

ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

Sociology Optional Politics and Society

Paper 1 · Unit 7

Every theory of power from Weber to Foucault, the elite-pluralist quarrel that organises the whole unit, and the machinery of state, civil society and social movements.

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UPSC SYLLABUS

(a) Sociological theories of power. (b) Power elite, bureaucracy, pressure groups and political parties. (c) Nation, state, citizenship, civil society, ideology. (d) Protest, agitation, social movements, collective action, revolution.

Sociological Theories of Power

The unit begins with a definitional quarrel. Is power a capacity held by someone over someone (a constant-sum relation), or a capacity of a system to get things done (a variable-sum facility), or something that is not held at all but circulates? Weber, Marx, Parsons, Arendt and Foucault give five different answers, and knowing which question each is answering is worth more than knowing their definitions.

- Weber's definition is the standard: power (Macht) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance. Note the three features aspirants miss: it is a probability, not a possession; it is located in a social relationship, not in a person; and resistance is built into the definition, which makes power constant-sum, since your gain is my loss.
- Weber's more useful concept is authority (Herrschaft, legitimate domination): the probability that a command will be obeyed by a given group of persons. Power rests on the capacity to compel; authority rests on the belief of the ruled in the legitimacy of the ruler. Weber's decisive move is that legitimacy is a belief held by the subordinate, not a quality possessed by the ruler, which is why every system of domination cultivates the belief in its own legitimacy.
- Weber's three pure types of legitimate domination, each with its own basis and administrative apparatus. Traditional: legitimacy rests on the sanctity of immemorial tradition, obedience is owed to the person of the chief, and the apparatus is patrimonial, staffed by personal retainers, with feudalism as a sub-type. Charismatic: legitimacy rests on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual, obedience is owed to the person because of his charisma, the apparatus is a band of disciples, and it is inherently unstable and revolutionary. Rational-legal: legitimacy rests on belief in the legality of enacted rules, obedience is owed to the impersonal order and to the office not the person, and the apparatus is bureaucracy.
- The routinisation of charisma is the concept that carries Weber's theory of change: charisma is by nature extraordinary, unstable and hostile to routine, so it must be transformed to survive the founder's death, through hereditary charisma or charisma of office, at which point it settles into a traditional or rational-legal form. Weber's insight is that charisma is the one genuinely revolutionary force in history, but it always ends by becoming the routine it overthrew.
- Marx: power is not autonomous, it is rooted in the relations of production. The class that owns the means of production is the ruling class, and its economic dominance translates into political and ideological dominance. The Communist Manifesto's formulation is that the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. Power is therefore constant-sum, class-based, and destined to disappear when classes do, since the state withers away.
- Parsons is the crucial counterpoint and the direct subject of the 2014 question. In *On the Concept of Political Power* (1963) he argues power is a generalised capacity of a social system to mobilise resources to attain collective goals, legitimated by the value system. His analogy is that power circulates in the political system as money circulates in the economy: it is a medium, and like credit it can expand. Hence power is variable-sum or positive-sum. Society as a whole can have more power, not merely a different distribution of it, and power flows from the collectivity to its leaders as a deposit of trust, not from leaders onto subjects.

- So 'power is not a zero-sum game' is answered by staging Weber against Parsons. Weber: power is exercised over others despite their resistance, so it is necessarily distributive and constant-sum. Parsons: power is exercised on behalf of a collectivity to achieve shared goals, so it is collective and can grow. The critique of Parsons is the one to write: by defining power as legitimate and goal-attaining, he assumes the value consensus he needs to prove, treats power as necessarily serving common interests, and thereby writes coercion, domination and sectional interest out of the concept. Giddens's objection is exactly this, that Parsons obscures power as a means by which some groups realise their interests at the cost of others.
- Hannah Arendt (*On Violence*, 1970) supplies a third non-Weberian position: power belongs to a group and springs up whenever people act in concert, it is never the property of an individual, and it exists only so long as the group holds together. Her sharpest claim is that power and violence are opposites: violence appears where power is in jeopardy, and rule by sheer violence comes about when power is being lost. This is worth deploying in any question on legitimacy, since it reverses the common assumption that violence is power in its purest form.
- Michel Foucault dissolves the whole framework. Power is not a possession or a commodity to be held, seized or shared; it is exercised, relational, and circulates through a net-like organisation. It is capillary, reaching into the smallest practices, gestures and bodies. It is productive, not merely repressive: it produces reality, domains of objects and rituals of truth, and it produces the subject himself. And it is inseparable from knowledge, hence power/knowledge, since the human sciences that claim to describe people are the instruments through which people are governed.
- Foucault's specific mechanisms to name: disciplinary power, operating through hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination, drilled into the body in the prison, school, barracks, factory and hospital; the Panopticon, Bentham's design that Foucault makes the diagram of modern power, since the inmate who cannot verify whether he is watched ends up watching himself, so surveillance becomes self-surveillance and power becomes automatic; governmentality, the conduct of conduct, the arts by which populations are governed at a distance; and biopower, power over life itself, taking the population as its object through statistics, public health and the regulation of birth and death. Where Weber asks who holds power, Foucault asks how power operates and what it makes of us.
- Steven Lukes's three-dimensional view is best learned here and applied in the next section: the first dimension is decision-making, the second is agenda-setting, the third is the shaping of preferences. Lukes's own summary is that the supreme exercise of power is to get another to have the desires you want them to have, that is, to secure compliance by controlling thoughts and desires.

Theories of power compared

Theorist	What power is	Where it is located	Sum character
Weber	Probability of carrying out one's will despite resistance	Social relationships; legitimated as authority	Constant-sum
Marx	Capacity rooted in ownership of the means of production	Class structure; the state serves the ruling class	Constant-sum, class-based
Parsons	Generalised capacity to mobilise resources for collective goals	The social system, legitimated by shared values	Variable-sum (positive-sum)
Arendt	The human ability to act in concert	The group, and only while it coheres	Collective; opposite of violence
Elite theorists	Organised control of the key institutional positions	A cohesive minority	Constant-sum
Pluralists (Dahl)	Capacity to prevail in actual decisions	Dispersed across competing groups	Dispersed, shifting
Lukes	Capacity to affect another against their real interests, including by shaping their wants	All three dimensions: decisions, agendas, preferences	Constant-sum, but often invisible
Foucault	A relation exercised, not a thing held; productive of subjects and truth	Everywhere, capillary, in practices and discourses	Neither; the question is mis-posed

KEY TERMS

Herrschaft (authority) — Weber: legitimate domination, where a command is obeyed because the ruled believe in the right to rule.

Routinisation of charisma — Weber: the transformation of unstable personal charisma into hereditary or office charisma so it can survive the founder.

Power/knowledge — Foucault: power and knowledge directly imply one another; the sciences that describe people are instruments for governing them.

Biopower — Foucault: power that takes the population and life itself as its object, through health, statistics and regulation of the species body.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- What are the theoretical models of societal power? Which one of them is most applicable in advanced industrial societies. [2019]
- "Power is not a zero-sum game". Discuss with reference to Weber's and Parsons's views. [2014]
- Explain the concept of power. Distinguish between power and authority. [1998]
- List the sources of power and explain the various indicators based on which power can be measured. [2010]
- Write short note: Authority and Legitimacy. [2004]

The Faces of Power: Pluralism, Non-Decisions and Lukes

This debate organises the whole unit, because the elite-versus-pluralist quarrel is really a methodological quarrel: what you find depends on where you look. Each successive theorist accused the previous one of looking only where power is easiest to see.

- Floyd Hunter (Community Power Structure, 1953) studied Atlanta using the reputational method, asking informed people who ran the city, and found a small, cohesive business elite behind a compliant political leadership. This is the community power studies tradition UPSC has asked about repeatedly.
- Robert Dahl (Who Governs?, 1961) attacked the method and reversed the finding. Studying New Haven with the decisional method, examining who actually prevailed in concrete decisions across urban redevelopment, education and nominations, he found different groups winning in different issue areas, with almost no overlap. His conclusion is dispersed inequalities: resources are unequally distributed but no single group has all of them, and different resources matter for different issues.
- Dahl's pluralism holds that power is dispersed among competing organised interests, that no group monopolises decision-making, that the state is broadly a neutral arena or referee, and that even the unorganised have latent power through the rule of anticipated reactions, since leaders anticipate the response of voters. He calls actually existing democracies polyarchies rather than democracies, to mark the gap between the ideal and the reality of rule by multiple competing minorities.
- Bachrach and Baratz (Two Faces of Power, 1962) is the first counter. Dahl studies decisions, but power is also exercised by preventing decisions: the second face is non-decision-making, the practice of confining the scope of decision-making to safe issues. Their concept of the mobilisation of bias, adapted from Schattschneider, holds that institutions are not neutral arenas but are systematically biased toward some interests, so some conflicts are organised in and others organised out. Dahl looks only at the issues that reach the agenda and therefore mistakes the visible part of power for the whole of it.
- Steven Lukes (Power: A Radical View, 1974) adds the third dimension. The first two dimensions both require an observable conflict, whether over decisions or agendas. But the most effective power prevents conflict from arising at all, by shaping perceptions, cognitions and preferences so that people accept their role in the existing order because they can see no alternative, or see it as natural and unchangeable, or value it as divinely ordained and beneficial.
- The pivot of Lukes's theory is real interests: he defines power as A affecting B in a manner contrary to B's interests, which lets him say that a person can be under the power of another even when there is no conflict and the person is content. Latent conflict exists between the interests of the powerful and the real interests of those they exclude.
- The objection to Lukes, which a good answer must supply: who decides what someone's real interests are, if not that person? The concept requires the analyst to overrule the subject's own account of what they want, which is either paternalist or unfalsifiable. Lukes himself later conceded the difficulty. The related problem is that the third dimension is very hard to demonstrate empirically, because the absence of conflict is compatible with both contented consent and successfully manipulated consent.
- Locate the theorists on this map, since it is the single most useful organising device in the unit. Dahl occupies the first face; Bachrach and Baratz the second; Lukes the third, and Lukes's third face is essentially Gramsci's hegemony and Marx's false consciousness restated in behavioural language, which is why Lukes calls it the radical view. Foucault sits outside the map entirely, since he rejects the premise that power is a thing possessed by an A and exercised over a B.
- The critique of pluralism as a whole, which is what most exam questions want: it studies only overt decisions and so is blind to non-decisions and to preference-shaping; it treats the state as a neutral referee, ignoring that state managers have interests of their own; it assumes organised groups represent everyone, whereas Olson shows the diffuse and unorganised systematically lose to the concentrated and organised; and it ignores that not all interests are organisable, since consumers and the poor face collective action problems

that firms do not. Yet against the elite theorists, pluralism has the merit of insisting that power be demonstrated by evidence rather than inferred from structure, which is a real methodological gain.

KEY TERMS

Non-decision-making — Bachrach and Baratz: power exercised by keeping issues off the agenda so they never become decisions.

Mobilisation of bias — The systematic institutional favouring of some interests over others, so some conflicts are organised in and others organised out.

Polyarchy — Dahl's term for actual competitive regimes: rule by multiple competing minorities, not by the people.

Real interests — Lukes: what a person would want under conditions of relative autonomy, used to identify power that operates without visible conflict.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Write short note: Community Power. [2002]
- Write short note: Community power structure. [1990]
- Critically examine the statement, 'A study of power inevitably involves an investigation of social class'. [1987]

Elite Theory: Pareto, Mosca, Michels

Classical elite theory was built explicitly against Marx. Its founding claim is that the division between a ruling minority and a ruled majority is a permanent feature of all societies, so a classless society is impossible and socialism would merely replace one elite with another. Pareto grounds this in psychology, Mosca in organisation, Michels in the necessities of large-scale association.

- Vilfredo Pareto defines the elite formally: those who score highest in their branch of activity. He then divides the governing elite (those who directly or indirectly play a notable part in government) from the non-governing elite, and both from the non-elite mass. The elite is defined by superior personal qualities, which makes his theory psychological rather than structural.
- Pareto's residues are the key to his theory and the 2018 question on the characteristics of elites. Residues are the enduring non-logical sentiments underlying conduct. Two matter: Class I residues, the instinct for combinations, produce cunning, innovation, manipulation and rule by guile, and their bearers Pareto calls foxes, borrowing from Machiavelli. Class II residues, the persistence of aggregates, produce conservatism, loyalty, solidarity, faith and the readiness to use force, and their bearers are lions. Derivations are the rationalisations, ideologies and justifications people invent to dress up residues as reasoned argument.
- Circulation of elites, asked in 2019 and 2021, has two distinct meanings and giving both marks you out. The first is the movement of individuals between elite and non-elite, so the elite recruits able individuals from below and sheds its incompetents. The second and more important is the movement of whole elites, the replacement of one governing elite by another as the balance of residues shifts. Fox regimes rule by manipulation and consent but grow decadent, lose the will and the capacity for force, and are overthrown by lions; lion regimes rule by force and conviction but become rigid and are subverted by foxes. History is thus cyclical, and Pareto's phrase is that history is a graveyard of aristocracies.
- Pareto's key claim: revolutions occur not because the masses rise but because the governing elite has degenerated, becoming closed to fresh recruitment while superior elements accumulate in the lower strata. Revolution is therefore an elite replacement, and the masses supply the muscle for a change of masters. This is the anti-Marxist edge of the theory and it must be stated.

- Gaetano Mosca's Ruling Class shifts the ground from psychology to organisation, and his version is more defensible. In all societies there appear two classes of people, a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The ruling class prevails not because its members are superior individuals but because it is an organised minority facing a disorganised majority, and organisation is the decisive resource.
- Mosca's political formula is the concept to carry away: no ruling class justifies its power by naked force, it always claims a moral and legal basis, the will of God, the will of the people, the mandate of history, and the formula responds to a real need in human nature to be governed on a basis of principle rather than force. This is Gramsci's hegemony arriving thirty years early from the right.
- Mosca is more open than Pareto in three ways, and examiners reward the contrast: he emphasises the sub-elite or second stratum, the wider layer of civil servants, managers and intellectuals through which the elite actually rules and from which it recruits; he allows social forces, that is, new interests thrown up by social change, to press their way into the elite; and he came to accept that representative institutions and parliament genuinely constrain the elite, which is why he ends up defending liberal democracy while Pareto does not.
- Robert Michels (Political Parties, 1911) supplies the iron law of oligarchy: who says organisation, says oligarchy. His case is the most damaging one available, the German Social Democratic Party, the most internally democratic mass party of its day. The mechanisms: large organisations require specialised leadership, delegation and expertise; leaders acquire irreplaceable skills, control of information and the machinery of communication; the mass is apathetic, grateful and psychologically disposed to venerate leaders; and leaders develop an interest in their own positions distinct from the members' goals, so organisational survival displaces the original aim. Michels calls the tendency for leaders to become conservative the embourgeoisement of leaders.
- The critique of the classical elite theorists, which turns most questions on relevance: Pareto's residues are unfalsifiable, since any behaviour can be assigned post hoc to a residue, and his psychological reductionism ignores the economic and institutional structures that select elites. His cyclical theory has no account of direction or change beyond oscillation. His theory has an ideological edge, given his hostility to democracy and the appropriation of his ideas by Italian fascism, which should be noted without over-claiming Pareto's own commitments. Empirically, elites in developed democracies are not the cohesive, self-conscious minority the theory needs, and there is genuine institutional constraint through elections, courts and a free press.
- The defence, which is the other half of a 2021 relevance answer: elite circulation describes real phenomena, since political dynasties open and close, elites do co-opt talent from below to defuse challenge, and revolutions have often been elite replacements, as Skocpol shows for France, Russia and China. In India, the succession of elite formations from an English-educated national elite to regional, agrarian and caste-based elites through the Mandal-era upsurge is genuine circulation, and Michels's law describes Indian party organisation exactly, since internally democratic parties are rare and control concentrates in a leadership that owns the machinery.

KEY TERMS

Residues — Pareto: enduring non-logical sentiments underlying conduct; Class I combinations make foxes, Class II persistence makes lions.

Derivations — Pareto: the ideological rationalisations that dress up residues as logical argument.

Political formula — Mosca: the moral or legal principle by which a ruling class justifies its power as something other than force.

Iron law of oligarchy — Michels: any large organisation, however democratic its aims, necessarily generates a self-serving oligarchic leadership.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Critically examine the relevance of Vilfredo Pareto's theory of Circulation of Elites in the present scenario. [2021]
- What, according to Pareto, are the basic characteristics of elites? Discuss. [2018]
- Discuss the concept of circulation of elite. [2019]

Mills' Power Elite

C. Wright Mills (*The Power Elite*, 1956) is the American, structural and radical version of elite theory, and confusing him with Pareto is the standard failure here. Mills locates the elite not in superior psychological qualities but in the command posts of institutions. His elite is not a class in the Marxist sense and not a natural aristocracy in Pareto's; it is a set of positions that happen to be occupied by interlocking people.

- The core thesis: power in mid-century America is concentrated in three interlocking institutional orders, the corporate rich commanding the large corporations, the military warlords commanding an expanded military establishment, and the political directorate commanding the executive branch of the federal government. Historically these were separate; the process of institutional centralisation drew them into a coincidence of interest.
- The 2020 question quotes the decisive point: the elite rules in institutional rather than psychological terms. Mills is explicit that the power elite are not powerful because they are exceptional people. They are powerful because they occupy the command posts of the major institutional hierarchies, and it is the pivotal position, not the personal quality, that confers the power. Anyone in the chair would have the power; the elite is a structure of positions. This is precisely where he breaks from Pareto, for whom elite membership follows from superior residues.
- How the elite coheres, given that Mills insists it is not a conspiracy: an interchangeability of positions, with the general becoming a corporate director and the executive becoming a cabinet secretary; a common social origin in the upper class, the same prep schools, Ivy League universities, clubs and intermarriage; and a psychological similarity and shared world view produced by that common formation. Mills says the elite have a coincidence of interests rather than a plot, and quoting this defends him against the conspiracy charge.
- Mills's three-tier model of American society: at the top, the power elite making the consequential decisions of war, peace, slump and boom; at the middle levels, a drifting set of balancing powers, Congress, interest groups and local politics, which is where pluralists mistakenly look and thus find pluralism, but which no longer decides the big questions; and at the bottom, a fragmented, powerless mass society, politically apathetic and manipulated by mass media, which has replaced the classic public of informed debating citizens.

- The public-to-mass-society transition is Mills's most underused argument and it is the sociological heart of the book. In a public, as many people express as receive opinion, communication is two-way, opinion finds an outlet in effective action, and the public is autonomous of institutional authority. In a mass, far fewer express than receive, the media dominate, opinion has no channel to action, and authority penetrates the mass. Democracy dies not by coup but by the transformation of the public into a mass.
- The critics, which the 2016 question on the power elite in democracy demands. Dahl objects methodologically: Mills demonstrates that these men occupy positions from which they could exercise power, but never demonstrates that they actually prevail in concrete decisions, and potential for control is not the same as control. David Riesman (*The Lonely Crowd*) counters with veto groups, arguing that America has no ruling elite but a plurality of organised groups powerful enough to block what they dislike while unable to command, so the picture is one of drift and stalemate, not domination. Marxists object from the other side: Mills has no theory of class or of the economy, so he describes a coalition of institutional orders without explaining why the corporate order dominates, and treating the military and political orders as co-equal with the economic obscures the primacy of capital.
- The Miliband-Poulantzas debate is the Marxist refinement worth one line: Ralph Miliband's instrumentalist account, close to Mills, shows the state is run by people drawn from the capitalist class, so the state serves capital because capitalists staff it. Nicos Poulantzas's structuralist reply is that the personnel are irrelevant, since the state serves capital by virtue of its structural position within the mode of production and must have relative autonomy from any particular capitalist to serve capital as a whole. Poulantzas's point is that Miliband, by arguing about who staffs the state, concedes the pluralists' terrain.
- For the 2016 question on power elite in democracy, the balanced position: the concept illuminates the concentration of consequential decision-making in institutional command posts even in a formal democracy, exposes the gap between electoral procedure and substantive control, and travels well to the corporate-media-political nexus and to the debate on electoral finance. But it understates institutional constraint from courts, elections, federalism and a free press, cannot explain elite conflict, and lacks a theory of why anyone at the bottom ever wins. Deploy it as a corrective to pluralism rather than as a description.
- The Indian application, useful in most elite questions: Yogendra Singh and others document the shift from a homogeneous, English-educated, upper-caste national elite at Independence to a plural, regionalised and increasingly caste-differentiated political elite, driven by universal franchise, the rise of the dominant peasant castes, the Mandal upsurge and the regionalisation of the party system. The honest reading is that circulation has been real in the political elite and much slower in the bureaucratic, corporate, judicial and media elites, which remain narrowly recruited. That asymmetry is the argument, not the fact of change.

KEY TERMS

Power elite — Mills: those occupying the command posts of the corporate, military and political orders, whose power derives from position, not personal quality.

Coincidence of interest — Mills's alternative to conspiracy: the elite acts in concert through shared origins, interchangeable positions and a common world view.

Veto groups — Riesman: organised interests strong enough to block outcomes they dislike but too weak to command, producing drift rather than rule.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- According to Mills, "Elite's rule in institutional terms rather than psychological terms." Comment. [2020]
- Discuss the importance of 'power elite' in democracy. [2016]
- Write short note on Power Elite from a sociological perspective. [2011]
- Write short note on C. W. Mills' Power Elite. [2009]
- Write short note: Power elite in society and the emergence of new elite in power structure. [2005]

Bureaucracy

Weber built bureaucracy as an ideal type, a deliberate analytical exaggeration that no real organisation matches and against which real organisations are measured. Every subsequent contribution to the field is an argument that the informal reality departs from the formal model, and that the departure is either a dysfunction or the thing that makes the organisation work.

- Weber's ideal type has these features: a hierarchy of offices with clearly defined spheres of competence; operation by consistent abstract rules applied to particular cases; impersonality, which means *sine ira et studio*, without hatred or passion, so cases are decided on the file and not on the person; appointment on the basis of technical qualification, not election or purchase; a full-time salaried career with promotion by seniority or merit and security of tenure; management based on written documents, the files; and the separation of the official from ownership of the means of administration, which is the historically decisive break from patrimonial and feudal administration.
- Weber's claim for it is strong and must not be softened: bureaucracy is technically superior to any other form of organisation in precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity and strict subordination, exactly as the machine is superior to non-mechanical modes of production. Bureaucracy is the organisational form of rational-legal authority, and its spread is the institutional face of rationalisation.
- Weber's own ambivalence is the highest-value point and aspirants routinely miss it. He did not celebrate bureaucracy. He called it a shell as hard as steel, rendered in English as the iron cage; he warned it produces the specialist without spirit and the sensualist without heart; he saw that its efficiency makes it practically indestructible and that once fully established it is among the hardest social structures to destroy; and he feared the political question of his time was how to preserve any freedom or leadership against a bureaucracy that reduced people to cogs. His answer, a strong parliament and plebiscitary leadership, is a check on bureaucracy, not a cure. Weber the diagnostician is not Weber the enthusiast.
- Robert Merton (Bureaucratic Structure and Personality, 1940) supplies the dysfunctions. Rules meant to be means become ends in themselves, which is goal displacement: an instrumental value becomes a terminal value. Discipline produces over-conformity and ritualism, so the official follows the rule when it defeats the purpose. Trained incapacity means the very training and skills that produce competence become blind spots when conditions change. The bureaucratic personality, cautious, rule-bound, defensive and resistant to change, is a product of the structure, not a personal failing. Merton's mechanism is that the same discipline that makes bureaucracy reliable makes it rigid, so the dysfunctions are generated by the functions, not by deviation from them.
- The attribution detail that examiners notice: 'trained incapacity' is Thorstein Veblen's, 'occupational psychosis' is John Dewey's, and 'professional deformation' is Daniel Warnotte's. Merton borrows all three and says so. Do not attribute trained incapacity to Merton without noting its origin.

- Alvin Gouldner (*Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*, 1954) shows there is no single bureaucracy but several patterns. Mock bureaucracy is rules imposed from outside and ignored by everyone, with the no-smoking rule as his case. Representative bureaucracy is rules both sides accept as legitimate and useful, such as safety rules. Punishment-centred bureaucracy is rules imposed by one side on the other and enforced by sanction, generating tension. His indulgency pattern, the tolerated informal leniency, was what the new manager destroyed, showing that formal rules multiply when informal consent breaks down.
- Peter Blau (*The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*, 1955) demonstrates the opposite of Merton: informal practices that violate the rules can improve efficiency. His agents consulted each other despite a rule forbidding it, and got better outcomes than the rule would have produced. So the formal structure is not the organisation; the organisation is the formal structure as modified in practice, which is exactly what the recurring 'informal structure of bureaucracy' questions want.
- Michel Crozier (*The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, 1964) supplies the sharpest theory: a bureaucracy is an organisation that cannot correct its behaviour by learning from its errors, because the rules are impersonal and centralised, so error produces more rules, which produces more rigidity, in a vicious circle. His positive contribution is the zone of uncertainty: wherever rules cannot specify the outcome, the person who controls that residual uncertainty holds real power, which is why his maintenance engineers, whose breakdowns no rule could predict, held power far exceeding their formal rank. This is the single best answer to any question on informal power in bureaucracy, and it is Michels's iron law arriving from a different direction, since both show that formal structure never accounts for where power actually sits.
- Philip Selznick (*TVA and the Grass Roots*, 1949) adds co-optation, the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership to avert threats to stability, and shows how the organisation's official goals were displaced by its adaptation to local elites. Burns and Stalker's contrast between mechanistic systems, suited to stable conditions, and organic systems, suited to changing conditions, explains why the bureaucratic form fails in innovative environments.
- The relation to democracy, which is what the 2011 question on concentration of power is driving at. Weber's fear: the bureaucrat has the files, the expertise and permanence, while the minister is an amateur and temporary, so the official secret becomes the specific invention of bureaucracy and expertise becomes a form of unaccountable power. Michels adds that any organisation, including a democratic party, generates its own oligarchy. Marxists add that a neutral instrument in a class society serves the dominant class. The counter-position: bureaucracy is what makes universal, rule-bound and impersonal administration possible at all, and its impersonality, whatever its human costs, is what protects the citizen from arbitrary and particularist rule. A file that ignores who you are is the precondition of equal treatment. Give both halves.
- For India, note the twist worth writing: the bureaucratic ideal type presumes impersonality, but the Indian bureaucracy operates in a society organised by caste, kinship and patronage, so the recurring finding is not the absence of rules but their particularistic application, a formal rational-legal shell running on patrimonial practice. This is a case where the ideal type earns its keep, since the distance between the type and the reality is the analysis.

KEY TERMS

Ideal type — Weber: a deliberately one-sided analytical construct, not a description and not an ideal to aim at, used to measure the distance of reality from it.

Goal displacement — Merton: rules that are means become ends in themselves, so the official follows the rule against the purpose it serves.

Zone of uncertainty — Crozier: the residual area rules cannot specify, where whoever controls the uncertainty holds power beyond their formal rank.

Co-optation — Selznick: absorbing potential opponents into the leadership to avert threats, at the cost of displacing the original goals.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- What is formal organization? 'The growth of bureaucracy has resulted in extreme concentration of power at larger levels of social organization.' Discuss. [2011]
- Write short note: Informal structure of Bureaucracy. [2001]
- Write short note: Dysfunctions of bureaucracy. [1993]
- Write short note: Bureaucracy in New Capitalist Economy. [2004]
- Write short note: Bureaucracy in developing societies. [1986]

Pressure Groups and Political Parties

Weber defines parties functionally: parties reside in the sphere of power, and their action is oriented toward the acquisition of social power, that is, toward influencing communal action no matter what its content may be. That last clause matters, since it means a party may be class-based, status-based or purely opportunistic, and Weber refuses to specify in advance.

- The distinction the 2014 question asks for, and give it as a set of criteria rather than a paragraph. Political parties seek to capture governmental power and contest elections; pressure groups seek to influence those who hold power and do not contest elections. Parties must aggregate a wide range of interests into a programme capable of winning a majority; pressure groups articulate a single or narrow interest and need not compromise. Parties bear responsibility for governing and are accountable to an electorate; pressure groups bear no such responsibility and are accountable only to their members. Parties have a formal legal status and recognition; pressure groups are largely informal and voluntary. Almond and Powell's language is useful: parties perform interest aggregation, pressure groups perform interest articulation.
- The boundary is porous, and saying so earns marks. Pressure groups become parties, as environmental movements became Green parties; parties spawn and own pressure groups, as Indian trade unions are affiliated to parties, which is why the 2021 question calls them dialectically related; and single-issue groups contest elections. In India the relation runs the wrong way by comparative standards, since major unions and student and farmer organisations are wings of parties rather than autonomous groups pressing on them, which weakens their capacity to press any party in office.
- Types of pressure groups: sectional or protective groups defend the interests of a section, so membership is closed and bounded, as with trade unions, business chambers, professional associations, farmer bodies; promotional or cause groups advance a cause, so membership is open to anyone who shares the belief, as with environmental, civil liberties and right to information campaigns. Wyn Grant's cross-cutting distinction of insider groups, consulted routinely by government and playing by its rules, and outsider groups, excluded

and forced into public campaigning, explains why some groups petition and others protest. The choice of method is a function of access, not of temperament, which is a point worth making explicitly.

- Methods, worth listing for the 2022 question on policy formulation: lobbying legislators and officials, supplying technical expertise and draft language, which is the most effective and least visible route; funding parties and campaigns; litigation, which in India has been transformative through public interest litigation, since a group that cannot win in the legislature can win in the courts; media campaigns and shaping public opinion; and demonstration, strike and direct action, which is the recourse of outsider groups.
- Pareto and Mosca aside, the theoretical evaluation of pressure groups is the elite-pluralist quarrel again. Pluralists see them as the connective tissue of democracy: they represent interests between elections, supply expertise the state lacks, disperse power, and provide countervailing power. Critics answer that they represent the organised, not the people; that their influence is proportional to resources, not numbers, so business systematically outweighs consumers and labour; that they are internally undemocratic, per Michels; and that they are unaccountable to anyone but their own members.
- Mancur Olson's *Logic of Collective Action* (1965) is the analytical point that should appear in any pressure-group answer, since it explains the bias without alleging conspiracy. Rational individuals will not act to achieve a common interest unless the group is small or there are selective incentives, because the benefit of a public good accrues whether or not one contributes, which is the free rider problem. Therefore small, concentrated groups with much at stake per member organise easily, while large, diffuse groups with little at stake per member remain latent. A handful of manufacturers organise; a hundred million consumers do not. The asymmetry of pressure politics is structural, not a plot.
- Party typologies: Duverger distinguishes cadre parties, loose caucuses of notables financed by their own members and oriented to elections, from mass parties, built on large dues-paying memberships with permanent organisation and ideological cohesion. Duverger's law holds that the simple-majority single-ballot system tends to produce two-party competition, while proportional representation favours multipartism. Otto Kirchheimer's catch-all party captures the post-war drift: ideological baggage is shed, the membership's role is downgraded, the leadership is strengthened, and the party appeals across the whole electorate rather than to a class base.
- For India, Rajni Kothari's *Congress system* (1964) is the essential citation: a system of one-party dominance that was nonetheless competitive, in which the Congress functioned as a party of consensus containing factions that operated as parties within the party, while opposition parties functioned as parties of pressure, working through Congress factions rather than displacing the Congress. Its virtue is explaining how a dominant party system remained genuinely democratic. Its decline is dated to the late 1960s onward, and the subsequent story is coalitional and regional, with Yogendra Yadav's account of successive democratic upsurges, in which the participation of the lower castes and the rural poor came to exceed that of the privileged, reversing the pattern found in Western democracies. That reversal is a real and quotable finding.
- The multi-party dynamic the 2017 question asks about: in a fragmented multi-party system pressure groups gain leverage, because with narrow majorities and coalition governments a group holding a decisive bloc can extract concessions disproportionate to its size; access multiplies as there are more parties to lobby; but influence also becomes unstable, because governments change and today's insider is tomorrow's outsider. In India, the parallel effect is that caste and community associations become quasi-pressure groups, and the reservation demands of dominant agrarian castes are the clearest illustration of a sectional group using electoral arithmetic to force a policy question onto the agenda.

KEY TERMS

Interest articulation vs aggregation — Almond and Powell: pressure groups voice particular demands, parties combine them into a programme for governing.

Free rider problem — Olson: rational individuals withhold effort from a collective good they will receive anyway, so large diffuse groups stay unorganised.

Catch-all party — Kirchheimer: a party that sheds ideology and its class base to appeal across the whole electorate.

Congress system — Kothari: one-party dominance that remained competitive, with Congress factions absorbing opposition pressure from within.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Illustrate with examples the role of pressure groups in the formulation of social policies. [2022]
- Examine the dynamics of pressure groups in multi-party political system. [2017]
- Distinguish between Political Parties and Pressure Groups. (in about 150 words) [2014]
- Examine the role of pressure groups in parliamentary democracy? [2013]
- Explain how political parties and pressure groups are dialectically related to each other in terms of achieving their goals. [2021]
- Evaluate the functioning of political parties in the democracies of the Third World. [1993]

Nation, State and Citizenship

The 2012 question, whether the nation is the same as the state, is the organising question here and the answer is no. A state is a political and legal apparatus; a nation is a felt community. The nation-state is the historically recent and empirically rare claim that the two should coincide, and almost no actual state satisfies it.

- Weber's definition of the state is the one to give: a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Unpack all four elements, since each does work: it is a claim, so it may fail; the monopoly must be successful, which is what distinguishes a state from a warlord; the force must be legitimate, which distinguishes taxation from robbery; and the territoriality is what distinguishes the modern state from all earlier political forms, which claimed people rather than mapped ground.
- A nation is a community, not an apparatus: a body of people who believe they share a common descent, culture, history and destiny, and who claim the right to political self-determination on that basis. The state is objective and institutional; the nation is subjective and imagined. Hence a nation without a state (the Kurds, Palestinians), a state with many nations (India, Nigeria, the erstwhile USSR), and one nation across many states (Korea historically, the Arab world's pan-nationalism) are all ordinary rather than exceptional.
- Ernest Gellner (Nations and Nationalism, 1983) gives the modernist explanation and it is the one to lead with. Nationalism is a product of industrial society, not of ancient sentiment. Agrarian society had no interest in cultural homogeneity, since a literate clerisy sat atop illiterate and mutually unintelligible peasant communities and the vertical distance was the point. Industrial society requires a mobile, literate, interchangeable workforce communicating in a shared standardised idiom, which only mass state education can produce, so the state must sponsor a high culture and that culture becomes the nation. Gellner's most quotable line is that nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.
- Benedict Anderson (Imagined Communities, 1983) defines the nation as an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. Imagined because the members will never know most of

their fellow-members yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion; limited because even the largest nation has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations; sovereign because the concept was born when Enlightenment was destroying divinely ordained hierarchical dynastic realms. His mechanism is print-capitalism: the mass-produced book and the newspaper created standardised vernaculars and gave scattered readers the sense of a simultaneous community moving through empty homogeneous time. Note that imagined does not mean fabricated or false, and this is the commonest misreading of Anderson.

- Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolism is the necessary corrective: the modernists cannot explain why nationalism has such emotional force or why some invented nations take and others fail. Smith argues modern nations are built on pre-existing ethnies, named populations with shared myths of descent, historical memories, a common culture and a link to a homeland, so nationalists do not invent from nothing, they rediscover and reconstruct. Hobsbawm and Ranger's *Invention of Tradition* sits with the modernists, showing how national traditions that appear ancient were manufactured recently.
- The 2015 deterritorialisation question is answered by taking both sides. The case for erosion: capital, information and people move across borders faster than states can regulate; supranational bodies and trade regimes constrain sovereignty; diasporas sustain identities detached from territory, so long-distance nationalism becomes possible; and global cities are more connected to each other than to their hinterlands. The case against: borders have hardened rather than dissolved, since the movement of capital was liberalised while the movement of labour was not; states have proved to be the agents rather than the victims of globalisation, because someone had to deregulate; and the most visible global response has been the resurgence of nationalism, which Castells reads as resistance identity. The synthesis: globalisation deterritorialises economy and culture while re-territorialising politics and belonging, which is why the two trends are simultaneous rather than contradictory.
- T.H. Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950) is the single most examinable text in this subsection, so give the structure exactly. Citizenship is full membership of a community, with all members equal in respect of the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. It has three elements, which developed in sequence across three centuries in England. Civil rights, the eighteenth century: liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property, to conclude contracts, and the right to justice; the associated institution is the courts. Political rights, the nineteenth century: the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as elector or member; the associated institutions are parliament and councils of local government. Social rights, the twentieth century: the whole range from a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society; the associated institutions are the educational system and the social services.
- Marshall's thesis, and this is what the question is really about: citizenship and social class have been at war in the twentieth century. Citizenship is a principle of equality, class a system of inequality, and Marshall argues that the growth of citizenship, especially social rights through the welfare state, has not abolished class inequality but has made it tolerable and legitimate by guaranteeing a basic equality of status. Class inequality is acceptable so long as the equality of citizenship is recognised.
- The critiques of Marshall, which are what separate an average answer from a good one. It is Anglocentric and evolutionary, since the neat three-century sequence fits England and almost nowhere else, and in India all three sets of rights arrived together with the Constitution in 1950, in a society without the prior civil-rights foundation Marshall assumed. It is teleological, presenting an outcome of political struggle as a natural unfolding, when in fact every right was fought for and can be withdrawn, as welfare retrenchment demonstrates. It is gender-blind, as Walby and others argue, since women obtained the rights in a different order and civil rights within marriage came late, so the male sequence is not universal. It treats citizenship

as passive receipt rather than active claim, which is Turner's active versus passive citizenship distinction. And it presumes a homogeneous national community, which multiculturalists dispute: Kymlicka's differentiated citizenship holds that equal treatment of unequal groups perpetuates disadvantage, so group-differentiated rights are required by equality, not exceptions to it. Niraja Gopal Jayal's *Citizenship and Its Discontents* traces exactly this in India, where citizenship has moved from a universalist civic promise toward a contested terrain of group claims and, more recently, of descent-based definition.

- For India, the useful framing: the Constitution granted political rights to all before civil society had established civil rights, and before social rights had any material base, so Ambedkar's warning in the Constituent Assembly is the appropriate citation, that India was entering a life of contradictions, with equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life, one man one vote and one vote one value against a society denying the principle of one man one value. The Indian citizenship story is the attempt to close that gap, and reservation, the right to information, the right to education and employment guarantee are all instalments of Marshall's social rights arriving after rather than before the political ones.

KEY TERMS

State — Weber: the community that successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate physical force within a territory.

Imagined community — Anderson: the nation, imagined as limited and sovereign, made possible by print-capitalism; imagined, not imaginary.

Ethnic — Smith: a named population with shared descent myths, memories, culture and a homeland link, on which modern nations are built.

Social rights — Marshall: the right to economic welfare, security and a civilised life by prevailing standards; delivered through education and social services.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- What do you understand by nation? Is the nation same as the state? Discuss. [2012]
- Discuss T. H. Marshall's views on citizenship. (in about 150 words) [2014]
- "Globalization involves deterritorialization." Examine with reference to the nation-state. [2015]
- Write short note on the following from a sociological perspective: Citizenship and Civil Society. [2012]

Civil Society and Ideology

Civil society is the realm of organised social life between the family and the state, voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting and bound by a legal order. The term has meant four different things across its history, and using it without saying which meaning you intend is the standard error here.

- The four meanings, in order. Hegel: civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) is the sphere between the family and the state, the domain of particular interests, needs and market relations, where individuals pursue private ends and which the state must transcend to realise the universal. Marx inverts the evaluation but keeps the location: civil society is bourgeois society, the real theatre of history and the site of egoistic economic life, and the state is its instrument rather than its overcoming, so Marx dissolves civil society into the economic base. Tocqueville (*Democracy in America*) supplies the liberal meaning that dominates today: voluntary associations are the schools of democracy, dispersing power, training citizens in cooperation and standing between the individual and a potentially despotic state. Gramsci makes the decisive move for sociology, treating civil society as the site of hegemony.

- Gramsci's civil society is not the economy and not the state. He divides the superstructure into political society, the state proper, coercion, army, police, courts, and civil society, the ensemble of so-called private organisms, the church, schools, trade unions, the press, cultural associations. The ruling class rules through the first and leads through the second. Hegemony is the combination of coercion and consent, or as he puts it, domination plus intellectual and moral leadership, where the subordinate classes actively consent to a world view that serves their rulers because it has become simple common sense.
- Gramsci's strategic conclusion follows: in the East, where civil society was primordial and gelatinous, the state was everything and a frontal assault, the war of manoeuvre, could succeed, which is why 1917 worked in Russia. In the West, civil society is a robust structure behind the state, a system of fortresses and earthworks, so revolution requires a war of position, a long struggle for cultural and ideological ascendancy within civil society before power can be taken. His organic intellectuals, produced by a class to give it consciousness of its own function, are the agents of that struggle, as against the traditional intellectuals who imagine themselves independent of class. The historic bloc names the fused alliance of structure and superstructure that a hegemonic project welds together.
- Note the irony examiners like: for the liberal tradition civil society is the guarantor of democracy against the state, while for Gramsci civil society is where domination is secured most effectively, precisely because it does not look like domination. Both are right, which is why the concept survives.
- Habermas's public sphere (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962) is the other essential contribution: a domain of social life where public opinion can be formed, in which private people come together as a public and reason about matters of general interest, access is in principle open to all, and the force of the better argument prevails over status. His historical case is the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth-century coffee house, salon and journal. His thesis of decline is the refeudalisation of the public sphere: as the state and the economy penetrate it, mass media convert citizens into consumers of opinion and public debate becomes a staged display of representation for an audience rather than a reasoning among participants. The critiques to note: Nancy Fraser and others show the bourgeois public sphere excluded women and the propertyless from the start, so its openness was a claim rather than a fact, and there were always counter-publics.
- Robert Putnam (*Making Democracy Work*, 1993) supplies the empirical case for the Tocquevillean view: comparing Italian regions, he attributes the effectiveness of regional government in the north to a dense civic tradition of associational life, and the failure in the south to its absence, arguing that social capital, the networks, norms and trust that enable cooperation, is what makes democracy work. *Bowling Alone* extends the argument into a thesis of American civic decline. The critiques are worth carrying: social capital can be bad, since the mafia and exclusionary caste associations are dense networks with high internal trust, which is why Putnam later distinguished bonding from bridging social capital; the argument risks blaming poor regions for their own poverty; and causation may run from good government to civic trust rather than the other way.
- Partha Chatterjee's political society (*The Politics of the Governed*, 2004) is the indispensable Indian intervention and it should appear in any Indian civil society answer. His claim: civil society in the classical sense, of citizens with rights relating to the state through law and associations, is in India a small enclave of the propertied and educated. The bulk of the population relates to the state not as rights-bearing citizens but as populations, targets of governmental policy and welfare, who negotiate through means that are often not strictly legal, such as squatter settlements and unauthorised connections, and who make claims on the state through political mediation and moral appeal rather than through law. That domain is political society. Chatterjee's point is not that Indians are bad citizens; it is that the liberal civil society model describes the elite and misdescribes everyone else.

- For the 2017 question on the changing state and civil society interface in post-independence India, the arc: a developmental state that treated civil society as a partner in nation-building, with Gandhian constructive work, Bhoodan and Sarvodaya; the emergency and the JP movement, which produced a civil libertarian and rights-based civil society explicitly opposed to the state; the 1980s and 1990s growth of NGOs, funded partly by the state and international donors, which pulled activism toward service delivery and raised the question of whether an NGO funded by the state can oppose it; the rights-based legislative wave, the right to information, education, food and employment guarantee, which was substantially driven by civil society campaigns and represents its high point of influence; and the subsequent tightening of the regulatory and foreign-funding regime, which has narrowed the space. The analytical point rather than the chronology: Indian civil society has been most effective when it worked as a claim-making coalition on the state and least effective when it became a contractor of the state.
- Ideology, the concept: coined by Destutt de Tracy for a science of ideas, and inverted by Marx into its critical sense. For Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*, ideology is the systematically distorted thought that presents the particular interests of the ruling class as universal interests, since the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, because the class that has the means of material production has control at the same time over the means of mental production. Their camera obscura image is that in ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down, and the inversion arises from their historical life-process.
- Karl Mannheim (*Ideology and Utopia*, 1929) generalises the critique and thereby turns it on Marxism itself. His particular conception of ideology imputes distortion to a specific opponent's specific claims; his total conception treats the entire world view of an age or class as socially determined, at which point Marxism too becomes an ideology, since it is a thought-style rooted in a social position. His distinction is that ideologies are the thought-systems of the dominant that stabilise the existing order, while utopias are the thought-systems of the subordinate that shatter it, and both are situationally determined. His proposed escape, the relatively free-floating intelligentsia, socially unattached and drawn from many classes, who can synthesise perspectives, is the weakest part of the theory and should be named as such, since intellectuals are not exempt from social determination by virtue of being intellectuals.
- Louis Althusser's version is the one to pair with Gramsci: Ideological State Apparatuses, the church, school, family, media, law, unions, function primarily by ideology and only secondarily by repression, while the Repressive State Apparatus, army, police, courts, prisons, functions primarily by violence. His most cited claim is that the school has replaced the church as the dominant ISA in mature capitalism. Ideology for Althusser is not false ideas about reality but the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, and it works through interpellation, hailing individuals as subjects, so that we recognise ourselves in the roles ideology offers and thereby become the subjects it needs. Ideology has no history and is eternal, which is where he departs most sharply from Marx.
- The end of ideology debate closes this out. Daniel Bell (*The End of Ideology*, 1960) argued that in the West the great nineteenth-century ideologies were exhausted, that a rough consensus had settled on a mixed economy, welfare state and political pluralism, and that politics had become technical rather than total. Fukuyama's *End of History* revived the claim after 1989. Both have aged badly, and the evidence against is the resurgence of religious, nationalist and identity-based mobilisation, which is precisely what the 2022 question on the transition from ideology to identity politics is asking about.
- For the 2022 transition question, the argument to make: the decline of programmatic left-right ideology in India, accelerated by the exhaustion of the developmental consensus and the convergence of parties on economic policy after 1991, left identity as the principal axis of mobilisation, and the Mandal moment gave caste an explicit political form while the parallel religious mobilisation gave community another. Add the two qualifications that make it a sociological answer rather than a commentary. First, identity politics is not

the opposite of ideology: it is an ideology, since it supplies a total account of the social world, of who the injured are and who is responsible, which is exactly Mannheim's total conception. Second, in a society where material disadvantage is distributed by ascriptive group membership, identity mobilisation is also redistributive politics conducted in the only vocabulary that maps onto the actual structure of inequality. The 2015 statement that ideology is crucial for social transformation is answered by the same evidence: every transformative movement in India, from the anti-caste movements to the national movement, ran on an ideology, since ideology is what converts a grievance into a claim and an aggregate into an actor.

KEY TERMS

Hegemony — Gramsci: rule by consent secured in civil society, domination plus intellectual and moral leadership, so class rule becomes common sense.

War of position — Gramsci: the long struggle for ideological ascendancy within a robust civil society, necessary in the West where frontal assault fails.

Political society — Chatterjee: the domain where populations, not rights-bearing citizens, negotiate with the state through mediation and moral claim.

Interpellation — Althusser: ideology hails individuals as subjects, and by recognising ourselves in the hail we become the subjects the order requires.

Total conception of ideology — Mannheim: the entire thought-system of an age or class is socially determined, which makes Marxism an ideology too.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Highlight the roles and function of civil society in a democratic system. [2021]
- Discuss the changing interface between state and civil society in post-independent India. [2017]
- What is civil society? Present a note on civil society engagement with science and technology policy in India. [2019]
- "Ideology is crucial for social transformation in a democracy." Discuss. [2015]
- Analyse the nature of transition from ideology to identity politics India. [2022]
- Evaluate how do civil society and democracy mutually reinforce each other. [2013]
- Critically examine the role of civil society in democracy. [2013]

Protest, Agitation, Social Movements, Collective Action and Revolution

The syllabus lists five terms in ascending order of organisation and ambition, and the 2011 and 2015 questions test exactly that ladder. A social movement is a sustained, organised collective effort by people sharing a common ideology to bring about or resist change in the social order. The words that carry weight are sustained, organised and ideology, since they distinguish a movement from a riot, a fashion, a panic or a one-off protest.

- The ladder, which answers 'when does collective action become a social movement'. Collective action is any action by people in pursuit of a common interest, including a single strike or boycott, and it may be brief and unorganised. Protest is an expression of objection, which may be individual, momentary and without a programme. Agitation is sustained protest aimed at a specific and limited demand, with organisation but a bounded goal, so it dissolves when the demand is met or defeated. A social movement adds four things: continuity over time, an organisational structure, an ideology that diagnoses the problem and prescribes a remedy, and a collective identity binding participants into a we. Revolution goes further still: it seeks not to change a policy or an institution but to overturn the social and political order itself, and it succeeds only by seizing state power.

- Prerequisites of a social movement, for the 2011 and 2015 questions: an objective condition of strain or deprivation; the perception of that condition as unjust and remediable rather than natural, which is the ideological step and the one most theories emphasise; a generalised belief or frame identifying cause, culprit and cure; leadership capable of articulating it; an organisation to sustain mobilisation beyond the moment of anger; resources, money, networks, meeting places, communication; a collective identity; and a political opportunity, meaning that the system is open enough to make action seem worthwhile but closed enough to make it necessary. Note the paradox in that last one, since revolutions rarely occur under maximal repression or maximal openness.
- The classical collective behaviour tradition. Herbert Blumer treats movements as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life, arising from unrest, and classifies them into general movements, broad and unorganised such as the labour or women's movement, specific movements with defined goals and organisation, and expressive movements which change the participant rather than the society, such as religious and fashion movements. Turner and Killian's emergent norm theory answers the crowd theorists by arguing that crowd behaviour is not irrational contagion but the working out of a new norm that emerges in an ambiguous situation, so crowds are normatively governed like any other group.
- Neil Smelser's value-added theory (Theory of Collective Behavior, 1962) is the most examinable of the structural accounts, and the six determinants must be given in order, since his claim is precisely that each is necessary and each narrows the range of possible outcomes, like stages in a manufacturing process. Structural conduciveness: the social structure permits the behaviour, as a financial panic requires a market. Structural strain: some ambiguity, deprivation, conflict or discrepancy exists. Growth and spread of a generalised belief: the strain is identified, given meaning and attributed to a cause, without which people feel strain but do not know what to do. Precipitating factors: a dramatic event that sharpens and confirms the belief. Mobilisation of participants for action: leadership and organisation bring people into action. Operation of social control: the counter-determinant, since the response of authorities can prevent, deflect or inflame the episode, and Smelser insists this is the most important because it can arrest the sequence at any point. The critique: Smelser treats movements as a species of irrational collective behaviour caused by strain, closer to a panic than to politics, and the sequence is hard to falsify because a completed movement can always be retro-fitted to the six stages.
- Relative deprivation theory, associated with Ted Gurr (Why Men Rebel, 1970), holds that the impetus to rebellion is the perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities, that is, between what people believe they are entitled to and what they think they can actually get. The strength of the theory is that it explains why absolute misery does not produce revolt while improvement often does, since expectations rise faster than capabilities. The weakness is decisive and must be given: discontent is nearly universal while movements are rare, so deprivation cannot explain the timing, and the theory has no account of organisation, resources or opportunity. Grievance is a constant; mobilisation is the variable.
- Resource mobilisation theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) is the reply to exactly that. Grievances are ubiquitous and therefore explain nothing; what varies is the availability of resources, money, labour, legitimacy, media access, and the capacity of social movement organisations to aggregate them. Movements are rational, strategic, organised politics by other means, not eruptions of frustration. Their entrepreneurial vocabulary, of SMOs, social movement industries and the competition for resources among them, treats movements as firms in a market. The critiques: it overstates rationality and organisation, underplays grievance, emotion and identity entirely, and its focus on professional movement organisations fits well-funded American campaigns better than a poor people's movement that has no resources and wins anyway.
- The political process model (Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam) supplies the missing variable, the polity. Movements succeed or fail according to the structure of political opportunities, the openness of the system,

the stability of elite alignments, the presence of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression. McAdam adds indigenous organisational strength and, crucially, cognitive liberation, the collective shift in consciousness by which people come to see the system as unjust and themselves as capable of changing it, which is his answer to the resource theorists' neglect of consciousness. Tilly's repertoires of contention name the historically limited set of forms of action available to people at a given time, since a modern movement demonstrates and petitions while an eighteenth-century crowd seized grain, and his WUNC displays, worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment, describe what movements must publicly perform to be taken seriously. Sidney Tarrow's cycles of contention explain why movements cluster in waves, since an early riser demonstrates the vulnerability of authorities and lowers the costs for everyone behind it.

- New social movements theory explains what the earlier theories cannot. Alberto Melucci, Alain Touraine, Claus Offe and Habermas observe that post-1960s movements in the West differ from the labour movement in their base, being drawn from the new middle class and the educated rather than a class; their goals, being about identity, quality of life, autonomy and recognition rather than the distribution of income; their organisation, being decentralised, network-like and hostile to hierarchy; and their means, being cultural and symbolic, directed at civil society rather than at the state. Melucci's contribution is that the movement's central work is the construction of collective identity, and that movements in complex societies challenge the codes by which reality is named, so their most important action is symbolic and often invisible in latent networks between visible protests. Touraine's historicity holds that movements are the means by which a society acts on itself and defines its own future. Inglehart's post-materialism supplies the explanation, that generations raised in security prioritise self-expression and belonging over economic security.
- The critique of the NSM label, which should be stated because it is where Indian scholarship lands: the newness is overstated, since the labour movement had strong identity and cultural dimensions and nineteenth-century movements were not narrowly economic; the class base is not as new as claimed; and above all the framework travels badly to the South. Gail Omvedt and others argue that India's so-called new social movements, the farmers', women's, Dalit, environmental and anti-displacement movements, are not post-material at all, since they concern land, water, forests, livelihood and survival, and they combine identity claims with material claims inseparably. The Narmada Bachao Andolan is simultaneously about displacement, livelihood, adivasi identity and a model of development, so the material/post-material distinction fails.
- Snow and Benford's framing perspective supplies the piece both structural and resource theories lack: movements do not simply find grievances, they construct them. Collective action frames perform diagnostic framing, naming the problem and attributing blame, prognostic framing, proposing a solution and a strategy, and motivational framing, providing the rationale for acting. Frame alignment is the work of linking a movement's frame to the existing beliefs of potential recruits. This directly answers the 2012 question on whether movements are always influenced by ideology: they are, because ideology is what converts a condition into an injustice, an injustice into a claim, and a category of sufferers into a collective actor. But the honest qualification is that many movements begin with a diffuse grievance and acquire an articulated ideology only later, often from outside, and some, particularly spontaneous agitations and identity-based mobilisations, run on symbol and sentiment more than on doctrine. So say: ideology is constitutive of movements, but it is often the product of mobilisation rather than its precondition.
- The Indian classifications to cite. M.S.A. Rao classifies movements by the level of change they seek: reform movements aim at partial change in the existing system, transformative movements at change in major areas without overturning the system, and revolutionary movements at radical reorganisation of the whole social order. Ghanshyam Shah's *Social Movements in India* reviews the field and classifies by participant base, peasant, tribal, Dalit, backward caste, women's, industrial working class, and his critical point is that the

Indian literature has been long on description and short on theory. T.K. Oommen's work on the Bhodan-Gramdan movement analyses charisma, its institutionalisation and its decay, which is Weber's routinisation demonstrated on Indian material. A.R. Desai's Marxist reading of peasant struggles is the standard counterpoint to culturalist accounts.

- Revolution: theories in ascending order of sophistication. Marx: revolution is the resolution of the contradiction between developing forces of production and existing relations of production, carried by a class that has become a class for itself, and revolutions are the locomotives of history. The objection is empirical, since revolutions have occurred in agrarian rather than advanced capitalist societies, precisely where Marx did not expect them. James Davies's J-curve (1962) holds that revolutions are most likely when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal, so the intolerable gap between what people have come to expect and what they get widens abruptly, and the mood of the moment matters more than the absolute level. Chalmers Johnson's *Revolutionary Change* treats revolution as the outcome of a disequibrated social system, where values and environment fall out of synchronisation and elites fail to resynchronise them, producing power deflation, in which the regime must rely increasingly on force as the belief in legitimacy drains away. Crane Brinton's *Anatomy of Revolution*, a historian's comparison, gives the recurring sequence including the defection of the intellectuals, the financial breakdown, the rule of the moderates, the accession of the extremists, the reign of terror, and Thermidor.
- Theda Skocpol (*States and Social Revolutions*, 1979) is the most important and should anchor any revolution answer. Her method is structural and comparative, on France, Russia and China. Her three theses. First, revolutions are not made, they come: they are not the achievement of a revolutionary movement with an ideology and a will, since no group in any of her three cases set out to make the revolution that occurred, and the outcomes were intended by no one. This is a direct assault on voluntarist and purposive accounts. Second, the state is an autonomous structure, not a committee of the ruling class, with interests of its own in revenue and international competition, and revolutions begin with the collapse of state capacity, typically under the pressure of military competition with more developed states abroad combined with the resistance of a landed class at home to the reforms the state needs to compete. Third, agrarian class structure determines the outcome: whether peasants have the autonomous village organisation to revolt when the state's coercive grip loosens is what turns a political crisis into a social revolution. Her definition is precise and worth reproducing: social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures, accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below, and they are distinguished from political revolutions, which transform state structures but not social structures, and from rebellions, which may involve revolt without structural change.
- Skocpol's critics, which you need for a critical examination: she writes agency, ideology and leadership almost entirely out of the story, and it is implausible that Lenin and Mao made no difference; she generalises from three agrarian bureaucratic empires, and the model fits Iran 1979 badly, where an ideological mass movement toppled a state that had not lost a war, a point Skocpol herself addressed; and her state-centrism, valuable as a corrective, cannot explain why revolutions take the ideological direction they do. Charles Tilly's alternative is worth a line: he distinguishes a revolutionary situation, defined by multiple sovereignty, in which two or more blocs make incompatible claims to control the state and a significant part of the population backs the challenger, from a revolutionary outcome, the actual transfer of power, and he insists the two must be explained separately, since most revolutionary situations produce no revolutionary outcome. Barrington Moore's comparative thesis on the routes to modernity, bourgeois revolution leading to democracy, revolution from above leading to fascism, and peasant revolution leading to communism, gives

the class-coalitional version, and his line that no bourgeois means no democracy is the most quoted in the literature.

- The movement-versus-revolution distinction, for the 2011 question, stated cleanly: a social movement seeks change within the existing order, is typically sectoral and partial, can succeed without capturing state power, may be reformist or radical, and is usually prolonged and often non-violent. A revolution seeks to replace the order, is total in scope, necessarily involves the seizure of state power, produces a rapid and fundamental transformation of the state and class structure in Skocpol's sense, and is typically violent. The relation between them: a revolution requires a revolutionary movement, so movements are the vehicle and revolution is one possible destination, but Skocpol's warning stands, that the presence of a revolutionary movement is neither sufficient nor, on her structural account, even the principal cause. Most movements are not revolutionary and most revolutionary movements do not produce revolutions.
- The 2011 question on collective action producing integration and disintegration is answered with the classical apparatus. Integration: Coser's proposition, following Simmel, that conflict with an out-group increases internal cohesion and establishes group boundaries, so collective action forges solidarity where none existed, as the national movement made a nation out of a subcontinent; Durkheim's collective effervescence, in which assembly itself generates the moral energy that binds; and safety-valve institutions that release hostility without destroying the structure. Coser's key qualification is that conflict is integrative when it concerns goals, values or interests that do not contradict the basic assumptions on which the relationship is founded, and disintegrative when it strikes at the core consensus. Disintegration: movements built on ascriptive identity harden boundaries and produce counter-mobilisation, and a society mobilised along cross-cutting cleavages is stabilised while one mobilised along cumulative and coinciding cleavages, where the same line divides people by religion, region, language and class at once, is torn apart. That cross-cutting versus cumulative cleavage distinction is the analytical payoff, and it is what should carry the answer.

KEY TERMS

Value-added theory — Smelser: six determinants (conduciveness, strain, generalised belief, precipitant, mobilisation, social control) that must combine in sequence.

Cognitive liberation — McAdam: the collective shift by which people come to see the system as unjust and themselves as able to change it.

Repertoire of contention — Tilly: the historically limited set of protest forms available to a people at a given time.

Collective action frame — Snow and Benford: the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational work by which movements construct grievance into a claim.

Social revolution — Skocpol: rapid basic transformation of state and class structures, carried in part by class-based revolt from below; distinct from political revolution.

Multiple sovereignty — Tilly: the revolutionary situation in which two blocs make incompatible claims to control the state, each with significant backing.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Explain the conditions under which a collective action transforms into a social movement. [2015]
- Highlight prerequisites of social movement. Bring out the difference between social movement and revolution. [2011]
- Discuss how 'environmentalism' can be explained with new social movements approach. [2022]
- Are social movement always influenced by ideologies? Discuss. [2012]
- "Collective action in politics can bring integration and disintegration in society." Comment. [2011]
- Write short note: Social movement as an expression of protest. [2008]

Last-mile revision

- Weber: power is the probability of carrying out one's will despite resistance; authority is legitimate domination, and legitimacy is a belief held by the ruled, not a property of the ruler.
- Weber's three types: traditional (patrimonial staff), charismatic (disciples, unstable, revolutionary), rational-legal (bureaucracy). Charisma always routinises into one of the other two.
- Parsons makes power variable-sum, a system capacity for collective goals, circulating like money. Weber makes it constant-sum. That pairing is the whole 'zero-sum' question.
- Arendt: power belongs to a group acting in concert; violence appears where power is failing. Power and violence are opposites, not degrees.
- Foucault: power is exercised not possessed, capillary, productive, inseparable from knowledge, and it makes subjects. He is not a fourth face of Lukes; he rejects the whole framing.
- The faces: Dahl's decisions, Bachrach and Baratz's non-decisions and mobilisation of bias, Lukes's shaping of preferences against real interests. Lukes's third face is Gramsci's hegemony in behavioural clothing.
- Pareto is psychological (residues, lions and foxes); Mosca is organisational (organised minority, political formula, sub-elite); Michels is structural (iron law of oligarchy). Do not blur them.
- Mills is the anti-Pareto: the power elite rules by occupying institutional command posts, not by superior qualities. Corporate, military, political, plus a coincidence of interest, not a conspiracy.
- Weber feared bureaucracy, he did not admire it: iron cage, specialists without spirit, the official secret. Merton's dysfunctions are generated by its functions, not by deviation from them.
- Crozier's zone of uncertainty is the best line on informal power: whoever controls what the rules cannot specify holds power beyond their rank.
- Olson explains pressure-group bias without conspiracy: concentrated small groups organise, diffuse large ones free-ride. That is why business outweighs consumers.
- Kothari's Congress system: one-party dominance that was still competitive, because factions inside Congress absorbed the opposition's pressure.
- Nation is not state. Gellner: industrialism needs a homogeneous high culture, so nationalism invents nations. Anderson: print-capitalism makes the imagined community. Smith: it is built on pre-existing ethnies.
- Marshall: civil (18th, courts), political (19th, parliament), social (20th, welfare). Thesis: social rights make class inequality tolerable without abolishing it. India got all three at once, which breaks the sequence.
- Gramsci's civil society is where hegemony is manufactured, so the same sphere the liberals call democracy's guarantee is the site of domination. Both readings are correct.
- Chatterjee: civil society in India is an elite enclave; most people inhabit political society, negotiating as populations rather than as rights-bearing citizens.
- Mannheim turns the ideology critique on Marxism itself via the total conception; his free-floating intelligentsia is the weak point and you should say so.
- Smelser's six: conduciveness, strain, generalised belief, precipitating factor, mobilisation, social control. Social control is the counter-determinant and can stop the sequence at any stage.
- Grievance is constant, mobilisation is variable. That single sentence gets you from relative deprivation to resource mobilisation to political process.

- Skocpol: revolutions are not made, they come. State breakdown under international pressure plus agrarian class structure, not revolutionary will. Social revolution transforms state and class structure; political revolution only the state.

Common errors to avoid

- Merging Pareto, Mosca, Michels and Mills into one 'elite theory'. Pareto grounds elite rule in psychology (residues), Mosca in organisation, Michels in the logic of large associations, Mills in institutional position. The 2020 question exists precisely to catch aspirants who give Mills a psychological basis.
- Calling Mills's power elite a conspiracy or a ruling class. He explicitly says coincidence of interest, not plot, and he has no theory of class, which is exactly what Marxists attack him for.
- Presenting Weber as an admirer of bureaucracy. He called it technically superior and as hard as steel in the same breath. Missing his ambivalence is the standard bureaucracy-answer failure.
- Attributing 'trained incapacity' to Merton. It is Veblen's, as 'occupational psychosis' is Dewey's; Merton borrows and credits them. Merton's own contributions are goal displacement, ritualism and the bureaucratic personality.
- Treating Foucault as a fourth dimension of power after Lukes. Lukes's three faces all presuppose an A exercising power over a B against B's interests. Foucault rejects that premise entirely, so he is not an extension, he is a different question.
- Writing that Parsons and Weber agree on power. Parsons's variable-sum, consensus-based, collective-goal definition is a deliberate rejection of Weber's constant-sum, resistance-based one, and Giddens's critique is that it writes domination out of the concept.
- Saying Anderson's 'imagined' means fake. Imagined means the communion exists in the mind of members who will never meet, not that the nation is a fabrication. He says so explicitly.
- Giving Marshall's three rights without the argument. The rights are the easy half. The thesis is that citizenship and class have been at war, and that social rights legitimated class inequality instead of ending it. Add the Indian break: all three arrived together in 1950, so the sequence is not universal.
- Using 'civil society' without specifying which sense. Hegel's sphere of particular interests, Marx's bourgeois society, Tocqueville's associational guarantee of democracy, and Gramsci's site of hegemony are four different concepts. Gramsci's is the opposite of Tocqueville's in evaluation.
- Confusing Gramsci's civil society with the state. He splits the superstructure into political society (coercion) and civil society (consent). Hegemony operates in the second.
- Treating identity politics as the absence of ideology. Identity politics is an ideology in Mannheim's total sense, and in India it is also redistributive politics in the only vocabulary that matches the actual structure of inequality.
- Reciting Smelser's six determinants out of order or dropping social control. The value-added logic requires the sequence, and social control is the one that can arrest the process, which he calls the most important.
- Answering a movement question with relative deprivation alone. Deprivation is everywhere and movements are rare, so it cannot explain timing. Resource mobilisation and political opportunity are what the examiner wants next.
- Applying new social movements theory to India without the correction. Omvedt's point is that Indian movements over land, forest, water and displacement are material and identity-based at once, so the post-material premise fails.
- Saying Skocpol thinks revolutionary movements cause revolutions. She says the opposite: revolutions are not made, they come. State breakdown plus agrarian class structure, and outcomes intended by no one.

- Using revolution and social movement interchangeably. A movement seeks change within the order and need not take state power; a revolution replaces the order and must. And distinguish Skocpol's social revolution (state and class structure) from political revolution (state only).