Democratic Revival – an Agenda for Action

9th November, 2012; Mumbai

by

Foundation for Democratic Reforms
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The initial conditions...

1. poor service delivery
   - bribes & red-tape
   - harassment & delays
   - influence peddling

2. citizenship sense lacking
   - Elected leaders as ‘monarchs’
   - legislators and party cadre should ‘somehow’ deliver
   - No link with taxes
   - No sense of public money, entitlement to public services
   - No local leaders or local solutions
   - Systemic distortions not corrected
   - Links broken: Taxes↔Services, Vote ↔Public good
   - Authority ↔Accountability
   - Easy populism & wasteful use
   - Citizen & public servants roles reversed

3. overcentralization
As a consequence...

- Excessive dependence on elected legislators
- Vote as a lever for getting even the smallest thing done
- Party cadres have to devote vast amount of time at local level
- Great sacrifice expected from legislators and political workers
Elected legislator

Burden on legislator & vast cadre network

• Money for votes
• Freebies, sops & doles
• Divisive politics

Mounting dissatisfaction

Even with best efforts, only 10% gets done

Good people marginalized in politics

• Mounting corruption
• Political recruitments from dynasties, corrupt money bags

• Unsustainable sacrifice
• Ethical politics not sustainable

desperation of citizens
vote as a lever
Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds

Corruption → Illegitimate Money Power → Political Power → Corruption
Most election expenditure is to buy votes

- Greater corruption by the elected
- Increased voter cynicism
- Voter seeks money & liquor
- Increased election expenditure
- Not spending large amounts almost guarantees defeat
Money, liquor, caste, emotion & disenchantment dominate

No matter who wins, people lose

Voter maximizes short-term gain

Vote not seen as promoting public good

Vote de-linked from public good
Counter-mobilization by other groups based on primordial loyalties

Identity politics, polarization and strife

Marginal vote most important

Strategic voting and vote-bank politics

Voices of reason and modernity drowned out by obscurantists

Politicians pander to fundamentalists

Social divisions exacerbated
Corruption & misgovernance became endemic

Corruption thrives for govt. to survive

Govt. survival depends on legislative majority

Legislators spent a lot of money to get elected

They need multiple returns to sustain the system

Political survival and honesty became incompatible
PERCENTAGE OF HEREDITARY MPs IN 15th LOK SABHA BY AGE
PERCENTAGE OF HEREDITARY MPs IN CONGRESS BY AGE
Decline in vote share & seat share of both BJP & Congress in UP Assembly elections

 Decline of Congress in UP

 Decline of BJP in UP

 Seat Share %  
 Vote Share %
Decline in vote share & seat share of both BJP & Congress in UP Assembly elections

Similarly, performance of both BJP and Congress declined rapidly in other major states when they did not have alliances.
Decline of **Congress** in the largest states of India

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>27.90%</td>
<td>17.30%</td>
<td>15.10%</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>9.00%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>8.60%</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
<td>13.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharasht ra</td>
<td>38.20%</td>
<td>31.00%</td>
<td>27.20%</td>
<td>21.10%</td>
<td>21.00%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>41.80%</td>
<td>35.10%</td>
<td>39.50%</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>10.68%</td>
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<td>24.70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>24.80%</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>19.80%</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>5.60%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>43.80%</td>
<td>27.00%</td>
<td>40.80%</td>
<td>35.30%</td>
<td>34.60%</td>
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<td>36.30%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Falling vote share of Congress since 1989

Congress' Average Vote Share % after 1989/90:
- Uttar Pradesh - 13.7%
- Maharashtra - 27.7%
- West Bengal - 24.7%
- Bihar - 13.1%
- Tamil Nadu - 10.1%
Consequent decline in share of seats in all states except Maharashtra

Note: Only in UP & Bihar do seats and votes reflect Congress’ own strength; in other states alliances have given Congress better results
## Decline of **BJP** in the largest states of India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Avg. vote share in state elections since 1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uttar Pradesh</strong></td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.7% 31.5% 33.3% 32.5% 20.1% 17.0% 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maharashtra</strong></td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7% 12.8% 14.5% 13.7% 14.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Bengal</strong></td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5% 11.3% 6.5% 5.2% 1.9% 4.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bihar</strong></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6% 13.0% 14.6% 15.7% 16.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tamil Nadu</strong></td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4% 1.7% 1.8% 3.2% 2.0% 0.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Karnataka</strong></td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1% 17.0% 20.7% 28.3% 33.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Falling vote share & seat share of BJP in the major states since 1989

- Uttar Pradesh: 20.89%
- Maharashtra: 13.15%
- West Bengal: 5.03%
- Bihar: 14.27%
- Tamil Nadu: 1.57%
Falling vote share & seat share of BJP in the major states since 1989

Note: In Bihar and Maharashtra BJP is in alliance with regional parties
BJP & Congress do not matter in more than half of India

Total Seats in Lok Sabha: 543
Halfway mark: 272

'Big 6' States - 291 LS Seats

- Uttar Pradesh: 80 LS seats
- Maharashtra: 48
- West Bengal: 42
- Andhra Pradesh: 42
- Bihar: 40
- Tamil Nadu: 39

*AP included as Congress could not win a single seat in any of the by-elections since 2009.
Performance of Congress in the ‘Big 6’ states: Lok Sabha and Assembly Tally

Note: Congress has regional alliances in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal
Performance of BJP in the ‘Big 6’ states: Lok Sabha and Assembly Tally

Note: BJP has regional alliance in Maharashtra and Bihar
BSP vs. SP in Uttar Pradesh: Small difference in votes but huge difference in seats

- **2007**
  - BSP: 30.4%
  - SP: 25.4%

- **2012**
  - BSP: 25.9%
  - SP: 29.2%

*Difference in vote share is actually small*

*But difference in seat share is huge*
AIADMK vs. DMK in Tamil Nadu: Small difference in votes but huge difference in seats

- **2006**
  - DMK: 39.9%
  - AIADMK: 44.8%
  - DMK: 39.4%

- **2011**
  - AIADMK: 51.8%
  - DMK: 13.2%
  - AIADMK: 85.7%

*Difference in vote share is actually small*

*But difference in seat share is huge*
Cong+ vs. TDP+ in Andhra Pradesh: Small difference in votes but huge difference in seats

- **2004**
  - Cong+: 48.7%
  - TDP+: 40.2%
  - Seat Share: 76.9%

- **2009**
  - Cong+: 36.5%
  - TDP+: 34.76%
  - Seat Share: 51.4%

*Difference in vote share is actually small*

*But difference in seat share is huge*
Countries and their electoral systems (FPTP & PR)

### Classification of countries by type of electoral systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Past The Post (FPTP)</th>
<th>Proportionality-based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK <em>(only for House of Commons)</em>, Canada, India, Australia</td>
<td>Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Germany, New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh, Pakistan</td>
<td>South Africa, Brazil, Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Kenya</td>
<td>Israel, Turkey, Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica, Barbados &amp; Bermuda</td>
<td>Russia, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea &amp; Mexico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*IDEA Table of electoral systems worldwide - [http://www.idea.int/esd/world.cfm](http://www.idea.int/esd/world.cfm)*
Distortions of FPTP

- National Parties marginalized in most large states
- Political fragmentation
- Money power for marginal vote leading to corruption
- The best and brightest shun elections and politics
- Politics of fiefdoms has taken root
- Competitive populism to attract marginal vote
- Divisions exacerbated for local political gains
- Political recruitment flawed, to ‘somehow’ win constituencies
- Tactical voting because of ‘wasted’ votes
- Voter apathy and cynicism
Merits of Proportional Representation

- Vote buying diminishes as marginal vote is not critical.
- Competent and honest politicians with good image become electoral assets.
- Rational, long-term policies can be pursued as marginal vote is unimportant.
- National parties will be viable in all states.
- Vote reflects voters’ views.
- Greater voter participation.
- Voice and representation to all segments and views.
## Potential problems of PR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Political fragmentation as each caste/group floats a party</td>
<td>• Reasonable threshold level, of say 5% vote in a large state – as required for representation, in and from, that state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Link between vote and legislator</td>
<td>• Allocation of each constituency to a member on agreed basis. A member will represent a territorial constituency within a larger multi-member constituency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Autocratic parties</td>
<td>• The problem exists in FPTP also. Democratization of parties and selection candidates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A simple PR model for India

- State as unit for PR threshold (for Assembly & Lok Sabha)
- Multi-member constituencies – 6-10 seats
- Parties get seats in proportion to their votes in a state, if they cross the minimum required vote, of say 5% in a large state.
- Members elected from party lists in each multi-member constituency
- Each elected member is allotted to an assembly / Lok Sabha segment by referential choice based on party vote share in the MMC
## How Incentives Change for Various Players in FPTP and PR for Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPTP Incentive</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for most votes in the constituency</td>
<td>Winnable, wealthy candidates who buy votes are preferred. Respected, clean, competent candidates are rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of marginal vote to win</td>
<td>Corruption is condoned as necessary evil. Vote buying is all important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contest in only select constituencies to maximize seats and gain power</td>
<td>Divisions are fomented to capture vote banks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying for gerrymandering while drawing constituency boundaries</td>
<td>Certain constituencies, from which the ruling party has legislators, benefit at the expense of the other constituencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Major national party needs alliances to win power / seats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desperation to forge alliances once party is below threshold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eventual marginalization as party withers away</td>
<td></td>
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Contd...
### How Incentives Change for Various Players in FPTP and PR for Party

<table>
<thead>
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<th>PR Incentive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Need for broad-based appeal and image</td>
<td>Projection of clean and competent candidates; focus on policies and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall vote share, not marginal vote in a constituency matters</td>
<td>Legitimate campaign financed by honest resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party can contest on own agenda and image</td>
<td>No need for amassing black money and corrupt practices because no vote buying is necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need for pre-electoral alliance</td>
<td>A party can be viable with decent vote share and good ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party building across state to nurture vote share</td>
<td>National / major party never marginalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-electoral alliance</td>
<td>Foot print of national parties in all states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No desperation to win marginal votes – more rational politics</td>
<td>Competitive populism will give way to long-term policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# How Incentives Change for Various Players in FPTP and PR for **Candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPTP Incentive</th>
<th>FPTP Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal vote all important to win</td>
<td>• Buying votes, arousing caste and sectarian divisions all important. Vast, unaccounted, illegitimate expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impenetrable entry barrier for honest, competent persons with clean image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR Incentive</th>
<th>PR Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall share of vote of the party and image ensure election; vote buying not needed</td>
<td>• Leaders of quality emerge and enter politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Corrupt candidates have no advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal vote in a constituency not important</td>
<td>• Entry barrier for honest, competent leaders, in politics lowered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vote buying diminishes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### How Incentives Change for Various Players in FPTP and PR for **Voter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPTP Incentive</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal vote all-important</td>
<td>Vote has a price, not value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All parties distribute money</td>
<td>Take money from all; vote for whomever you want</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A ‘good’ candidate / party will not win | • Don’t waste vote. Vote for someone else who can win  
• Vote for second worst party, not best party |
| A totally undesirable candidate may win | Vote tactically in favour of his nearest rival, irrespective of merits |
| No matter who wins, things don’t change | No point voting. Stay away from politics & polling |

*Contd…*
# How Incentives Change for Various Players in FPTP and PR for **Voter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR Incentive</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote is not wasted. Each vote counts, and the party vote will result in seats</td>
<td>Vote for the best party, not second-worst party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election outcome actually brings about visible change</td>
<td>Voters who stay away from polls become politically active and start voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal vote is not critical</td>
<td>Each vote has a value, not price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice to select a party whose policies and image they like</td>
<td>Vote for a party based on agenda, image and the list of candidates in MMC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VOTE
TAXES
AUTHORITY
PUBLIC GOOD
SERVICES
ACCOUNTABILITY
Local governments
Need for judicial reforms

• National Judicial Commission
• Judicial accountability
• Indian Judicial Service
• Procedural reforms for speedy justice
• Local courts
• Independent, accountable crime investigation
• Independent prosecution
WAY AHEAD

- Service delivery guarantees
- Local government empowerment
- Independent accountability mechanisms
- Judicial and police reforms
- Electoral system reforms