



Mains Practice Question

Q. The idea of "One Nation, One Election" has been recently debated in India. Discuss the potential advantages and disadvantages of implementing such a system. **(250 words)**

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Approach

- Introduce the answer by defining One Nation One Election
- Highlight the advantages of One Nation One Election
- Delve into its disadvantages
- Conclude in balanced manner

Introduction

The concept of "**One Nation, One Election**" involves holding simultaneous elections for the **Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies** across the country.

- This concept has been widely discussed recently, leading to the establishment of a high-level **Committee on Simultaneous Elections** in September 2023.

Body

Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of Simultaneous Elections:

- **Advantages:**
 - **Cost-effectiveness:** According to estimates, the cost of holding general elections to the Lok Sabha alone is around **₹4,000 crore**.
 - Conducting multiple elections at different intervals substantially increases the overall expenditure.
 - Holding simultaneous elections could lead to **significant cost savings** for the government and political parties.
 - **Efficient Utilization of resources:** Simultaneous elections would optimize the deployment of **administrative machinery, paramilitary forces, and other resources** required for conducting elections.
 - This would prevent disruptions in governance and administrative efficiency caused by frequent elections.
 - **Reduction in the Campaign Mode:** Under the current system, political parties and leaders **remain in a perpetual campaign mode** due to frequent elections, hindering policy-making and governance.
 - Simultaneous elections could **provide a relatively longer period of stable governance** without electoral distractions.
 - **Social Cohesion:** High-stake elections each year in various states often lead to **polarizing campaigns by political parties**, exacerbating social divisions along religious, linguistic, and regional lines.
 - Simultaneous elections could **potentially reduce the frequency of such divisive campaigns**, promoting greater social cohesion.

- **Voter Fatigue Mitigation:** Frequent elections can lead to voter fatigue, potentially resulting in **lower turnouts** and diminished participation in the democratic process.
 - Simultaneous elections could help mitigate this issue, fostering **greater engagement from the electorate.**
- **Disadvantages:**
 - **Compromise on Federal Principles:** India is a diverse federal country with states having unique regional and local issues.
 - Simultaneous elections could **overshadow these specific concerns, giving an advantage to national political parties** over regional parties, potentially undermining the federal structure.
 - **May Not be so Cost Effective:** Various estimates by the **Election Commission** show that the costs of conducting all State and parliamentary elections in a five-year cycle work out to the equivalent of **Rs. 10 per voter per year.**
 - In the short term, simultaneous elections will increase the costs for deploying far larger numbers of **EVMs and VVPATs.**
 - **Constitutional Challenges:** The **Law Commission, under Justice B. S. Chauhan,** reported that simultaneous elections are not feasible within the existing constitutional framework.
 - Implementing simultaneous elections would require significant constitutional amendments, particularly to **Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356,** which deal with the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
 - Such amendments could have far-reaching implications for the parliamentary democratic system.
 - **Vulnerability to Systemic Failures:** In the current system, even if one state or region faces logistical or security issues during elections, the **remaining states can proceed with the process.**
 - However, in the case of simultaneous elections, any significant systemic failure or disruption could **potentially jeopardize the entire electoral exercise,** raising concerns about the resilience of the system.

Conclusion

Any decision on implementing "**One Nation, One Election**" should be based on extensive consultations with all stakeholders to ensure that the **principles of federalism, democracy, and constitutional propriety** are upheld while reaping the potential benefits of simultaneous elections.