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Q3

'Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people' Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS II · 10 marks · Parliament and State Legislatures

Parliament and State legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges and issues arising out of these.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the claim that simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will save time and money in electioneering but will reduce the government's accountability to the people
- Balance Model Code costs against federal verdicts, [Articles 83 and 172](#), and mid-term political choice

Revision summary

A common poll calendar would reduce [Election Commission](#) cost, party spend and Model Code freezes.

[Articles 83 and 172](#) set five-year terms that can end earlier; forcing one date can cut or stretch those bargains.

Off-year Assembly verdicts are a real accountability tool that simultaneity would weaken.

National waves may swamp State issues and federal diversity of mandates.

Clustered cycles and an honest dissolution rule are safer than a rigid one-nation lockstep.

Introduction

India already held simultaneous polls in the first two decades of the Republic. After mid-term dissolutions, the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies drifted onto separate clocks. A discussion paper from [NITI Aayog \(2017\)](#), the [Law Commission](#), and a [Parliamentary Standing Committee](#) revived "one nation, one election". The statement is half right on cost and campaign time, and seriously right on the risk to accountability if terms are forced into one calendar.

Body

Time and money: the case for simultaneity

- The [Election Commission of India](#) spends a large sum on each general and Assembly cycle; parties spend more on campaigns; the Model Code of Conduct freezes new schemes and senior postings for weeks.
- Security forces, teachers on poll duty, and the administrative machine are pulled into election mode several times in five years, which the [Law Commission](#)'s electoral-reform reports and the

Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice have treated as a real drag on governance.

- A single national roll revision, a single EVM-VVPAT deployment, and a single campaign season would cut repetition, which is the honest part of the statement.
- Voter fatigue and continuous polarising campaigns also have a social cost that a staggered calendar multiplies.

Accountability: why a separate State clock matters

- **Article 83** fixes the Lok Sabha term at five years unless dissolved sooner; **Article 172** does the same for a State Assembly; **Article 174** and **Article 356** allow early dissolution or President's Rule. Those tools exist so that a House that has lost confidence does not sit out a national timetable.
- A State voter today can punish a State government in an off-year without having to vote on the Union at the same time; that mid-term verdict is a form of accountability that simultaneity would thin out.
- National waves can drown local issues if every Assembly is polled with the Lok Sabha; federal diversity of mandates, which S.R. Bommai protected as part of the basic structure of federalism, would be harder to express.
- If Assemblies are extended or cut to fit the Lok Sabha clock, the voter's five-year bargain with that House is rewritten by a Union-centred calendar, which is a democratic cost, not only a legal tweak.
- Collective responsibility in the Council of Ministers is tested by no-confidence and by the next election; fewer elections mean fewer such tests, even if they save money.

A balanced discussion

- Saving time and money is a governance argument, not a constitutional trump card; the **Representation of the People Act, 1951**, can be amended, but **Articles 83, 85, 172, 174 and 356** need a coherent design so that a hung House is not frozen for years or dissolved only to serve a national date.
- Clustered regional cycles, as a middle path, can cut the number of Model Code freezes without making every State a passenger on the Lok Sabha train.
- Accountability can be protected by keeping the right to dissolve a House that has lost majority, even if the default is a common poll year, and by not using **Article 356** to manufacture a simultaneous calendar.
- Campaign-finance ceilings, a longer Model Code only where polls are actually on, and a stronger **Election Commission** are cheaper reforms than a forced lockstep of all Houses.

Flow diagram

Separate LS and Assembly clocks -> Repeated MCC and cost

Simultaneous elections -> Lower time and money

Simultaneous elections -> Thinner mid-term accountability

Arts 83 172 356 -> Term and dissolution

Term and dissolution -> Need a design that keeps federal verdicts

Conclusion

Simultaneous elections would likely cut campaign time, security cost and Model Code disruption. They would also reduce the number of moments when the people can hold a State or Union government to account on its own record. The statement is therefore useful as a warning: efficiency is not the same as accountability, and any common calendar must keep the voter's right to a mid-term federal verdict.

Facts & figures

Articles 83 and 172

Five-year terms of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, unless dissolved sooner.

Article 356

President's Rule in a State; a simultaneous-election design must not use it only to align poll dates.

NITI Aayog discussion paper (2017)

Revived the case for simultaneous elections on cost, governance and Model Code grounds.

Law Commission of India

Electoral-reform reports (including the 170th and later work) examined simultaneous polls and the legal changes they would need.

S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)

Treated federalism as part of the basic structure and put judicial limits on Article 356, which matters if terms are aligned from the Centre.

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