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**ONE NATION ONE ELECTION (ONOE): A CONSTITUTIONAL,
DEMOCRATIC AND STRENGTHENING OF UNITY OR SILENCING
REGIONS**

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Abstract

One Nation, One Election (ONOE) proposal wants all the elections in India includes the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies elections to happen at the same time across the country. The goal is to change the ways that the country holds elections. The people who support these changes and reforms says that holding elections at the same time will make things more stable and cut down on the government's costs and administrative work. It would also help to stop what happens when there are constant elections in the country. It is also claimed that ONOE could get more people to vote by lowering the number of elections taking place across the country and also reducing the stress that come with the elections and letting the government focus on the long-term development goals for the growth of the country.

The proposal of ONOE has sparked a lot of discussion over time whether or not it is constitutional correct in means like for democracy. Critics insist that ONOE presents a significant threat to India's federal structure. The schedule of elections or clash of all elections happening together may cause national issues to take priority over regional issues, which would make Indian democracy less diversified or effective. Moreover, the constitutional issues surrounding the premature dissolution of legislature assemblies before finishing their tenure is topic of discussion and must be solved with considerable legal and practical advice.

This research piece critically analyses the historical development of ONOE in the context of democratic administration in the country and the constitutional problems related to its implementation. This article examines the advantages and hazards to determine whether ONOE acts as a means to enhance national unity or inadvertently suppresses the diverse

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regional areas in India. In the end, the paper stresses the importance of rigorous execution or rejecting the proposal in order to protect democratic accountability and federal balance in the country.

Keywords: *One Nation, One Election (ONOE), Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, Constitutional, Democracy.*

INTRODUCTION

The Elections are the most important part of a democratic country because they let people choose their leaders and keep the government accountable for what it does and what they implement. India is the largest democratic country in the world and elections are held at all levels of government. These are the Lok Sabha elections at the national level, the State Legislative Assemblies at the state level and the Panchayats and Municipalities at the local level. These elections happen at different periods of the year right now.

The *One Nation, One Election*³ idea is to hold all of India's key elections at the same time. The major goal of this approach is to cut down on the number of elections that happen over and over again. These elections frequently cost a lot of money⁴, require constant political campaigning⁵ and also puts a lot of stress on the administrative system and on the government as well as on the voters. Supporters think that having elections at the same time would let governments focus more on running issues in the country and making it better instead of always being in election mode.

But even if these are good things, the idea of changing the way elections are run from past several years has brought up some critical issues. Some others say that having elections at the same time could upset the balance of power between the Centre and the States, which is an important part of India's democracy and federal system. They also worry about the national issues and big political parties would take up most of the election campaigns, leaving little room for regional issues and local voices. So, even though One Nation, One Election seems like a good idea for change, it makes people very worried about how well it represents

³ Snehanu Ray, *One Nation One Election: An Overview*, 6 Int'l J.L. Mgmt. & Hum. 2455 (2024).

⁴ Devesh Kapur & Milan Vaishnav eds., *Costs of Democracy: Political Finance in India* (Oxford Univ. Press 2018).

⁵ Anil M. Varughese & Holli A. Semetko, *Political Campaigning in India: Changing Contexts of Political Communication*, 13 S. Asian Hist. & Culture 267 (2022).

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democracy, fairness and India's regional variety. And most importantly the practical implementation of this idea in the country.

Historical Origins of One Nation, One Election

Elections didn't always happen at different times when India got independent and approved its Constitution. In fact, the Lok Sabha and most State Legislative Assemblies held their elections at the same time as India's first general elections in 1951–52. This system lasted for a few years and was an early version of what is now known as One Nation, One Election.

But this arrangement slowly fell apart over the years. One big factor was that states were reorganised, which made new states and changed the boundaries of existing ones. In 1996, the Law Commission of India advised looking into the prospect and proposed an idea of having elections together again. This was the first time that the notion of going back to elections at the same time thing was seriously studied again. The debate has gotten a lot of attention again in the last few years. The Law Commission's 2017 report⁶ and the Prime Minister's comment both suggested an organised framework for putting One Nation, One Election into action through revisions to the Constitution and the law. These changes illustrate that ONOE isn't a new notion, but its old notion that is getting a lot of new attention and is a response to current worries about how well the government works if elections does happens at the same time instead of several different elections at different time and how new elections policy would change the administrative system of the country more effectively.

Potential Benefits of One Nation, One Election

One of the best reasons to support One Nation, One Election is that it would cut down on the costs of running elections to a certain level and then the money would be used for the development of the nation.⁷ It costs a lot of money to hold elections in a country as big and diverse as India. These costs include sending police, security forces, moving election materials, using electronic voting machines and making other administrative arrangements during the voting. These costs happen over and over again in a short amount of time because elections in our country happen more often in different states. If elections are held at the same

⁶ Gautam Mohanty & Sai Ramani Garimella, *The Law Commission of India: A Critical Analysis of Its Contributions to Law Reform* (2023).

⁷ M. Pareek, *The Concept of One Nation, One Election in Indian Democracy: A Study of Benefits, Challenges, and Feasibility*, 4 *Rsch. Rev.* 13 (2024).

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time, many of these costs can be cut, which will make better use of public funds for development and other big issues of the country.

Another key benefit of these elections is that they make the government run more smoothly. The government has to do a lot of work during elections since many public officials are appointed to do the work. Teachers, police officers and civil servants are routinely pulled away from their usual jobs, which makes it harder for them to provide public services. A single, consistent election cycle would lessen these interruptions which is happening during their duty time and let these officials focus more on running the country and making it better and smooth then focusing on these continuous elections.⁸

Lastly, having elections too often can make voters tired and exhausted. People may lose interest in voting if they have to do it over and over again which could lead to fewer people voting and a portion of people avoiding the elections because the number of elections taking place. By holding elections together, the voting process can be made easier and more convenient for people, which may lead to more people voting.

Constitutional and Legal Challenges

One of the biggest problems with putting One Nation, One Election into action is that it would require massive revisions to the Indian Constitution. The Constitution now says different things about the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies in Articles 83, 85, 172 and 174.⁹ These rules would need to be changed so that all legislatures follow the same election cycle in order to make elections happen at the same time. For these kinds of changes to the Constitution to happen, both Houses of Parliament need to agree on same with a special majority and at least half of the State Legislatures need to agree with them. Getting this level of political unity is quite hard, especially in a federal system like India's where states have different political goals.¹⁰

When a State Legislative Assembly is dissolved before its full term is up because of political instability or a loss of majority, it creates another critical problem. In these situations, it is

⁸ A. Shaji George, *One Nation, One Election: An Analysis of the Pros and Cons of Implementing Simultaneous Elections in India*, 2 *Partners Universal Int'l Rsch. J.* 40 (2023).

⁹ G.C. Malhotra, *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures* (Lok Sabha Secretariat 2004).

¹⁰ Ajayraj Singh & Sonal Jain, *Constitutional Aspects and Challenges for Implementing One Nation One Election*, 7 *Int'l J.L. Mgmt. & Hum.* 1567 (2024).

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unclear how the election cycle can be kept going. Some ideas call for extending the duration of the current parliament or decreasing the term of a freshly elected assembly. But both approaches are bad for democracy because they could get in the way of what voters want.

Also, if One Nation, One Election works, it will be a big job for the Election Commission of India to conduct the election at the same time. If elections were held at the same time all around the country, it would take more money, more people, more technology and better security during the elections and voting. The Election Commission would also require more legislative authorities to make sure that elections on such a wide scale are free and fair. If the planning is not good enough to make it happen then running such large elections could be a very hard job to complete.

Criticisms and Concerns

Right now, elections happen at different periods in different states. This lets political parties focus on issues that are important to their region, like local development, state legislation and cultural issues. This framework lets states set their own priorities. If elections happen at the same time, national issues may over shadow a regional issue and debates may take over the campaigns, making problems that national issue may be consider more important and special then the state or regional issue might be considered less important. This could make regional views less heard and hurt the diversity that is India's federal structure.¹¹

Another worry is that national political parties are becoming more powerful. Most of the time, big national parties have more money, better organisation and more media coverage.¹² In this kind of electoral system, these benefits might let them win elections all throughout the country. Because of this, smaller and regional parties may have a hard time competing with the national political because of their influence and power.

One Nation, One Election also makes people wonder about how accountable the democracy of the country is. Elections that happen on a regular basis let people check on how well their governments are doing at all levels. Elections can be a way for people in authority to check on themselves every now and again. If elections only happen once every few years, people

¹¹ Zheer Ahmed & Samuel Kuruvilla, *The Idea of One-Nation, One-Election: Its Potential Risk and Significance for India*, 16 J. Polity & Soc'y (2024).

¹² Arun R. Swamy, *National Politics, Regional Politics, and Party Systems*, in *The Indian Handbook* 170 (2013).
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may not be able to hold governments accountable as often, which could make them less attentive to what people want and need.

Finally, having elections for more than one level of government at the same time could confuse voters. In one election, voters would have to choose representatives for both the national and state administrations. This would usually mean dealing with various political alliances and issues. Some voters may find this too complicated, especially in a country where people have different levels of literacy and political knowledge.

Policy Recommendations

If One Nation, One Election is to be taken seriously, it should be put into action slowly and carefully. A method that would let the government test the system by holding elections at the same time in a few states or at the local level first.¹³ This would let lawmakers understand how the system would work in real life, what problems it would cause for government, and how voters would react before using it all throughout the country.

Another essential suggestion is to make the main democratic institutions stronger, especially the Election Commission of India. It would take more people, money, advanced technology and legal authority to hold elections at the same time on such a vast scale. The Election Commission needs to have enough power and protections to make sure that elections are still free and fair, even when there is more pressure on them.¹⁴ Last but not least, the law should be able to change to handle scenarios where the government falls before their term is over. Any changes made in these situations must respect the will of the voters while still serving the larger purpose of elections in the nation.

Conclusion

The idea of "One Nation, One Election" will transform the way elections are held in India in a big way. It promises a lot of practical benefits such as making it easier for governments to focus on running country issues instead of always campaigning, cutting the costs of elections and making it easier for people to vote. The approach attempts to make politics more stable

¹³ Saket Bihari, *One Nation, One Election: Towards Streamlined Governance and Electoral Reform* (n.d.).

¹⁴ Harshini G.S., *One Nation, One Election: Reforming Democracy or Challenging Federalism*, 2 LawFoyer Int'l J. Doctrinal Legal Rsch. 225 (2024).

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and help with long-term planning and policy implementation by putting all elections on the same cycle.¹⁵

But even though One Nation, One Election could have some good effects, it also presents some major issues. Like people are really worried that this kind of arrangement could lead to too much centralisation of power and confusion among the voters. If national-level politics take over election campaigns, regional issues and local voices will be doomed which is a crucial aspect of Indian democracy. Also, having fewer elections could make it harder for people to hold their leaders accountable.

So, every move towards making One Nation, One Election a reality must be made with caution. Democratic objectives like fair representation should not be sacrificed for the sake of electoral efficiency.¹⁶ To keep India's democracy free and fair, we need a balanced strategy that respects both constitutional ideals and administrative efficiency in the country.

¹⁵ Gaurav Upadhyay, Rajneesh Dhama & Naman Joshi, *Synchronized Elections and Indian Federalism: An Analysis of the One Nation, One Election Reform* (n.d.).

¹⁶ Gajendra Giri, *One Nation One Election*, 7 Int'l J.L. Mgmt. & Hum. 3347 (2024).

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