



Mains Practice Question

Q. Do simultaneous elections compromise democracy and federalism? Analyze.

22 Jun, 2021 GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly mentioning the context of simultaneous elections.
- Discuss the arguments in favour & against of simultaneous elections.
- Conclude Suitably.

Introduction

The idea has been around since at least 1983, when the Election Commission first mooted it. However, recent elections in four states and one Union territory in March-April are suspected to have contributed to the second wave of Covid infections.

This has reinvigorated a well-reasoned debate for conducting simultaneous elections in India.

Body

Arguments For Simultaneous Election

- **Incalculable Economic Costs of Elections:** Directly budgeted costs are around Rs 300 crore for a state the size of Bihar. However, there are other financial costs, and incalculable economic costs.
 - For example, each election means government machinery misses out on their regular duties due to election duty and related work.
- **Policy Paralysis:** The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) also affects the government's functioning, as no new significant policy can be announced and executed after the elections are announced.
- **Administrative Costs:** There are also huge and visible costs of deploying security forces and transporting them, repeatedly.

Arguments Against Simultaneous Elections

- **Federal Problem:** Simultaneous elections are almost nearly impossible to implement, as it would mean arbitrarily curtailing or extending the term of existing legislatures to bring their election dates in line with the due date for the rest of the country.
- **Against Spirit of Democracy:** Critics also say that forcing simultaneous elections is against democracy because trying to force an artificial cycle of elections and restricting the choice for voters is not correct.
- **Regional Parties At Disadvantage:** Regional parties are supposed to be at a disadvantage because in simultaneously held elections, voters are reportedly likely to predominantly vote one way, giving the dominant party at the Centre an advantage.
- **Diminished Accountability:** Having to face the electorate more than once every 5 years enhances the accountability of politicians and keeps them on their toes.

Conclusion

It is obvious That the Constitution and other laws would need to be amended for implementing simultaneous elections. However, it should be done in such a way that it doesn't hurt the basic tenets of democracy and federalism.

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