

## Concerns with simultaneous elections

### Why in news?

\n\n

\n

- Union government is clear with its stand on simultaneous elections to Parliament and all State Assemblies.

\n

- But the case for holding simultaneous elections in the diverse, federal Indian polity is weak.

\n

\n\n

### What are reasons cited by government for single election?

\n\n

\n

- Massive expenditure would be reduced.

\n

- Diversion of security and civil staff from primary duties is avoided.

\n

- Impact on governance due to the model code of conduct will be less.

\n

- Disruption to normal public life will be addressed.

\n

\n\n

### What the concerns with the reasons for single election?

\n\n

\n

- **The cost factor** -The Election Commission incurs a total cost of roughly Rs. 8,000 crore to conduct all State and federal elections in a span of five years, or roughly Rs. 1,500 crore every year.

\n

\n\n

\n

- To put this in context, all the States and the Centre combined incurred an

expenditure of nearly Rs. 30 lakh crore in FY2014.

\n

- Which is about 0.05% of India's total annual expenditure, and it is not a large price to pay for world's largest and most vibrant electoral democracy.  
\n
- The notion that elections are prohibitively expensive is false and misleading.  
\n
- **Code of conduct and polls** -The model code of conduct for elections was agreed by political parties in 1979, and prohibits the ruling party from incurring capital expenditure for certain projects after elections are announced.  
\n
- If India is indeed embarking on a path of "cooperative federalism", then more such projects will be undertaken by each State and not by the Centre.  
\n
- If all political parties still feel the need to reform the code, they are free to do so. The solution is to reform the code and not the electoral cycle.  
\n
- **Governance paralysis**- Paralysis of the government due to State elections is a mere excuse.  
\n
- The real reason is that the two national parties are excessively dependent on their national leaders' campaigns in State elections,  
\n
- Depending on their national leaders is the problem and the prerogative of the national parties, it is not the fault of the electoral system.  
\n
- **Diversion of civil staff and disruption of public life** - These were the two other reasons cited, but these sound more like reasons against holding elections in general.  
\n
- These two reasons are very weak when measured against the costs of limiting electoral opportunities for citizens.  
\n

\n\n

### **Is single election a viable solution?**

\n\n

\n

- Studies proves that there is clear empirical evidence that most Indian voters tend to choose the same party when elections are held simultaneously to both Centre and State.  
\n

- At the same time when elections became disparate, there was no evidence of the voter choosing the same party.  
\n
- Simultaneous elections impinge on the political autonomy of States.  
\n
- If elections are to be held simultaneously, States will have to give up this power and wait for a national election schedule.  
\n
- Under a simultaneous elections regime, the State will be beholden to the Union government for elections to its State, which goes against the very grain of political autonomy under Indian federal structure.  
\n
- Thus “oneness” is not the desired path to efficiency in a diverse polity such as India.  
\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

