

A STUDY ON ELECTORAL REFORMS AND CHALLENGES OF INDIA

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the process of reform of India's federal system, with a focus on fiscal federalism. We first summarize the basic features of, and recent reforms in intergovernmental relations, including the role of political institutions, assignments of expenditure responsibility and revenue authority, the system of intergovernmental transfers, and institutions and mechanisms for government borrowing. We then discuss the institutional specifics of the reform process, to understand the dynamics of India's federal system. 'Electoral reforms' is an issue of great interest to all sections of the people. There have been a lot of complaints that the present electoral system in India is defective in many ways and does not ensure a fair opportunity to every candidate. Money power, soaring election expenditure, Corruption and other electoral malpractices distort the electorate's verdict.

KEYWORDS

Election, Election Commission, People, Democracy, Electoral Reforms, decentralization, intergovernmental relations, economic reform

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1. INTRODUCTION

Basic to democratic polity is the concept of sovereign powers vesting in the “people”. In modern democracies, the people govern themselves through their elected representatives. In a parliamentary system, the executive comes out of the legislature and remains part of it and responsible to it. The election of members to the houses of legislatures is conducted through an institutionalised electoral process. This electoral process therefore, no matter how it is designed and conducted, forms the foundation of a parliamentary democracy. Elections are critical to the maintenance and development of democratic tradition because at one level, these are influenced by the political culture in which they operate, but at another, they also generate strong influences that can improve or distort this political culture.

India is the largest and one of the most vibrant democracies of the world. It is true that we have been able to run a democratic system for more than 6 decades and we should be proud of it because very few developing nations have actually been able to run a democratic system. But in recent years unfortunately there has been a growing feeling that the Indian Political System was not working very well. The entry of criminal elements in politics, defections of legislators, communalization of politics, minuses of public office by persons in high positions and money power in elections have made it clear that there are deep seated problems in many sectors of Indian Parliamentary System. How and where did we fail? Does the fault lie with the constitution itself or its implementation? A very suitable answer is that it is mainly the political and electoral system, which has completely derailed the social, economic and administrative fabric of the country. Now time has come to consider whether we were wrong in adopting the present system of parliamentary democracy. Therefore, the only way to remedy the present malady is to make the political system deliver the goods. And it is not only the politicians who are to blame, but also we are all responsible for the present state of affairs.

Starting from very different initial conditions in terms of political institutions, and pursuing a very different set of policies, India has followed China in being an economic reformer as well as a star economic performer. The dimension of reform that has received the most attention in India is that of redrawing the boundaries of authority and action between government and market, including liberalizing government restrictions on international trade and domestic corporate

investment, and changing the nature of government regulation of the private sector. What has received less attention in this context is the ongoing transformation of India's federal system of governance, through deliberate reforms and through unintended consequences of other policy changes. This transformation has the potential to sustain and accelerate economic growth in India. Specific reforms, with respect to decentralization to local governments, taxes and intergovernmental transfers have all previously been considered in detail, and continue to be discussed. The contribution of this piece is to put these individual changes into the context of the overall dynamics of India's federal system, so that the process can be understood from a positive perspective.

2. ELECTION:

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Elections may fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and for regional. This process is also used in many other private and business organizations, from clubs to and corporations. The universal use of elections as a tool for selecting representatives in modern democracies is in contrast with the practice in the democratic archetype, ancient Athens. As the Elections were considered an oligarchic institution and most political offices were filled using sortition, also known as allotment, by which officeholders were chosen by lot.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Among the other objectives, the study embarked upon the following.

1. To study the election system in India and voter participation in election
2. To study the influence of money, caste and power in election and role of media and technology during election.
3. To study challenges and reforms in front of the election commission.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature survey phenomenon is more fully arrayed in the following pages.

M. V. Rajeev Gowda and E. Sridharan (2012)¹ discuss on competitive political parties and election campaigns are central to the health of democracies. Parties and campaigns require significant resources to be effective. India has developed complex election expenditure, political party funding, and reporting and disclosure laws. They suggest that these laws may have perverse impacts on the electoral system: they tend to drive campaign expenditure underground and foster a reliance on unaccounted funds or “black money.” This tends to lead to an adverse selection system, in which those willing and able to work with black money dominate politics. They conclude with some possible remedies, including partial state financing of political parties that might restore the health of India’s electoral system.

Pippa Norris (2006)² in this paper concern about reform of the electoral system in the Netherlands is whether this would reduce the proportion of women members in the House of Representatives. What evidence is there for this expectation? This study considers these issues, with the first section summarizing the normative arguments why socially inclusive legislatures are thought to be desirable. The representation of women in the Netherlands parliament is compared against the record in other countries worldwide. The second section analyzes the impact of electoral systems on gender representation, confirming that substantially more women are usually elected in systems using party list proportional representation, especially those such as the Netherlands which have a large district magnitude, compared with majoritarian electoral systems using single member districts. Any reform that moves away from nationwide PR in the Netherlands will therefore probably reduce the proportion of women in parliament unless other compensatory actions are taken. Subsequent sections examine alternative strategies that could be adopted, including statutory quotas regulating the candidate selection process for all parties (for

¹**M. V. Rajeev Gowda and E. Sridharan**, *Reforming India’s Party Financing and Election Expenditure Laws*, *ELECTION LAW JOURNAL*, Volume 11, Number 2, 2012, # Mary Ann Liebert, Inc. DOI: 10.1089/elj.2011.0131

2. **Pippa Norris** *The Impact of Electoral Reform on Women’s Representation*, July 2006, Volume 41, Number 2, Pages 197-213

example, as used in Belgium), the role of reserved seats in legislatures, and the use of voluntary quotas in candidate selection rules implemented by particular parties. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and arguments surrounding electoral reform in the Netherlands.

Ethan Scheiner(2008)³ discuss In the early 1990s, popular discontent with politics in Italy, New Zealand, and Japan led to the enactment of new electoral systems in all three countries. The results of the reforms have been mixed, as they have dramatically altered politics in some cases but in others have been a great disappointment to many observers. This essay examines the reforms and the conditions under which they successfully addressed the problems of their party systems. The cases highlight the limitations of using electoral systems to explain political outcomes that are not direct effects of electoral rules.

Pippa Norris (2010)⁴ in this paper discuss on the standard explanation of electoral reform is offered by rational choice accounts. These regard the choice of rules as an elite-level issue, dominated by partisan interests bargaining within the legislature, where citizens are usually marginalized and powerless. Such accounts may help to explain *what* specific reforms are enacted but they lack the capacity to account satisfactorily for the logically prior questions: *when* and *why* are any successful reforms raised on the policy agenda? Part I presents a general policy cycle model identifying multiple actors in the process of electoral change. Working within this framework, the study seeks to test the proposition that political culture -- notably citizen dissatisfaction with regime legitimacy -- heightens the salience of institutional reform on the policy agenda. Part II summarizes the research design testing this proposition. Perceptions of regime legitimacy are measured at three levels: citizens' aspirations for democracy, satisfaction with the performance of democracy, and confidence in regime institutions. Evidence draws upon the 2nd and 3rd waves of the World Values Survey (WVS), in the early to mid-1990s, covering almost fifty countries around the globe. Patterns of institutional reform are measured by major changes to the electoral systems used for the lower house of parliament during the following

³ **Ethan Scheiner**, *Does Electoral System Reform Work? Electoral System Lessons from Reforms of the 1990s*, *The Annual Review of Political Science* is online at <http://polisci.annualreviews.org>

⁴ **Pippa Norris**, *Pippa Norris is the McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.* Pippa_Norris@Harvard.edu

decade. The study uses binary logistic regression to test whether macro-level perceptions of regime legitimacy in the early to mid- 1990s influenced whether electoral reforms were passed during the *subsequent* decade, controlling for levels of democracy and development. Part III presents the results. The evidence demonstrates that democratic aspirations (support for democracy as an ideal) are a strong, significant, and robust predictor of the occurrence of subsequent electoral reforms. The conclusion in Part IV considers the implications of these findings, both for theories concerning regime legitimacy, as well as for revising standard accounts of processes of institutional change.

Neel Kantha Uprety (2009)⁵ discusses his role at the Election Commission of Nepal and the changes that took place since 1990 through its role as a constitutionally appointed independent body. He details the changes and challenges encountered in voter registration methods, voter education, the type of electoral system used, and the creation of the election management body through legislation and the constitution. He also talks about the methods adopted to build trust among the people and the need to have open consultations between political parties through formal and informal meetings. He describes how the commission became more transparent over the years with increasing interaction with civil society through regular meetings, and grassroots level projects. Uprety details the election process in Nepal from the commission's perspective in terms of scaling up staff, training, use of ballot boxes, the introduction of electronic voting, and procurement. He offers insights into common problems encountered on Election Day, such as voter identification and the use of identification cards, and discusses how to overcome them.

Drude Dahlerup and Emil Johansson (2011)⁶ discuss in the report maps the diffusion of electoral gender quotas in the 30 EU/EEA countries. In 21 of the countries some type of gender quotas are in use, either legislated or voluntary party quotas. The report evaluates the effectiveness of different quota types in different electoral systems. Some gender quotas have resulted in major leaps in women's representation, while others had led to almost no change. The conclusion is that in order to be effective in changing women's historical underrepresentation electoral gender quotas have to fit the electoral system and should include regulations about the

⁵ *Neel Kantha Uprety, Case Study: Managing the Political and Practical: Nepal's Constituent Assembly Elections, 2006 - 2008*

⁶ *Drude Dahlerup and Emil Johansson (2011), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/studies>*

rank order of women and men on the electoral lists as well as sanctions for non-compliance. In general, the report reveals a mixed picture in Europe when it comes to women's representation. This up-dated version of the 2008-study (PE 408.309) shows that women's parliamentary representation increased only from 23.6 % in 2008 to 24.7% in 2011. In the most recent parliamentary election in 13 of the countries as well as in the election to the European Parliament women's representation increased, but ten countries experienced stagnation and in seven for the countries women's share of the MPs dropped. Eight case studies on Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are included in the report.

Shane McGee (2008)⁷ Designing an effective electoral system is vital for shaping the political institutions which it engenders. In emerging democracies with deep ethnic cleavages, this decision is critical because of the increased potential for political instability and violence. The global trend in electoral system design is shifting away from single-member district plurality systems towards those that incorporate proportional representation (PR). Within the academic community, conventional wisdom states PR-related systems better accommodate minority representation and thus mitigate electoral violence. In facilitating the creation of inclusive governments, these systems promote democratization in divided societies. Actual execution of PR-related electoral reform in South Africa and Lesotho has demonstrated the effectiveness of enabling minority ethnic and party representation in the political process. In light of this evidence, Kenya would be wise to heed existing calls in the country for a shift from a plurality to a mixed-member proportional electoral system

Dr Sanjay Ramesh(2007)⁸ in this paper Do preferential voting systems produce inter-ethnic cooperation in deeply divided societies? This was one of the questions explored by Fiji's Constitution Review Commission (CRC) in 1995. Fiji since independence had six general elections under the "winner takes all" First Past the Post system (FPTP) and the results reflected acute racial voting patterns. However, with the emergence in 1990s of a new democratic South

⁷ *Shane McGee (2008)*⁷, *Ethnic Divisions and Electoral System Design: Prospects for Reform in Kenya*, William and Kathy Hybl Democracy Studies Fellow MA Candidate, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver

⁸ *Dr Sanjay Ramesh*, *Preferential voting and Indo-Fijian minority strategy*, *Journal of Peace Conflict & Development* 10, March 2007 at www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk

Africa and multi-party executives in Northern Ireland, debates over electoral reform led by academics Donald Horowitz and Arend Leichardt provided new conceptual tools for managing conflict in divided societies. Utilizing existing theories on electoral reform and borrowing from a voting system used in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Nauru, the CRC recommended Alternative Vote (AV) as the electoral system for Fiji. This paper examines whether AV produced the desired effect as envisaged by Fiji's constitutional designers and in particular evaluates its impact on minority Indo-Fijians and proposes de-ethnicisation policy strategies for the future.

5. INDIA'S FEDERAL SYSTEM

India became an independent democratic nation in August 1947 and a constitutional republic in January 1950. The constitution explicitly incorporated a federal structure, with states as subnational entities that were assigned specified political and fiscal authorities. However, these states were not treated as independent sovereigns voluntarily joining a federation. In particular, the states' boundaries were not inviolate, but have been repeatedly redrawn by central action (though often in response to subnational pressure), as allowed by the constitution.³ India is now comprised of 28 states, six "Union Territories" (UTs) and a National Capital Territory (NCT), Delhi.⁴ In general, the constitution was structured to give the central government residual authority and considerable sovereign discretion over the states, creating a relatively centralized federation. In particular, the assignment of residual political and fiscal authorities to the center, either explicitly or through escape clauses, represents the polar opposite of the principle of subsidiarity,⁵ found, for example, in United States and European federal institutions.

The primary expression of statutory constitutional authority in India comes through directly elected parliamentary-style governments at the national and state levels, as well as (relatively new) directly elected government bodies at various local levels. national parliament has two chambers, one (the *Lok Sabha* or peoples' assembly) directly elected in single member, first-past-the post constituencies, the other (the *Rajya Sabha*, or states' council) indirectly elected by state legislators. The Prime Minister and council of ministers serve as the executive branch, rather than the largely ceremonial President of the republic. The states, plus the NCT and the UT of Pondicherry, mostly have single-chamber, directly-elected legislatures, with Chief Ministers in the executive role. The other UTs are governed by central government appointees. Each state

also has a Governor, nominally appointed by the President, but effectively an agent of the Prime Minister. Overlapping political authorities at the central and state levels have been dealt with through intra-party bargaining, and, more recently, through explicit bargaining and discussion.

Concentration of powers in the hands of the central government did not create serious conflicts in the early years of the functioning of the constitution since the same political party, the Indian National Congress (INC), ruled at the center and in the states. Many potential interstate or center-state conflicts were resolved within the party. The INC was essentially an umbrella organization that had pursued a campaign of independence from colonial rule, and this nationalist history contributed to its initial near-monopoly of political power.

India's relative political centralization was also reflected in bureaucratic and judicial institutions. The national Indian bureaucracy is provided constitutional recognition, and there are provisions for independent bureaucracies in each state. The key component of the bureaucracy is the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), whose members are chosen by a centralized process and trained together. They are initially assigned to particular states, and serve varying proportions of their careers at the state and national levels. The judiciary is a constitutionally distinct branch of government at both national and state levels, though the legislative/executive branch exerts influence through appointments and budget allocations.⁶ The Supreme Court has broad powers of original and appellate jurisdiction, and the right to rule on the constitutionality of laws passed by and other subordinate courts. Parliament. In specific issues of center-state relations concerning taxation and property rights, the basic centralizing features of the constitution have tilted the Court's interpretations towards the center. More recently, in the 1990s, it has made decisions checking the center's ability to override subnational political authority by means such as dismissing state legislatures.⁷ At the state level, the High Courts superintend the work of all courts within their jurisdictions, including district⁸

At inception, the Indian constitution clearly laid out the areas of responsibility of the central and state governments, with respect to expenditure authority, revenue raising instruments, and legislation needed to implement either. Expenditure responsibilities are specified in separate Union and State Lists, with a Concurrent List covering areas of joint authority. Unspecified residual expenditure responsibilities are explicitly assigned to the center. Tax powers of the two levels of government are specified in various individual Articles. Legislative procedures for each

level, particularly with respect to budgets and appropriations, are also spelled out in the constitution.

6. FEDERAL REFORMS

Despite periodic discussions of constitutional overhaul, India's political institutions have remained remarkably stable. The legal underpinnings of these institutions have not changed dramatically, with the single exception of the creation of directly-elected local governments in 1993, as outlined earlier. So far, that reform has not had major consequences for the conduct of India's polity, though it has dramatically increased the number and diversity of elected officials nationwide. One institutional reform that did emerge in 1990 was the creation of the Inter-State Council (ISC), which includes the Prime Minister, state chief ministers, and several central cabinet ministers as members, and has become a forum where political and economic issues of joint concern can be collectively discussed, and possibly resolved.

Within this relatively static institutional framework, the 1991 economic reforms, which substantially loosened central government control of foreign and domestic corporate investment, allowed state governments to become more autonomous actors in economic policy (e.g., Sinha, 2004; Singh and Srinivasan, 2005; Singh, 2007), with horizontal competition among (at least some) state governments replacing rent-seeking interactions with the center. In this respect, therefore, reforms that liberalized central government control of the private sector also promoted greater *de facto* federalism at the state level.

A major reform of the intergovernmental transfer system was initiated in 1994, with the recommendation of the Tenth Finance Commission that the original constitutional scheme of revenue change from only a small number of taxes being shared between the center and the states, to the entire consolidated fund of the center being so shared. This change was implemented through a constitutional amendment ratified in 2000, and has reduced the incentive of the central government to discriminate among the different taxes it collects.

7. ELECTORAL SYSTEM:

Electoral systems are the detailed constitutional arrangements and voting systems that convert the vote into political decision. The first step is to tally the votes, for which various vote counting systems and ballot types are used. Voting systems then determine the result on the basis of the

tally. Most systems can be categorized as either proportional or majoritarian. Among the former are party-list proportional representation and additional member system. Among the latter are First Past the Post (FPP) (relative majority) and absolute majority. Many countries have growing electoral reform movements, which advocate systems such as approval voting, single transferable vote, instant runoff voting or a Condorcet method; these methods are also gaining popularity for lesser elections in some countries where more important elections still use more traditional counting methods. While openness and accountability are usually considered cornerstones of a democratic system, the act of casting a vote and the content of a voter's ballot are usually an important exception. The secret ballot is a relatively modern development, but it is now considered crucial in most free and fair elections, as it limits the effectiveness of intimidation.

8. ELECTION REFORMS:

The Constitution of India provides sufficient and efficient provision to control elections under Part XV- Election and Article 324 to 329. The Article 324 speaks- Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in election Commission. It means the Election Commission has the power to Superintendence, direction and control the election through its enactments and legislation . Article 327 has a provision- Power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to legislature. It speaks- Subject to the provisions of the constitution, parliament may from time by Law make provisions with respect to all matters relating to, or in connection with election to either house of parliament or to the house of either house of the legislature of a state including the preparation of electorate rolls, the delimitation of constituencies and all other matters necessary for securing the due constitution of such house or houses. This provision indicate that any Court- High Courts and Apex Court has no constitutional provision's right to the interfere the Election Legislation . The Parliament is the Supreme authority to deal and legislate the election legislation. Again in the Article 329, Bar to interference by Courts in electoral matters. This Article speaks – Not with standing anything in this Constitution- (a) The validity of any law relating to the delimitation of Constituencies or the allotment of seats of such Constituencies made or purporting to be made under Article 327 Or Article 328, shall not be called in question in any Court. (b) No election to either house of Parliament or to the house of either house of legislature of a state shall be called in question except by an election petition

presented to such authority and in such manner as may be provided for by or under any law made by the appropriate legislature. Here, it is the parliament to enact legislation to control all types of loopholes with regard to fair election. It is its utmost duty to hold election in a fair manner and in a better way

9. DINESH GOSWAMI COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS:

The National Front, in its election manifesto, had promised extensive, the electoral reforms. As per that promise, an Electoral Law Reform Committee was constituted in February 1990, under the Chairmanship of the then Union Law Minister (Late) Mr. Dinesh Goswami, to recommend broad spectrum of electoral reforms.

10. ELECTORAL REFORMS BILL (MAY 30, 1990)

In consequence of the recommendations of the above Committee, the National Front Government introduced three electoral reform bills in Parliament on May 30, 1990. Two of these bills sought to amend the constitution and one to amend the Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951, with a view to introducing the reforms. The main features of the bill that sought to amend the representation of the people Acts, 1950 and 1951 are: 1.State funding of expenses on fuel for campaign vehicles and other miscellaneous things, a bar on contesting from more than one constituency and countermanding of election, only on the death of a candidate fielded by a recognized political party. 2.As proposed in the bills, the state funding was to be confined to supply of copies of the electoral rolls, diesel or petrol for vehicles and hiring of microphones for election meetings. 3.The new provision also tried to empower the Election Commission to nominate observers to watch conduct to election. The observers will have the power to direct the returning officers to stop the counting of votes or not to declare the result in certain contingencies like booth capturing. It also proposed to confer similar powers on the regional commissioners or supervisory officers of the Election Commission.

11. LAW PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS ON ELECTORAL REFORMS

The Law commission headed by former Supreme Court judge, Shri B.P.Jeevan Reddy, had made some of the important recommendations to the Union Government of Electoral Reforms in its

report submitted in September 1999. It was intended to make the election and electoral system more fair and effective so that the nerves of democracy in India are strengthened.

12. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Independent candidate should be barred from contesting elections to the Lok Sabha and legislative Assemblies.
2. Inclusion of a chapter in the Representation of the people Act, to regulate the formation and functioning of Political parties to avoid their splintering and to ensure internal democracy and maintenance of funds.
3. Scrapping of explanation-1 to section 77(1) of the representation people act to make the electoral system more representative, fair and transparent. Section 77 exempts a candidate from declaring poll expenses incurred by him beyond the fixed limit.
4. The Supreme Court has already declared the “section 77 is breeding Corruption” and has recommended its scrapping.
5. Suggested provision to make it obligatory for every candidate to declare his\her assets and of his\her spouse and dependent relations as well as provide particulars regarding criminal cases pending against them.
6. On state funding of political parties, it has reiterated the recommendation of Indrajit Gupta Committee subject to certain changes.
7. In case of electoral offences and certain other serious offences, framing of a charge by the court should itself be a ground for disqualification, in addition to conviction.
8. Proposed amendments to the relevant provision of the criminal procedure code to check false complaints.
9. Emphasized the desirability of adopting a rule that only a candidate obtaining more than 50% votes be declared elected and holding of 'run off' elections, wherever necessary.
10. Any party, which receives less than 5% of the total votes in election to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies shall not be entitled to any seat.
11. A new rule suggested in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business for Lok Sabha to ensure stability of Government.

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14. A new rule suggested in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business for Lok Sabha to ensure stability of Government. "Negative vote"

13. SUGGESTIONS (REMEDIES TO CHECK 'ELECTION-EVILS') :

There are so many evils in election, which can be solved in the better interests of the democracy in the country. Following Suggestions to remove these evils.

1. Speedy Trial- Those candidates, whose criminal cases pending in the courts should be disposed off speedy by the courts. In this reference 'special courts' can be established by the Government. Government should take initiative to introduce a drastic and radical and bill to effect this suggestion.
2. People's Awareness- People should be very vigilant and aware to check 'Mussle power' and 'criminal's power' to interfere in the election. People can collectively take decision to 'ignore' these elements. Not to vote them.
3. Vigilant Media'- Media is active enough to check above evils but the media should be more vigilant for fair election.

CONCLUSION:

In India, election has not become so easy and smooth. Corrupt practices have taken place in election. 'Criminals entry' has become a regular practice. It should be checked in a proper and in an effective manner. It is not so easy task . Sincere efforts are required by all side; especially the 'political parties' should be neat and clean in this matter. A consensus should be developed in political field that all types of reforms in the election is the utmost need of the time. This is necessary to protect the democracy in the country. Not well versed in education. Hence, they easily become the victims of ill designed elements of politics. Election Reforms are not so easy in our country due to many-many reasons. But some drastic and sincere efforts are essential to irradiate the evils. Following steps can be taken to remove the 'evils of election' Political parties should be taken to distribute election Tickets to worthy person. They should develop 'consensus'

in fairness of election. Time to time they should meet and develop the fairness in this regard. A comprehensive Legislation should be passed by the parliament to check all types of evils of election. Media must be vigilant to check evils in this field. Explicitly recognizing the political dynamics of federal reforms creates a different perspective for making policy recommendations. Even in cases where the reform does not change federal institutions, it may require coordinated action at different levels of government (e.g., in areas such as agriculture, power supply, health and education: see, in particular, Singh and Srinivasan, 2005). Instead of examining ideal and isolated reforms, the focus instead is on political feasibility. Where winners and losers can be identified, it may be possible to create packages of reforms that are politically acceptable, e.g., assigning greater revenue authority to local governments may be combined with reassigning some taxes from the center to the states (or allowing piggybacking), and cutting the states' share of the consolidated fund of the center (Rao and Singh, 2007). Thus, combinations of reforms may be accepted, where individual reforms would lose: the traditional economic compensation principle is implicitly applied in such cases. This approach can also guide the redesign and changes in the working of institutions such as the Finance Commission, Planning Commission, and ISC (e.g. Rao and Singh, 2005; Singh and Srinivasan, 2006)

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