Polity & Governance · GS - II

To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests ? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Pluralism, pressure groups, social movements, corporate lobbying, representation, participatory democracy, political finance, regulatory capture, electoral bonds, institutional autonomy

Model Answer

Pluralistic democracy assumes that democracy is strengthened when diverse interests can organise, articulate demands and influence public policy beyond periodic elections. In India, pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies perform this representative function.

Pressure groups such as farmers' organisations, trade unions and professional associations provide channels for interest articulation. Social movements like the Right to Information movement and environmental movements have brought otherwise marginalised concerns into public debate. Corporate lobbies contribute technical expertise, investment perspectives and policy inputs, particularly in complex sectors such as taxation, infrastructure and technology.

However, their democratic contribution depends upon equality of access. Resource-rich corporate actors may possess greater lobbying capacity, media influence and access to policymakers than economically weaker groups.

This creates risks of regulatory capture, unequal agenda-setting and policy influence disproportionate to numerical representation.

The Supreme Court’s 2024 electoral-bonds judgment also underscored the constitutional importance of political-finance transparency by examining the relationship between political contributions and citizens’ right to information.

Therefore, convergence between corporate wealth and political power can potentially affect institutional autonomy when campaign finance, lobbying and regulatory decisions lack transparency. Yet corporate participation itself is not inherently undemocratic.

The way forward lies in transparent political funding, disclosure of lobbying activities, conflict-of-interest rules, independent regulators, stronger parliamentary oversight and equal opportunities for civil society participation.

Thus, interest groups can deepen pluralism when access is transparent and relatively inclusive; without institutional safeguards, unequal economic power can distort democratic accountability.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP