

Podcast Activity

For this assignment you will listen to a podcast from NPR about interest groups in your chosen core country. The podcasts for each country are located below. After you have listened to the podcast, answer the following:

- Describe the interest group and the issue represented in the podcast. **The NPR Podcast details the opposition movement in Iran, which includes women's rights groups, NGOs, reformists, students, and migrants. The Islamic Republic of Iran, at the time this Podcast was recorded, had been opting to pursue a 'quarantine' strategy of curtailing the growing influence of the opposition movement, rather than a 'sledgehammer' strategy whereby the government would crack down harshly on the movement. The goal of the government of Iran is to depoliticize Iranian youth and the growing middle class by perpetuating to society the idea that protest is ineffective and futile. This is to be accomplished by containing student protests to university campuses, keeping the streets clear of any 'unsavory' political agendas.**
- What are the group's goals? **The opposition movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran consists of various groups, so of course, the goals of the movement as a whole are varied. For one, women's groups in particular are campaigning for an end to the punishment of 'stoning' for the crime of adultery. The youth desire greater democratization, respect for human rights comparable to other states, and increased political freedoms and participation.**
- What methods are they using to achieve those goals? Compare your findings for each of the core countries. **The opposition movement in Iran has so far, based off of the information presented in the Podcast, been aspiring to achieve their goals through peaceful moves towards reform. This includes student-led protest, incorporation of varied groups, and political maneuvering by groups outside the country that they are affiliated with. The reformist components of the movement have sought to achieve change through political processes, such as triumphing in parliamentary elections and increasing female participation in government. This is similar to how, for example, interest groups have worked for change in the People's Republic of China; in that country, interest groups organized peaceful protest led by common-folk or went on strike or demanded party members accommodate change in the Communist government. Likewise, Mexican interest groups attempt political change through protest, though their means have proven disruptive and have led to court fights as a result. Demonstrations in the Russian Federation have been much larger, demanding significant democratic reforms, but have also been largely contained. The United Kingdom has seen public servant interest groups protest and commit to strikes, so that situation is more similar to China than Iran. It is Nigeria that is far different from**

the situation in Iran, in which some groups have committed to sectarian violence while others within government have committed to achieving their goals through political processes and electoral means. Such evidence of the behaviors of interest groups in other countries lends itself to the conclusion that Iranian opposition groups behave similarly to much of the world by performing peaceful protest and strikes and advocating change through political means, but they continue to be restricted in their efforts despite refraining from violent outbursts.

- Would you say that the interest group in question has more or less autonomy from the government? Explain why you think this is the case. **The opposition movement attempts to act independently and in direct 'opposition' (hence, the name) to the Islamic Republic's government. This does not mean, however, that they are autonomous to any significant degree. Due to government restrictions and the opposition movement being limited to the confines of the government's laws in their campaigns, the opposition movement can largely act only to a degree agreeable to the government. This means that the movement remains restricted to certain areas and to expressing certain ideas without going too far. So no, they have limited autonomy despite the inner hierarchy of the movement possessing greater autonomy compared to the government due to the varied nature of the movement (i.e. women's groups, student groups, exiles, etc.).**
- How important do you think this interest group will be in influencing policy within the government? **The Islamic Republic of Iran has been largely successful in isolating opposition factions, dividing the opposition movement, quelling dissent, and quarantining 'anti-state' thought. It can be concluded, therefore, that this particular interest group will have little direct influence on the future policy of the government. The very existence of the movement, however, and the actions the government has so far taken and must continue to take dictate new policy decisions; in this way, the opposition movement does influence government policy, though not necessarily in the movement's interests. New government policies on what constitutes 'peaceful protest' and what they will arrest government opponents for are policies resultant from the opposition movement's campaigns.**

Feel free to do your own research regarding interest groups and the core countries. In the CIA Factbook, under the "government tab" called "political pressure groups and leaders" is information that may garner more resources for your research. Once you have completed your responses, place the assignment in the 'Podcast Activity' drop box.

Resources

[CIA](#)

[China](#)

Mexico

Iran

Nigeria

Russia

Great Britain