Democratic Revival – an Agenda for Action

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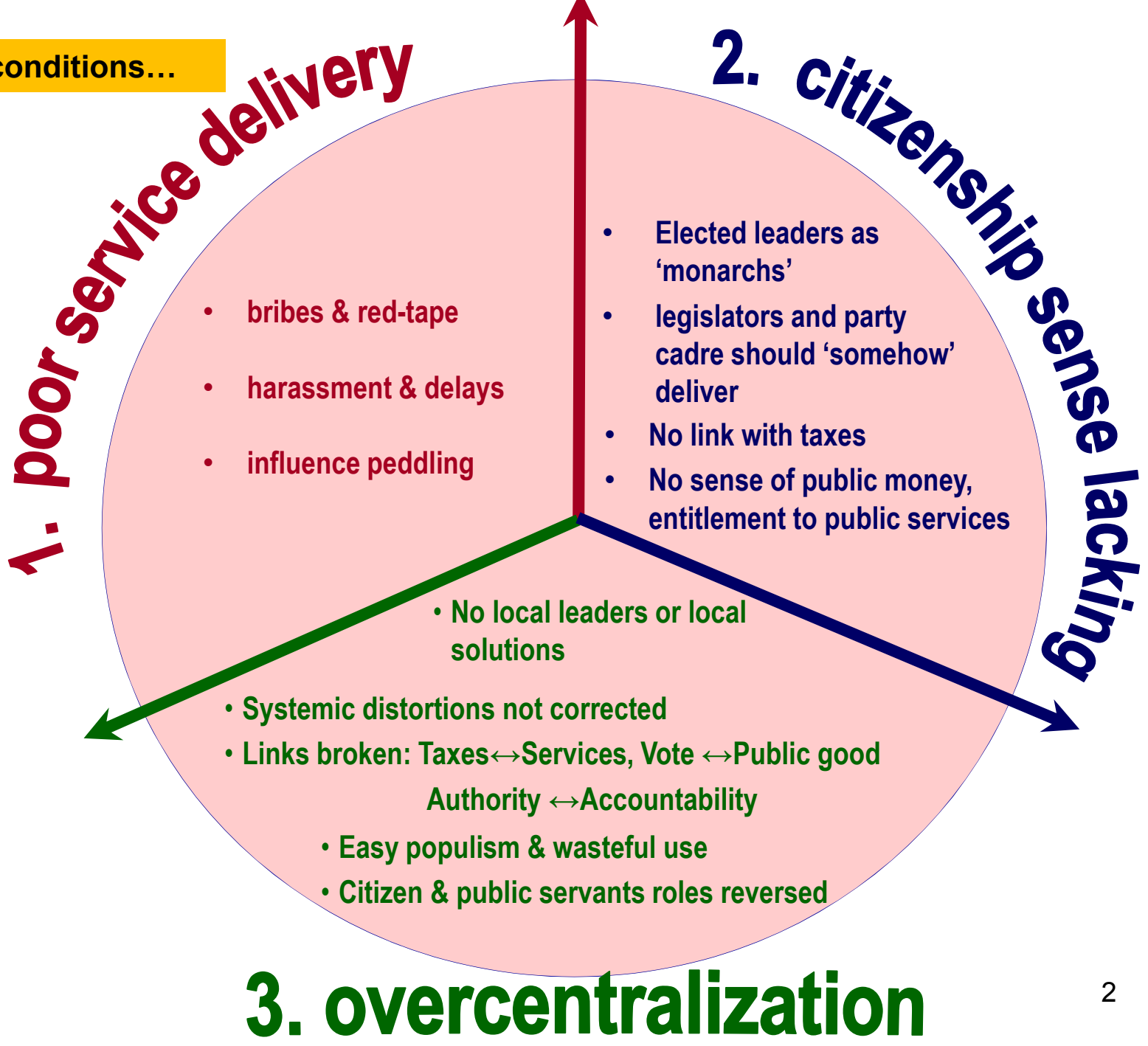
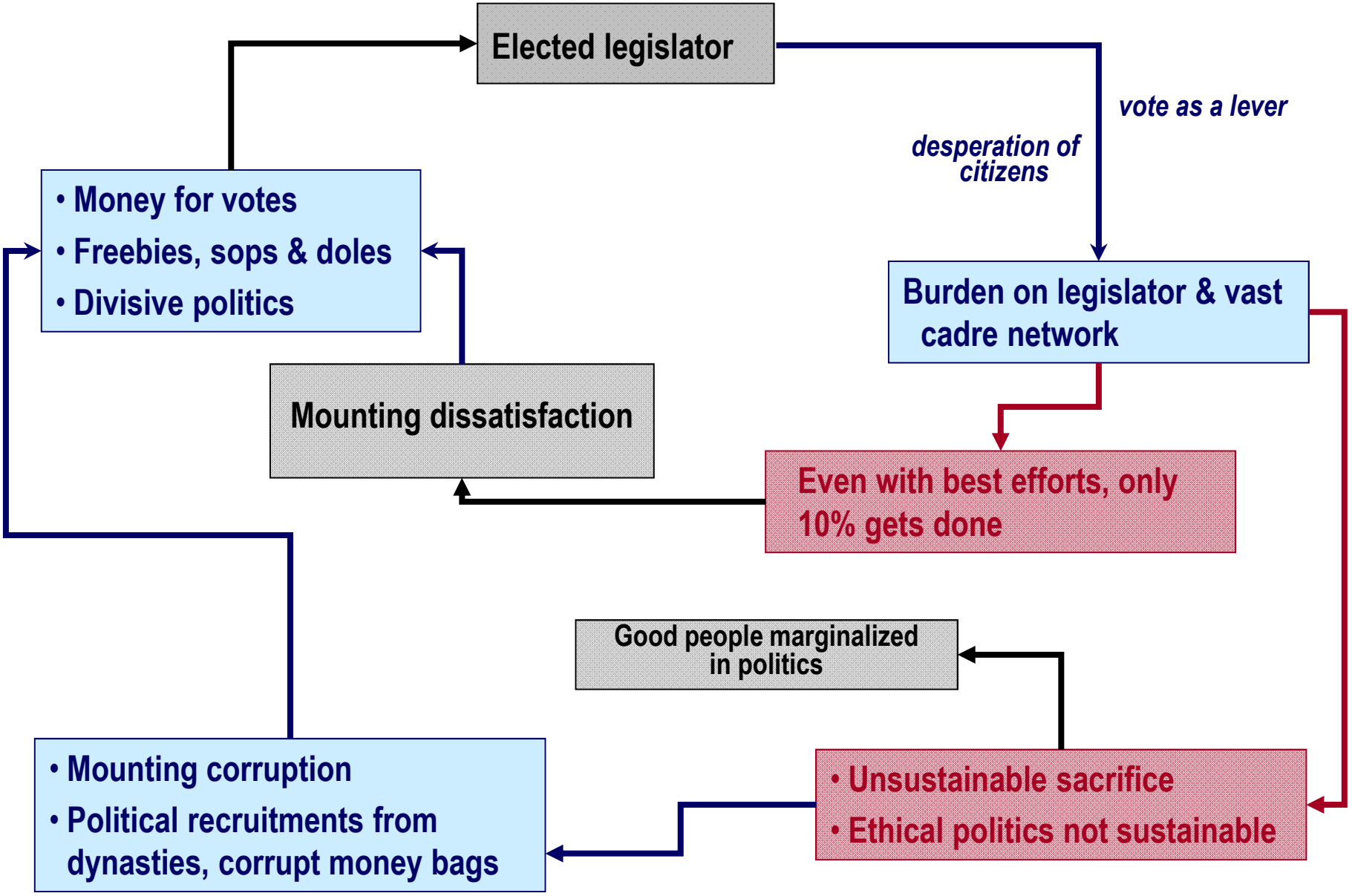
The initial conditions…



As a consequence…

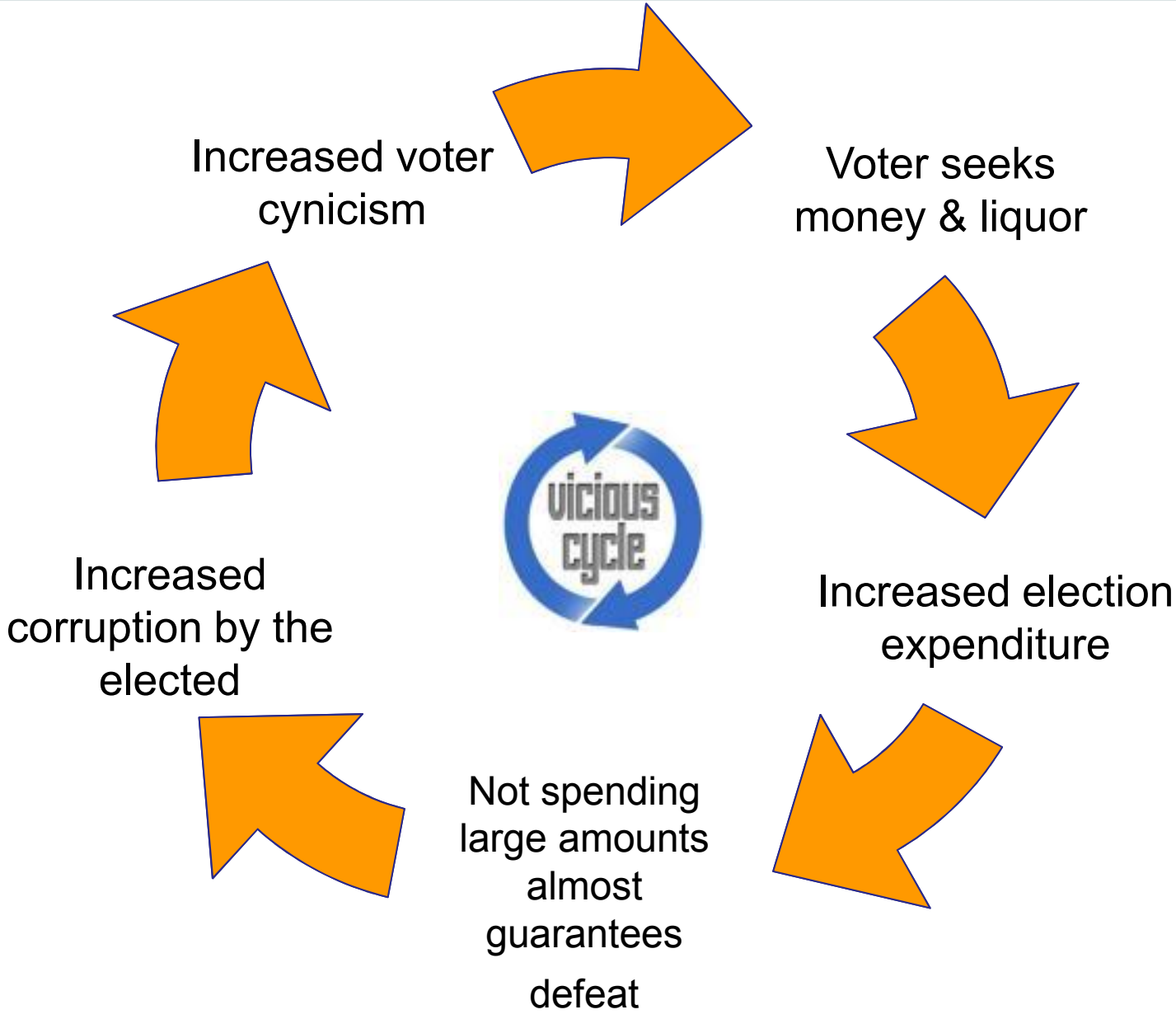
- excessive dependence on elected legislators
- vote as a lever for getting even the smallest thing done
- party cadres have to devote vast amount of time at local level
- great sacrifice expected from legislators and political workers


Elected legislator
vote as a lever
desperation of citizens
• Money for votes
• Freebies, sops & doles
• Divisive politics
Burden on legislator & vast cadre network
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

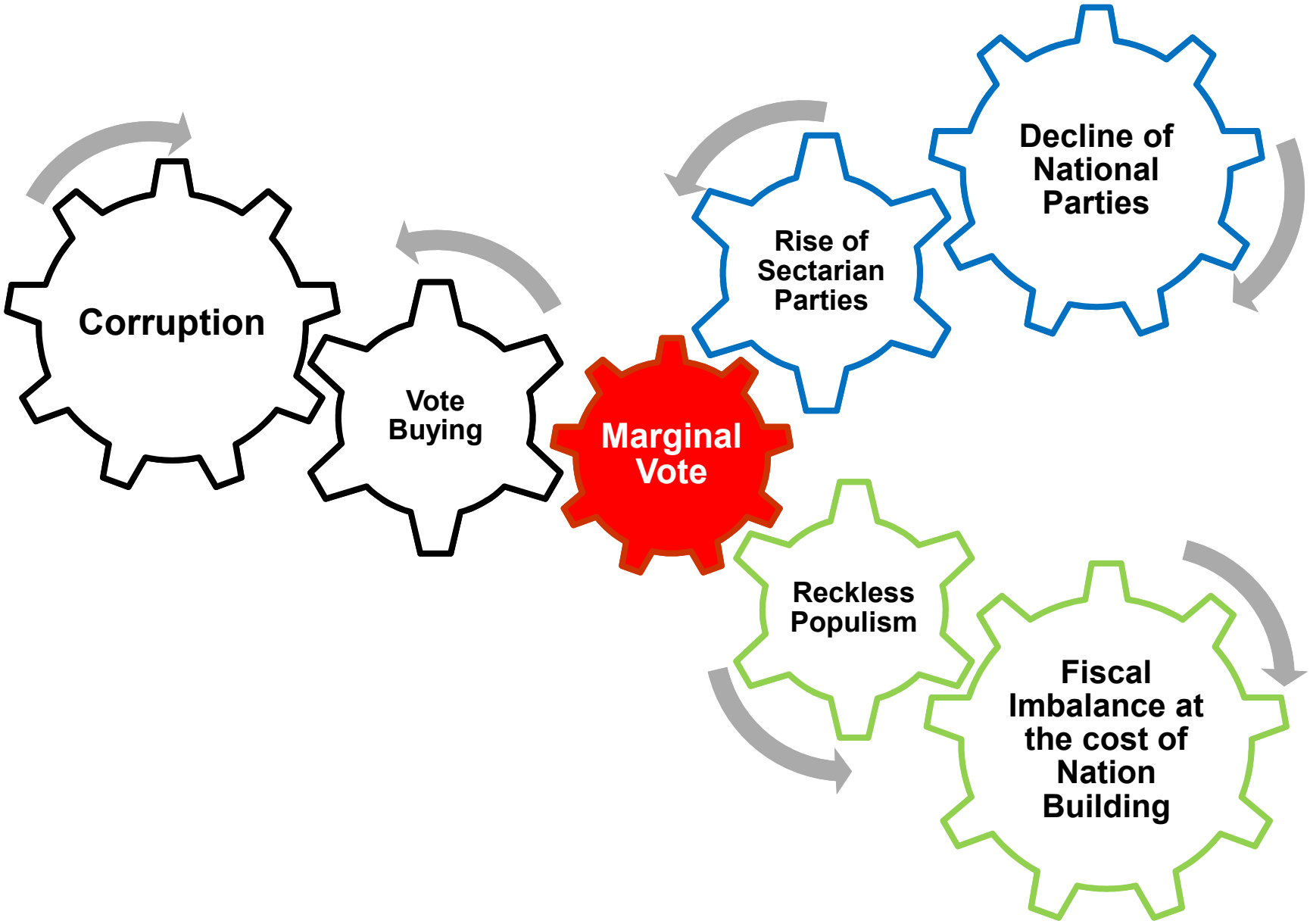
Drawbacks of First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) System

- Vote Buying and vast Election Expenditure
- National Parties are being marginalized
- Best and Brightest individuals are unelectable
- Reckless Populism at the cost of Nation Building

Most election expenditure is to buy votes



Consequences of Marginal Vote

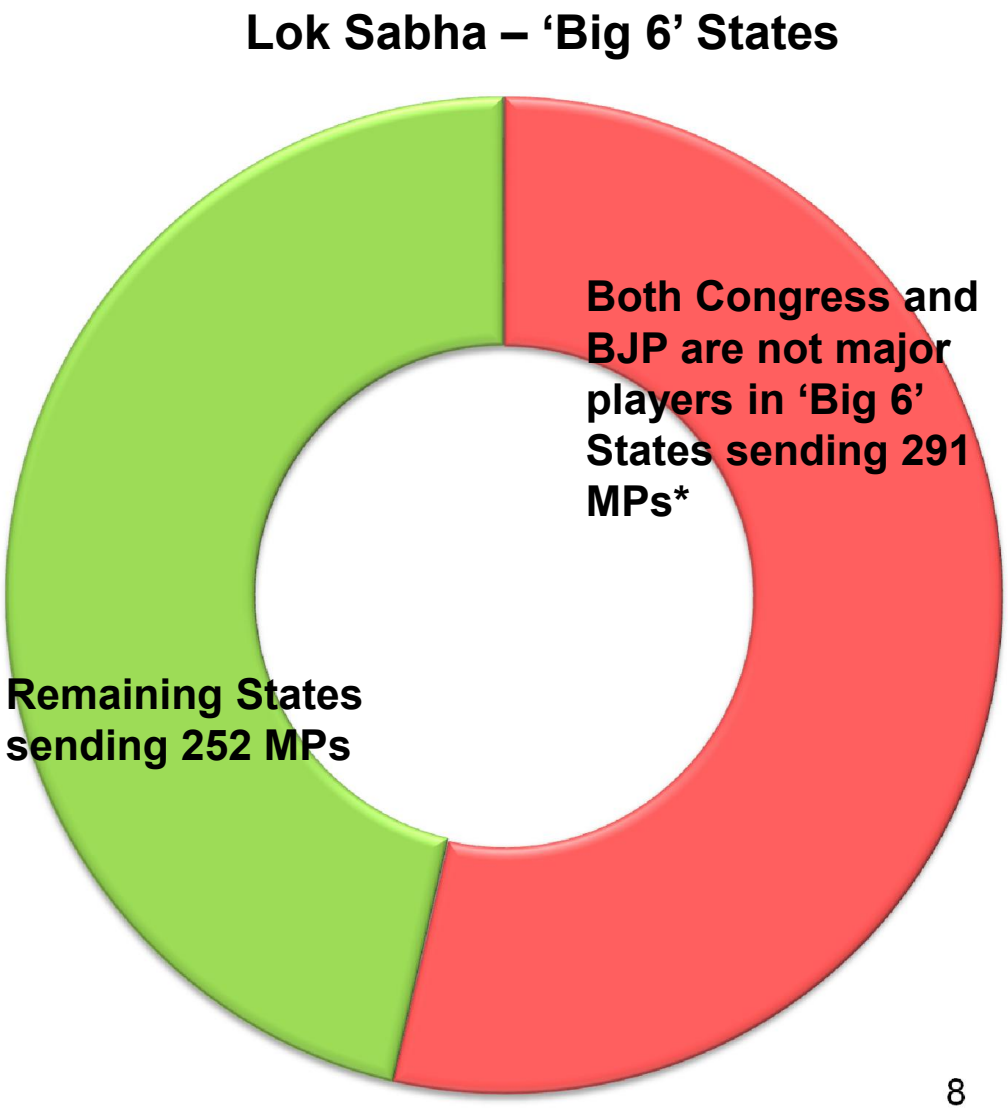


BJP & Congress do not matter … in more than half of India

Total Seats in Lok Sabha : 543
Halfway Mark : 272

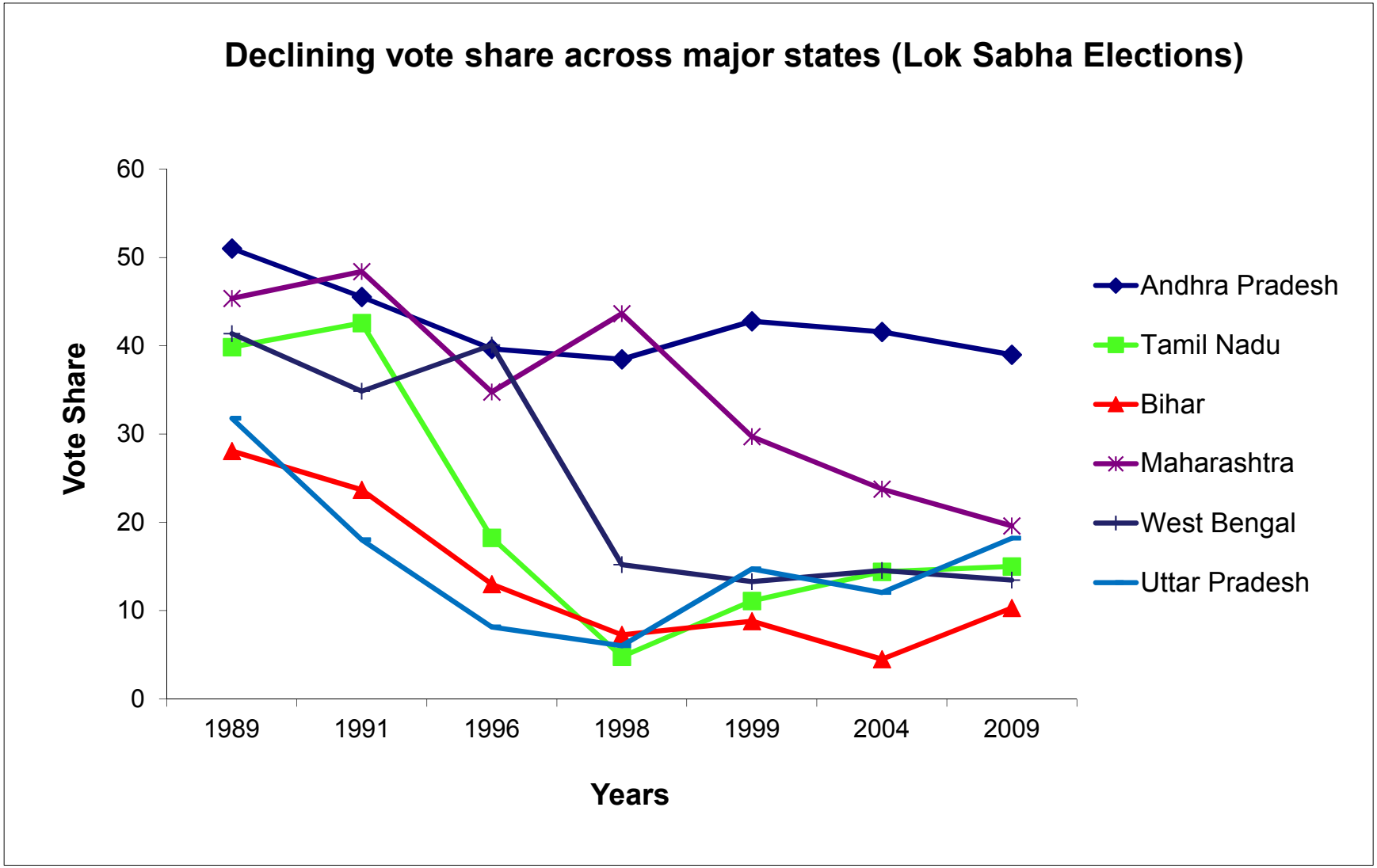
'Big 6' States - 291 Lok Sabha Seats

Uttar Pradesh	- 80 Seats
Maharashtra	- 48 Seats
West Bengal	- 42 Seats
Andhra Pradesh	- 42 Seats
Bihar	- 40 Seats
Tamil Nadu	- 39 Seats

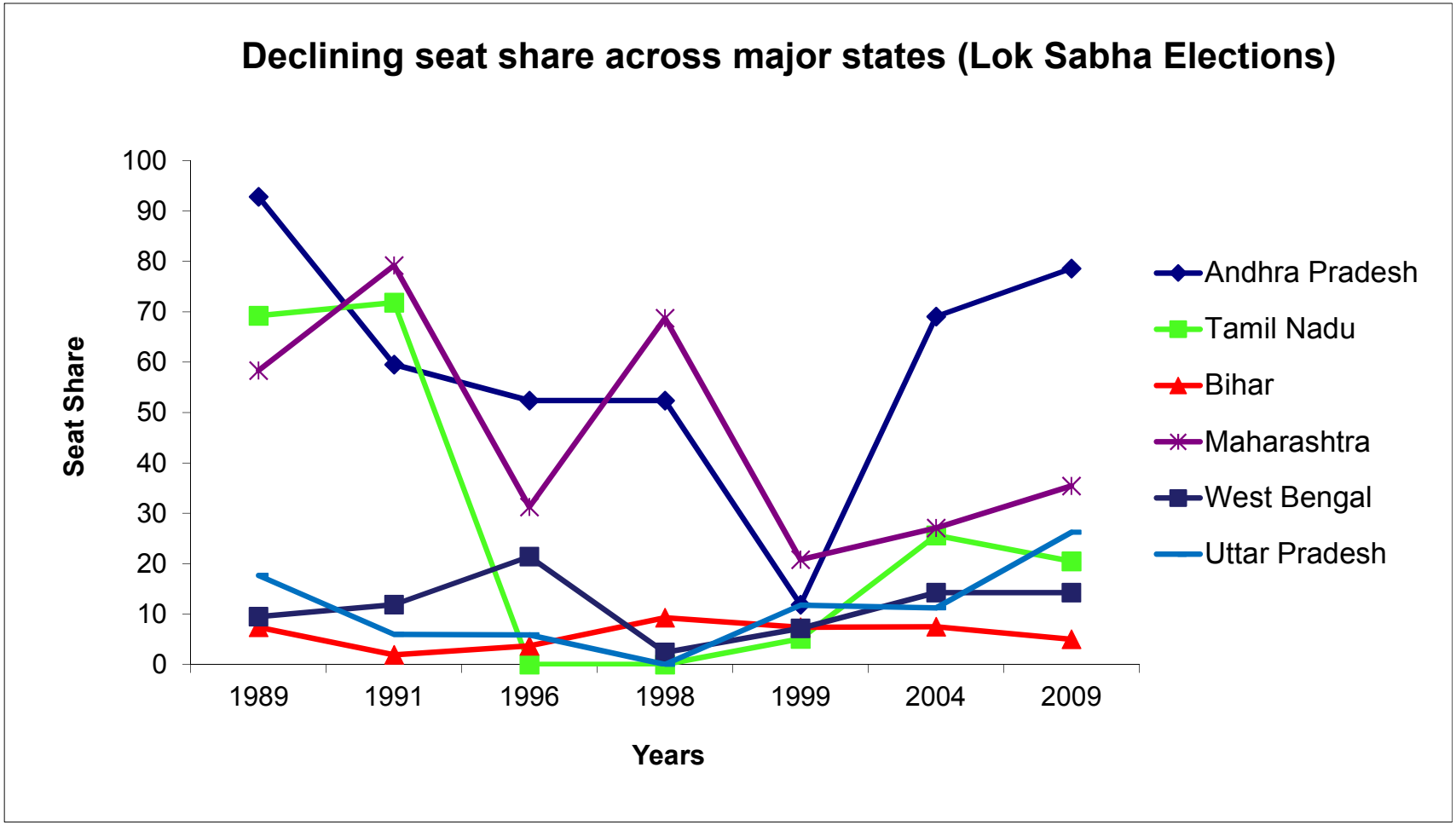


* AP included as Congress could not win a single seat in any of the by-elections since 2009

Falling vote share of Congress since 1989 …

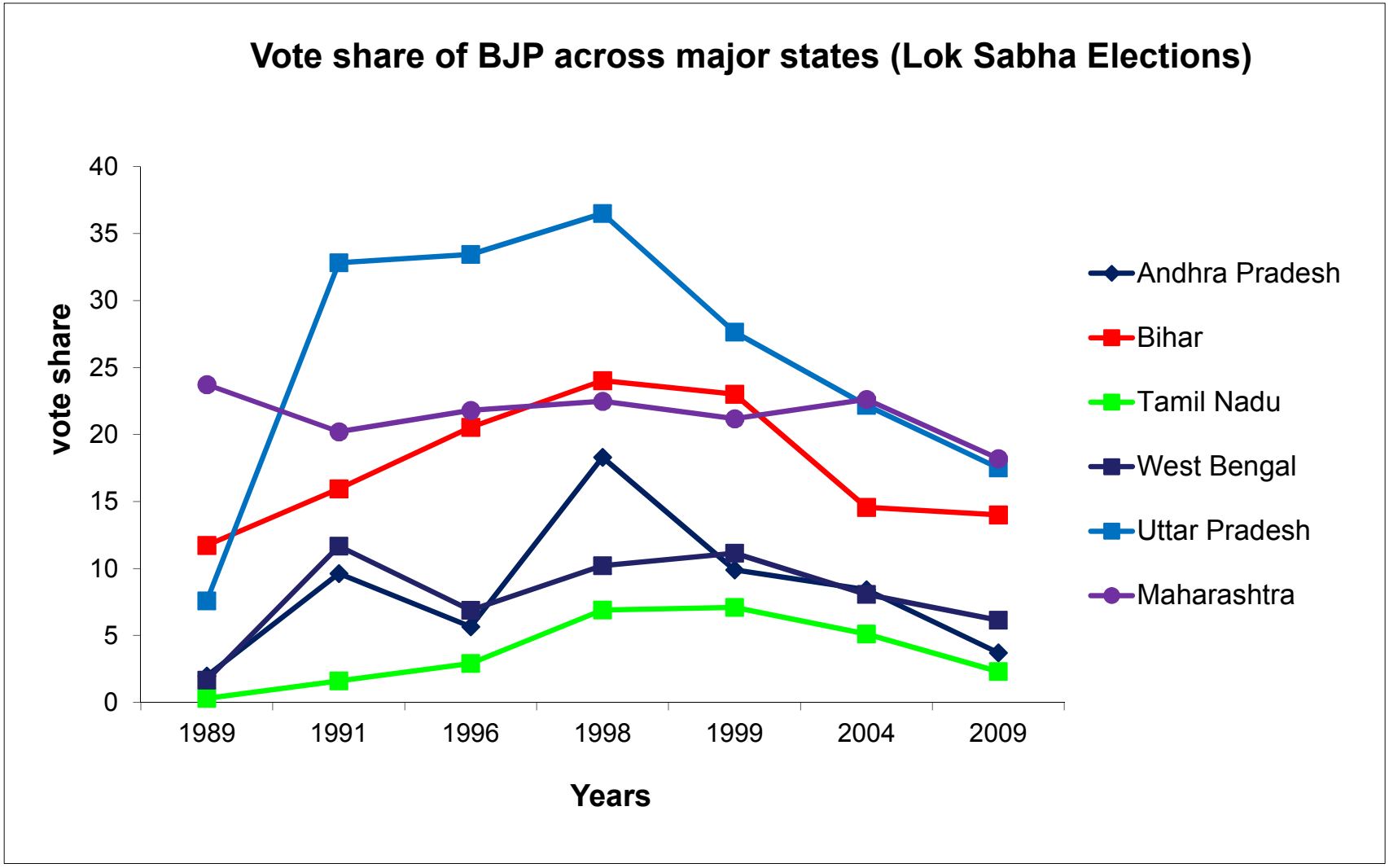


… Consequent decline in share of seats for Congress

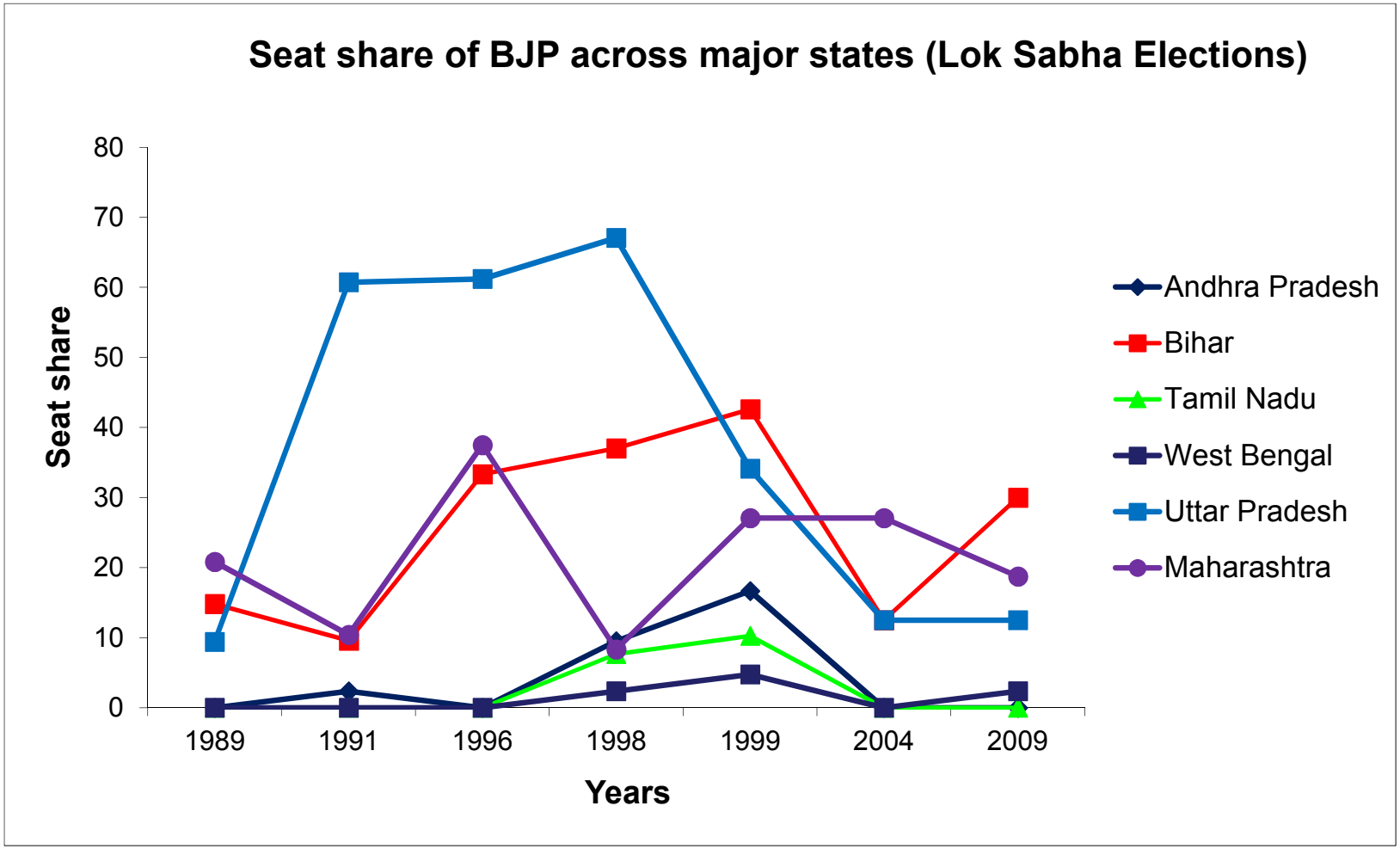


Note: *Only in UP & Bihar do seats and votes reflect Congress' own strength; in other states alliances have given Congress better results.*
Also, Congress could not win a single seat in AP in any of the by-elections since 2009

Falling vote share of BJP in the major states since 1989 …



… Consequent decline in share of seats for BJP



Note: In Bihar and Maharashtra BJP is in alliance with regional parties

Vote Share - Seat share disproportionality

Experience from Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections

SAMAJWADI PARTY (SP)			
Year	**Vote share %**	**Seat share %**	**Actual number of seats**
2007	25.43	24.07	97
2012	29.13	55.58	224

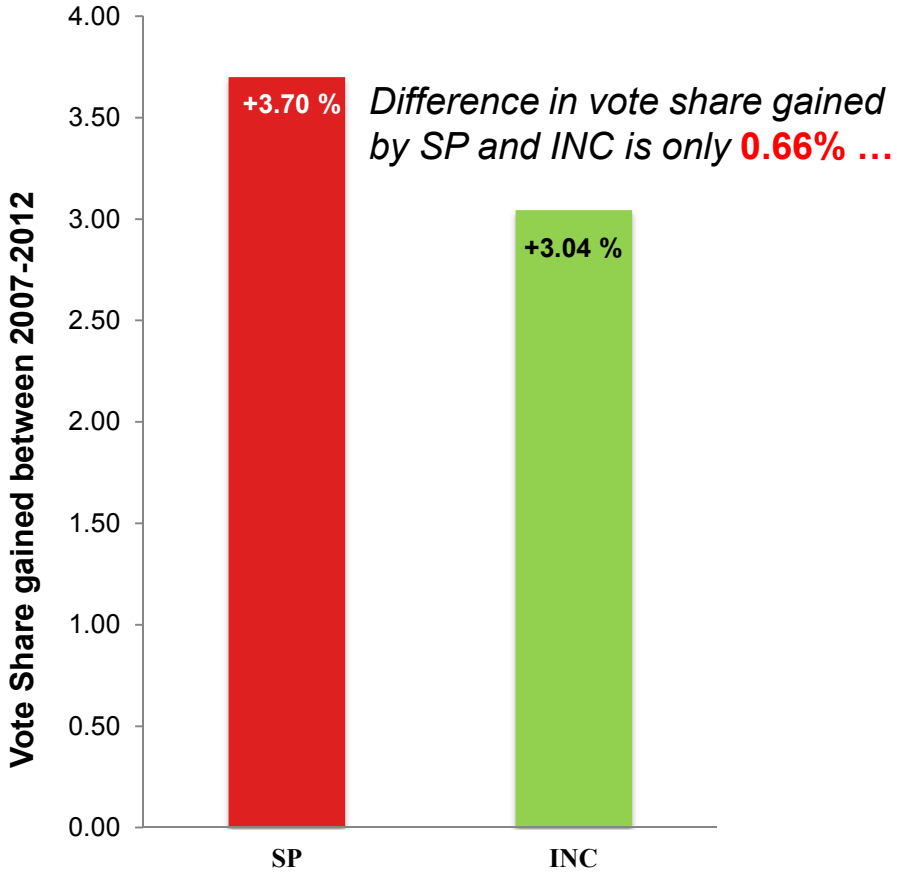
INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC)			
Year	**Vote share %**	**Seat share %**	**Actual number of seats**
2007	8.61	5.46	22
2012	11.65	6.95	28

Gain in vote share and seats Between 2007 and 2012		
Party	**Gain in Vote share**	**Gain in Seats**
SP	+3.70%	+127 Seats (31.51%)
INC	+3.04%	+6 Seats (1.49%)

SP vs. Cong in Uttar Pradesh:

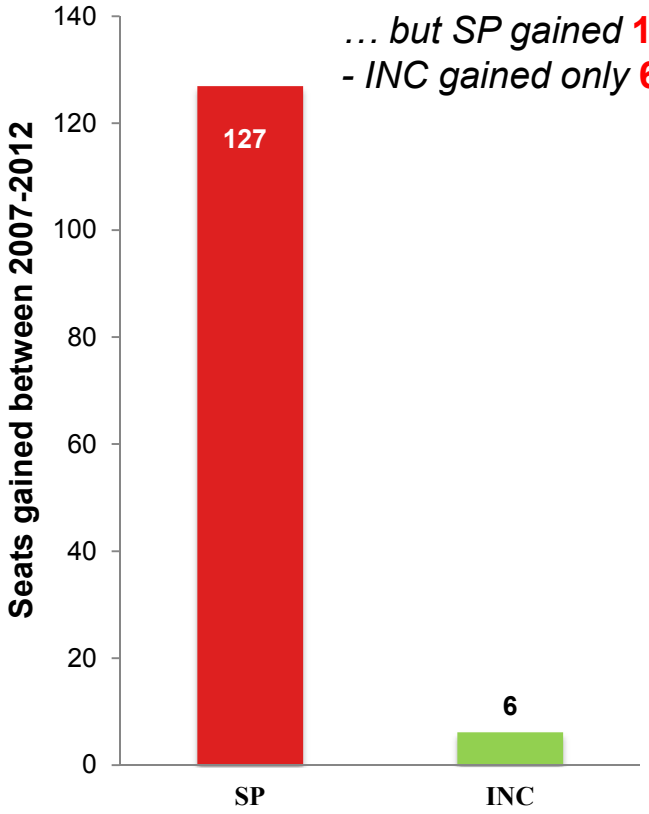
Similar gain in vote share … but huge difference in seats gained

Difference in Vote Share between 2007 and 2012 Assembly Elections



Difference in vote share gained by SP and INC is only **0.66% …**

Difference in Seats gained



… but SP gained **127 seats**
- INC gained only **6 seats**

Best & brightest are unelectable in FPTP

- In most major states, it costs Rs. 2-6 Cr to seriously compete to be an MLA & Rs.10 Cr or more to be MP
- Most money is for vote-buying and has to involve law-breaking and black money
- Big money, muscle power and criminal nexus, caste base and entrenched personal following are often prerequisite for electoral success
- Absence of internal democracy in parties, and weak local governments make it even harder for enlightened citizens to participate in politics

Populism and Fiscal Imbalances

- Reckless populism to gain marginal vote hurting the exchequer
- Fiscal deficits are not under control
- Skewed priorities – populist schemes instead of education, healthcare and infrastructure

Politics at the cost of nation-building

- Parties, in the quest for marginal vote, are compelled to offer short-term freebies
- This is often resulting in competitive populism and serious fiscal deficits
- Even when parties know the consequences, they are helpless; a slight fall in vote share eliminates them from the race to power
- Even major parties behave differently while in power and opposition. Instability is the consequences; and national interest is the casualty. ex: Petrol price hike, FDI, nuclear agreement
- Much of this problem is because of parties' fear of losing marginal vote

Distortions of FPTP - Summary

- 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

Need for an alternative electoral system

That is …

1. Fair
2. Broadly Acceptable
3. Easy to Accomplish
4. Corrects Most of the Present Distortions
5. Minimal Negative Impact

Proportional Representation (PR) instead of FPTP

FPTP	PR
Candidate Based	Party Based
Constituency Based	State Based
High Threshold for Success	Moderate Threshold for Success

Merits of PR

- 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

Altered Incentives & Outcomes for **PARTIES**

… under FPTP	… under PR
Dependence on marginal vote	Dependence on overall vote share in each state
Contest is constituency-based; therefore need for 'strong' candidates with money power & entrenched network	Contest is state-wide; therefore need for clean and credible candidates and leadership
National parties are not viable in states where they fall below 30-35% vote share	National parties viable if they have a reasonable vote share of even 5-10%
Electoral alliances marginalizing national parties over time	National parties can contest on their own and retain footprint; can have post-election alliance

Altered Incentive & Outcomes for **CANDIDATES**

… under FPTP	… under PR
Dependence on vote-buying to get marginal vote	Incentive to enhance voting share through image and credible campaigns
Entrenched networks of patronage and corruption to sustain election machine	Quality leadership and delivery to sustain image
Adversarial approach and extreme partisanship to deny space to opponents	Conciliatory approach and harmony to enhance electoral appeal
Only candidates with huge money power and caste base can survive. Entry barrier for clean, credible citizens	Clean candidates with good image and ability will thrive

Altered Incentives & Outcomes for **VOTER**

… under FPTP	… under PR
Vote has a price; Marginal vote forces vote buying. “Take money from all candidates & vote for one of your choice”	Vote has value; It becomes a means for improving governance
A ‘good’ & clean candidate cannot win – therefore vote for him is wasted	All votes have value. No vote is wasted
A totally undesirable candidate may win. Therefore tactical voting for any ‘winnable’ candidate to defeat him	Voting for party of your choice. No need for tactical voting

Altered Incentives & Outcomes for **VOTER** *(contd…)*

… under FPTP	… under PR
Vote for a ‘good’ party is futile as its vote share is not high enough	Vote for a party that represents your views and concerns
No matter who wins, nothing much changes	Electoral verdicts can change outcomes
“My vote does not matter – therefore I stay away.” Many abstain from voting	“My vote matters – therefore I will vote.”

Concerns about PR

Issue	Solution
• Political fragmentation as each caste/group floats a party	• Reasonable threshold level of, say, 5% vote in a large state – as required for representation, in and from, that state
• Link between vote and legislator	• Allocation of each constituency to a member on agreed basis. A member will represent an area within a larger multi-member constituency

Will PR affect stability?

- At national level, we already have coalitions. Government in PR countries are more stable

- At the state level, there may be fewer instances of single party rule under PR. This may be a small price to pay. Alternatively, we can combine PR for legislature with direct election of executive **only** at the state level

Constitution allows PR
No amendment needed

Art. 81(2)(b) of The Constitution Of India

For elections to Lok Sabha:

each State shall be divided into **territorial constituencies** in such manner that the **ratio between the population** of each constituency and the **number of seats** allotted to it is, so far as practicable, the **same throughout the State**…

Similar provision exists for elections to Legislative Assemblies under Art. 170(2)

Only Representation of the People's Act needs to be amended

A simple PR model for India

- State as unit for PR threshold (for State Assembly & Lok Sabha)
- Multi-member constituencies having 6 to10 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 are elected from party lists in each multi-member constituency
- Each elected member is allotted to an Assembly / Lok Sabha segment by preferential choice based on party vote share in the MMC

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Local Governments

VOTE

- Public Good
- Reduced role of vote buying
- Participation of enlightened citizens

TAXES

- Services
- Better Public policy
- Focus on infrastructure and nation building
- Better fiscal management

AUTHORITY

- Accountability
- Better service delivery
- Greater legitimacy and democracy


SUNNYVALE
Lachine Dr
Lowell Ct
W Homestead Rd
Homestead Rd
Homestead Rd
Homestead Rd
Noranda Dr
Dr. Tang Acupuncture Clinic
CUPERTINO

Local Governments - J&K experience

- It was a vote for self-governance, *not* self-determination
- **79% of voters** came out to exercise their franchise in the party-less election for local self-government institutions and elected some 33,000 representatives in 4,200 panchayats**.**
- This election result gave India a priceless opportunity in a militant-plagued state
- If funds are devolved with powers at Rs.1000/capita to every panchayat and municipal ward, people would be involved in things that matter in their lives.
- Terrorism and secessionism would recede with people's participation and satisfaction in outcomes.

THANK YOU