# Polity & Governance · GS - II

**Analyse the constitutional division of responsibilities between the Election Commission of India and State Election Commissions. How does their institutional independence contribute to electoral accountability in India?**

| EXAM YEAR | PAPER | SUBJECT |
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| MARKS | WORD LIMIT |
|---|---|
| 15 | ~250 words |

## Answer Hint

**Constitutional framework, Articles 324 and 243K–243ZA, electoral federalism, institutional independence, accountability, challenges**

## Model Answer

India's electoral governance operates through a constitutional division of responsibilities between the Election Commission of India (ECI) and State Election Commissions (SECs). This arrangement reflects the federal character of Indian democracy.

### 1. Constitutional allocation of responsibilities

1. **Election Commission of India:** Article 324 entrusts the ECI with the superintendence, direction and control of elections to Parliament, State Legislatures, and the offices of President and Vice-President.
2. **State Election Commissions:** Article 243K governs Panchayat elections, while Article 243ZA governs Municipal elections. These provisions empower SECs to supervise local body elections.
3. **Appointment and safeguards:** State Election Commissioners are appointed by Governors. Their removal is protected by constitutional safeguards, including removal through the procedure applicable to a High

Court judge.

## 2. Significance of institutional independence

1. **Electoral neutrality:** Independent election authorities reduce the possibility of direct executive interference in electoral administration.
2. **Decentralised democracy:** SECs strengthen grassroots participation by ensuring regular elections to rural and urban local governments.
3. **Accountability:** Electoral supervision, preparation of electoral rolls and enforcement of applicable election rules strengthen public confidence.
4. **Federal balance:** Separate constitutional institutions recognise that local elections require specialised state-level administration.

## 3. Institutional challenges

Differences in administrative capacity, disputes over electoral rolls, delayed elections, resource constraints and allegations of political interference can weaken public confidence. Coordination between ECI and SECs also requires clarity, particularly where electoral rolls and administrative arrangements intersect.

## Conclusion

The credibility of Indian democracy depends not only on national elections but also on fair and regular local elections. Strengthening SEC autonomy, resources, transparency and accountability is essential to preserve electoral integrity across all three tiers of government.

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