

# Bashevkin, “Interest Groups & Social Movements,” in LeDuc, Niemi, Norris, *Comparing Democracies*

## I. Organized groups:

### A. At core of democratic debate:

1. Attacked by critics as selfish & destructive of democratic process
2. Celebrated by supporters as crucial, constructive actors in process

### B. Synonyms:

1. Pressure groups, interest group, lobby, & organized interest
2. Social movement organization, social movement

### C. Definitions:

#### 1. Interest Groups (IG's):

- a. Bashevkin: “what IG's & social movements share is a set of norms, beliefs, or values that keep the ‘interest’ intact. These shared orientations are the glue binding together the group constituency, leading it to act as a coherent entity...collectivities that have as their basis a shared outlook, identity, or framework of reference” (135)
- b. Truman (1951): ‘IG’ refers to any group that, on basis of 1 or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes (135-6).
- c. Wilson (1990): org's, separate from govt though often in close partnership with govt, which attempt to influence public policy.

#### 2. Social Movements (SM's):

- a. Like IG's except "more pro-change, more challenging, *vis-à-vis* the institutional status quo" (138)
  - b. Protest groups that mobilize their adherents in more system-challenging ways than do IG's or parties
  - c. Kitschelt: movements tend to follow experience of marginalization
  - d. Blumer (1951): collective enterprise to establish a new order of life, meaning a fundamental cultural shift that will either be pursued or, conversely, opposed by SM adherents
  - e. Less formal than interest grps, more heterogeneity of views typically within SM's than IG's (largely because former are typically broader)
3. Substantive distinctions b/w party-IG-SM not always terribly clear

## II. Interest Group Functions:

### A. Social roles of IG's

1. Truman: these [shared attitudes] afford participants frames of reference for interpreting & evaluating events & behavior
2. Like parties, function as social networks as well as political org's

### B. Electoral roles of IG's:

1. Evaluate competing candidates
2. Help fund candidates
3. Mobilize voters

### C. Policymaking roles of IG's

1. Influence or pressure govt decision-makers, but not seek office (distinguishes them from parties)

2. Provide information to policymakers

- a. Where voters/citizens stand on issues
- b. Information (possibly biased) about issue itself

D. Wilson: IG's provide institutional linkages b/w govt (state) & major sectors of society

III. Substantive questions regarding interest groups & movements

A. Why do some groups face more difficulty to organize than others?

1. Hetero-/homo-geneity of members: SE homog & unity of views
2. Size of the groups (Olson)
3. Coercion/suasion & Selective benefits (Olson)

B. What explains difference in *means* employed by different groups with shared interests?

1. Means: Some form parties [Green parties]; Others IG's & lobbies [Sierra Club]; Others adopt "politics by other means" [Greenpeace]

2. Hypotheses:

- a. Bashevkin: groups form strategies based on their institutional & ideological settings [Such as?]
- b. History? "diffusion of innovation"
- c. Intensity of views?
- d. Power configuration of alternative & orthogonal views?

C. What explains general rising # & importance of interest groups?

1. Decline of parties [elaborate]
2. Education & affluence => greater resources & abilities => lower relative cost to mobilize groups
3. Advances in communications & transportation tech=> increased efficiency in organizing

D. What explains variation across space & time in the activities of interest groups? (differing uses of *Voice*?)

1. Change over time in US
  - a. Traditionally I.G.'s in US politics lobbied elected politicians in national & state capitals, increasingly they...
    - (1) Work in coalitions to lobby bureaucrats
    - (2) Present their arguments in court
    - (3) Make cases directly to public *via* media interviews & advertising
    - (4) Try to influence elections as well as traditional attempt to influence policy at legislative stage
  - b. What might explain these changing activities?
    - (1) Increasing professionalization of interest groups
    - (2) Societal changes? [Such as...]
    - (3) Voting-behavior changes?
    - (4) [Other ideas?]
2. Why lobby bureaucrats relatively more prevalent in FR than US?
  - a. Differing nature of electoral competition?

- b. Size of role of bureaucratic implementation on net effect of policy?
  - c. [Other ideas?]
- E. Social Movements more willing to use extra-political, even illegal, means to seek ends than IG's. Why? [tautological?]
- 1. Do mobilization needs of IG's & SM's differ?
  - 2. Does nature of IG's & SM's goal differ?
  - 3. Differing opportunities to achieve their ends? [consider Kitschelt's point above about SM's resulting from marginalization]
- F. What explains differing success of various groups of interests in achieving their ends?
- 1. Tarrow (1983): breadth & flexibility of group's *tactical repertory*
  - 2. History, e.g., novelty of movement or group's aims or tactics?
  - 3. Institutional differences in political process? [Such as...]

#### IV. Various Models of Group Activity

##### A. *Power-Elite Model*: Mills (1956), Hunter (1953)

- 1. Small elite, sometimes covert elite, controls government, limiting opportunities for "average" citizens' political participation
- 2. How does such a minority dominate the majority in a democracy?
  - a. Size, homogeneity, similar interests of these grps serve its coherence
  - b. Relative social, political, & economic power of elites enables them to dominate the uninformed, excluded masses

##### B. *Pluralist Model*: Truman (1951), Dahl (1961)

1. Struggles among competing grps essence of dem. politics; major role of govt to establish & maintain orderly relations among them
2. “vectors of political inputs” image: multiple (vector) forces push on govt; policy produced is resultant (vector) of those forces
3. Multiple points of access for diverse interests implies that group participation in public policymaking is virtually assured
4. What explains extent to which various collective demands met?
  - a. Emphasis on (relative) internal group characteristics, especially organizational resources.
    - (1) S-E status, media access or control, education, & skill of grp leaders
    - (2) Internal organizational cohesion
    - (3) Strategic social position (in political issue-space rel. to other I.G.’s)
  - b. Later work argued four key variables determining policy success
    - (1) Grp Resources: financial & human resources raise policy influence
    - (2) Grp Cohesion: organizational control, unity, & discipline positively related to influence
    - (3) Leadership&Grp Expertise: policy & administrative knowledge helps
    - (4) Group Representativeness: favorable strategic positioning and/or comprehensive group standing in a policy domain
  - c. Basic assumption of pluralist model: open, fair competition naturally favors groups w/ highest net “score” on these factors

**C. *Pluralism Critics:* Bachrach&Baratz (‘63); Schattschneider (‘60)**

1. Non-decisions & agenda setting

2. Govt & bureaucracy interested, not neutral, actors in process
3. Insiders v. Outsiders: some groups excluded
4. Basically reject image of govt as neutral arena in which group interests fairly compete & policies neutrally emerge.

D. *State-& Instit-Centric*: Katzenstein; Krasner; Evans; Skocpol

1. Three key variables: state preferences, capacity, & autonomy
2. Policymakers can & do develop preferences that differ from those of constituent groups
3. Relative degree of autonomy of state from societal groups determines degree to which they may differ
4. Capacity is the ability of the bureaucratic state to execute its actions & thus logically depends on its ability to concentrate, coordinate, & exploit governmental resources

E. *Corporatist Model*: (Schmitter 1979, Lijphart)

1. ““system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered & functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state & granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders & articulation of demands & [supporting activities]’ Schmitter (1979)” (149).
2. Interest groups operate as integral parts of, rather than external influences on, government activity

3. State is at the apex of the corporatist system, organizes a hierarchy within which interests operate regarding the government & other interests [keep the example of Government–unified labor movement–unified employer organization in mind]
  4. Note the incorporation of insider groups (with perhaps some exclusion implied) so that favored groups play a structured & significant role in policymaking
  5. Competition among groups is much more limited than in pluralist systems while state’s role is more assertive & sustained
  6. Contrast “liberal” or “societal” corporatism from “state” corporatism [“from below” v. “from above”]
- F. All actual country-times could be characterized to some degree by each of these models of politics, but...
- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. US most nearly pluralist? | 4. Japan hybrid of statist & corporatist? |
| 2. Britain bit more statist? | 5. Germany bit more purely corporatist?   |
| 3. France lot more statist?  | 6. Swe& Austria most nearly corporatist   |

## V. Empirical “Findings”

- A. Bashevkin claims that business groups generally most influential in most systems
1. Note the difficulty of establishing any such claim
  2. [If business groups most influential, why are they among the most critical of government policies?]
- B. Most of work confirms importance of internal characteristics of groups to their success

- C. Most also find that “political opportunity structure”—attitudinal or institutional environment within which groups operate—are key to strategies, success, etc. Thus, influence rests on combination of internal assets & external situation [a pretty banal conclusion at this level of generality]
- D. Groups adapt rapidly to their institutional circumstances: they seem to go where it matters in their system (e.g., Congress then courts in the US), subject to their abilities to go there.
- E. Evidence from transitional democracies indicates that democratic group competition does not emerge simply from establishment of rules allowing it
  - 1. Pre-transition traditions are key
  - 2. Pre-transition group organization also central

VI. Discussion: How could we evaluate common claim that “special interests” as opposed to avg citizens &/or their elected representatives hold power?