



Role of Parliamentary Committees in Indian Democracy

For Prelims: Types of Parliamentary Committees, Speaker, Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha

For Mains: Parliament Committees and its Significance

Why in News?

[Parliamentary committees](#) are constituted to delve deeper into matters of public concern and develop expert opinions.

What are Parliamentary Committees?

▪ Evolution of Committees:

- The **structured committee system was established in 1993**, but individual committees have been formed since independence.
- For instance, five of the many crucial committees of the Constituent Assembly are
 - The **Ad Hoc Committee on the Citizenship Clause** was formed to discuss the nature and scope of Indian citizenship.
 - The **Northeast Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee** and the **Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (Other than Assam) Sub-Committee** were significant committees during independence.
 - The **Expert Committee on Financial Provisions of the Union Constitution** and the **Advisory Committee on the Subject of Political Safeguards for Minorities** were formed to give recommendations on taxation and abolition of reservations for religious minorities, respectively.

▪ About:

- A parliamentary committee means a committee that:
 - Is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker / Chairman.
 - Works under the direction of the Speaker / Chairman.
 - Presents its report to the House or to the Speaker /Chairman.
 - Has a secretariat provided by the Lok Sabha / Rajya Sabha.
- The consultative committees, which also consist of members of Parliament, are not parliamentary committees as they do not fulfill the above four conditions.

▪ Types:

- **Standing Committees: Permanent** (constituted every year or periodically) and work on a continuous basis.
 - Standing Committees can be classified into the following **six categories**:
 - **Financial Committees**
 - **Departmental Standing Committees**
 - **Committees to Enquire**
 - **Committees to Scrutinise and Control**
 - **Committees Relating to the Day-to-Day Business of the House**
 - **House-Keeping Committees or Service Committees**
- **Ad Hoc Committees:**

- **Temporary** and cease to exist on completion of the task assigned to them. E.g. **Joint Parliamentary Committee.**

- **Constitutional Provisions:**

- Parliamentary committees draw their authority from **Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).**

What is the Role of Parliamentary Committees?

- **Provides Legislative Expertise:**

- Most MPs are not subject matter experts on the topics being discussed. Parliamentary committees are meant to help MPs seek expertise and give them time to think about issues in detail.

- **Acting as a Mini-Parliament:**

- These committees act as a mini parliament, as they have MPs representing different parties are elected into them through a system of the single transferable vote, in roughly the same proportion as their strength in Parliament.

- **Instrument for Detailed Scrutiny:**

- When bills are referred to these committees, they are examined closely and inputs are sought from various external stakeholders, including the public.

- **Provides a Check on the Government:**

- Although **committee recommendations are not binding on the government, their reports create a public record of the consultations** that took place and put pressure on the government to reconsider its stand on debatable provisions.
- By virtue of being closed-door and away from the public eye, discussions in committee meetings are also more collaborative, with MPs feeling less pressured to posture for media galleries.

How has the Role of Parliamentary Committees Declined Recently?

- During the course of the **17th Lok Sabha**, only **14 Bills have been referred** for further examination so far.
- As per data from PRS, as little as **25% of the Bills introduced were referred** to committees in the **16th Lok Sabha**, as compared to 71% and 60% in the 15th and 14th Lok Sabha, respectively.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen** the role of **parliamentary committees** by **giving** them more **resources, powers, and authority to hold the executive accountable.**
- Encourage **greater participation** from **civil society, experts, and stakeholders** in the committee proceedings **to ensure diverse perspectives** and informed decision-making.
- **Ensure transparency and accountability** in committee proceedings **by live streaming and recording meetings** and making reports and recommendations publicly available.
- **Develop a culture of bipartisan consensus-building** within committees to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are represented and to promote a more productive and efficient legislative process.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. In India, which of the following review the independent regulator in sectors like telecommunications, insurance, electricity, etc.? (2019)

1. Ad Hoc Committees set up by the Parliament
2. Parliamentary Department Related Standing Committees
3. Finance Commission
4. Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission
5. NITI Aayog

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1, 3 and 4
- (c) 3, 4 and 5
- (d) 2 and 5

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Parliamentary Committees are of two kinds Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees.
- The Former are elected or appointed every year or periodically and their work goes on, more or less, on a continuous basis.
- The latter are appointed on an ad hoc basis as the need arises and they cease to exist as soon as they complete the task assigned to them. **Hence option a is correct.**

[Source: TH](#)

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