



Simultaneous Elections

For Prelims: [Simultaneous Elections](#), Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, [Election Commission of India](#), [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#).

For Mains: Simultaneous Elections, Significance and Challenges.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

The Central government set up a panel headed by former **President Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plan.**

- Despite Logistical and other challenges, the idea of holding [Simultaneous Elections](#)/ ONOE to the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and state Assemblies in India has been a topic of discussion.

What are Simultaneous Elections?

- **About:**
 - The idea is about **structuring the Indian election cycle** in a manner so that elections to the **Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies are synchronised** together so that the election to both can be held within a given span of time.
 - While this concept had been practiced until 1967, it gradually fell out of sync due to the frequent dissolution of Assemblies and Lok Sabhas before their terms ended.
 - Currently, only a few states (**Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim**) hold elections along with the Lok Sabha polls.
- **Advantages:**
 - According to the draft report on simultaneous elections by the Law Commission of India (LCI) in August 2018, **ONOE will lead to the saving of public money, reducing the strain on the administrative setup** and security forces, timely implementation of government policies, and administrative focus on development activities rather than electioneering.

What are the Challenges in Holding Simultaneous Elections?

- **Feasibility:**
 - Article 83(2) and Article 172 of the Indian Constitution stipulate that the tenure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies respectively, will **last for five years unless dissolved earlier** and there can be circumstances, as in Article 356, wherein assemblies can be dissolved earlier. Therefore, the ONOE plan raises serious issues of feasibility if the Central or State government collapses mid-tenure.
 - Amending the Constitution for such a significant change would not only necessitate extensive consideration of various situations and provisions but **would also set a concerning precedent for more constitutional amendments.**

- The [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) submitted a feasibility report to the government in 2015, suggesting amendments to the **Constitution and the Representation of the People Act, 1951**.

- **Not Aligned with Federalism:**

- The idea of ONOE does not square with the concept of ‘federalism’ as it is established on the notion that the **entire nation is “one” contradicting the content of Article 1** which envisages India as a “Union of States”.

- **Present Form is More Beneficial:**

- The present form of recurrent elections can be seen as beneficial in a democracy as it allows voters to have their voices heard more frequently.
- As the underlying issues of national and State polls are different, the present framework **prevents the blending of issues, ensuring greater accountability**.

- **EVM and VVPAT Requirement:**

- Approximately 30 lakh [Electronic Voting Machines \(EVMs\)](#) and [Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail \(VVPAT\)](#) machines would be **needed for simultaneous elections**.

- **Cost Considerations:**

- The ECI has highlighted that simultaneous elections would require a substantial budget.
- A total of approximately Rs 9,284.15 crore would be needed for procuring EVMs and VVPATs, with additional costs for replacing machines every 15 years.
- Simultaneous elections would increase warehousing costs due to the storage of machines between elections.

- **Impact on Voter Behaviour:**

- Some political parties argue that it may influence voter behaviour in a manner that voters would end up voting on national issues even for State elections and this may lead to larger national parties winning both State and Lok Sabha elections thereby marginalizing regional parties.

- **Election Issues:**

- State and national elections are often fought on different sets of issues — and in simultaneous elections, voters may end up privileging one set over the other in ways they might not have done otherwise.

- **Diminished Accountability:**

- Having to face the electorate more than once every 5 years enhances the accountability of politicians and keeps them on their toes. Finally, a lot of jobs are also created during the elections, which boosts the economy at the grassroots levels.

How can Simultaneous Elections be Restored in India?

- According to the **Recommendations of the Law Commission Working Paper (2018)**,
 - Simultaneous elections may be **restored through an amendment of the Constitution, Representation of the People Act, 1951** and Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. A definition may be added to section 2 of the 1951 Act.
 - The no-confidence motion may be replaced with a constructive vote of no-confidence through amendments in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies rules of business.
 - [Anti-Defection Law](#) may be suitably diluted to prevent stalemate in case of a hung Assembly or Parliament
 - The statutory limit of six months for issuance of notification of general elections may be extended for securing flexibility as a one-time measure.

What are the Countries where Simultaneous Elections are conducted?

- In **South Africa**, elections to **national as well as provincial legislatures are held simultaneously for five years** and municipal elections are held two years later.
- In **Sweden** elections to the national legislature (Riksdag) and provincial legislature/county council (Landsting) and local bodies/municipal Assemblies (Kommunfullmaktige) are **held on a fixed date** i.e. second Sunday in September for four years. But most other large democracies do not have any such system of simultaneous elections.
- In **Britain**, the Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011 was passed to provide a sense of stability and predictability to the British Parliament and its tenure. It provided that the first elections would be held on the 7th of May, 2015 and on the first Thursday of May every fifth year thereafter.

- **Article 67 of Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany** proposes a constructive vote of non-confidence (electing a successor while dismissing the incumbent).

Way Forward

- Elections are held at different places every few months and it hampers the developmental work. Therefore, it's a must to have a deep study and deliberation on the idea in order to prevent the impact of the **model code of conduct** on development works every few months.
- There needs to be a consensus on whether the country needs one nation, one poll or not. All political parties should at least cooperate in debating this issue, once the debate starts, the public opinion can be taken into consideration. India being a mature democracy, can then follow the outcome of the debate.

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