

## "Historical Context and Evolution: The Journey towards One Nation, One Election in India"

<sup>1</sup>Anjali Painuly, <sup>2</sup>Hitesh Nautiyal

<sup>1</sup>Asst. Professor, Jagran School of Law, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Email Id- [anjalipainuly1797@gmail.com](mailto:anjalipainuly1797@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Asst. Professor, Jagran School of Law, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Email Id- [nautiyalhitesh@gmail.com](mailto:nautiyalhitesh@gmail.com)

---

### Abstract

In recent years, the concept of 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) has developed as a prominent and contentious issue in Indian politics. Every three months, at least one election is held in some section of the country. This is really terrible for India's growth prospects. The fundamental motivation for the proposed One Nation-One Election reform is to synchronize Lok Sabha and Vidhansabha elections across all states, reducing the frequency of polls across the country. This continued to be the standard until 1967, when it was progressively disrupted by things like government dissolutions, defections, and dismissals. Because our country, India, has such a democratic culture, elections are held almost every year, polling stations are picked at random, and progress toward development is hampered by the code of conduct. The Model Code of Conduct becomes effective shortly after the Election Commission announces the elections. The MCC prevents the implementation of new policies during elections. As a result, important policy choices are postponed at both the national and state levels.

**Key Words-** One Nation One Election, constitution, election commission, Model Code of Conduct, simultaneous or synchronize.

---

### Introduction

This research study dives into the many facets of ONOE, attempting to examine its practicality, obstacles, and prospective impact on India's political, social, and economic realms. The paper critically evaluates the constitutional, logistical, and political implications of synchronizing diverse electoral cycles across the country's federal structure. This also examines the initiative's legal and constitutional implications, as well as the practical considerations required in its

implementation, such as synchronizing election schedules and effectively allocating resources. However, the implementation of such a reform poses substantial challenges and has sparked a robust debate among scholars, policymakers, and political stakeholders. Critics raise concerns about the feasibility of conducting nationwide simultaneous elections, the potential strain on administrative and security resources, and the implications for federalism and regional political representation. They argue that the logistical and constitutional amendments required for such a reform are formidable, and the one-size-fits-all approach may not adequately address the unique political dynamics of each state. Through this analysis, the paper will contribute to the ongoing discourse on electoral reforms in India, offering insights into the feasibility and desirability of implementing "One Nation, One Election" as a transformative change in the nation's democratic framework.

### **Historical Background of 'One Nation-One Election' in India**

The state legislative assembly elections and the general elections that followed independence were held concurrently. Because some state assemblies were prematurely dissolved in 1968 and 1969, this practice was stopped in 1967. The Law Commission advocated simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections in its 170th report from 1999. According to the 79th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2015, the One Nation One Election principle saves the government millions of rupees in election expenditures when Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies are held simultaneously. Since 2014, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has advocated for simultaneous elections, claiming that this will assure the uninterrupted progress of development projects and cut down on the waste of public funds. In August 2018, India's Law Commission released a draft report on holding simultaneous elections. According to their findings, implementing such elections would require amendments to the Representation of the People Act of 1951, the rules of procedure for both state assemblies and the Lok Sabha, as well as the constitution itself. A "High Level Committee on One Nation, One Election" was established by the Union Government in September 2023, and Ramnath Kovind, a previous Indian president, will serve as its head. The High Level Committee held three meetings to hear opinions from different State and national political parties for a single election schedule.

Recently, the opinions of prominent jurists and members of the general public were also requested.<sup>1</sup>

### **Description of proposed concept**

India's Election Commission has expressed support for the proposal to one nation one election. They emphasize that the current system, with its multiple election cycles, places a significant logistical and administrative strain on the ECI, as it must repeatedly deploy staff, equipment, and security forces. Additionally, the enforcement of the model code of conduct over extended periods due to staggered state elections hampers governance and policy implementation. Critics argue that simultaneous elections in India could dilute regional issues, undermine federalism, and reduce state government accountability. It requires extensive political consensus and major constitutional amendments, with regional parties fearing it disproportionately benefits national parties. The Law Commission of India evaluated three options: fixed five-year terms for state assemblies and Lok Sabha, staggered synchrony with slight timing differences, and two-phase elections. Each option faces challenges like no-confidence motions, security, and practicality. Achieving 'One Nation One Election' remains difficult due to political dynamics and constitutional hurdles, raising concerns about regional representation, accountability, and power distribution. Despite potential benefits, the practical difficulties and governance risks necessitate detailed analysis and political consensus.<sup>2</sup>

### **The high level Committee on “One Nation, One Election”**

President Droupadi Murmu received the report from the high-level group on "One Nation, One Election," which was chaired by erstwhile President Ram Nath Kovind, on March 14, 2024. Amit Shah, the minister of home affairs, Ghulam Nabi Azad, the former J&K chief minister, the Ex-chairman of the Finance Commission, N.K. Singh, the Ex secretary general of the Lok Sabha Subhash Kashyap, and eminent counsel Harish Salve are among the members of the committee. Dr. Niten Chandra served as the HLC secretary, while Arjun Ram Meghwal, the minister of law, is a special invitee to the panel. The Committee conducted extensive

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://lawctopus.com/clatalogue/clat-ug/one-nation-one-election-in-india-advantages-disadvantages-amendments/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/one-nation-one-election-why-bjp-wants-it-and-why-it-is-opposed/articleshow/108500237.cms?from=mdr>

consultations to gather perspectives from various stakeholders. A total of 47 political parties submitted their views, with 32 expressing support for simultaneous elections. Many of these parties engaged in detailed discussions with the high-level committee on the issue. Additionally, a public notice was published in newspapers across all States and Union Territories, eliciting 21,558 responses from citizens nationwide, with 80 percent in favor of simultaneous elections.<sup>3</sup>

The team suggested holding the state assembly and Lok Sabha elections at the same time, along with coordinated local elections within a hundred days. New Lok Sabha elections would be called in the case of a hung House or no-confidence motion, but the new Lok Sabha would only stay in office for the balance of the original term. Unless they are dissolved sooner, freshly elected state legislatures will serve for the whole term of the Lok Sabha. Articles 83 and 172, which deal with the tenure of state assemblies and Parliament, must be changed in order to put the system into effect. The majority of the constitutional amendments that the panel suggested do not need to be ratified by states. Article 325 must be amended in order for the Election Commission to collaborate with state authorities to produce a uniform electoral roll and voter ID cards. The committee stated that the government, industry, and society are heavily burdened by the existing practice of conducting numerous elections annually. According to a committee statement, the proposals are intended to be consistent with the spirit of the Constitution.<sup>4</sup>

### **Impact on State Government**

**Pros:** Aligning electoral cycles is argued to enhance governance by reducing the frequency of elections, allowing state governments to focus on policy implementation rather than continuous campaigning. Currently, frequent elections keep state administrations in perpetual campaign mode, distracting them from coherent policy agendas and leading to populist measures. Synchronizing Lok Sabha and Vidhasabha elections would provide state governments with fixed five-year terms, aligning with the central government. This alignment would enable policy continuity, reduce election distractions, allow difficult decisions without electoral pressure, improve program oversight, and reduce populist measures, leading to

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2014497>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/watch-one-nation-one-election-what-did-the-panel-recommend/article67953798.ece>

optimal resource allocation. Welfare schemes and infrastructure projects can be designed for their intended impact rather than as pre-election sops. Fixed tenures for state governments would reduce policy inconsistency and reversals, allowing for sustained implementation. Regulatory reforms, investment policy changes, and subsidy rationalization can be based on economic needs rather than election timing, and contentious economic reforms can be introduced without immediate electoral concerns.<sup>5</sup>

**Cons:** Critics of synchronized electoral cycles argue that it reduces state governments' autonomy in election timing. Key downsides include the loss of incumbents' ability to optimize election timing based on political calculations, and the inability to address state-specific issues like droughts or economic conditions through early or delayed polls. Voters lose the chance to assess state and central governance separately. Regional factors influencing voter priorities are overlooked, and smaller regional parties argue that synchronized elections favour national parties focused on national issues. Synchronizing national and state elections prioritize national issues over regional concerns, disadvantaging state governance evaluation and regional party agendas. Voters may focus less on state government performance in welfare, infrastructure, and social indices when national debates dominate. Regional issues like unemployment and industrialization could be overshadowed. National parties benefit more from the emphasis on national issues, while smaller state-specific parties claim simultaneous elections undermine federal democracy by centralizing power and impeding regional aspirations.<sup>6</sup>

### **Impact on Citizens**

**Pros:** Synchronized national and state elections may reduce voter fatigue caused by frequent elections. Key issues include the logistical hassle of repeated voting, leading to voter apathy; continuous electioneering hindering substantial government work; constant campaign rhetoric breeding cynicism; and disruptions to daily life due to school closures, restricted movement, and heavy security during polls. Frequent elections also result in restrictive government activity due to the model code of conduct and massive election expenditures seen as wasteful, diverting focus from governance. These include better implementation of welfare schemes and public services without disruptions from frequent elections, and more efficient infrastructural

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lokatantra.in/articles-details/One-Nation-One-Election>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.livelaw.in/columns/simultaneous-elections-distorting-accountable-democracy-and-federalism-146027>

development. Economic reforms with long-term benefits can be pursued without immediate electoral concerns, while discretionary hand-outs and freebies are minimized, leading to optimal resource allocation. Policy consistency and stability improve, providing a coherent policy direction, and responsiveness to grievances increases as administrations can focus on governance rather than electioneering.<sup>7</sup>

**Cons:** Critics of synchronized national and state elections argue that it diminishes citizens' ability to express dissatisfaction with state governments independently of the Centre. Currently, voters can differentiate between state and central performance, voting out state governments in separate assembly elections. Synchronized elections may overshadow regional priorities with national issues, affecting local lives and livelihoods. State assembly polls currently focus on regional issues like infrastructure, jobs, welfare schemes, and utilities. While proponents claim robust local outreach can highlight state issues, regional parties face challenges in maintaining relevance when national narratives dominate.<sup>8</sup>

### **Impact on Political Parties**

**Pros:** The high-level committee reached out to 62 political parties, and 47 of them responded. Among these, 15 parties, including the Congress, BSP, AAP, and CPM, strongly opposed the proposal, arguing that it would violate the basic structure of the constitution. Additionally, 12 regional parties, including the RJD, JMM, TDP, SAD and BRS, did not respond to the committee's inquiry. Synchronized national and state electoral cycles can save political parties significant costs by enabling unified campaigning instead of frequent separate campaigns for Lok Sabha and Vidhansabha elections. Major expenses incurred by parties include paid advertising across media, on-ground activation such as rallies and public meetings, printed promotional materials, and travel and lodging for campaign teams. Aligned elections would allow parties to focus more on governance, policymaking, and organizational building, and make bolder reforms without immediate electoral risks. Additionally, regional parties could strengthen their presence beyond home states without the distraction of local elections.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup><https://scroll.in/latest/1062508/81-of-citizen-responses-in-favour-of-one-nation-one-election-says-centre>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/42687-why-one-nation-one-election-is-against-citizens-interest>

<sup>9</sup> <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/one-nation-one-election-is-our-commitment-pm-modi/>

**Cons:** A major concern regarding simultaneous national and state elections is that they may favour mainstream parties like BJP and Congress by centralizing the focus on national issues, there by marginalizing regional parties. Currently, separate state elections allow regional parties to mobilize voters based on local issues and leadership. However, with synchronized elections, national narratives could dominate, reducing space for regional issues and forcing regional parties to address national concerns. This shift could undermine India's federal structure and diminish regional representation. Additionally, synchronized elections would limit the frequency of opportunities to unseat incumbent governments, potentially reducing accountability and responsiveness. With elections only every five years, governments might become complacent and less urgent in their performance, while opposition parties would have fewer chances to challenge policy failures and adapt to changing voter sentiments.<sup>10</sup>

### **Cost Savings by Simultaneous election**

Simultaneous elections promise economic gains by boosting investor confidence, attracting capital inflows, and promoting growth. The stability of five-year government terms encourages investment by reducing political uncertainty, which currently hampers corporate capital expenditure. The cost of conducting Lok Sabha elections has increased significantly, with expenses rising from Rs. 1115 crores in 2009 to Rs. 3870 crores in 2014. According to the ADR, political parties collected Rs. 2355.35 crores and spent Rs. 2466.07 crores in the 2004, 2009, and 2014 Lok Sabha elections, with Rs. 1587.78 crores spent in 2014 alone. Unofficial estimates suggest total expenditures for the 2014 elections might exceed Rs. 30,000 crores, though these figures are hard to verify. For State Assembly elections from 2004 to 2015, parties collected Rs. 3368.06 crores and reported expenditures of Rs. 2727.79 crores. Unified polls can lower election costs, optimize administrative logistics, and free resources for development instead of frequent electioneering.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/political-divide-on-one-nation-one-election-32-parties-back-simultaneous-polls-15-oppose-the-idea/articleshow/108497426.cms>

<sup>11</sup>[https://legallaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/simultaneous\\_elections/NITI\\_AYOG\\_REPORT\\_2017.pdf](https://legallaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/simultaneous_elections/NITI_AYOG_REPORT_2017.pdf)

### **Constitutional Aspects of simultaneous election**

General elections for the Vidhansabha and the House of People were conducted concurrently from 1951 to 1967. Following 1967, this tradition was interrupted by the early dissolution of the Lok Sabha and many Vidhansabha. Restoring synchronization requires constitutional amendments and changes to other statutes, ensuring stability for the Lok Sabha and Vidhansabha. Key requirements include curtailment or extension of terms, amending the Constitution and the Representation of People Act, 1951, and ratification by the States. To prevent future disruptions from no-confidence motions, hung parliaments, or budget defeats, provisions for the remainder term of the Houses must be addressed. Prior efforts to allow for simultaneous elections involved Private Member Bills that suggested modifications to the Constitution's Articles 83, 172, and 326. The Constitution's Articles 85(1) and 174(1) address the sessions, prorogation, and dissolution of State Assemblies and Parliament, respectively, and provide that there may be no more than six months between the end of one House's session and the beginning of the next. The process for budget projections is outlined in Articles 113 and 203, which need assembly or legislative approval before any planned Consolidated Fund expenditures may be made. Failure to pass these estimates results in the termination of the Council of Ministers' terms, leading to a change in government. Articles 75(3) and 164(2) state that the Council of Ministers must maintain the confidence of the majority in the Vidhansabha or the State Legislative Assembly to remain in power.<sup>12</sup>

### **Countries holding synchronous elections**

In South Africa, national and provincial legislatures are elected simultaneously every five years, with municipal elections taking place two years later. In Sweden, elections are held every four years on the second Sunday in September for the National Legislature (Riksdag), provincial legislatures/county councils (Landsting), and local bodies/municipal assemblies. In the United Kingdom, the Fixed-term Parliaments Act of 2011 governs the tenure of the Parliament. In Belgium, there are five different types of elections in which one can vote. The Federal Parliament is normally voted every five years, in line with both the European and, by extension, the regional elections. The Constitutional Court of Indonesia mandated that starting from 2019, Indonesia would hold presidential and legislative elections concurrently. This

---

<sup>12</sup>[https://legalaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/simultaneous\\_elections/LCI\\_2018\\_DRAFT\\_REPORT.pdf](https://legalaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/simultaneous_elections/LCI_2018_DRAFT_REPORT.pdf)



decision was made to align with constitutional principles, asserting that Law No. 42 of 2008 conflicted with Indonesia's constitutional framework. Simultaneous elections are observed in various countries across the globe, including the Philippines, Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, among others. In these nations, which predominantly adopt a Presidential form of government, elections for both the President and the Legislature are conducted concurrently.<sup>13</sup>

### **Challenges of simultaneous elections in India**

Despite its appeal, conducting simultaneous elections presents several challenges. India's Election Commission has said that large-scale procurement of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) equipment will be required. The ECI estimates that procuring these machines would cost Rupees, 9284.15 crore. Additionally, these machines would need to be replaced every fifteen years, incurring further expenses. Moreover, the storage of these machines would increase warehousing costs. However, some exceptional cases need to be considered. If this plan is implemented, states like Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Nagaland may have to reduce the duration of their Assemblies by more than a year. Karnataka is the lone exception; in order to correspond with the April-May 2019 cycle, its tenure would need to be extended by a full year. Clearly, this is inconvenient. But considering the initiative's revolutionary power, it is imperative that all parties involved get over this one-time annoyance. To achieve this for the greater good of the nation, the government and key decision-makers must work towards building consensus and fostering collaboration across political parties and institutions such as the ECI. Many stakeholders' collaboration and cooperation are critical to the effective implementation of ONOE. This involves addressing logistical challenges such as voter registration, polling infrastructure, and security arrangements. It also requires coordination between the Election Commission of India and state election commissions, addressing any challenges to ensure smooth synchronization. Furthermore, executing synchronized elections requires interstate coordination, and overcoming obstacles to this cooperation is critical.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>[https://loksabhadocs.nic.in/Refinput/New\\_Reference\\_Notes/English/Simultaneous\\_election\\_to\\_Lok\\_Sabha\\_and\\_State\\_Legislative\\_Assemblies.pdf](https://loksabhadocs.nic.in/Refinput/New_Reference_Notes/English/Simultaneous_election_to_Lok_Sabha_and_State_Legislative_Assemblies.pdf)

<sup>14</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/10-faqs-on-one-nation-oneelection/articleshow/108498050.cms>

## **Conclusion**

It is not easy to have a One Nation One Election in India. We need consensus from all political parties, a lot of resources, and good laws. We also need to consider regional parties, campaign money, and technology. We need to consult with everyone involved to see whether this method is beneficial to India. While One Nation One Election offers certain benefits, it is critical to understand the potential obstacles and risks related with this system. A debate with all stakeholders is required to get an agreement on the feasibility and appropriateness of this system for India. The analysis concludes that by lowering expenses associated with election administration, security deployments, and governance interruptions, synchronized elections might result in significant cost savings for both state and federal governments. Every election requires a huge quantity of money to be generated. When elections are held simultaneously, political parties' election expenses might be greatly reduced. There would be no repeated fundraising, alleviating much of the pressure on the public and corporate communities for frequent election donations. While this cannot be completely eliminated, the frequency with which governments must announce giveaways will decrease. Many state governments are in financial trouble as a result of frequent elections. Their budget could benefit from fewer elections. Overall, simultaneous elections strengthen governance focus and increase political and economic stability. However, the loss of regional authority and responsibility pose considerable hazards. It has the potential to make a significant transformation in the Indian election system if it is carried out with effective execution of laws and regulations, while also meeting the growing demand for good administrative staff and security.

## References

1. "Amit Shah, Adhir, Azad in eight-member panel to examine idea of 'one nation, one election'". The Indian Express. 2023-09-02. Retrieved 2023-09-02.
2. A manual on force deployment in elections 2023, <https://ceogoa.nic.in/pdf/ImportantDocs/ManualonForceDeployment>.
3. Bar Council of India, [https://www.livelaw.in/pdf\\_upload/bcid-0223-2024-letter-to-high-level-committee-one-nation-one-election-518046](https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/bcid-0223-2024-letter-to-high-level-committee-one-nation-one-election-518046).
4. Bhagat P, Pokhrayal P. Conceptual Reform One Nation One Election. Iikogretim Online. Elementary Education Online. 2020;19(4):3229-3935
5. Chakravarty, P. (2015, December 3). Different vote for state and centre? Mint. <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/O3hCQggLS2ASxW5zz8fJ6K/Different-vote-for-stateand-centre.html>
6. Debroy, B., NITI Aayog members & Desai, K., NITI Aayog Officer on special duty. "Analysis of Simultaneous Elections".
7. Department of Legal Affairs (2018). "Simultaneous Elections Report" Available at: [http://www.lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/Simultaneous\\_Elections](http://www.lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/Simultaneous_Elections).
8. Explained: PM Narendra Modi calls for 'one nation one election' 'what does this idea mean? India express, Aug 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019.
9. Ghai KK. Indian Government and Politics. Kalyani Publishers; c2008.
10. Kaushik, Arun Kumar and Goyal, Yugank (2019) The desirability of one nation one election in India: Simultaneous elections. The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies.
11. Kulkarni, C. Polarising campaigns shrink relevance of smaller, regional parties. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/polarising-campaign-shrinks-relevance-smaller-regional-parties-670946.html>
12. Nooruddin, I., & Chhibber, P. (2008). "Unstable politics: fiscal space and electoral volatility in the Indian States". Comparative Political Studies, 1069-1091.
13. One Nation One Election: Centre forms Panel under Ex Prez. (2023, September 7). One Nation One Election: Centre Forms Panel Under Ex Prez. <https://blog.finology.in/Legalnews/one-nation-one-election-centre-forms-panel-under-ex-prez>
14. Singh, Hemant; 2019 June 20. One Nation One Election: Merits and Demerits. <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/one-nation-one-election-1561032672-1>
15. Tawa Lama-Rewal, S. (2009). Studying elections in India: Scientific and political debates. South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal, (3).
16. The Indian Express; c2022 Mar 10. <https://indianexpress.com/elections/ready-to-hold-one-nation-one-election-ec-chief-sushil-chandra-7813283/>