

1. **unconscionable** (adjective) – unethical, immoral, indefensible.
2. **switch** (noun) – change, move, shift.
3. **defection** (noun) – desertion, absconding, decamping.
4. **endorse** (verb) – support, uphold, approve.
5. **constitute** (verb) – compose, form, make up/account for.
6. **requisite** (adjective) – necessary, needed, required.
7. **orchestrate** (verb) – organize/arrange (secretively), mastermind, choreograph/engineer.
8. **decimation** (noun) – the destruction of a large proportion of a group.
9. **bode well** (verb) – augur, presage, portend (something, a good outcome).
10. **fold** (noun) – group, community, company.
11. **check** (noun) – control, break, constraint.
12. **stringent** (adjective) – strict/stern, severe, tough/rigorous.
13. **Anti-defection law** (noun) – The 10th Schedule to the Constitution, popularly referred to as the ‘Anti-Defection Law,’ was inserted by the 52nd Amendment in 1985. The grounds of disqualification are specified in Paragraph 2 of the 10th Schedule. A member would incur a disqualification under paragraph 2 (1) (a) when he “voluntarily gives up his membership of a party” and under 2 (1) (b) when he/she votes (or abstains from voting) contrary to the directive issued by the party. (Courtesy: [The Hindu](#)).
14. **devoid of** (adjective) – lacking, without, free of/free from.
15. **disturbing** (adjective) – worrying, disconcerting, unsettling.
16. **ideological** (adjective) – dogmatic, doctrinal.
17. **programmatically** (adjective) – methodical, disciplined, systematic.
18. **cohesiveness** (noun) – togetherness, unitedness.
19. **satrap** (noun) – local ruler, subordinate official, governor (of a province in ancient persian empire).
20. **assert** (verb) – declare, claim, contend.
21. **dishonesty** (noun) – duplicity, untruthfulness, deceit.
22. **plausible** (adjective) – valid, convincing/credible, logical.
23. **objective** (noun) – aim, intention, purpose.
24. **loaves** plural form of **loaf** (noun) – slice, share, portion.
25. **distinctiveness** (noun) – characteristics, individuality, uniqueness.
26. **rampantly** (adverb) – uncontrollably, pervasively/ubiquitously, in a widespread manner.
27. **polity** (noun) – a politically organized society (or state or unit).
28. **align with** (verb) – join up with, form an alliance with, give support to.
29. **patronage** (noun) – backing/support, advocacy, assistance/protection.
30. **call for** (phrasal verb) – require, publicly ask/necessitate, demand.
31. **machinations** (noun) – schemes/plots, intrigues, conspiracies.
32. **work around** (phrasal verb) – to deal with a problem which is trying to prevent you from achieving something.
33. **allegiance** (noun) – loyalty, faithfulness, devotion.
34. **flout** (verb) – defy/disdain, refuse to obey, disregard (a rule).
35. **invariably** (adverb) – always, every time/each time; habitually/inevitably.
36. **dispensation** (noun) – administration; system, organization.
37. **dubious** (adjective) – suspicious, questionable, unreliable.
38. **blatant** (adjective) – evident, flagrant/glaring, obvious.
39. **partisan** (adjective) – biased, prejudiced, one-sided.

40. **loyalist** (noun) – a person who is loyal (faithful/devoted).
41. **vest** (verb) – bestow on, confer on, grant to.

Unconscionable switch: on Congress MLAs' defection to TRS

The ease with which 12 Congress MLAs have defected to the TRS raises troubling questions

Telangana Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy's decision to endorse the merger of a 12-member group of legislators from the Congress with the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi may be technically justified under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. They constitute the requisite two-thirds of the 18-member Congress Legislature Party. But this orchestrated decimation of the Opposition in the 120-member legislature does not bode well. With this, the TRS's strength has gone up to 103. It had won 88 seats in the 2018 elections, but three MLAs — an Independent and one each from the Telugu Desam Party and the All India Forward Bloc — defected to its fold recently. These actions seem aimed to reduce the Opposition's ability to act as a check. Defections are not uncommon despite the stringent conditions of the anti-defection law. But coming so soon after the Assembly elections, and devoid of a point of principle, they raise disturbing questions about the ideological and programmatic cohesiveness of the Congress. MLAs need not be tied to party *satraps* and should assert their individuality in law-making — but it is dishonesty to switch sides after being elected on a party ticket when the only plausible objective is to grab the loaves of power. That there is no ideological distinctiveness to political representation in States such as Telangana has made it possible for defections to happen rampantly. In an ideology-lite polity, the MLAs seem to see no benefit in meaningfully representing their constituents, and find it rewarding to align with the ruling party for the purposes of patronage.

The anti-defection law, that calls for disqualification unless defecting legislators are part of a group that constitutes at least two-thirds of the legislative strength of a party and that merges with another party, was enacted to prevent such machinations. However, defectors have found ways to work around the law to avoid disqualification. Dramatic shifts in allegiances by elected MLAs have been a concern in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, among other States. In many cases, even if the two-thirds rule has been flouted, the

authority given to the Speaker, who is invariably from the ruling dispensation, has enabled dubious calls. This decision-making structure has also allowed blatant defections to be ignored, as seen in Goa and Manipur, among other States. In such cases, the Speaker has acted less as a constitutional authority and more as a partisan party loyalist. It is time to reconsider the anti-defection law's procedural implementation and to vest the power on decisions over mergers of groups and disqualifications of legislators with an institution such as the Election Commission. This could well bring about a more strict and objective implementation of the anti-defection law.