological representation, regional representation, representation of identities and representation of interests. A good number of political parties represent the commonideologyof their core voters and supporters. Such parties include Liberal and Conservative parties of the United Kingdom, Communist Party of China, Democratic Party in the United States of America, and Fascist parties of Italy and Germany. Some parties focus on regional representation. Such parties' core vote is based in a particular region; they prefer to identify themselves with the region's culture, language and religion and speak for that region. India's Telangana RastraSamiti which championed the cause of separate statehood for Telangana or the National Conference striving for the autonomy for the state of Jammu & Kashmir are examples of parties that represent the demands of their region. Some parties represent particular identities. The BahujanSamaj Party in Uttar Pradesh and the Shiv Senain Maharashtra are examples of parties which represent the interests of Dalits and Marathis respectively. Although these parties succeed in garnering support from voters of other identities, a large chunk of votes comes from their core identity-based voters. A few political parties also represent particular interest. The interest can be in the form of issues, such climate change, nuclear disarmament etc. The Green Party of Europe and the Nuclear Disarmament Party (1984-2009) in Australia fall in this category.

## 4.3.8 Control over Government

The role of political parties goes beyond the ruling party. They also work as the opposition. This role is exclusively found in democratic political systems. As an opposition party, the political party try to put control on the tyranny of the government. They criticise the government for its programmes and policies which they think are not in the best interests of the people and the state. They organise protests, marches, and door to door campaigning to spread awareness of the wrong policies and priorities of the governments. In turn, governments take the opposition party's role seriously, allowing their ministers and other party members to respond to the opposition party's allegations.

However, the most recurring role of the political parties as the opposition has evolved in the United Kingdom. Here the opposition party is known as Her Majesty's Opposition. Functioning as an opposition party, the concerned political party forms a Shadow Cabinet. The Shadow Cabinet of the opposition remains ready to take charge if the ruling loses the majority in the legislature. In other democracies, the opposition parties try to remove the ruling party and assume that role. To this end, they bring a no-confidence motion in the Parliament. Once the ruling party fails to prove the majority, the opposition takes the opportunity to form the government.

## 4.3.9 Making Public Opinion

Public opinion-making is primarily a democratic function of political parties. Political parties are directly associated with citizens through political socialisation, electoral and public opinion-making functions. Political parties function as agents of public opinion-making. They try to mobilise and convince citizens to stand with their position on any given issue. For instance, take the issue of the 123 Agreement, also known as the India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement which was covered extensively in Indian media. Not only the political parties but also Indian society was deeply divided. The main opposition party, the BharatiyaJanata Party and Marxist parties were opposing the deal as well as shaping public opinion in their favour. It is believed that the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement was one of few issues on which Indian people were aware of and shaping foreign policy issue since Independence. Although parties perform the public opinion-making function, they most extensively engage in this function during elections as public opinion is more likely to turn into votes at this time.

## Check Your Progress Exercise 2

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) The functions of political parties are not limited to electoral politics. Do you agree?

.............................................................................................................................

.............................................................................................................................

.............................................................................................................................

.............................................................................................................................

.............................................................................................................................

# 4.4 POLITICAL PARTIES UNDER DIFFERENTPOLITICAL SYSTEMS

The role and functions of political parties vary with the type of political system. Their functions in non-democratic political systems differ from their functions in democratic political systems. The functions of political parties differ even among the non-democratic political systems like fascist and communist political systems. The difference in functions and roles is primarily rendered by the difference in political culture, the degree of socio-political development, the number of political parties and intra-party culture.

The role of political parties in a democracy is very comprehensive. American political scientist E. E. Schattschneider has observed that "the political parties created democracy, and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties." (Katz 2020: 216). First**,** the **electoral function** is the most important function of parties in a democracy. A competitive party system is found in the democratic political systems, where various political parties vie for votes in

elections to control political power. Political parties compete with each other to increase their membership and mass support base. Second, parties s**ocialise the citizens**, recruit and train them for holding political positions in the government. Political parties in democratic political systems mainly use persuasive means to mobilise support. After elections, bargaining among elected members takes place in the democratic political system to occupy political positions in the government. Given the democratic compulsions, often the top leadership is compelled to make their ministries more representatives in terms of region, occupation, gender and identities. Third, the role of political parties does not end with the **formation of the government**. Even after selecting elected members for political positions in government, parties function as watchdogs and keep an eye on them and the government. They even reshuffle ministers from one ministry to another, if found necessary. Fourthly**,** political parties create a strong **linkage between governments and voters**. According to Kay Lawson, four linkages are most important: electoral linkage, participatory linkage, clientelistic linkage, and directive linkage (Pettitt 2014: 14). The electoral linkage keeps the elected representative responsive to the voters and supporters of the party. By elevating the citizens' role from mere voters, the participatory linkage allows them to play an active role in governments. The clientelistic linkage provides a bargaining opportunity to voters and the party- the party provides some services or facilities in exchange for votes. Through the directive linkage, those in power (former party members, but now in government) try to control citizen's behaviour through coercion, education or both. Fifthly, the proper functioning of a democracy cannot be imagined without opposition parties today. **Controlling the government** as an opposition party is exclusively found in the democratic political systems.

Given the difference in political parties and political culture, the role and functions of parties in developing political systems varies from those of the advance or well-established democracies described above. In general, parties in developing systems strive for modernisation and political stability. However, political parties in some developing states have deferred playing in the election by the rules. Such parties have willingly or unwillingly challenged the stability of the system. Nevertheless, through the well-thought recruitment functions, parties in most of the states have succeeded in providing stability to the political system by making the council of ministers more representative and diverse in terms of region, identity, gender, and race.

Political parties play a slightly distinct role in the non-democratic political systems such as authoritarian, communist and fascist systems. There are three types of authoritarian political systems: monarchy, military and civilian. In authoritarian political systems, political parties are the instrument of governing the polity. They legitimise the ruling class and shield their regime. Political parties perform five interrelated functions in authoritarian political systems (Hague, Harrop and McCormick 2019: 282). First, the political parties help in solving intra-regime conflicts. In the absence of political parties, the dictator's regime may be destabilised.Secondly,political parties help balance threats to the regimes coming from other potential challengers like the military. Thirdly,political parties assist the dictator in managing elections. The dictator's

party help him in bribing voters, capturing polling booths, and manipulating elections. Fourthly, functioning as an instrument of propaganda, political parties take the message of the ruling class and extend their influence to the remote areas of the political system. Finally, political parties in the authoritarian regimes perform socialisation function. But they do not seek merely to educate people but educate in such a way that people support the regime, its ideology and prevent the chances of revolt against the regime.

In Communist political systems, inter-party competition is absent because either other parties are not recognised or lack enough support to compete with the dominant communist party. The communist political parties are usually organised on the principle of democratic centralism. Therefore, a strict hierarchy is maintained in the party. The political parties in the communist political system play a vital role in modernising, socialising, recruitment, and opinion-making. The communist systems' political party try to build the newly established communist states in line with communist ideology and philosophy. They shape the government's policies and programmes but not as opposition but from within. To enhance and maintain the legitimacy of the communist regime, they socialise and re-socialise citizens. They use persuasive as well as coercive means to attain their goals.

Fascist regimes assign great importance to the leader and party. As these systems are totalitarian, they try to control all aspect of citizen's life. Therefore, the fascist parties focus on the socialisation function. Through socialisation, the ruling elites try to legitimise the leaders and their ideology to deter and debarred any chance of opposition. To this end, the ruling party does not hesitate to coercing its citizens to follow the party, and its leaders dictate. Fascist political parties seek to modernise the state in line with fascist ideology. They try to shape public opinion favouring the fascist state and strongly discourage criticism and counter-opinion. The political party also functions as a coordination mechanism between people and government. As in the Communist systems, political parties in the fascist systems socialise citizens and discipline in line with the party's ideology, if necessary.

## Check Your Progress Exercise 3

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) How does the role of political parties differ in democratic and non-democratic political systems?

.......................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................

.......................................................................................................................

## 4.5 CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties have been facing several internal and external challenges for a long time. Internally, the party's organisation and succession have been issues of concern. Parties, especially in developing countries, lack internal democracy. Organisational elections do not take at regular interval. Few leaders make decisions at the top level while others follow. A charismatic leader occupies the top position for an extended period, either without elections or merely with token organisational elections. In some cases, dynastic succession at top leadership takes place. Members of a family or clan occupy the top leadership position of the party. In this context, Spanish sociologist and political scientist Juan J. Linz (1926-2013) has aptly noted that the level of peoples' involvement and ideological and emotional attachment political parties commanded a century or even two or three decades has eclipsed. Few external developments in the 21$^{st}$century have further complicated the matter, leading to a decline in the people's trust in the political parties.

Declining people's trust in political parties is a noticeable challenge. With rising awareness, peoples' expectations from political parties have increased. In the age of mass communication and social media, people are overtly expressing their anguish and dissatisfaction with parties. Several factors have contributed to the growth of this dissatisfaction. First, the opposition for the sake of resistance is one of them. Often political parties embarrass the same policies and programmes when in power which they used to oppose while in opposition. In India, one can take the Bhartiya Janata Party's opposition to Foreign Direct Investment in retail. It opposed the FDI in retail while in opposition butcarried forward the policy when it came into power since 2014. Secondly, the media also fuels this growing dissatisfaction. There is a tendency to paint leaders as power-seekers and creatures who work for self-perpetuation in power. Lastly, the inability of political parties to adapt to the changing social and cultural aspects of the states and cope with citizens' changing demands is widening the trust deficit. These factors have cumulatively contributed to reducing the public trust in political parties.

The rise of election management firms is posing a significant challenge to political parties. Several political parties have begun to delegate the crucial election management function to professional election management firms. Until recently, this was predominantly practised in the developed democracies of Europe and America. This is no longer the case now. Political parties in the Developing World, in their quest for political power through elections have started hiring election management firms. These firms take the required information from political parties and make election strategy for them. Taking private data from social media giants like Facebook and WhatsApp, these firms treat people like groups and not citizens. The entry of election management firms is promoting unethical data transfer. The rising role of the firms may make political parties less responsive and accountable towards citizens because parties may regard firms as more crucial in winning elections than providing services to the citizens. The expansion of the role of these firms may create a gap between political parties and citizens.

The increasing influence of social media is another factor that is further subsiding peoples trust in political parties. With the expansion of Internet services, the role of social media has expanded manifold in the last one or two decades. Social media has made the relationship between political parties and citizens a two-way process. The functioning of the political parties is significantly affected by this technological revolution. Instead of directly interacting with citizens, political parties use social media to reach people and mobilise people in their favour. Information is sent via social media. Consequently, the direct contact between citizens and political parties is gradually declining, especially when there are no elections. Political party's engagement with citizens is declining because the party's role as a link between society and government is being performed by the Information Technologycells of political parties.

In recent years, the IT Cells have made social media a favoured instrument of political parties to spread information to further their parent parties' image among citizens and targeted groups. To this end, political parties do not hesitate in spreading baseless fake news against their opponent parties. To gain an advantage over oppositions, political party's IT Cells have become a source of misinformation and distorted information against their opposition to malign the image. Fact-checking websites are exposing this propaganda and misinformation spreading strategy of political parties. Consequently, a section of citizen is getting disillusioned from political parties. Citizens have started expressing their anguish openly on social media. It will lead to a further decline in people's trust in parties, which will hamper the party's socialisation and recruitment functions.

## Check Your Progress Exercise 4

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

**1)**What arethe challenges to the functioning of political parties in contemporary times?

.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................
.......................................................................................................................

## 4.6 LET US SUM UP

Political parties are difficult to define but relatively easier to understand. The five elements or characteristics are identical to political parties: group, permanent organisation, principles, goals, and means. Although political parties play important roles and functions in all political systems, yet, their functions differ from one political system to another. In democratic political systems, they focus on electoral and coordination functions, while in authoritarian systems, they strive to legitimate the regime and function as a saviour of the regime. Many non-democratic regimes could have succumbed in the absence of political parties. If

we trust Lenin, even the revolution in the bourgeoise society could have been difficult, if not impossible, without the communist party's linchpin role in bringing proletariat consciousness among the working class.

Nevertheless, despite their linchpin roles, political parties are facing some severe challenges both internally and externally. Internally, even while functioning in democratic political systems, parties are coping with a democratic deficit. The lack of regular organisational elections and hereditary succession at the top position like the president and general secretary are top internal challenges. Externally, the rise of election management firms, expanding role of social media and the widening trust deficit between parties and the citizen voters compelled the parties to improvise their functioning. The improvisations like the use of social media may potentially address some crucial challenges. However, the establishment of IT Cells, in this way or another, is further extending the trust deficit between voters and them.

## 4.7 REFERENCES

Apter, D. E. (1969).'The Political Party as a Modernizing Instrument'. In Jean Blondel (ed.), *Comparative Government: A Reader*. London: Palgrave, pp. 86-95.

Ball, Alan R. (1987). *British Political Parties: The Emergence of a Modern Party System*. London: Macmillan.

Ball, Alan R. (1993). *Modern Government and Politics*. Chatham: Chatham House.

Duverger, Maurice. (1967). *Political Parties: Their Origin and Activity in Modern State*. Cambridge: University Printing House.

Hague, Rod, Martin Harrop and John McCormick.(2019). *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*. London: Red Globe Press.

Katz, Richard S. (2020). 'Political Parties'.In Daniele Caramani (ed.), *Comparative Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lapalombara, Joseph and Myron Weiner.(1969). 'The Origin and Development of Political Parties'.InJoseph Lapalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*.Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Neumann, S. (1969). 'Toward a Comparative Study of Political Parties'. In Jean Blondel (ed.), *Comparative Government: A Reader*. London: Palgrave.

Pettitt, Robin T. 2014. *Contemporary Party Politics*. New York: Palgrave.

Weiner, Myron and Joseph Lapalombara.(1969). 'The Impact of Parties on Political Development'.InJoseph Lapalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*.Princeton: Princeton University Press.

# 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

1) Highlight five elements of political parties.

2) While writing the difference between two types of political parties, focus on when they came into being, their organisational aspect, and social base.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

If you agree, then (i) Highlight political party's functions like nation-building and modernisation, political socialisation, and controlling the government as opposition. (ii) Also focus on coordination, public opinion-making, and representation functions.

If you disagree, then (i) highlight political recruitment, formation of the government, making and shaping of government's policies functions.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

(i) Focus on the number of political parties and competition for a vote in electoral politics. (ii) Which functions they focus on and which not. (iii) Whether they use persuasive, coercive or the mix of both instruments to achieve their goals.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 4**

(i) Discuss the internal challenges like lack of internal democracy and hereditary succession on the top post. (ii) Show in detail how widening trust deficit, increasing role of election management firms, and expanding social media are posing challenges to political parties.

# UNIT 5 PARTY SYSTEMS*

**Structure**

## 5.0 OBJECTIVES

The interactions among political parties and their relations with the political system define the party system in a country. This unit provides an analysis of party system and illustrates various settings under which they operate. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Define party system

- Explain the major types of classifying party systems

- Describe the features of different party systems

- Identify the factors affecting the party system.

---

*Dr. TulikaGaur, Guest Faculty, Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board, University of Delhi, Delhi

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit of this block, we have defined a political party and examined the varied functions they perform in a political system. As we saw, political parties, except for those in the single-party system, constantly seek to gain political power at the national, regional or local levels, in every state. In this process, they respond to each other's initiatives in a competitive power struggle. This competitive interplay between parties conceived as a set of interactive structures is known as a 'party system'. The interaction between parties in a party system is impacted by various factors: such as the number of parties interacting with each other, size of parties, level of competitiveness etc. Students of comparative politics are interested in party systems mainly because the number and kind of parties contesting elections affects not only the choices which voters confront, but also government formation and the ease which political executives can formulate and implement public policies.

Students of political science have been classifying party systems for almost as long as they have been studying parties. Classification of party systems however has been difficult both because of the variety of political parties and the dynamism of the political system. For a long time, the general trend of classifying party systems was based on the 'number approach' (which limited the classification of party systems to one-party systems, two-party systems, and multiparty systems based on the number of parties operating in the system), until Sartori (1976) added degree of polarization as other criteria based on which party systems were either extreme or moderate. This unit will introduce you to some of the typologies of party systems. It will also describe the features of important party systems and examine the interaction between the party system and the wider political system.

## 5.2 CLASSIFICATION OF PARTY SYSTEMS

Various attempts have been made by several political scientists to classify party systems based on different criteria. The most enduring ones have been those proposed by two French political scientists, Maurice Duverger and Jean Blondel. Duverger (1954) pioneered the classification of party systems based on the number of parties existing in a system. He identifies 'single-party system' and 'pluralist-party systems'. In the first category, he included the single-party system and the dominant party system and in the pluralist party systems, he included two-party system and multiparty systems. Also, based on the nature of parties of which a party system may comprise, Duverger classifies party systems as 'disciplined/rigid' and 'undisciplined/flexible'. Considering the composition of an absolute majority in a system, he classifies party systems as:

- party systems with an absolute majority consisting of a single party.

- party systems where the absolute majority does not belong to anyone party but rests with a coalition of different parties.

- party systems where the absolute majority is formed with the help of minor/smaller who get to play a significant role in either government or opposition.

- party systems where the absolute majority is formed with the help of minor/smaller parties but with no distinct role for them in either government or opposition.

A decade later, Jean Blondel (1968) carried forward the work of Duverger by introducing additional categories. Blondel used the share of the vote won by parties from 1945 through 1946 to construct a fourfold typology.He distinguished two-party systems, two-and-a-half party systems, multiparty systems with a predominant party and multiparty systems without a predominant party. His typology of party system distinguished one-party dominant systems, two-party systems, moderate pluralism, and extreme multipartyism. Blondel's typology was based on the analysis of the clusters in the average share of the vote won by the largest two parties and then considering the ratio of the first party's share to that of the second and third parties. His analysis showed that in the two-party systems (prevailing in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Austria), the two party share was 90 per cent and above and closely balanced between the two parties. In the next cluster, the share of the two-party ranged from 75-80% of the vote cast but there was a wider average difference (10.5%) between the first and second parties (the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada and Ireland). Taking account of imbalance in the share of the vote, Blondel categorized these as two-and-a-half rather than three-party systems.

Giovanni Sartori (1976) introduced a new element into the classification of the party system. Not satisfied with the systems based purely on the 'numbers approach', Sartori analysed how far away parties in system stood from each other in terms of ideas, the intensity of the conflict between them and their role in government. In his typology, Sartori took only those parties that mattered, that is, large or small parties were to be counted only if they affected party competition. Using this approach, Sartori came up with the following four types of party systems:

1) **Predominant Party System** in which one party dominates the government in spite the existence of large number of parties. A predominant party could emerge due to factors such as popularity among the masses, its historical lineage, charismatic leadership, strong organizational structures, etc.

2) **Two-Party System** in which political power is shared between two relatively powerful political parties.

3) **Limited Pluralism** in which the neither of the two dominant parties have a clear cut majority and seek support of other like-minded parties. The coalition government could be seen as 'feeble government' but it may not necessarily be short-lived government. Sartori had included the German Federal Republic, Sweden, Belgium, Ireland, and Denmark as examples of limited or moderate pluralism.

4) **Extreme Pluralism** is a system where the supporting parties occupy extreme positions and are largely polarized. The presence of 'anti-system' parties,

bilateral oppositions, and centripetal competitions are some of the features of this type of party system. With deep cleavages and low consensus, the extreme or polarized pluralism does not offer a legitimate party system in world politics.

As you can see, Sartori's typology is also based on numbers (properly counted) whose principal distinction was not number, *per se,* but rather, the degree of polarization and party competition. This enabled comparative political scientists to explain why certain kinds of multiparty systems led to cabinet instability and system collapse, while others did not.

The party system is a dynamic element of a political system. Since the 1980s, parties and party systems have undergone significant change in Europe and those that transited to democratic systems (about which you will be studying in Block IV of this course). As Peter Mair (2002) pointed out, there are fewer and fewer current instances of pure two-party competition and none of polarized pluralism. Instead, party systems in most liberal democracies fit into the increasingly crowded category, moderate pluralism. The most recent approach to classify party systems has been in terms of institutionalization (Siaroff, 2013) explains institutionalization as the level of organization in parties, the extent of their associations with the society, consistency in ideologies of parties, interparty competition; and the extent to which political parties and elections have high legitimacy in a country.

For the sake of ease in understanding the various kinds of party systems prevailing, we will classify the party systems as under:

1. Two-Party System/Bi-party System

2. Two-and-A-Half-Party System

3. Multi-Party System

4. One-Party System/Single-Party System

5. Institutionalized vs de-institutionalized Party System

## Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

1) What is a party system?

……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

2) What is the Sartori's contribution to analysis of party systems?

……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

## 5.2.1 Two-Party System

Also called the bi-party system, this system is characterised by the dominance of two 'major' political parties which stand equal chances of grabbing the political power and forming the government. Several other smaller parties may exist in the system, but the centre-stage is shared by two parties. The two dominant parties are usually backed by a majority of electorates which implies that the rest of the parties in the system remain in minority. Power keeps shifting from one of the dominant parties to the other, leaving the rest with an almost negligible role in the formation of the government.

Two-party systems work on the foundation of mutual acceptance and coexistence between both parties which openly accept each other and their position with full respect. In this context, Siaroff (2013) identifies two variations in this system. First, as '*Competitive party system*' which exhibits clear alternation in power as the two parties stand equal chances of winning. A good example of such a system is the party system in the USA where both the houses of Congress in general and the Senate in particular witness a high level of competition between the two parties. Malta and most of the erstwhile British colonies, mainly the Caribbean countries also have a similar party system. The second variation is an 'imperfect or imbalanced two-party system', where despite the presence of two major parties, one party has a better chance of winning than the other. For instance, Botswana and some state legislatures of the USA are systems where one party has more chances of winning than the other. Hence, functions more as a dominant party system to some extent (Siaroff 2013).

The two-party system can comprise of parties exhibiting two opposite ideologies or sharing similar ideology but having distinct electoral support  The presence of Labour and Conservative parties in the UK, until the emergence of the Social and Liberal Democratic Party in the late 1980s, is a classic example of a two-party system based on competing ideologies. On the other hand, in the USA, the Democratic and the Republican parties initially had different ideologies/political orientations but with time they both have become flexible and accommodative of varying interests. Both the parties differ in their approaches to achieve the accepted democratic norms in the country and give the citizens a clear choice as per their preferences.

A bi-party system results in a 'party government' which implies that the government is formed by a single party and will account for a stable and accountable government. This system gives a clear straightforward choice to the public while giving strength to the government as well as opposition to fulfil their mandates. A strong government faces a strong opposition which ensures a sense of accountability in the government and continuous zeal in the opposition to enhance their chances of grabbing power.

However, a bi-party system may result in 'adverse politics' where parties are aware and assured of their position in the political system and hence, may try to get into power by all means thus corrupting the system Both the parties may tend to be driven by interests of a small, wealthy elite prevailing in the country. For instance, in the USA two-party system may provide ample opportunities for

debate, but issues favouring the elite class always get speedy consent than those about the common man.

## 5.2.2 Two-and-Half-Party System

In this system, there are two major parties and one or more than one smaller yet significant party/parties. "A two-and-a-half-party system is where the two main parties get at least 80 per cent of the seats but not more than 95 per cent and where the system does not meet the criteria of one-party predominance. There is no fixed pattern of outcome in a two-and-half-party system as the outcome will depend on the third party's support without which the formation of government is impossible. This system may rarely exhibit a single-party majority and the formation of the government will largely depend on the political equation created between the parties in the system.

Some regard the two-and-half-party system as a transitional phase between the bi-party system and multiparty system. Siaroff (2003) cites the emergence of the Liberal Democratic Party in the1970s in the UK and the rise of the New Democratic Party in Canada in the early 1980s to argue that most of the two-party systems have now become two-and-half-party systems in the true sense.

The emphasis in the two-and-a-half-party system remains on 'half', the third element/party which might play the role of kingmaker in a political system. There surely remains an asymmetry between the parties. As explained by Bhushan (2015) the first party remains substantially larger than the second, and the third party is much smaller than both first and the second party. Siaroff (2003) places this third party in a position where it works as a 'hinge' or a 'wing'. As a 'hinge' this third party directs the formation of government in one direction or the other because it shares commonalities with the other two parties in the system. This way they play an important role in the government as well. On the other hand, as 'wing', the third parties act as a mere support system of either of the major parties and may or may not get to play a part in the government. The Free Democratic Party (FDP) in Germany, for instance, works as a hinge party. It does not hold huge electoral support (only 13.2 per cent of seats) nor does it get to hold the Chancellor Post, yet it remains the most significant factor in determining the outcomes of the elections in Germany. Depending on its coalition with the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SDP); the FDP has been in government for about 41 of the 53 years since 1949, with its periods in opposition being only about one term at a time. On the other hand, since the 1980s in Portugal, the Nationalist Popular Party and the Communist party are winged parties of two main parties, the Social Democratic party (PSD) and the People's Party (CDS), respectively.

The presence of 'half parties' creates a more consensual political system rather than a majoritarian one. The dependence of main parties on the 'hinge' or 'wings' increases the extent of accountability and restraints on the major parties which otherwise may act as absolute powers in a single-party majority situation. Hence, a two-and-half-party system accounts for a more democratic procedure in the formation of government than the single-party or the bi-party system.

### 5.2.3 Multiparty System

A multi-party system has three or more political parties. It can be categorized as a stable and unstable multiparty system. The Netherlands, Switzerland are some of the examples of the former while France and Italy exemplify the latter. The party system in Switzerland has nine political parties though only four parties enjoy majority electoral support. The government in Switzerland is normally formed as a coalition of these four parties with the rest of the smaller parties playing a significant role in forming coalitions in different parts of the Swiss Federation. France and Italy have been the most remarkable examples of the 'unstable multiparty system'. France witnessed the formation of at least 26 governments during 1944-1958. Similarly, Italy had 38 governments between 1948 and 1975. In both these countries, smaller parties (French Communist Party in France and Italian Communist Party in Italy) played an important role in distancing the larger parties from the governance, and hence, had to rely on coalitions which due to rising internal differences proved to be highly unstable (Haywood 2013). Another way of categorizing a multiparty system is 'moderately/limited' and 'highly 'fragmented multiparty system. The former may comprise three to six relevant parties. In this deconcentration, the top two parties are limited to less than 80 per cent of the seats. Coalition government remains to be the only way forward. The highly fragmented party system may have more than six relevant parties. An outcome of this system with frictions among medium and small parties is a weak coalition government of three or more parties. Brazil, Israel, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, India, and Indonesia had highly fragmented multiparty systems (Siaroff 2013).

Multiparty systems are also categorized as 'moderate' and 'polarized' multiparty systems. Moderate multiparty systems exhibit ideological similarity, that is, the difference between various parties' ideologies is very moderate (Sartori 1976). Here, there is a higher tendency among the parties to come to a compromise in case of differences or disputes resulting in a much more stable and strong government.  A polarized multiparty system, on the other hand, comprises parties with wide and strong ideological differences. This makes the parties refrain from reaching a middle ground. In such systems, there may even be political parties holding 'anti-system' stance making resolution of disputes or differences difficult. The Communist Parties in France, Italy and Spain, for instance, have created more disputes and resulting in unstable governments in these countries (Haywood, 2013).

A multiparty system is the most efficient system in sustaining democracies. The presence of multiple parties enables a system of internal checks and balances for the governments ensuring greater accountability in return. It creates an atmosphere of discussions and debates and makes policymaking a more inclusive phenomenon. Since there is a greater possibility of coalition governments and lesser feasibility of a single party achieving a majority in a multiparty system, it ensures that the government policies and decisions address the diversity of interests and concerns pertaining to all the groups/segments/sections of that country. A multiparty system not only ensures accountability of the government but also creates a wider platform for public opinion.

Despite its democratic credentials, the multiparty system has some shortcomings. The first and the most important one remains to be the instability induced in the governance due to coalitions. Multiple parties have different interests and achieving cooperation and consensus among them might be a difficult task. Further, during the process of achieving consensus, various malpractices and compromises may take place which may corrupt the entire political system of a country.

The multiparty system also delays and sometimes derails the processes of policy negotiation and implementation. As mentioned above, the difficult task of having the consent of all plagues the smooth functioning of the government most of the time. A lack of clear ideological orientation also is one of the shortcomings of a multi-party system as the parties are more focused on forming a government through unholy coalitions or compromises. A multi-party system thus can become more a system of achieving greater numbers than a system of representing a diversity of interests.

## 5.2.4 One-Party System

The one-party system, also called a single-party system, implies the system in which only one party exists and is legally allowed to exist, which controls the government. However, according to Duverger, there can be different forms of the one-party system. Under what he called a dominant-party system or one-party dominant system, some minor parties may sometimes be allowed, but they exist on the condition of accepting the leadership of the dominant party. This system is normally found in totalitarian countries where minor parties are either crushed by the ruling party or constitutionally debarred. The former Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China are classic examples of a one-party system. In China's party system, the Communist Party of China (CPC) is the only party authorized to govern the state despite eight other smaller parties existing in the system. The smaller parties neither have the legal sanction to contest in the election nor have the freedom to criticize the decisions and policies of the CPC.

A one-party system is also found in some democratic states, especially those that have gone through colonial rule in the past. These states have started their nation-building under the guidance of their national leaders who had guided them throughout their freedom movement. Political parties in these newly emergent states usually centre on a charismatic leader and the ideology of national development is derived from the leader's ideology itself. For example, Ghana under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Tanzania under the leadership of Julius Nyerere and Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe have had single-party systems. Being solely dependent on the leadership, the political parties in this kind of arrangement lack the level of organisation and discipline found in the Communist one-party states. As a result, almost all of them have disintegrated or lost their dominant status.

One-party systems generally provide for strong and stable governments, which are a necessity for efficient policymaking and implementation, but they have several shortcomings. The possibility of a single-party system developing into an authoritarian state remains quite high. Such states tend to silence the opposing

voices by forceful means. Hence, such systems may not stand true to the function of the party system which remains to act as a link between a government and citizens. Also, the procedure of transfer of power and leadership may be amended by the single party in power as per its convenience resulting in monopolisation of leadership and power which defeats the role of the party system as an agency of decentralization/diffusion of power in the society. In contemporary times we find these systems in China, Cuba, Eritrea, Laos, North Korea, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam.

### 5.2.5 Dominant-Party System

This system is often confused with single-party systems but there remain clear differences between the two. A 'dominant' party may consist of multiple parties/political groups competing for power but is generally dominated by a single major party within the system. Whereas, in single-party system, there is absence of multiple parties and the entire political system is under the control of that single party itself. While the former accommodates varying interests and opinion of various other political parties, the latter works generally in an authoritarian political setup where any kind of opposition is not tolerated.

In this system, single party hegemony prevails for a long period of time because it not only predominates in parliament and controls the government but also maintains its dominance over a period of time. Even when it fails to occupy majority, it still retains the potential to form a minority or lead a coalition. Hence, this ability of domination despite missing the majority-mark, distinguishes this system from the 'imperfect two-party system' where attaining majority is the only way to govern, and minority ruled governments are not possible.

The presence of one-party dominant system is generally observed in dictatorships where opposition parties are prevented from acting and participating in the political system. For instance, Chad and Cameroon are some cases where dictatorships have discouraged the participation of other parties. Nevertheless, democracies also exhibit this system as can be observed in Botswana Democratic Party in Botswana since 1996, and the Congress party in India from 1947-1977. Another classic example of this party system is Japan where its single largest party i.e., the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had dominated the party system for 54 years until 2009. During this period, it has served a noticeably short period as opposition (1993-1994) and almost entire duration has held political power under its control. Other examples include Sweden where Social Democrats have managed to remain at the forefront from 1932-1976, Italy dominated by Christian Democrats (1946-1983), Israel by Mapai/Labour Party (1948-1977), Namibia by South West Africa People's Organization (since 1991), and South Africa remains dominated by African National Congress since 1994.

Dominant-party system on one hand provides a stable, strong, and predictable government; on the other hand, it undermines the democratic credentials of the system as the prolonged system of governance often results in rise in corrupt practices within the party and centralization of power to the extreme levels. As noted by Haywood (2013: 239), the dominant-party system "tends to erode the important constitutional distinction between the state and the party in power.

When governments cease to come and go, an insidious process of politicization takes place through which state officials and institutions adjust to the ideological and political priorities of the dominant party". Another shortcoming of this system is the absence of a strong and effective opposition. While the dominant party remains in power, it ensures its authority is unchallenged and hence, makes every effort to discourage any kind of opposition or protest. A dominant-party system can, therefore, be detrimental to democracy.

## 5.2.6 Institutionalized vs De-institutionalized Party System

Different categories of party systems mentioned above may not be the permanent arrangements in any democracy. It has been observed in various countries that the extent of consistency of party systems and the potential of main parties to maintain their status is not static and varies with time. This phenomenon was first conceptualized as 'Party System institutionalization' by Mainwaring and Scully in 1995 in the context of Latin America. Accordingly, the party system was classified as 'institutionalized' or 'de-institutionalized' party system based on the stability and predictability maintained by the system. Institutionalized party systems smoothen the process of governance because they are less volatile and consist of durable parties which stand deeply rooted in society. Not only do they promote greater economic growth, but they also tend to yield better public policies. An institutionalized party system stands more accountable as it is better in articulating and aggregating the public demands. It exhibits greater party discipline, making it easier for the legislature to function and is more likely to resolve the deadlocks and reduces immobility than in an inchoate system (Siaroff, 2013).

Deinstitutionalized party is often referred to as party system collapse or party collapse – identified as 'inchoate party systems' (Mainwaring and Scully 1950). This system is often observed in third wave democracies (see Block IV). The recent developments make de-institutionalized systems more evident than the institutionalized systems. For example, Papua New Guinea is categorized as an inchoate party system because until recently, no prime minister has been able to complete a full parliamentary term. Another example is Peru where leaders and politicians have adopted party-less strategies by acting as free agents with almost none or fewer attachments to party labels- making Peru a case of democracy without parties (Mainwaring 2016).

## 5.3 FACTORS AFFECTING PARTIES IN A SYSTEM

Party systems evolve according to the transformation and changes that take place in (i) the electoral system; (ii) social and cultural diversity; (iii) the constitutional structure; (iv) the degree of international autonomy (Sartori, 1976, 291). A country's party system is largely shaped according to the electoral system opted by it. The electoral system defines the criteria for representations and there remain several ways and methods that are opted by democracies according to their social and political structures. For instance, an electoral system based on a single-member majority tends to yield a less fragmented party system because it provides for a clear majority to the single party whose candidate has got

maximum votes. On the other, proportional representative systems are more conducive for a highly fragmented party system. For instance, during the 1990s, an assessment of 73 democratic countries revealed that the countries having proportional representation systems mostly had a multiparty system, while those with non-PR system were more inclined towards a dominant party system or two-party system. (Krupavičius, Algis. Isoda, et al., 2013). The electoral system also defines the competitive spirit of party systems. For instance, if a country witnesses frequent changes in electoral support, then whatever party system it may have, it will be highly competitive. Since changes in electoral support impact the parties' performance, hence, there will be more efforts put forward by the political leaders and after the elections also there will be uncertainty as the 'political bargain' will rise. There will be greater emphasis on mobilization of masses and in turn, will result in a highly informative and aware political population.

Another factor affecting the condition of the party system is the social and cultural diversity of that given country. For instance, there are fewer chances for a one-party system to emerge in a diverse society as such a system would not be able to address the social and cultural cleavages. A multiparty system or a two-an-half-party system is more likely to emerge in societies with wide gaps and differences in its social and cultural sectors. On the other hand, there is a greater scope for a single-party system or dominant party system to emerge in a less diverse society.

In addition to this, the constitutional structure of a country can shape its political system and accordingly the party system. A highly fragmented social structure may not yield a multiparty system if the constitution restricts the political and civil rights of individuals. Further, the ideological orientation and inclination proposed in the constitution can also shape the party system. Thus, if the constitutional provisions aim to establish a communist society, it will empower the left-winged party to establish a single-party system or a dominant party system.

Party system change may take a variety of forms, from marginal change to the alternation of its essential features. A change of party system might be manifested in four ways: 1) incidental swings, 2) limited change, 3) general change, and 4) alternation of the system. Incidental swings are usually temporary distortions in the patterned way a party system operates, and they might be related to the establishment of some new small parties. Limited change is prolonged or even permanent, but this change is restricted either to one area or confined to the emergence of a party that replaces another one. General change is more serious and relates to several aspects, that is, the fact that changes are multifaceted and prolonged and that they concern salient features of the system. The alternation of the system signifies a dramatic change in most of its aspects, i.e., the party composition, its strength, alliances, and leadership. Party systems also change their format due to long-term social and economic developments. The processes of dealignment or realignment of party affiliations result from structural demographic changes, accompanied by culture shifts (Krupavičius, Algis. Isoda, et al, 2013).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, party and party systems across the world have been facing significant challenges from the forces of globalization and democratization. These include growing marketization, the rise of issue-based politics, and the spread of information and communication technologies. Many argue that these developments are weakening the bonds between the voters and political parties and increasing fragmentation. Others argue that political parties and party systems are transforming and adjust to the new developments. They point to the rise of cartel parties (that often collaborate with each other for state resources as well as for career stability and continuity of their leaders) and the increasing reliance of parties on professionals to run centralised and technically skilled party operations and campaigns as evidence of transformation and adjustment of parties and party systems to the new realities.

## Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Distinguish between a dominant party system and a one-party system.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

2) Identify the main characteristics of a multiparty system.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

## 5.4 LET US SUM UP

Parties and party systems have become the constituent elements of modern representative democracies. Today, they are the most visible institutions of representative democracy. They are the linkage making institutions between political leadership and voters, political elite and civil society, the rulers and the ruled in all representative democracies. In most political systems, there are multiple political parties even though a few continue to be run by single a party. In their competitive power struggle, parties interact and respond to each other. The term party system refers to the structural and institutional arrangement for interaction between political parties. As we saw, there have been many ways in which party systems have been classified. However, the typologies evolved by Maurice Duverger, Jean Blondel and Giovanni Sartori have been enduring ones. In this unit, we have examined the Two-Party System, Two-and-A-Half-Party System, Multi-Party System, One-Party System and the Dominant Party System bringing out their important features and variants. We have also examined the Institutionalized vs de-institutionalized party system

There remain several factors that affect the number and size of parties in the party system. The constitutional structure of a country, the degree of socio-cultural diversity, and type of electoral representative system are some of the aspects of the political system which shape the party system. As we saw, party system is a dynamic concept and tends to change as and when these factors undergo a gradual or a sudden transformation.

## 5.5 REFERENCES

Bhushan, V. (2018).*Comparative Politics.* Chennai: Atlantic.

Blondel, Jean. (1969). *An Introduction to Comparative Government,* London: Weidenfeld& Nicolson.

Clark, William Roberts. Golder et al. (2013).*Principles of Comparative Politics.*USA: CQ Press.

Duverger, Maurice. (1954). *Political Parties.* London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Haywood, A. (2013). *Politics.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kitschelt, Herbert. (2011). "Party Systems" in Robert E. Goodin (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science.* London: Oxford University Press.

La Palomabara, Joseph and Weiner, Myron. (1966). *Political Parties and Political Development.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Krupavičius, Algis. Isoda, Vytautas,Vaišnoras, Tomas. (2013). *Introduction to Comparative Politics.* Kaunas: European Social Fund (ESF) and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mair, Peter. (2002). "Comparing Party Systems," in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, Pippa (ed). *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting.*Norris Edition. London: Sage.

Mainwaring, S. (2016). Party System Institutionalization, Party Collapse and Party Building. *Government and Opposition. 51*(4), 691-716.

Novák, M. (2015). Competitive Party Systems: Where do Duverger and SartoriDiverge?.*Revue française de Science Politique*, 3(3), 451-471.

Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Siaroff, A. (2013). *Comparing Political Regimes: A Thematic Introduction to Comparative Politics Third Edition,* Canada: University of Toronto Press.

## 5.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress- 1

1) Party system is the competitive interplay between parties conceived as a set of interactive structures.

2) Sartori introduced new elements in the classification of party systems. He included the degree of polarization as necessary component of identifying party systems. This helped in explaining why some multiparty systems were stable or unstable.

## Check Your Progress- 2

1) A dominant-party system consists of multiple parties/political groups competing for power but is dominated by a single major party. Whereas, in single-party system, multiple parties are absent and the entire political system is under the control of that single party. While the former accommodates varying interests and opinions of various other political parties, the latter works generally in an authoritarian political setup where any kind of opposition is not tolerated.

2) A multi-party system can be characterized as follows: a) Competition between more than two parties, b) Increased possibilities of a coalition government, c) Less possibility of single-party government, d) Significant role played by even smaller parties, e) No fixed equation for sharing of electoral votes, f) Creates an efficient system of checks and balance over the government, g) Adequate representation for diverse voices and opinions, h) Debates, discussions, and compromise remains to be the guiding principles of government making as well as policymaking, i) Provides voter with ample choices to choose their government, j) Suits best a diverse society with varying groups and opinions, etc.

# UNIT 6   PRESSURE GROUPS*

## Structure

## 6.0   OBJECTIVES

As we saw in the last unit, political parties provide the critical link between citizens and the government in a democracy. Pressure groups, the subject of this unit, also perform a similar role and contribute to the policy process. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning and characteristics of pressure groups;

- Distinguish pressure groups from political parties, interest groups, civil society

- Classify pressure groups;

---

*Dr. Kishorchand Nongmaithem, Consultant, Faculty of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

- Describe the methods, strategies and techniques used by pressure groups; and
- Explain the role of pressure groups in democratic politics.

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

We normally associate modernization with the widespread belief that the conditions of life can be altered through human action. But modernisation is also associated with economic and social changes like industrialisation, urbanisation, modern education, spread of public communications etc. These changes lead to an increasing diversity of life conditions which results in the formation of large numbers of special interest groups. Most democracies provide scope for such special interest groups to express their needs. These groups, commonly identified as 'interest groups' or 'pressure groups', seek to protect or advance their collective interests and also to obtain public policy outcomes favourable to them by pressurizing the government and other state apparatus. Such groups have come to play an important role in the political system by organising individuals into groups and then linking them with the political system. In this sense, pressure groups act as mediating institutions between the government and the governed in a democratic polity.

## 6.2 DEFINING PRESSURE GROUPS

The task of defining 'pressure group' in a single universally acceptable definition is a difficult one. Consider the following definitions of pressure groups:

- "organised groups possessing both formal structure and real common interests in so far as they influence the decisions of public bodies" -W.J.M. Mackenzie.

- "organisations trying to influence the policy of public bodies in their own chosen direction, though never themselves prepared to undertake the direct Government of the country" -Samuel Finer.

- "an association of individuals joined together by a common interest, belief, activity or purpose that seeks to achieve its objectives, further its interests and enhance its status in relation to other groups, by gaining the approval and co-operation of authority in the form of favourable policies, legislation and conditions" -Peter Shipley.

- "organizations which seeks to influence government policy without at the same time being willing to accept the responsibility of public office" -N.C. Hunt.

Despite differences in their emphasis, these definitions make it clear that pressure groups are voluntary social groups characterized by persuasive activism to achieve a desirable change or to prevent an undesirable change. Their activism, often termed as 'pressure politics' involves various methods to influence the government and other state apparatus like legislatures, executives, or individuals in responsible positions of decision-making and implementation of public policies.

In the recent times, pressure groups also emerged in the form of social movements on issues like protection of environment, corruption, human rights, education, health, livelihood etc. For example, groups like Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) or India Against Corruption (IAC) have propagated public awareness on issues of environment protection and corruption respectively while pressurizing the government for a better policy outcome.

Pressure groups vary in terms of size and influence as well as the area of operation. Some are relatively small, formed on the basis of highly specific interests, and operate at local or domestic level, while others are extremely large and powerful with some of them even operating beyond national boundaries. For example, groups like Confederation of Free Trade Union, Council of European Federation of Industry, Amnesty International, Anti-Apartheid Movement, Oxfam and Friends of Earth are some of the groups that operate across national boundaries. Moreover, there are also collective groups like the World Social Forum (WSF) formed by different civil societies, advocacy groups, and social movements from different countries but operate at the global level. Thus, whatever be their size, strength and area of operation, pressure groups have come to play an enormously important role in society and politics, and are considered to be a vital component of modern political system.

---

**The World Social Forum (WSF)** is a collective solidarity forum of various civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, groups of farmers, intellectuals, women, youths, etc. from around the world whose aim is to condemn the harmful effects of globalisation and working towards the establishment of a better world. The group organised its annual Forum for the first time in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Since then, the forum organises its anti-globalization campaigns in various parts of the world. The forum then emerged as a challenger or alternative to the World Economic Forum which has been organized in Davos, Switzerland, denouncing its neoliberal economic policies. The WSF is known for its opposition to globalization driven by neoliberalism and defended by global financial institutions like the WTO, IMF and other multinational corporations.

---

## 6.3 ORIGIN OF PRESSURE GROUPS

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his book, *Politics,* famously said, 'Man is by nature a social animal'. This idea of Aristotle implies that man cannot live alone and that men enter into relationship with others to live a social and political life. This behaviour of men incentivises them to form social groups in almost every sphere of life. Therefore, as many scholars also suggested, ever since the inception of organized human society there had been groups in society whose character and activities were similar to what we identify today as pressure groups. In this regard, 'groups' and 'group politics' can be considered as old as the human society itself. People belonging to different sections of the society, be

it religion, caste, ethnicity, profession, trade unions, farmers came together and voluntarily organized themselves in order to advance their interests.

Pressure groups gained prominence in the modern times, particularly after the American and French revolutions in the late 18th century. The spread of democratic rights, ideas and values led to an astonishing increase in the number of pressure groups. Prominent among the new pressure groups are those of minorities and women. They have come together to demand social and political rights to ensure that they are not subjugated. For instance, the Abolition Society in Britain was founded in 1787 to oppose the slave trade. Similarly, the Society for Women's Rights was founded in France in 1866 with the purpose of exerting a worldwide women's suffrage movement. Thus, by the end of the 19th century, many such groups asserting the interests of business groups, trade unions etc., had become operationalised in most of the industrial societies.

Despite the pressure groups coming to prominence in democratic politics, the discipline of political science had hardly given any attention to their role and influence in political processes. Arthur F Bentley, an American social scientist, who is regarded as the founder of the group theory, wrote in 1908 that it was only through the analysis of group activities that one could achieve a true knowledge of government. It was, however, only in the mid-twentieth century that the study of group politics began to attract political scientists. Some of the pioneers of group-centred approach in the study of politics are David B Truman, Earl Latham, WJM Mackenzie, S.E Finer, and Joseph La Palombara.

## 6.4 PRESSURE GROUPS AND OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS

It is easily conceivable that there can be many kinds of groups in a political system which may be organized and cohesive such as interest groups, political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs) and so on. Although these groups exist to serve their common interests, they differ from what we identified as pressure groups. Therefore, we should be able to differentiate pressure groups from other entities.

### 6.4.1 Pressure Groups and Interest Groups

Among the many social groups, interest groups are possibly the closest to pressure groups. In fact, many scholars do not make a distinction between pressure groups and interest groups and they often treat the two as synonymous. Alan R Ball (1994: 103), for example, puts pressure groups under the same category as interest groups, attitude groups etc. He defined these groups as "social aggregates with some level of chosen and shared aims which attempt to influence the political decision-making process". Likewise, Robert H. Salisbury also argued 'pressure group is only more pejorative but perhaps more familiar a term for interest groups. For these scholars, pressure groups, in a sense, are similar to interest groups in that they strive to achieve the interests of their members.

There are other groups of scholars who seek to differentiate pressure groups from interest groups. They believe that pressure groups always attempt to influence the government's decision-making process, whereas interest groups do not necessarily have the intention to do so. Interest groups merely insist on promoting their interests to achieve their specific goals but they do not exert pressure on the government. Therefore, the word 'pressure' can be taken as the basic point of distinction between the two. For these scholars, pressure groups are far more powerful than interest groups or any group of similar kind because they have the intent or capability to pressurize the government to get policy decisions favourable to them. In this regard, Hugh A. Bone says, "every group is an interest group or a group with an interest, but not every group attempts to influence public policy". This implies that interest groups transformed themselves into pressure groups when they begin to influence the decision-making process. In a sense, one can say that all pressure groups are interest groups but not all interest groups necessarily transform into pressure groups.

There are other scholars who avoid the use of the term 'pressure group'. They argue that the term carries a negative connotation as it insinuates the threat of use of force to achieve their objectives. These scholars prefer to use labels such as 'sectional' 'organized' 'the lobby' or 'interests' groups to refer to the whole range of groups that strive for a specific interest in society. Whether they are called interest groups, attitude groups, or pressure groups, they exist to serve their respective group's interests and all of them in one way or the other exert some pressure on the government (Watts 2007: 6). Despite the ambiguous line of demarcation between pressure groups and these groups, one can still make the distinction that 'pressure groups' generally refers those groups that actively seek to influence public policy.

## 6.4.2 Pressure Groups and Political Parties

Both pressure groups and political parties are important agencies which aim to achieve the interests of different sections of society. In some respects, the roles of pressure groups are parallel to those of political parties—as agents of political mobilization and representation by linking the government and the governed. But there are theoretical and practical distinctions between the two. While political parties aim to get into power and form the government, pressure groups generally seek to influence and pressurize the government in accordance with the particular interests and aspirations of the people they represent. Unlike political parties whose central objective is to capture power and run the government, pressure groups never aim to gain formal control of the government. Instead, pressure groups devote themselves to influence the government to realize their demands and objectives. In other words, pressure groups seek to influence government, parties seek to become government.

Another distinction between pressure groups and political parties is that while the former focus on only one policy area, the latter have broad programmes covering all (or almost all) policy areas. For instance, trade unions or human rights groups are concerned with limited goals of protecting or promoting welfare of the workers or human rights. They rarely concern themselves with economic or external policies, except when those policies impinge on their interests. Political

parties on the other hand are concerned with diverse policies related to national development.

However, the distinction between political parties and pressure groups can sometimes be extremely complicated by the fact that some pressure groups are found to have close relationship with one political party or another. In fact, there are pressure groups which render support to certain political parties whenever they think their political purpose can be served by supporting them and vice-versa. On the other hand, there are also pressure groups which have transformed into political parties. For example, the Labour parties in Britain and Australia had their origins in the working people's movements. Likewise, in India, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram and the Aam Admi Party (AAP) in Delhi were pressure groups before they become political parties. However, in general, most pressure groups seek to keep some distance rather than to develop close links with political parties.

## 6.4.3 Pressure Groups and Civil Society Organizations

Pressure groups are also often equated with civil society organizations (CSOs). Civil society organizations are organizations and associations set up by the citizens of a country to pursue certain interests. While some of the civil society organizations act as interest groups to promote their respective interests, others pressurize the government to bring about certain public policies in their group's interests. In India, civil society groups like Lok Satta, Jannagraha, and Foundation of Democratic Reforms (FDR) are persuading political parties to create avenues for legitimate funding to political parties with transparency and disclosure. They also significantly contributed in the improvement of voter registration in India. The group FDR in particular, also works for transparency, right to information, speedy delivery of justice by the judiciary etc. However, what differentiates pressure groups from CSOs is that pressure groups are more power-centric than CSOs which are interest oriented. Moreover, the domains of pressure groups are relatively restricted compared to CSOs whose arenas of functioning are usually vast and diverse.

## Check Your Progress 1

**Note**:  i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Define pressure groups. How are pressure groups different from interest groups?

…………………………………………………………………...………

…………………………………………………………………...………

…………………………………………………………………...………

…………………………………………………………………...………

…………………………………………………………………...………

2) Explain the difference between pressure groups and political parties.

…………………………………………………………………………...……

…………………………………………………………………………...……

…………………………………………………………………………...……

…………………………………………………………………………...……

…………………………………………………………………………...……

## 6.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups came into existence to serve the interest of the community or group they represent. Therefore, their objectives and demands are different depending upon the collective interest of the particular group. However, despite their differences, pressure groups exhibit certain characteristics in common. A fundamental characteristic of pressure groups is that they neither contest elections nor attempt to directly involve in the governmental affairs. Instead, they aim to pressurize government agencies, bureaucrats, and politicians to get public policies in their favour. While doing this political bargaining, pressure groups always try to maintain a neutral political position by concentrating on their specific demands. Therefore, pressure groups are sometimes considered as 'apolitical' groups. However, they may enter into the arena of electoral politics by financing or supporting the party or candidate who they think will work in their interests. In this regard, pressure groups also try to maintain good relationship with political parties, politicians or high-ranking executives of the government in order to win their co-operation or support in group's interests. Pressure groups, however, have no permanent political affiliation and generally try to keep their group interest above political interests. They, therefore, wish to win the co-operation of whichever party controls the government of the day.

Since pressure groups emerged from specific sections of the society, their arena of functioning is generally restricted. However, their demands may be many (social, political or economic) and they may vary from time to time while the group remains intact. This flexibility of demands and objectives is an important characteristic of pressure groups. Another characteristic of pressure group is their emphasis on the need for a collective approach rather than an individualistic approach. They believed that group activities are more effective than activities of individuals.

## 6.6 CLASSIFICATION OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups have been classified by several scholars into different categories on the basis of their structure and organization. Among them the four-fold classification given by Almond and Coleman is more suitable and widely applicable. They are:

## 6.6.1 Institutional Pressure Groups

Institutional pressure groups are those groups which are formed in various institutions, including government institutions like schools, colleges, universities, judiciary, bureaucracies, hospitals, police etc. Since these pressure groups exist within formal organizations formed by professionally employed personnel like doctors, lawyers, teachers, they are highly organized in accordance with proper rules and regulations. Therefore, they are also known as professional pressure groups. In India, groups like Civil Services Association, Police Families Welfare Association, Defence Personnel Association, Indian Medical Association, All India Bar Association, etc. all come under this category. They are formed in order to serve their interests without directly getting involved in the government. Since they are close to the government, they can easily influence the government. Apart from articulating their own interest, they may also articulate and represent the interest of other groups. For example, a pressure group in the Ministry of Agriculture can easily and effectively convince other ministries or bureaucrats on behalf of the interests of farmers.

## 6.6.2 Associational Pressure Groups

These groups are highly organized and specialized groups formed to pursue limited goals. Associational pressure group includes organization of businessmen and industrialists like Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCAM), Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) etc. These groups, by virtue of their vast array of resources, technical and managerial knowledge and their close links with elite groups in the government are among the most influential pressure groups. Some of these groups are so powerful that even political parties are dependent on them for funds and other resources, and in turn, government sometimes serves them by giving concessions in the reduction of tax, tariff, trade etc. In some cases, the government even seeks suggestions and advice of these groups on major policy issues of economic and commercial aspects. This category also includes workers and peasants' unions such as All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Bharatya Kisan Sangh, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and student's organizations like AkhilBharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP), National Students Union of India (NSUI), Students Federation of India (SFI), etc. Therefore, this category is sometimes divided into different types such as business groups, trading groups, agrarian groups, worker groups, and student groups and so on.

## 6.6.3 Non-Associational Pressure Groups

This category refers to those groups which are informal in nature brought together by religion, culture and traditions, kinship, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, or family ties etc. There is no formal and structural procedure in their activities and demands. They do not have permanent demands or interests. Their demands and interests keep changing according to requirements of a specific situation. Non-associational pressure groups are mostly based on language, ethnicity, religion or any other socio-cultural aspects in the society. They are more concerned with

community service focusing on protection and promotion of the interest of the whole community. Therefore, they are also known as socio-cultural pressure groups. In India, religious based groups such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Samiti or caste-based groups like Lorik Sena, Bhumi Sena, Vaishaya Samaj, Balmiki Samaj, etc. are some examples of socio-religious and cultural pressure groups. These groups are formed with the aim of protecting and promoting the culture, tradition and beliefs of particular religious, ethnic or cultural communities.

### 6.6.4 Anomic Pressure Groups

Anomic pressure groups are those which appear for a short span of time for specific objectives and purpose. In Almond's words, they are 'more or less spontaneous groups, penetrated into the political system from the society'. These groups are generally formed in response to unpredictable moments like, famine, drought, scarcity of resources or any similar kind of urgency. Since these groups are spontaneous in nature depending upon the spur of the moment, they are not guided by any rule or procedural structure. As a result, their behaviour and actions are also quite unpredictable which often turns violent. For example, famine relief groups like Mizo National Famine Front in Mizoram or the Assom Gona Parishad formed during the Assam Movement can be termed as anomic pressure groups. Once the purpose is served, most of them ceased to exist while others may transform into political parties like in the case of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra or the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note**: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the four types of pressure groups classified by Almond and Coleman?

………………………………………………………………………...……

………………………………………………………………………...……

## 6.7 METHODS AND TACTICS OF PRESSURE GROUPS

We know that pressure groups constantly endeavour to shape public policy. For this, they use different methods and tactics. And tactics adopted by pressure groups are not similar because, their choice of tactics is determined by various factors such as the nature of the political system, attitude of the government, the capability and strength of the particular pressure group. It also depends on the availability and convenience of methods which the groups have at their disposal. They tend to use any possible methods that will provide maximum benefit in the group's interests. Following are some common tactics employed by pressure groups:

### 6.7.1 Lobbying

Lobbying refers to an effort made by pressure groups to influence government decisions. Lobbying is one of the most common and significant persuasive tactics used by pressure groups. The term 'lobby' is derived from the lobby or the hall of Britain's House of Commons. Therefore, lobbying refers to any attempt or efforts made by individual members or groups, usually in the lobbies or halls of parliament buildings, to garner support for their cause by influencing politicians, legislatures, or anyone who is in the government or in the authority of policy-making. The act of lobbying can be conducted in multiple ways, such as direct personal contacts, sending delegations or representatives, writing of letters, telephone calls, email conversations or any other form of communication activity that can be used for persuasion. Although the act of lobbying remains highly personal basically associated with private activities of individual members of the group, it may also occur on a large scale in which several individual members try to convince and persuade those who have the power to decide policy decisions such as member of the legislature, ministers or government officials etc. Pressure groups may also lobby through advertisement in popular media such as newspaper, radio, television etc. in order to convince those in the position of power. The process of lobbying may also include actions involving favours, inducements and offerings to lure the officials in order to get the work done.

### 6.7.2 Shaping Public Opinion

To highlight and convey their issues and concerns to the government, pressure groups widely use the tactic of public-opinion campaigns. A public-opinion campaign is basically geared to attract media attention and also to sensitize the public at large in order to gain wider influence. For this, pressure groups use several platforms such as use of mass media, issuing press release, distributing pamphlets, organizing public meetings etc. In doing such publicity exercise, pressure groups are able to shape public opinion in their favour on the one hand and to present a criticism of the government policy on the other. The purpose of influencing public opinion is to alert the government thereby making their voice heard.

### 6.7.3 Publicity and Propaganda

Publicity and propaganda are another common technique used by pressure groups. Pressure groups usually do this by propagating their interests through mass media, such as newspapers, radio, television, internet, and so on. Through this pressure groups can highlight their demands and opinions as well as inform and educate the government and the public at large on matters that are crucial for their collective interests. By doing this, pressure groups are able to attract and influence those in authority to accede to their demands.

### 6.7.4 Strikes and Agitations

Usually, pressure groups use peaceful means to achieve their goals. But they may also resort to agitations to get maximum benefits of their demands. Such tactics

include strikes, protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience. Strike is a form of agitation which attempts for a temporary stoppage of work to force government or those in authority to concede to their demands. It is one of the most effective and common form of agitation adopted by pressure groups. Strikers often refuse to carry out their legitimate duties and may try to persuade others not to perform their duties. Though most forms of strikes are constitutional and peaceful, they sometime go out of control and result in violent. *Bandh* and *Gherao* are other forms of direct-action methods. A Bandh is a combination of a strike and a shutdown or blockade. Participants refrain from economic activity and usually set up roadblocks or shut office, shops, public transport etc., to 'enforce' the *bandh*. *Gherao*, on the other hand, involves the confinement of government officials by members of pressure groups for forcing them to concede to their demands. It is similar to picketing in which people congregate outside a place of work or location where an event is taking place to draw public attention to a cause. In India, most pressure groups rely more on direct action methods and less on techniques like lobbying.

---

**Pressure Groups in India and the West**

India and Western countries are democracies. But within Western countries there are differences between Presidential and Parliamentary forms of government. India though a parliamentary democracy differs from such countries of the West in terms of developmental levels. Therefore, there are some differences in the role of pressure groups. Firstly, the American pressure groups are regarded as the fourth organ of the government, but the Indian pressure groups are not yet able to play such a significant role in politics. Secondly, in India and Great Britain, the cabinet and civil service are the main targets of pressure groups for lobbying purposes rather than the parliament. However, the targets of American pressure groups are the Congress and its committees rather than the President for lobbying purposes. Thirdly, in India, pressure groups based on caste, religion, region, etc. are more powerful than the modern groups like business organisations. Finally, a significant feature of' American pressure groups is that they take interest in foreign policy issues while in India pressure groups are concerned more with domestic policy issues and problems, and less with foreign policy matters. Despite these differences, democratic politics presupposes the crucial role of pressure groups for serving the interests of different sections of society.

---

## Check Your Progress 3

**Note**: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

1) Why do pressure groups attempt to pressurize the government? Elaborate some pressure tactics used by pressure groups.

………………………………………………………………………………..……

………………………………………………………………………………..……

………………………………………………………………………………..……

………………………………………………………………………………..……

………………………………………………………………………………..……

2) What is lobbying?

………………………………………………………………………………..……

………………………………………………………………………………..……

………………………………………………………………………………..……

## 6.8 PRESSURE GROUPS IN MODERN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Group activity is a feature of every democracy and, indeed, of many authoritarian states as well. Although pressure groups have existed for long and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future, it is difficult to assess their role in a democracy. This is because of the multiplicity and diversity of pressure groups. There are simply too many of them and they vary in terms of their aims, composition and method. Some engage in continuous political activity while others do so intermittently or vanish after accomplishing their objective. Given this, the generalised comments we make here do not apply to all pressure groups in all circumstances.

For those who take a positive view of pressure-group activity, these groups enhance our democracy and have an important role in the political processes. Pressure groups enable individuals to associate with one another and voice their interests and grievances which are essential rights in any democracy. Their activities give representation and voice to the minorities or the disadvantaged sections of the society who are not adequately represented in the government. For instance, women, ethnic minorities, gays, transgenders that are inadequately represented by political parties, find opportunity to express any resentment about their treatments, and to suggest ideas that would help overcome obstacles that prevent them from fulfilling their potential.

Pressure group activity also encourages wider participation in decision making process. Ordinary individuals participate in political life only during election time. Elections which are held once in four or five years may not allow voters to express a preference on individual issue. Pressure groups give an opportunity to individuals be politically active and to make a contribution to the working of democracy between elections.

Pressure groups act as a link between the people and the government, a useful intermediary between the electors and those whom they elect, allowing a variety of views to be expressed. They counter the monopoly of the political process by political parties. As one political scientist put it "The views which pressure

groups convey are legitimate interests…Modern democracy would not exist without pressure groups. As a channel of representation, they are as legitimate as the ballot box…. They can mediate between the government and the governed" (Baggott, 1995).

Pressure groups often provide specialist information to the government and often help in the implementation of policy. Some of the well organised pressure groups often participate in official consultative committees, advisory groups and commissions. Most governments rely on these groups for advice, information specialist expertise and help in implementing policies. Pressure groups thus contribute in the formation, shaping and implementation of public policies.

Finally, activities of pressure groups make the public at large better informed about public policies. These activities keep political system and government more responsive to the aspiration and demands of the people.

However, there are critics who argue that pressure groups can endanger and weaken the democratic process. They argue that relatively small unelected groups of individuals, instead of elected representatives, are able to influence policies and laws. Marxist and Elitist theorists, for instance, argue that politics is always dominated by a small number of people. According to Marxist scholars, pressure groups reflect the prevailing power structure of the system in which few leaders from the capitalist class always control and dominate these pressure groups. This class-based nature of pressure groups ensures the system in favour of the powerful and wealthy class while leaving less for the weaker majority. On the other hand, Elitist theorists explain pressure groups in terms of what Robert Michels called the 'iron law of oligarchy' which claim that minorities, often called 'oligarchs' always rule these organizations. According to them, majority of the masses, particularly from weaker section of the society are largely unorganized, therefore, they are unlikely to emerge as leaders of pressure groups, because they neither have the resources nor the power to fight in the political battle against the powerful.

Critics of group activity also contend that the methods and tactics used by pressure groups are often corrupt and intimidating. For example, large-scale demonstrations or protest may cause inconvenience to many. Sometimes direct actions methods go out of control, thereby resulting into violent clashes between the protestors and state machineries. However, the right to make a protest, particularly when those in power take actions that are detrimental to a section of society, is a fundamental one in any democracy.

It appears that excessive group power creates the possibility of organised interests foisting their particular views upon elected representatives who are expected to keep the general interest of the people. On the other hand, too little group power poses the threat of elected government behaving in high handed manner and ignoring the legitimate needs and preferences of the people. Given that pressure groups have become indispensable components of modern political life, it is important to draw a line between excessive and reasonable influence of group activity. In general, governments which allow pressure groups to operate freely are far more accountable and responsive to the public than those without pressure groups.

## 6.9   LET US SUM UP

Pressure groups are organizations, associations and groups representing the collective interests of their members. They play an important role in democratic politics of a country by articulating the demands and interests of different groups in society. By forming pressure groups, people seek to protect and promote their shared interests and beliefs while exerting pressures on the government. In fact, many of the pressure groups are able to influence the government and change the community's socio-economic and political structures. Since they do not attempt to exercise governing power, they are different from political parties in many ways. Though similar in their orientation and nature, pressure groups are also different from other groups in the society like interest groups, or civil society organizations. They are well structured, organized and formalized in their objectives, working and methods. Though few pressure groups exist for a short time to achieve immediate or specific purpose, majority of pressure groups are long-lived and exert concerted pressures on the government thereby influencing both the policy formulation and policy implementation process in their group's interests.

## 6.10  REFERENCES

Alan R. Ball and John Millard. (1965). *Pressure Politics in Industrial Societies*, London: Alfred & Knopf.

Baggot, Rob. (1995). *Pressure Groups Today.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Finer, S. E. (1958).*Interest Groups on Four Continents.*Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Forman F.N. and N.D.J. Baldwin. (1999). *Mastering British Politics.* London: Macmillan Press.

Key, V. O. (1969). *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*. New York: Thomas and Crowell Co.

Watts, Duncan. (2007). *Pressure Groups.* London and Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

## 6.11  ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

1. Group of individuals or associations that seek to exert pressure or influence in the decision-making process of the government in order to gain policy outcome in accordance with their interests. Although pressure groups are similar to 'interest groups, the former aim to influence the government's decision-making process, the latter do not have the claims against the government or cannot influence the government.

2. Pressure groups aim to influence the decision-making process without directly involve in forming the government. Political parties, on the other hand, are groups that seek to contest elections to form the government.

## Check Your Progress 2

1. Almond and Coleman's classification of pressure groups consists of four types. They are: (i) institutional pressure groups, (ii) associational pressure groups, (iii) non-Associational Pressure groups, and (iv) anomic pressure groups

## Check Your Progress 3

1. Pressure groups constantly attempt to pressurize the government to gain policy outcomes on their behalf. For this they adopt various techniques which include lobbying, propaganda, appeals and petitions, holding of demonstrations, *dharnas*, strikes, *bandh*, boycott, and so on. However, their choice of strategies and techniques are determined by factors such as nature of political system, effectiveness of the group, availability of techniques etc.

2. Lobbying refers to any attempt or efforts made by individual members or groups to garner support for their cause by influencing the government or those who are in the authority of policy-making. It may include actions involving favours, inducements and offerings to lure the officials or leaders to get the work done.

# UNIT 7 ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES[*]

## Structure

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Classification of electoral systems

7.3 Majoritarian Systems

    7.3.1 First-Past-the-Post/ Single-Member Plurality system

    7.3.2 Second Ballot System

    7.3.3 Alternative Vote (AV)/ Supplementary Vote (SV) system

    7.3.4 Condorcet Method

7.4 Proportional Representation Systems

    7.4.1 Single-Transferable-Vote (STV) System

    7.4.2 Party-List System

7.5 Mixed Methods

    7.5.1 Mixed-Member Proportional or Additional Member System

    7.5.2 Semi-Proportional Method

    7.5.3 Cumulative Vote System

    7.5.4 Slate System

7.6 Comparative Assessment of Majoritarian and PR Systems

7.7 Let Us Sum Up

7.8 References

7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

---

[*]Dr. Tulika Gaur, Guest Faculty, Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board, University of Delhi, Delhi

# 7.0 OBJECTIVES

An electoral system does not only set rules for election, but also plays crucial role in shaping the party system and political culture of the country. This unit focuses on electoral systems and processes. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Define electoral system,

- Identify the various dimensions of an electoral system,

- Assess combinations of electoral methods used by different countries in their national or local elections,

- Examine the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of electoral systems, and

- Analyse the links between parties and electoral process.

# 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The electoral system refers to a set of rules through which people get to choose their representatives or political leaders. It shapes the outcome of the election by providing for an election mechanism and election process through which representation of several political parties is determined in the legislature. Electoral systems not only work at the national level but are also used extensively in determining the composition of local bodies. It is the deciding factor for the various combinations of political parties/groups/individuals that exist at the legislative and executive level in a country. Formation of coalitions, various strategies opted by political parties to get into the legislature, and their election manifestoes- all depend on what kind of electoral system exist in their political system. An electoral system is not a static concept; rather it is a dynamic system which has been evolving continuously as needed by the countries to suit their political system. An electoral system well-defined facilitates the democratic culture to perform in its true spirit.

A well known comparative political science scholar, Bernard Groffman has identified six basic components of an electoral system. These are 1) defining the eligibility for contesting the election (individuals or party or combination of both); 2) specifying rules within the party for identifying the party's candidates or setting the criteria for ranking the candidates in a party list, 3) specification of ballot type, 4) specification of constituencies (districts), 5) determination of election timing, and 6) rules for ballot aggregation. Apart from this, the term electoral system is also used to refer to rules and regulations for the voters, campaigning, advertising, deciding on phases of elections, and so on (Krupavičius, Isoda, Vaišnoras 2013).

As mentioned by Rae (1971), electoral systems have three dimensions: the ballot structure, the district structure, and the electoral formula.

1. Ballot structure defines the nature of ballot system and the different ways in which it is casted and counted. For instance, whether votes are casted for

either Individuals or a group of individuals (party list) or a combination of both; how many votes are supposed to be casted for candidates and/or lists; in case more than one votes are to be casted, then whether it is based on preference or rank of candidates/list in any order; and finally, whether there is single round or multiple rounds of voting.

2. District structure comprises of the area, number, and hierarchy of electoral districts. Here, electoral districts are those areas in which elections are conducted. There can be one single seated or multiple seated district structures, that is the entire country can be considered as a national electoral district or it may be divided into several small electoral constituencies. In case of latter, there may exist a certain kind of hierarchy such as upper and lower tiers. There may be one or many seats in any electoral district.

3. The electoral formula refers to the process through which votes get transformed into seats. The most popular formulas are the plurality, majority, and proportional representation (PR) systems. These formulas may vary as per the district structure.

## 7.2 CLASSIFICATION OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Generally, the electoral system is classified into three main categories based on the rules decided for conversion of votes into seats in the legislature: first category is the Majoritarian system; second is the Proportional Representative system and the third is the Mixed system. Majoritarian Method refers to a system where larger parties get to represent higher number of seats, while the Proportional Representation (PR) systems depicts a system where seats are decided in proportion to the votes acquired in the election. Mixed systems are the combination of the majoritarian and PR systems.

It is more likely that in Majoritarian system, parties getting 30 percent of votes may emerge as the ruling parties resulting in mostly two-party systems or single-party governments such as in 2010 elections in the U.K., when the Conservative Party appeared as the largest party acquiring 47 percent of seats despite holding only 36 percent of votes while the Liberal Democratic Party acquired 9 percent of seats with 29 percent of votes. The Conservatives have held power for a prolonged period even though they have never earned more than 40-45 percent of total electoral votes. Majoritarian system may result in huge disparities as the seats are not allocated in proportion of votes acquired. Also, there are higher chances for a party with minimum two-fifth of votes to acquire the political power which might impact the efficacy of the government and the political system.

On the other hand, in PR system, parties get representation on seats according to the percentage of votes acquired by them in elections. For instance, a party getting 40 percent of votes get to represent on 40 percent of total legislative seats, thus reducing the possibilities of single-party rule. PR systems usually result in multiparty systems or in coalition governments assuring a better representative system and more effective political system. The governments thus formed are popular governments and are better at managing the popular mandate than those

in the Majoritarian system where government is mostly formed by those who have secured lesser than 50 percent of total votes.

Mixed systems aim to combine the benefits of PR and single-member plurality systems in various ways possible. There are several arrangements in the Majoritarian System, Proportional Representative System and Mixed systems which are designed by countries to suit their political culture. Some of them are discussed in the following section.

# 7.3 MAJORITARIAN SYSTEMS

## 7.3.1 Single-Member Plurality Systems

In the single member plurality (SMP)system,the person/party holding maximum number of votes is the winner. This system is popular in the UK, USA, Canada, India, and some other countries which have had their political systems derived from the British colonial past.

In this system, the entire area gets divided into single-member constituencies which are generally of equal size. The electoral votes are cast for a single candidate for each constituency, i.e.,each voter gets to vote for a single candidate to govern for their constituency. This system, which is also called the First Past the Post System, there is a higher probability of winning such election despite getting minority votes in favour. For example, if five candidates contesting an election get 32, 25, 14, 18, 11 votes out of total 100 votes polled, the winner is the one who has secured the largest number of votes, 32 votes. This means that although the majority of votes (100-32=68 votes) were not favouring this candidate, yet this candidate is declared winner because the maximum number of votes casted in favour of any candidate belongs to him.

This accounts for a major drawback of the First Past the Post System as it results in wastage of many votes. It also means that in this system, there is higher possibility of smaller political parties getting poor coverage and attention. Some scholars hold that this also undermines the very essence of a healthy democracy as it dilutes the impact of smaller groups and political parties in the political system. Since, the elected candidate usually enjoys only minority support, the legitimacy of such governments also can be questioned. Another risk associated with this system is that it may result in an unaccountable government because the winner is decided on the basis of simple majority which may not be in essence the choice of majority of population.

Despite these limitations, there remain various advantages associated with this system. The government formed in such systems claim clear mandate from the electorates even though it based on simple majority. This helps in avoiding any kind of radical group or extremism from gaining strength in the political system. Furthermore, the provision of several single-member constituencies ensures that every part of country gets adequate representations in the national legislature. It also tends to provide the voters with ample choices of candidates and varying criteria of choosing the representatives are allowed to exist simultaneously which in turn strengthens the democratic element.

## 7.3.2 Second-Ballot System

This method has managed to address the major shortcoming of the earlier discussed SMP system to a large extent. To ensure that the winning candidate gets decided not only on the basis of simple majority but also on absolute majority, Second-Ballot system is used. It has been an accepted electoral system inFrance, Chile, Austria and Russia. As followed in the SMP system, the entire country is divided into several single-member constituencies and people's vote is based on single-choice out of many candidates contesting the election. However, there are two rounds of voting. After the first round of voting, the second round of voting is held between the leading two candidates who have emerged as winners in the first round. This gives people the freedom to choose any candidate in the first round, but then limits the choice to the top two contenders so that a candidate with absolute majority emerges as winner. Because of this format, this system is also described as 'Mixed Majority-Plurality' system.

This system is also followed in the USA when the two main political parties conduct internal election to decide on their leadership and presidential candidates. Rounds of voting continue to take place until any of their candidates reach an absolute majority.

Although this system may seem to address the major drawback of the SMP system, yet it fails to provide ample opportunities to the smaller parties and individual candidates. In this system, there is higher tendency of larger parties' candidates to secure the top two positions and relegating the significant positions of the third parties which may not be far behind from the top two contenders. This system may also encourage the candidates to opt for popularity over party principles resulting in unstable and corrupt contenders reaching the top two positions. Lastly, holding election twice in any country will cost extra load on the country's treasury as well strain the electorates' patience.

Despite these shortcomings, the Second-Ballot system also ensures that the elected candidate secures consent of most of the population and is more widely accepted. It gives the electorates also ample choices in the first round and preferential choice in the second round leading to maximum satisfaction of the electorates to the outcomes of such rigorous event. Moreover, the legitimacy of the candidate thus elected remains unquestioned which consequently leads to a strong and stable governance system unlike that of the SMP system.

## 7.3.3 Alternative-Vote / Supplementary Vote System

This is another method that is used to address the criticism of SMP system regarding the lack of absolute majority of the winning candidate. However, it is generally used in internal election in different countries and not as a mandatory method to decide the national leadership of any country. For instance, the election in House of Representatives in Australia is decided by using the Alternative Vote (AV) method while the election of Mayor in London, United Kingdom is decided by the Supplementary Vote (SV) method, which can be described as a variant of the AV method.

The SV and AV methods are based on the same principles and differ in details. In both the systems, there are single-member constituencies, with the electorate getting chance to cast multiple votes in accordance with their preference. Electorates rank their candidates according to their choices and preferences. The first preference is considered as the main vote, while the other ranks are considered as alternative or supplementary vote. In AV system, this ranking is given to each of the candidate contesting the election but in the SV system, there is only one supplementary vote available for the electorates. This means that if 7 candidates are contesting the election, then according to the AV system, the electorates will rank the candidates as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7; but in the SV system the candidate will choose their topmost favourite and rank them 1 and may give 2 to their second most favourite candidate. Thus, there are many alternative votes and only one supplementary vote. The votes are counted according to the first preferences and the candidates acquiring least votes get eliminated and their votes are distributed among others in order of second preference. This process is repeated till an absolute majority is reached by one of the candidates. There is a slight difference between the AV and the SV system in counting. While in the AV system the elimination and redistribution of votes is done multiple times but in the SV system in single round top two candidates are decided and the subsequent round decides the winner.

The AV/SV system is detailed and complex process, but it tends to result in single-party or two-party system where larger parties overshadow the smaller parties and individual candidates. Another major criticism that is faced by this system is that the preferential counting may result in the same outcome as that of SMP system wherein the winner may have lesser first preference votes, yet they get chosen to govern on behalf the entire population.

Nevertheless, this system ensures that fewer votes are wasted, and a candidate's popularity and acceptance is decided on the basis of preferential votes casted by the voters. It is also known as 'Limited Vote Plan' or 'Approval Voting'. It has been adopted by several private associations in the past and also in parliamentary elections in 1990 in various Eastern European countries (Belarus, Ukraine). The major thrust for adopting such approach has been to ensure that the winning candidate wins absolute majority of votes or minimum 50 percent of votes.

### 7.3.4 Condorcet Method

Derived from the name of the founder Marquis de Condorcet, a mathematician from France, this method is slightly more complex than those mentioned above. To some extent it stands on the same principle of AV system because the voters need to put their candidates on order of their preferences but in pair wise comparison. For example, if there are 3 candidates X, Y, Z contesting the election then the voters must vote pair wise in XY, YZ and XZ. The voters decide on to which candidate they prefer in a particular pair. The one who gets most votes is declared as the winner.

This method may seem to be more accurate and fairer in terms of deciding the representation but due to its complex nature it has not been practiced widely. Given the fact that it stands on the basis of pairs that are made out of contesting

candidates, it is obvious that for a country where large number of candidates contest for elections, it will not be possible for voters to make all the pairs and judge accordingly.

## Check Your Progress 1

**Note**: (i) Use the space below for your answers

(ii) Check your answers with the ones given at the end of the unit.

1) Define the 'First-past-the-post' system?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

2) List the major shortcomings of the SMP system.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

3) How is AV system different from SV system?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

## 7.4 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEMS

The term 'Proportional Representation' is generally used as an umbrella term for several methods and mechanisms that aim to establish proportionality in the election outcomes. The underlying principle for all the methods remains to be the fact that they try to match the share of seats won with the share of votes won. The legislative seats are shared in direct proportion to the votes acquired by the party/candidates in the election. Some of the well known and practised examples include the 'Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) or Additional Member System (AMS)', 'Single-Transferable-Vote (STV) System', 'Party-List System', 'Cumulative Vote System', and 'Slate System'.

### 7.4.1 Single-Transferable-Vote (STV) System

This system was first proposed by Thomas Hare and is therefore also known as 'Hare System'. It is widely used in The Republic of Ireland and the UK (Northern Ireland Assembly) as these states are made up of multi-member constituencies and the representatives elected from each constituency vary from minimum three to maximum eight. However, this does not imply that the voters get to cast multiple votes. The voters are entitled to only one vote, but it is a preferential voting system as practiced in AV system. Thus, the voters single vote

gets transferred according to their second and third preferences and so on till a candidate is able to secure the defined 'quota' which again is defined in terms of total votes acquired and total number of seats.

In these multi-member constituencies, the winning criterion for a candidate is achieving the defined quota which is calculated according to the Droop formula as mentioned below:

$$\left( \frac{\substack{\text{total number of valid} \\ \text{ballots cast in the district}}}{1 + \substack{\text{number of members} \\ \text{to be elected}}} \right) + 1$$

For example, if the total number of votes is 100 and total number of representatives allotted are 4, then all the 4 candidates need to achieve 1+(100/1+4) = 21 votes each in order to win the election. In case none of the candidates get the required Droop Quota then the candidate getting least number of votes get eliminated and his votes get transferred according to their second preferences. This process is repeated until all the required 4 candidates get 21 votes each. In other case, if the candidate surpasses the Droop quota, then all the excess votes acquired by that very candidate also get transferred in accordance with the next preference.

The voters cast single vote, but it gets transferred multiple times as per the preferences mentioned, hence, this system is known as 'Single-Transferrable Vote (STV) system'. Thissystem is used in Rajya Sabha elections in India where each state assembly works as one multi-member constituency, and the MLAs get one transferable vote each. Australian Senate, Parliament of Malta and Ireland have also adopted this system.

This system has managed to reduce the 'wastage' of votes and unlike the SMP system, this system provides for higher possibilities of proportional representation. All the candidates are judged and elected on equal criteria and remain at par with each other in representing the constituency, which in turn ensures better and more balanced governance system. It also provides the voters, ample choices to rank their candidates and get varied combination of representatives, and reduces the possibility of single-party dominance in the political system.

Although this system, overcomes many limitations of the Majoritarian methods, it has its own shortcomings. Multi-member constituencies may result in abrupt combinations of representatives which may hamper smooth and speedy decision-making capabilities leading to an inefficient governance system. Moreover, all candidates hold same value and position even though some of them might be more widely accepted and popular than the others. Hence, public liking/popularity/acceptance also gets compromised to a certain extent as all the winners hold equal importance.

### 7.4.2 Party-List System

As the name suggests, this system is based on voting done for party rather than the candidates. The Party-List system is followed in both single-member

constituencies as well as multi-member constituencies. Some of the examples include states of European Union (Belgium, Luxembourg); also the European Parliament gets elected following this method. Apart from these, it is also followed in those countries where the entire country is considered as a single constituency such as Israel, and Switzerland.

Votes are casted in favour of parties and not candidates. However, the list system is such that the voter is well aware of all the candidates contesting the election as the parties list their candidates in order of the preferences, with first rank being given to the highest position. Hence, each of the party in the country prepares a list which declares the candidates position if they get elected to power. Voters cast their votes in favour of their preferred party after knowing the list of the candidates. Parties share the seats in direct proportion with the votes acquired. For instance, if a party achieves 40 percent of votes, then it gets to represent 40 percent of seats which gets filled by the list of candidates prepared by the party beforehand. In Switzerland this system has been slightly modified where the voters get a blank vote, and they can either vote for a party-list or they can create their own hybrid-list which consists of candidates from different party-lists.

Party-list system can be further classified in two forms: Open-list systems and closed-list systems. The former is an arrangement where voters cast their vote for both the party and the candidate within the party. So, they have their say in determining who in the party-list should be chosen for the said position. For example, in Finland, the voters cast two votes- one for the party and other for the candidate within that Party.

Closed-list system, on the other hand, does not give any choice to the voter in context of the candidate. The list is prepared by the party and presented to the electorate. In Israel which has adopted this system, voters accept the list of candidates nominated by the party and cast their vote in favour of the party.

Belgium follows the mid-way between the closed-list and the open-list system, wherein, the voter gets to choose either the list provided by the party or any individual candidate and where lower placed candidate can get higher position in case, he/she succeeds in acquiring the specified minimum number of preferential votes.

Advocates of Party-list system hail it as the purest form of proportional representation as it assures fair chance to both small and big parties. Party-List system has also fared well in terms of inclusion of smaller/neglected/marginalized sections of society such as women and minorities. The voter gets an idea before voting as to which party has more inclusive list and covers all sections of the society and which kind of government they will get if choosing any party. This results in a more inclusive society which rests on higher possibilities of negotiations, bargain, and consensus.

However, the Party List system runs the risk of having an unstable, fragmented, and weak government. As the voters vote for party, their link with the candidates may not be as strong as it tends to be in systems which allow voting for their candidate directly. Also there remains a chance where a certain candidate may have influential position in the party but lack mass appeal, leading to a possible disaffection after the leader is elected. Moreover, candidates may also get into

unfair practices to get into the list and public service might get masked by greed for power, leading towards a corrupt system of governance.

# 7.5 MIXED ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

This category includes systems that combine elements of each of the first two types to produce a pattern somewhat in between, that is, with some elements of majoritarian and some of proportionality but not falling completely under either of them.

## 7.5.1 Mixed-Member Proportional or Additional Member System

By combining the SMP system and the Party-list system, we get the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) or Additional Member (AM) system. This implies that some seats get filled by SMP method while rest of the seats are filled using the Party-List system. A good example of this arrangement in play is in Germany where 50 percent of the seats are filled by SMP system particularly in the single-member constituencies. A few other states in Europe, like Italy, Scotland, and Wales have adopted MMP system where more than 50 percent of seats are allotted as per the SMP system and rest are filled using Party-list system.

In this system, the voters are entitled to two votes each- one for the candidate and other for the party. The basis for this hybrid system is to maintain the difference between the constituency representative and ministerial positions. While the former gets chosen by the people directly through the SMP system, the latter is elected in a more proportional manner with the party getting its due importance. Further, the voters also get the choice of electing their constituency representative from a different party and the government from a different one, which leads to an efficient 'checks and balance' system in place.

## 7.5.2 Semi-Proportional Method

This is another variation in the combination of majoritarian method and the proportional representation method. A certain variation in this system is followed in New Zealand and India where some arrangements is made to ensure the involvement of ethnic minorities and backward classes in the political system of the respective country. The Maori districts in New Zealand are exclusively confined to people who are descents of Maori community while in India, there are certain areas from which only Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes can contest the election, but the same criteria do not apply for voters. Voters from all category and castes can vote but contesting candidates must be from SC or ST category. In a sense, this is more of an arrangement to reserve some seats for a special class rather than true form of proportional representation.

## 7.5.3 Cumulative Vote System

Another variation of semi-proportional method can be seen in Cumulative vote system in which voters are entitled for multiple votes in multi-member constituencies. The number of members to be elected to represent a constituency equals the number of votes casted by every voter. Thus, if there are 5 members to

be elected from a single constituency, then each voter gets to cast 5 votes. Here the voter is free to cast all the votes to a single candidate, or one vote to each of those contesting candidates or divide the votes among the candidates as per his/her discretion. The top five candidates are considered as winner. Hence, counting wise this follows the SMP system, as the cumulative votes matter in final results.

## 7.5.4 Slate System

This system is exclusively used in USA during the election of President's Electoral College. It is closely related to Party-List system with the only difference being the list prepared by party is called as 'Slate'. The voters get the 'slates' from both the Democratic and the Republican Party and vote for their preferred slate i.e., they vote for an entire list of candidates and not any one candidate in particular. The slate, which acquires 51 percent of votes, wins the entire state i.e., the party to which the slate belongs gets to represent the entire state. This aspect is somewhat like the 'first-past-the-post' system however, the major difference remains the criteria of earning 51 percent of total votes to win the election. Also, in the 'first-past-the-post' system, the constituencies are represented by single candidate while in the 'slate system' the constituencies are represented by more than one member and the party winning 51 percent votes gets to appoint its members listed as representatives. Hence, the constituencies are represented by multiple members belonging to one party.

## Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the one given at the end of Unit.

1) What are the major drawbacks in the PR system?

…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

2) Describe the Single-Transferable Vote system.

…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

3) What is Party-List system?

…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

## 7.6 COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES

The significance of electoral processes cannot be denied in the wake of emerging democratic societies all around the world. An electoral system does not only set rules for election in a country, but also plays crucial role in shaping the party system and impacting the political system of the country. Hence, it becomes imperative for political parties, in return, to influence and alter the electoral system as per their advantage.

Electoral systems and processes vary across time and space and party politics act as a catalyst for such changes and variations. Both the majoritarian and the PR systems have been tried, altered and replaced by countries across the world in different times. Many countries have tried to alter the elections by simple shifting from one kind of electoral system to another or by opting for a combination of two different electoral systems. A classic example in hand is France, which has changed its electoral systems more frequently than others. The parliamentary elections were held according to second-ballot system till 1985, when it was replaced by Party-List system under the influence of the Socialist Party which controlled the national assembly in the 1980s and 1990s. A major factor driving such change was derived from the hitherto President Mitterrand's strong desire to strengthen Socialist representation in the National Assembly. Another example of changes in electoral system can be noted in case of United Kingdom which has seen changes in the electoral systems of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland from single-member plurality (SMP) to proportional methods with the SMP system retained in general elections. This is said to be the result of an active interest of Labour Party in opposition towards electoral reforms particularly for devolved bodies. New Zealand has also shifted its electoral system from SMP to PR system since 1993. Italy has also experimented by replacing its erstwhile party-list system with the MMP/AM system and returning to the party-list system in 2003 (Haywood 2013: 207).

An electoral process can be assessed in context of following two aspects: firstly, the extent to which the electoral process is able to deliver fair and justified representation, and secondly, the impact it creates on the efficiency of the government.

Speaking of the Majoritarian methods, the criteria of delivering fair and justified representation remains unrealised as it is driven by popular preference which may or may not represent the society in its truest form. The general criticism associated with the majoritarian methods is that it does not stand true to the electoral strength as achieving 'simple majority' is the only criteria to win an election. There is a tendency for the relatively smaller parties to be sidelinedin such arrangement. This is very well exemplified in the 2014 General Elections in India, where the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has swept the elections and formed a majoritarian government despite getting merely 31 percent of votes in its favour.

In this context, the PR system seems to be much more efficient in delivering fair and justified representation of the masses. Here, we need to keep in mind that an

essential function of an electoral system is not only to facilitate the process of government formation but also in delivering a strong and stable governance system. The PR systems seem to be failing on this as it generally results in coalition governments which may be not as stable and strong as single-party government seems to be. It has been noticed that the coalition governments formed in PR systems face equal criticism and challenges post-election despite claiming a clear electoral strength in the elections. The sphere of influence shrinks and the ability to act and deliver on public promises is equally hampered in PR systems due to the formation of coalition governments.

Advocates of PR systems identify the good governance in terms of having maximum civil support and obedience. They justify the PR systems as one delivering maximum possible efficient governance system as it is the only system which takes 'absolute majority' as a criterion for forming a government. So even if there is a coalition government in place, it assures that all its members and ministers enjoy popular support in its purest form possible. Consensus, debate and discussion are essence of a highly efficient government as these not only protect but also ensure coexistence of diverse public opinion and interests making majority of its citizens content with the government.

## 7.7 LET US SUM UP

Electoral processes are of great significant when it comes to the formation and maintenance of democratic societies. Not only they shape the election outcomes, but also influence the structure of party systems, impact political culture and government formation in any country. In turn, the electoral processes also get affected by the social and political structure of a country. Different set-ups call for varying electoral systems either solely or in combination. The study of varying range of electoral systems can be classified in two major categories: Majoritarian systems and Proportional Representation Systems.

The most opted majoritarian method is 'Single-member Plurality', also called as the 'first-past-the-post system'. It is followed in countries which have single-member constituencies and the candidate securing maximum number of votes is declared as winner. There are no restrictions on minimum number of votes which is required for winning the election. Simple majority of votes is the only criteria. This method is often criticised on the grounds of 'wasting' a large number of votes by considering only simple majority. Some other methods include Second Ballot System, Alternative Vote (AV)/ Supplementary Vote (SV) system, and Condorcet Method offer an alternative.

The second category of Electoral systems is known as Proportional Representation (PR) Systems which includes a varying range of methods such as Single-Transferable-Vote (STV) System, Party-List System, Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) or Additional Member (AM) system, Semi-Proportional Method, Cumulative Vote System, and Slate System. These methods are more representative as they follow proportionality rule which implies that the seats are allotted in accordance with the votes acquired.

The majoritarian methods usually result in single-party governments and two-party systems which at times do mask up the efforts of the third parties or smaller groups and parties. The PR systems usually operate in a multi-party system and tend to yield coalition governments. Both the systems have their advantages and disadvantages. While the former yields strong and stable governments with lesser possibilities of mid-term change in governments, the latter is more concerned with the essence of democracy to be measured in terms of consensus, discussion and negotiations which can happen in case of coalition governments only. In context of disadvantages, the majoritarian methods run the risk of facing public disapproval of the governments as it is based on 'simple majority' which may go against the public at large. On the other hand, the PR systems are too complicated and time taking, and may not be feasible for large and poor countries because multiple rounds of voting seem to be an expensive affair.

## 7.8 REFERENCES

Haywood, Andrew .(2013).*Politics.* London:Palgrave Macmillan.

Krupavičius, Isoda, Vaišnoras. (2013).*Introduction to Comparative Politics: Didactical Guideline. Kaunas:* Vytautas Magnus University.

Rae D. W. (1971).*The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Siaroff, Alan. (2013). *Comparing Political Regimes: A Thematic Introduction to Comparative Politics.* Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Clark, William Roberts; Golder, Matt; Golder, SonaNadenichek. (2013). *Principles of Comparative Politics.* USA: Sage Publications.

## 7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

1) The first-past-the-post system refers to an arrangement where the contesting candidates do not need to pass a minimum threshold of votes to be elected; instead, they need a simple majority, that is, one more vote than their closest rival. In this system the government is formed by the party whose candidates have managed to win maximum constituencies irrespective of their share of the popular vote.

2) A major shortcoming of the SMP systems is their tendency to give a majority of seats to one party which is also known as a "manufactured majority". By limiting the representation to bigger parties, this system can marginalise smaller parties in the political system.

3) In both the systems, there are single-member constituencies, but the electorates get to cast multiple votes in accordance with their preference. In AV system, this ranking is given to each of the candidate contesting the election but in the SV system, there is only one supplementary vote available for the electorates.

# Check Your Progress 2

1) The multiple voting involved in PR system creates extra expenditure from the country. Further, the process may be more time consuming. It usually results in coalition governments which are considered weak and less efficient in comparison to the single-party governments yielded by majoritarian methods.

2) Single-Transferable Vote system is an arrangement where the voters cast preferential votes for individual candidates by giving them ranks as per their discretion.

3) A Party-List system refers to an arrangement wherein the political parties prepare a list of candidates in accordance with the number of seats to be contested. Voters are given a choice to choose the party as well as decide on the ranking/preferences of candidates within the party-list. Alternately, the list of candidates is decided by the party and the voters vote for the party list.