

# Democratic Revival – an Agenda for Action

May 22, 2013

by

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The purpose of a government is to make it easy  
for people to do good and difficult to do evil.

**William Gladstone**

# Democracy – Myron Weiner's Four Conditions

- Competitive elections
- Political freedoms for all
- Peaceful transfer of power and no retribution
- Real power with elected governments

# Distortions of state power

- Positive Power restricted  
Negative Power unchecked
- State organs are dysfunctional
- A system of alibis  
Victims of vicious cycle
- Change of players  
No change in the rules of the game
- Political process ought to be the solution  
But has become the problem itself

# Indian democracy is a work in progress

## **Policymakers have responded to emerging challenges :**

- 73<sup>rd</sup>, 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments – Local Governments(1993)
- Voter registration and electoral process reforms (past 15 years)
- Mandatory disclosure of candidates antecedents (2003)
- Political funding reforms (2003)
- Strengthening anti-defection law (2003)
- Limiting size of cabinet (2003)
- Rajya Sabha elections reforms (2003)

*Contd...*

# Indian democracy is a work in progress

## **Policymakers have responded to emerging challenges :**

- Right to Information (2005)
- Gram Nyayalayas Act (2009)
- 97<sup>th</sup> Amendment – Right to form Cooperatives (2012)

## **In the pipeline**

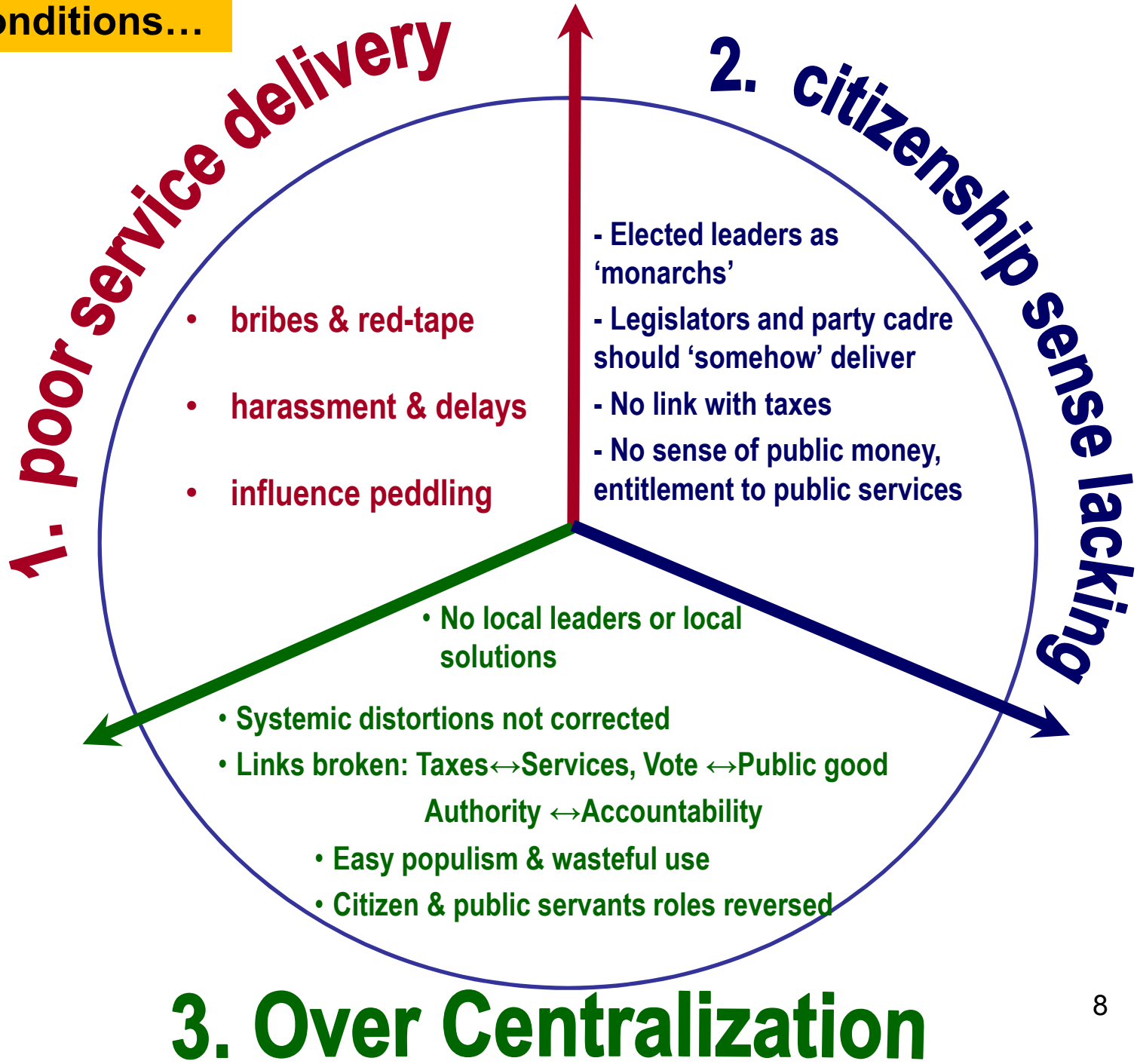
- Lokpal Bill
- Service Guarantee Bill
- Judicial Standards & Accountability Bill

## **Under consideration**

- National Judicial Commission
- Indian Judicial Service

However, much remains to be done.

To understand nature of crisis and resolve it, we need to focus on the initial conditions.





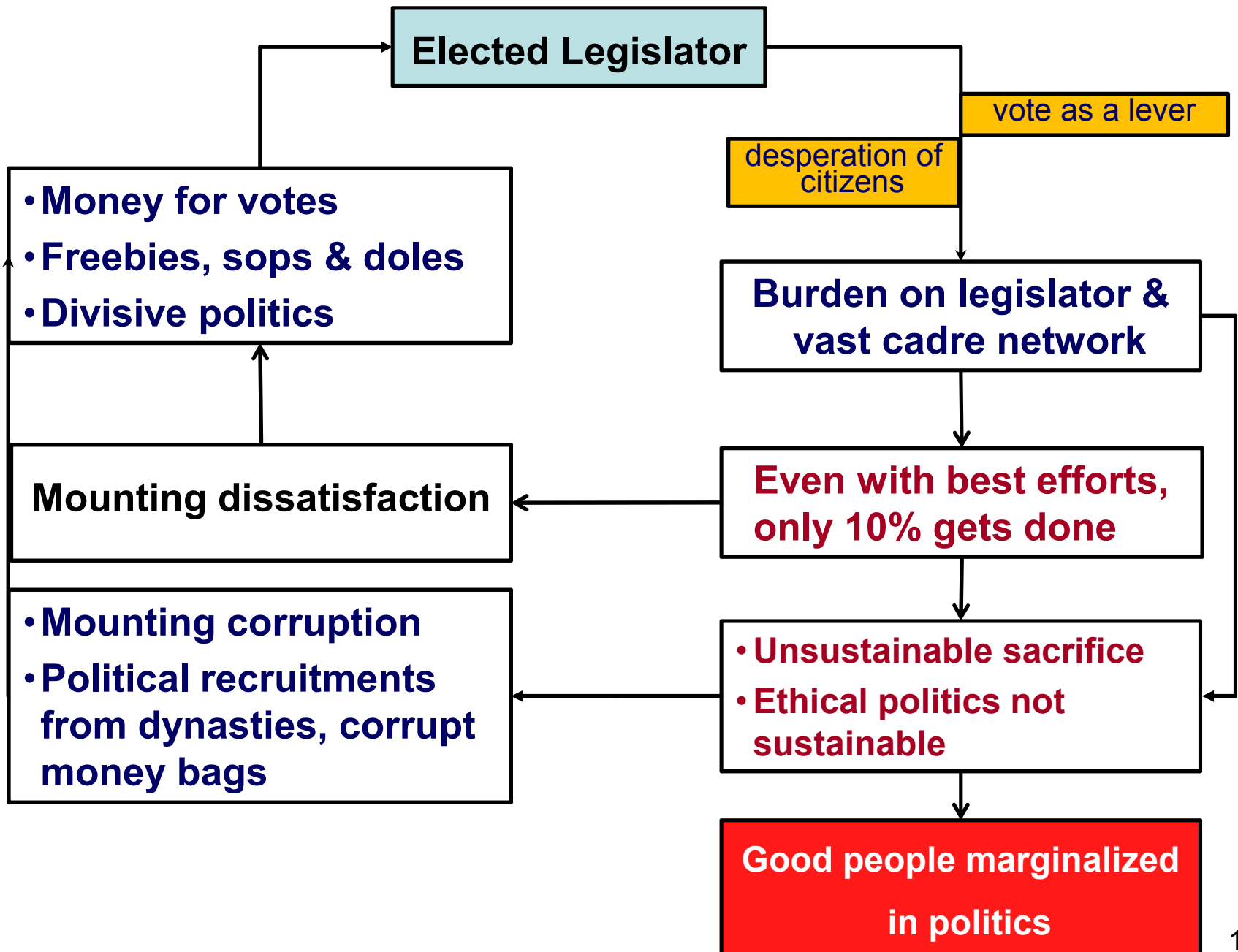
# As a consequence...

excessive dependence on  
elected legislators

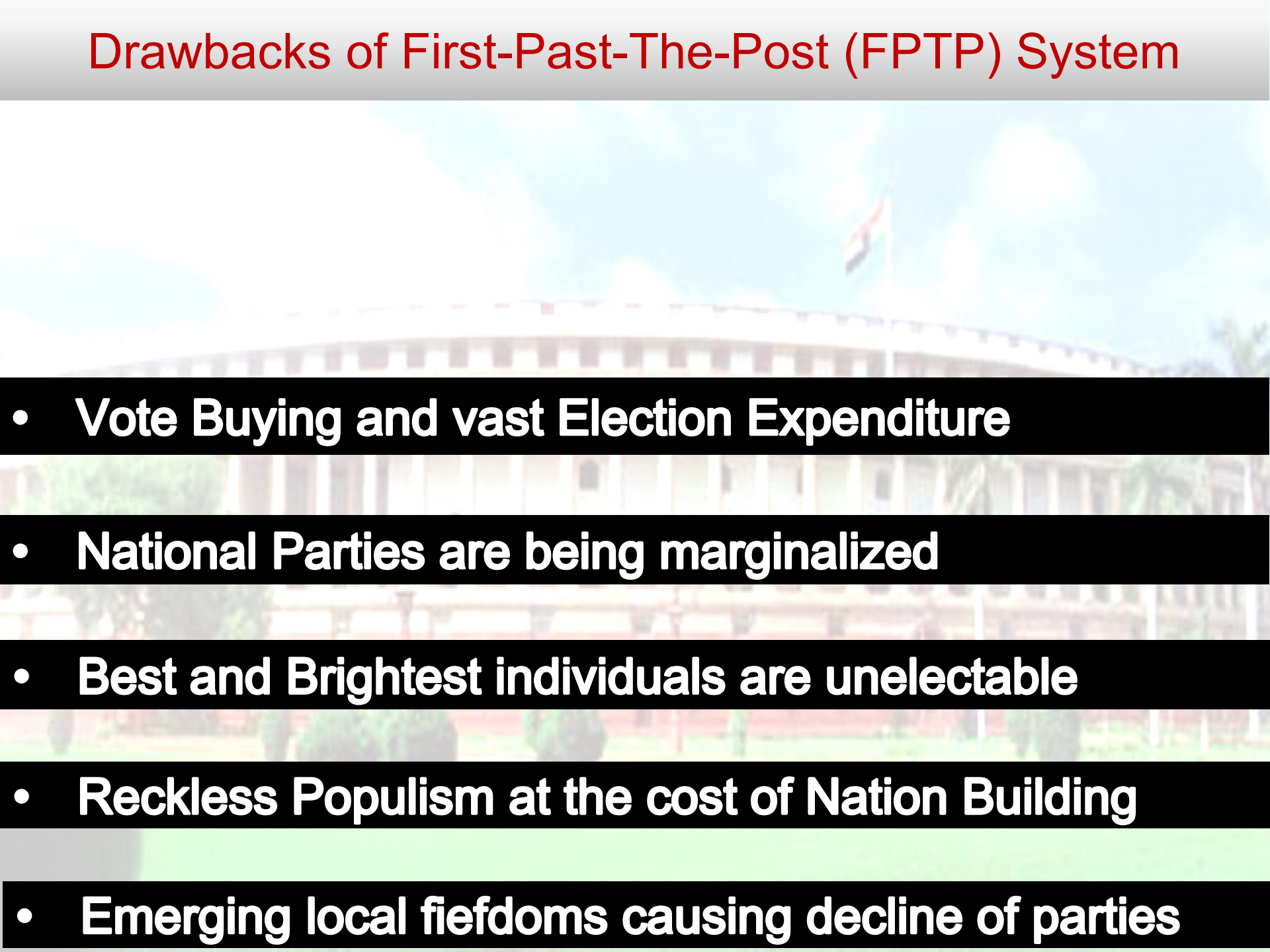
vote as a lever for getting  
even the smallest thing done

party cadres have to devote  
vast amount of time at local level

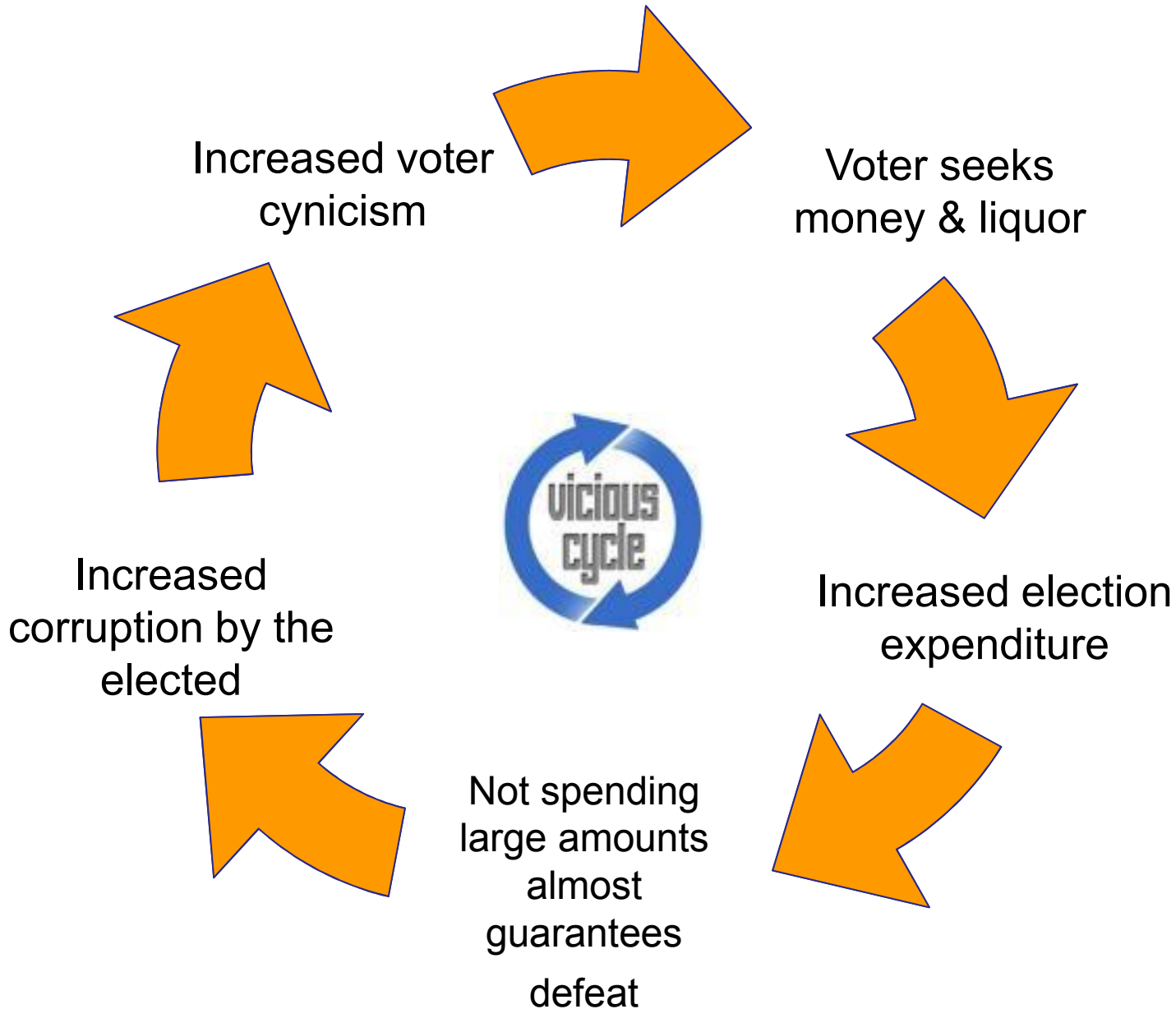
great sacrifice expected from  
legislators and political workers



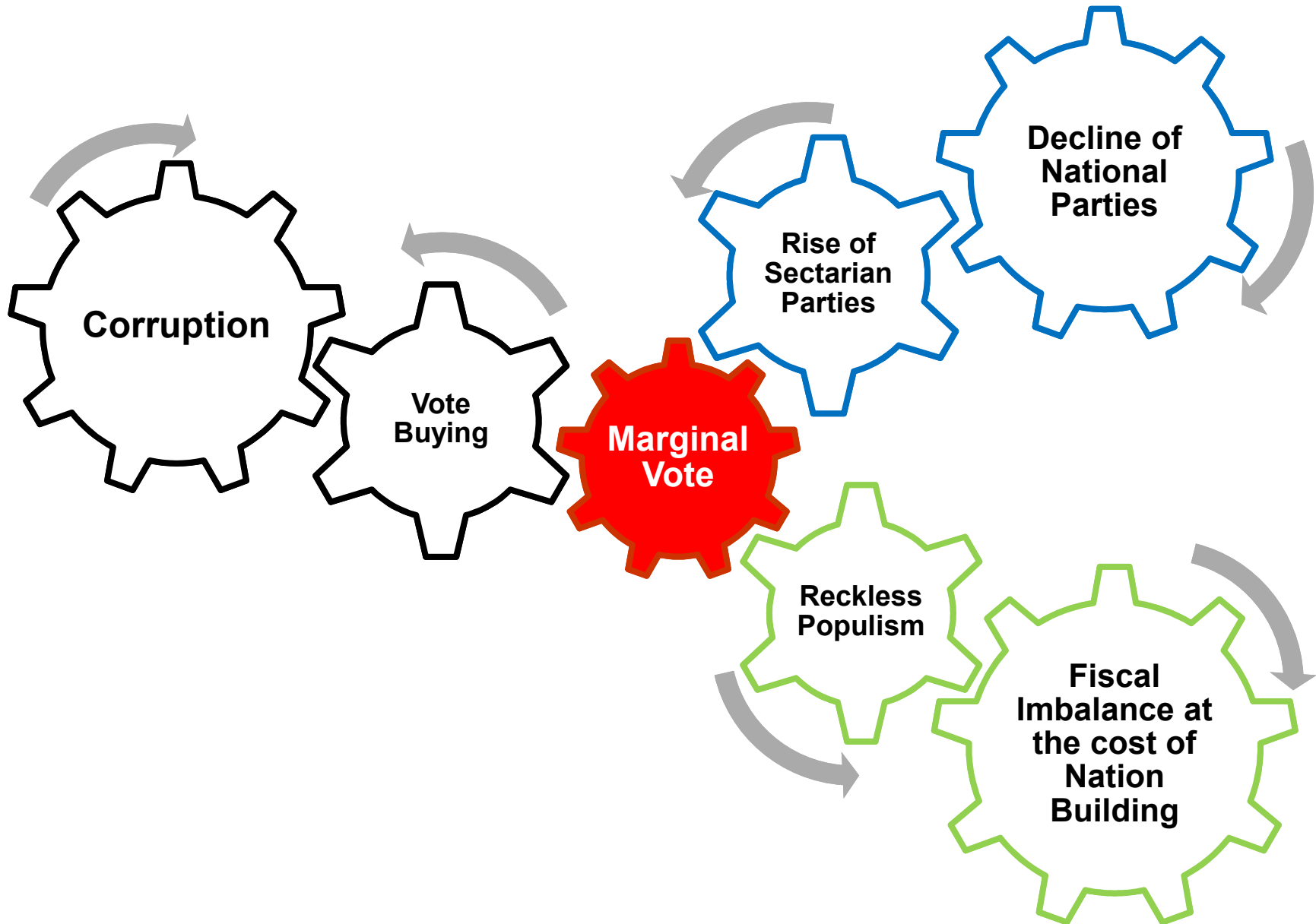
# Drawbacks of First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) System

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- **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**
  - **Emerging local fiefdoms causing decline of parties**

# Most election expenditure is to buy votes



# Consequences of Marginal Vote

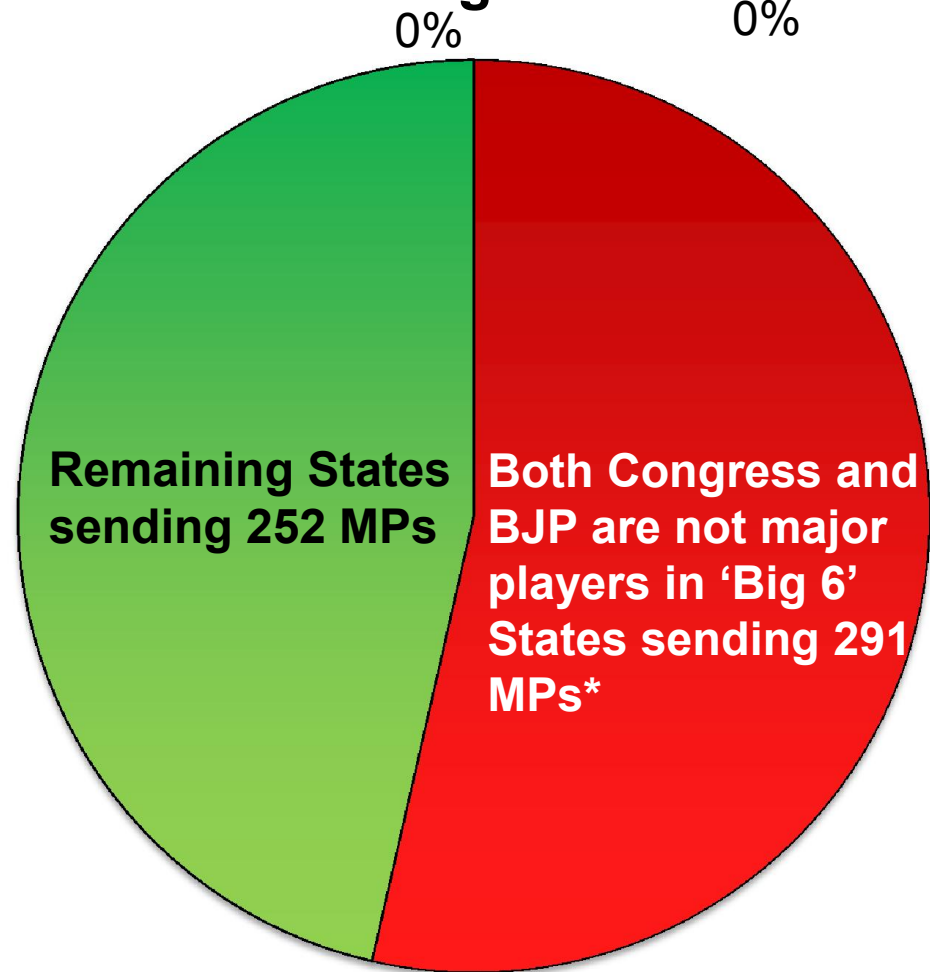


# BJP & Congress do not matter

... in more than half of India

## Lok Sabha - Big 6 States

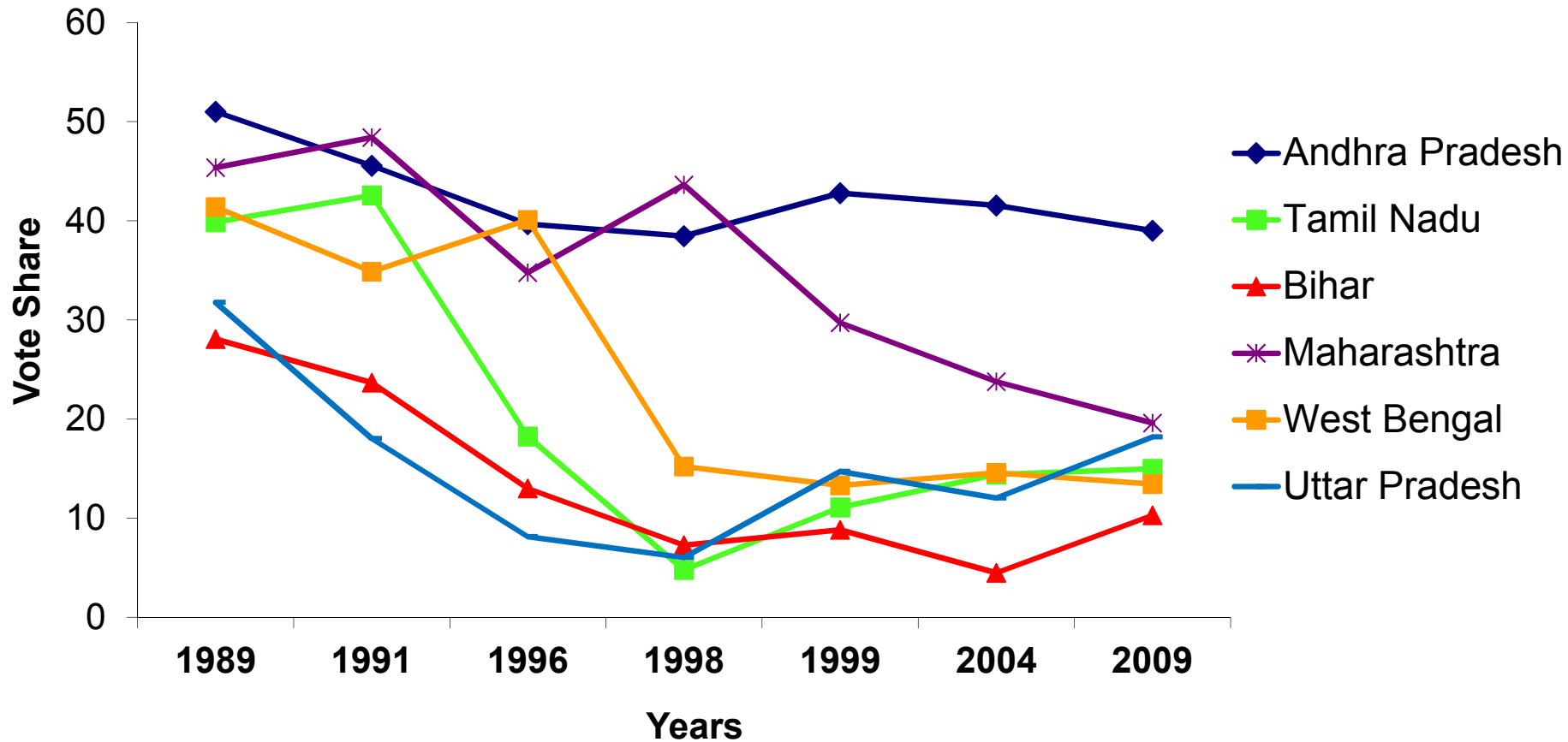
Total Seats in Lok Sabha	: 543
Halfway Mark	: 272
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'Big 6' States	: 291 Lok Sabha Seats
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Uttar Pradesh	- 80 Seats
Maharashtra	- 48 Seats
West Bengal	- 42 Seats
Andhra Pradesh	- 42 Seats
Bihar	- 40 Seats
Tamil Nadu	- 39 Seats



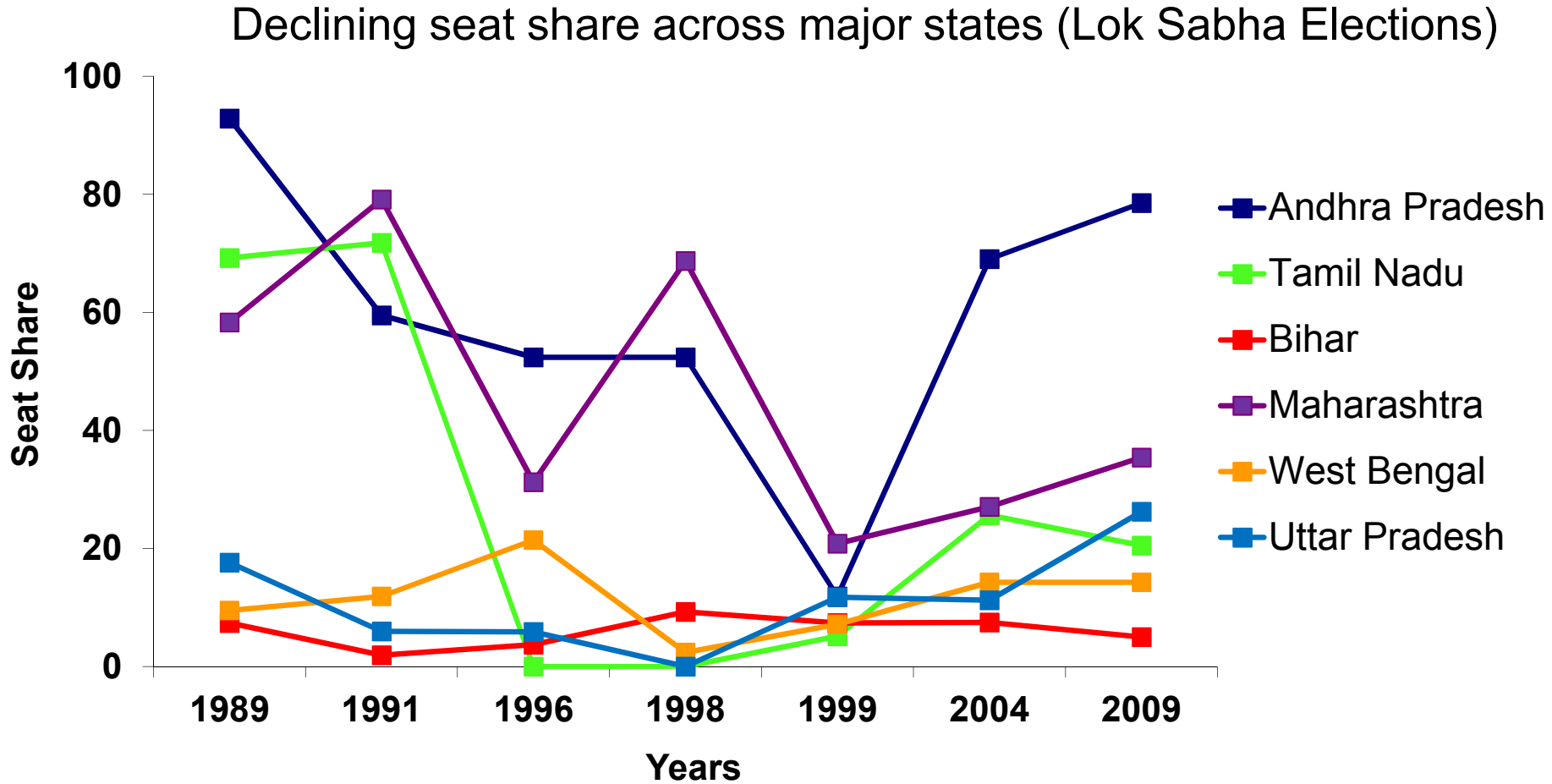
\* AP included as Congress could not win a single seat in any of the by-elections since 2009

# Falling vote share of Congress since 1989 ...

Declining vote share across major states (Lok Sabha Elections)



# ... Consequent decline in share of seats for Congress

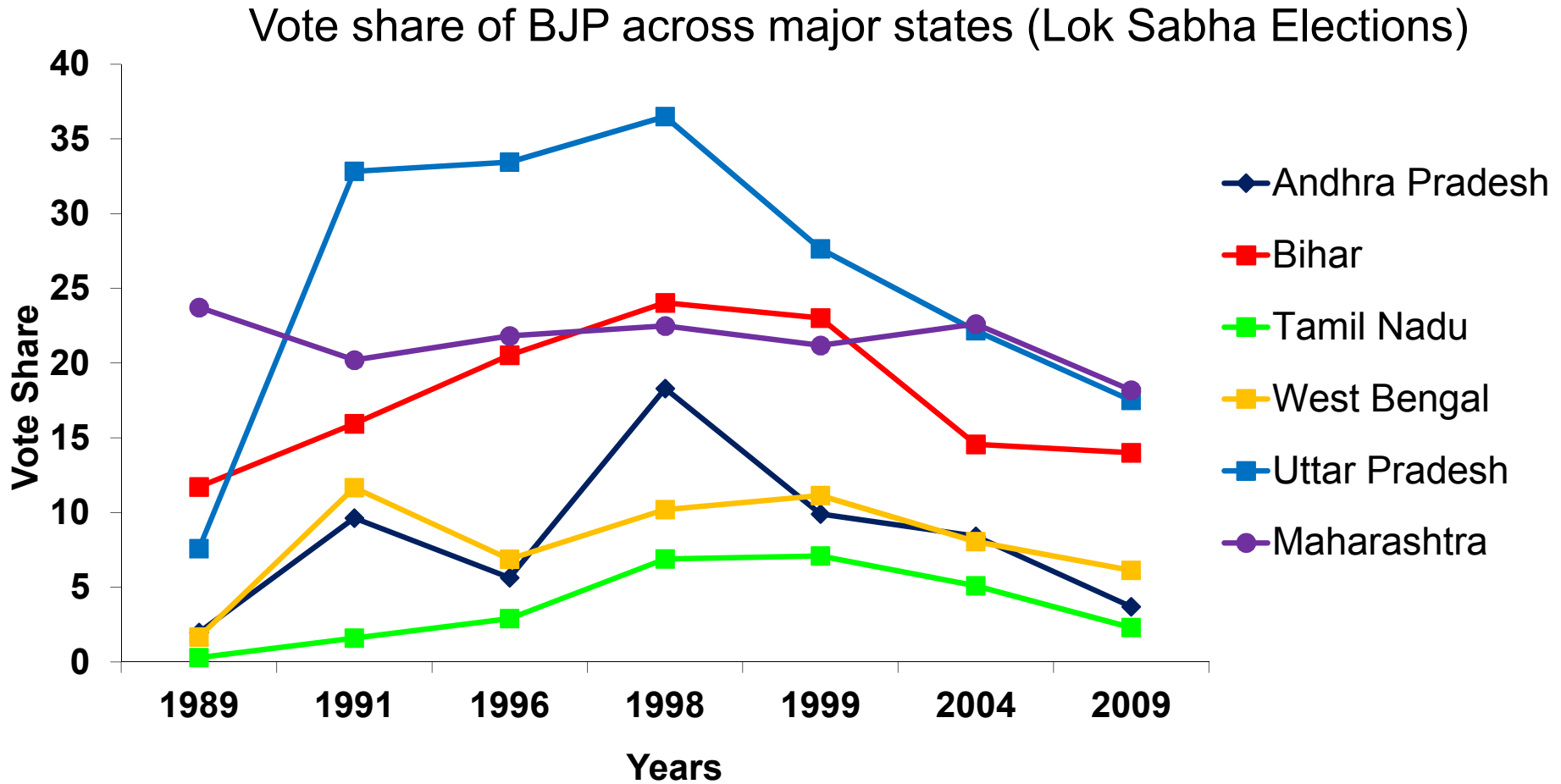


**Note:** Only in UP & Bihar do seats and votes reflect Congress' own strength; in other states alliances have given Congress better results.

Also, Congress could not win a single seat in AP in any of the by-elections since 2009

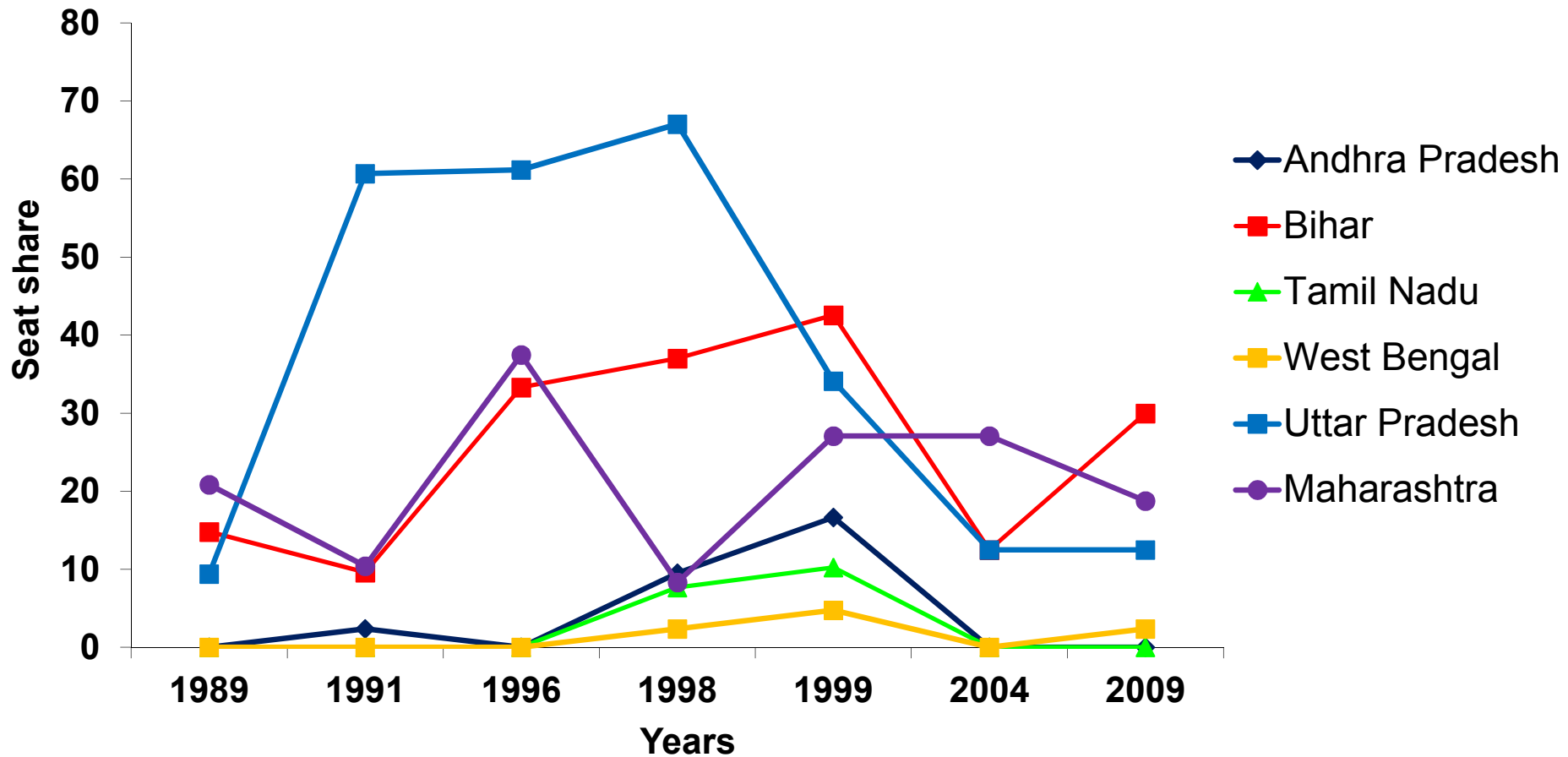


# Falling vote share of BJP in the major states since 1989 ...



# ... Consequent decline in share of seats for BJP

Seat share of BJP across major states (Lok Sabha Elections)



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

# Vote Share - Seat share disproportionality

## Experience from Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections

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

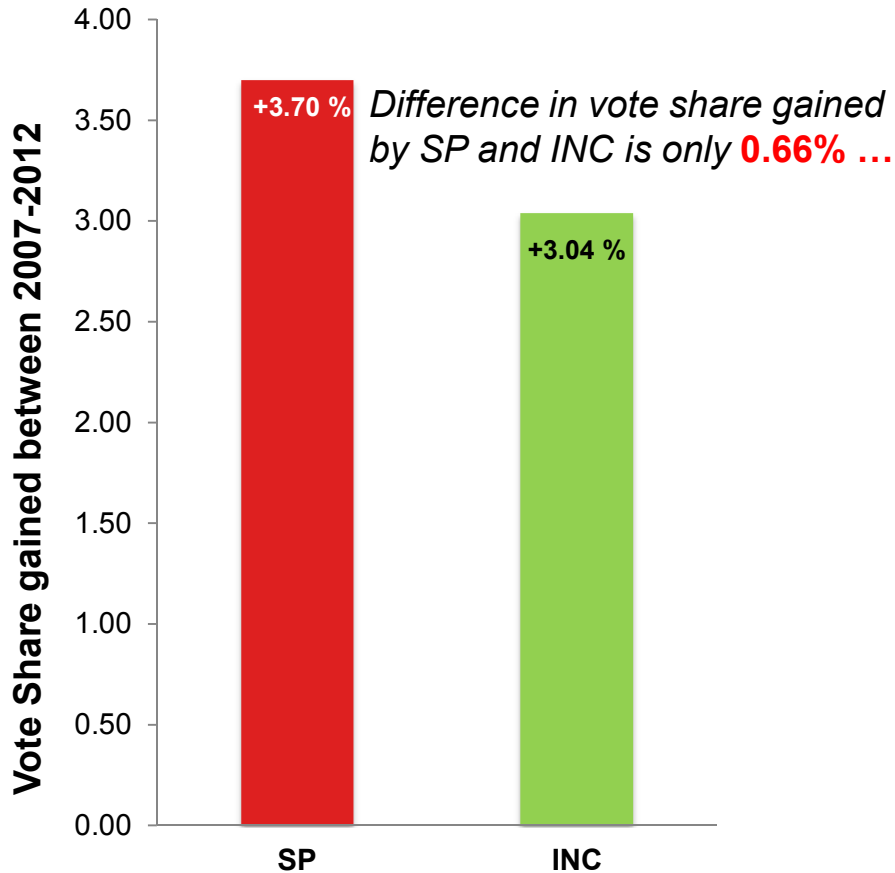
<b>INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC)</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Vote share %</b>	<b>Seat share %</b>	<b>Actual number of seats</b>
2007	8.61	5.46	22
2012	11.65	6.95	28

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

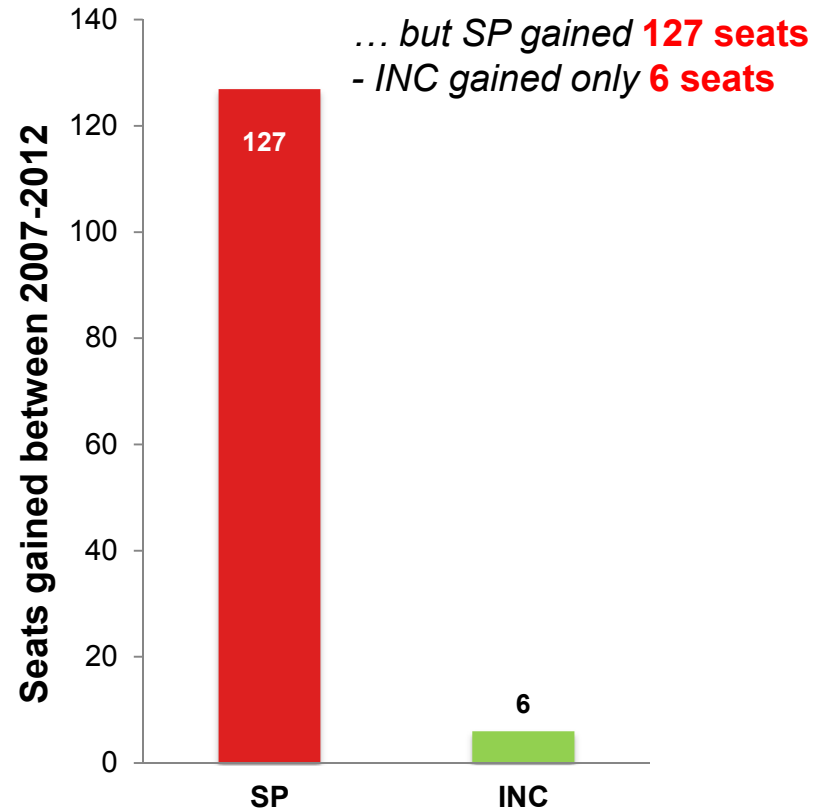
# SP vs. Cong in Uttar Pradesh:

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

## Difference in Vote Share between 2007 and 2012 Assembly Elections



## Difference in Seats gained



# Best & brightest are unelectable in FPTP

- In most major states, it costs Rs. 2-6 crores to seriously compete to be an MLA & Rs.10 crores 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

# Parties are in decline

Parties often at the mercy of local strong men...

- with abnormal money power, patronage networks and caste connections
- built impregnable modern fiefdoms without legitimate democratic mandate... operating entirely outside party
- weaken the party when they switch sides

# 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 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
- Even when parties know the consequences, they are helpless; a slight fall in vote share eliminates them from the race to power
- 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 .. Parties in decline
- 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

Candidate  
Based

Constituency  
Based

High  
Threshold  
for Success

PR

Party Based

State Based

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

# Will PR affect stability?

- At national level, we already have coalitions. Governments 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
- Evidence shows that there is greater policy continuity in PR governments as opposed to FPTP governments

# Stability – Constructive No Confidence

- Germany, Spain and Hungary have provisions for Constructive No Confidence.
- Art 67 of German Basic Law. “The Bundestag can express its lack of confidence in the Federal Chancellor only by electing a successor with the (support of the) majority of its members”.
- A similar provision can be incorporated to promote stability in India at both national and state levels.

# Stability – filling Vacancies without by-elections

- Art 48 of the German Federal Electoral Law States that if a vacancy arises in Bundestag:
  - “the vacant seat shall be filled by an appointment from the Land (State) list of that party for which the departed member stood for election.”
- Such a provision can be incorporated in law along with PR, so that frequent by-elections can be avoided
- Constructive no confidence and filling vacancies without frequent by-elections will enhance stability of governments

# 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 to 10 seats.
- Each voter will have a single vote for a party of her choice.
- Each party will offer a list of candidates in order of preference.

# A simple PR model for India (contd...)

- 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 Multi-Member Constituency.

# 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

Lachine Dr

# SUNNYVALE

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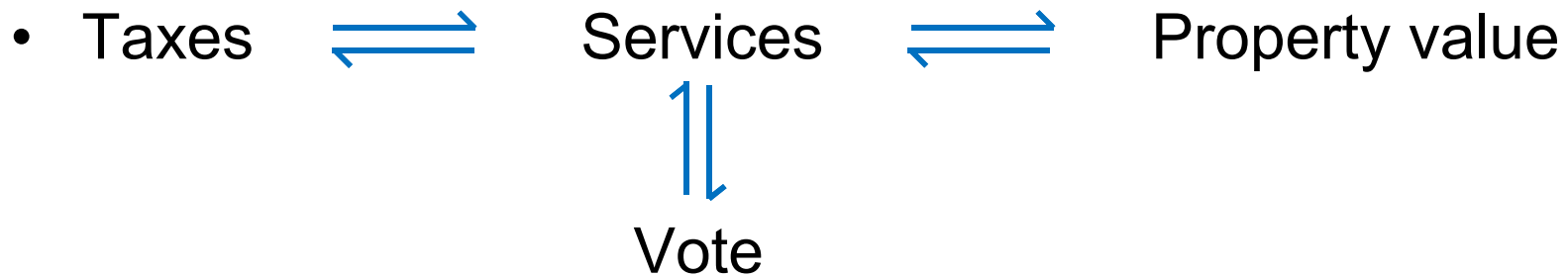
Dr. Tang Acupuncture Clinic

This is an aerial photograph of a residential area in Sunnyvale and Cupertino, California. The image shows a grid of streets with houses, trees, and some commercial buildings. Large white text overlays identify the cities. Street names are labeled in smaller white text. A swimming pool is visible in the upper left, and a clinic is in the lower right.

# CUPERTINO

# Local Government – Cupertino vs Sunnyvale

- Sunnyvale & Cupertino are two cities in Bay Area of California on either side of Homestead Road
- Through all conditions are similar, property values of Cupertino are 40 – 50% higher
- Reason: School District in Cupertino has good reputation for outcomes. Only local residents (tax payers) can send kids to local public schools. Hence, greater demand for houses in Cupertino



# Local Government - 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**