



# **DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

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**ROLE OF PARLIAMENT TO PREVENT  
ELECTORAL DEFORMS IN INDIA**

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## ROLE OF PARLIAMENT TO PREVENT ELECTORAL DEFORMS IN INDIA

### Context

- India's electoral integrity is under strain not due to a lack of reforms, but because of potentially deformative measures such as *Delimitation*, *One Nation One Election (ONOE)*, and *Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls*.

### About India's Electoral Democracy

- India is the **world's largest electoral democracy**, operating under a **parliamentary system** as outlined in the **Constitution of India (1950)**.
- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)**, an autonomous constitutional body under **Article 324**, administers **all elections to Parliament, State Legislatures**, and the offices of the **President and Vice President**.
- India's electoral democracy has long been hailed for its **vibrancy and inclusiveness**. But the growing concerns over **electoral deformations** like **Delimitation** based on population, **One Nation One Election (ONOE)** and **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls** create institutional weaknesses and undermine the **fairness, integrity or credibility** of elections.

### Pillars of Concerns

- Delimitation Based on Population:** The upcoming delimitation exercise, expected after the 2026 census, could drastically alter the balance of power between states.
  - It risks penalizing southern and eastern states that have successfully controlled population growth, while rewarding those with higher fertility rates and northern Hindi-speaking states by allocating seats based on population.
  - It could lead to **gerrymandering** (redrawing boundaries to ensure favorable outcomes) and a dilution of federal principles.
- One Nation, One Election (ONOE):** Simultaneous elections aim to synchronize national and state elections, presented as an efficiency measure, and magnify the advantage of incumbency.
  - National narratives and issues tend to eclipse local issues and dominate such elections, benefitting the dominant national party and reducing voter autonomy at the state level.
  - The concentration of the electoral calendar, into a single cycle every five years, **enhances manageability and manipulability** by those in power.
- Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls:** The SIR process, especially in states like Assam and Jammu & Kashmir, raises fears of targeted disenfranchisement.
  - Manipulation of the SIR process** by deep organizational reach and influence over local officials **can exclude voters from minority communities**.
  - Recently, in Bihar**, about 44 lakh names vanished from the voter list, suggesting **a national pattern of mass disenfranchisement**.
  - Estimates project over five crore deletions, marking the largest voter exclusion in democratic history.

### Global Paradox: Democracy Without Democrats

- India's situation is part of a broader phenomenon of *electoral authoritarianism*, where governance is sustained by elections that are procedurally intact but substantively hollow.
- The **International IDEA's Global State of Democracy report** flags India for '**democratic backsliding**' particularly in **indicators like 'credible elections'**.
- Concepts like '*abusive constitutionalism*' and '*autocratic legalism*', as seen in Hungary, Turkey, and Venezuela, now find resonance in India.

### Way Ahead: What Parliament Should Do?

- For Delimitation:** Delimitation is governed by **Articles 82 and 170** of the Constitution and the **Delimitation Act, 2002**.

- ♦ Parliament needs to ensure a **fair population-to-seat ratio** across states, possibly by creating a **Constitutional amendment** ensuring equity for southern states that have effectively controlled population growth.
- ♦ It needs to **pass a fresh Delimitation Act** after the next Census (2026) to redraw Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies.
- ♦ Parliament needs to **protect federal balance** by resisting population-based seat redistribution.
- **For One Nation One Election (ONOE):**
  - ♦ **Constitutional Amendments** to Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356 for synchronising election cycles, that is **required by a special majority**.
  - ♦ **Consultation with States** and **Legal Coordination** through an **all-party committee or Inter-State Council** to build consensus, since elections to state assemblies are state matters.
  - ♦ Parliament needs to scrutinize the intent and impact of proposed reforms.
- **For Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls:** The **ECI's SIR process** aims to ensure inclusion of new voters and removal of duplicates, guided by **Section 25 of the Representation of People Act (1950)**.
  - ♦ **Parliament** provides legislative backing and funding for **digital voter roll integration** across states.
    - It oversees implementation of **Aadhaar–EPIC linkage** (while ensuring data privacy compliance).
    - It mandates **annual roll reviews** in coordination with Census data to keep rolls dynamic and inclusive.
    - Parliament needs to ensure transparency and accountability in electoral roll revisions, and safeguard minority representation and prevent systemic disenfranchisement.

### Conclusion

- Preventing electoral deformities is a continuum, combining institutional integrity, civic vigilance, and technological accountability. Electoral democracy needs to evolve toward **transparency, inclusivity, and equity**.

Source: IE

### Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Critically examine the role of the Indian Parliament in safeguarding electoral integrity. Discuss how legislative oversight can prevent electoral deformations such as biased delimitation, One Nation One Election, and selective revision of electoral rolls.

