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EVALUATING THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COORDINATED ELECTIONS IN INDIA: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE "ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION" PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the implications—both favourable and unfavourable—of instituting synchronized elections across India, often termed "One Nation, One Election." This proposed change aims to align the timing of national, state, and local elections to minimize frequent electoral cycles. The study finds that harmonizing polls could lead to substantial cost reductions for both state and central administrations, as it would lower expenses associated with election management, security measures, and governance interruptions. Annual savings are projected to exceed ₹45 billion. The effect on state governments presents a dual narrative: while national issues might overshadow regional matters, state authorities could gain more time to focus on governance rather than campaigning. Voters might experience reduced fatigue but would also lose the opportunity to voice discontent with state governments at staggered intervals. For businesses, coordinated elections could offer greater policy consistency and reduced political unpredictability. However, the risk of prolonged single-party dominance might lead to diminished government oversight. Additionally, national parties are likely to gain an advantage over regional parties. Overall, synchronized elections could enhance governance efficiency and contribute to political and economic stability. Nevertheless, the potential drawbacks, such as diminished regional autonomy and reduced governmental accountability, pose significant concerns. The analysis concludes that while the benefits of synchronized elections are notable, addressing potential negative impacts on regional representation and accountability may necessitate further electoral reforms. This summary encapsulates the essential findings of the full analysis, shedding light on the multifaceted considerations involved in evaluating this significant electoral reform proposal.

INTRODUCTION

With around 900 million eligible voters, India's election system is intricate, befitting the biggest democracy on Earth. State legislative assemblies, local municipal authorities, Lok Sabha, and Rajya Sabha are all part of this system. In India, the electoral system is deeply rooted in the Constitution, which lays out a federal model with clear divisions between federal and state responsibilities. The Election Commission of India ("ECI") is tasked with overseeing the conduct of all elections, ensuring they are free and fair. This independent body is

responsible for the comprehensive regulation of electoral processes, including political parties and their funding.²⁸⁵

Lok Sabha elections have been held every five years, with the possibility of early dissolution, since the first general election in 1951–1952. The 2019 general elections saw a voter turnout exceeding 67%, reflecting the vibrancy of the Indian democratic process. However, the timing of these elections often conflicts with state assembly elections, leading to a persistent

²⁸⁵ Das, Tapan. "One Nation One Election In India: Possibilities and Probable Benefits." (2024).

election environment across various regions. This staggered schedule means that many areas are perpetually engaged in some form of electoral process, which generates continuous governance disruptions and incurs significant costs.²⁸⁶

As compared to the one to five phases usually used for state elections, the seven-part 2019 Lok Sabha election ran from April 11th to May 19th. This extensive process requires the mobilization of millions of electoral personnel and security forces to manage polling stations nationwide. The enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct during prolonged election periods also hampers the implementation of social programs, infrastructure development, and major policy decisions by both state and central governments.

Since the 1990s, Indian elections have highlighted a trend towards anti-incumbency and intense multiparty competition. The fragmented nature of the electoral schedule presents challenges in terms of administrative efficiency, rising electoral expenses, and voter fatigue. Additionally, this arrangement can lead to an imbalance where the central government exerts disproportionate influence over state resources and narratives during simultaneous state elections.

Several high-profile committees have explored reforms aimed at improving the electoral process, including public financing of elections, the potential for recalling Members of Parliament, and transitioning from the first-past-the-post system to proportional representation. Among the most debated proposals is the 'One Nation, One Election' plan, which seeks to synchronize national and state election cycles. Proponents argue that this reform would lead to reduced electoral costs, enhanced governance efficiency, a reduction in populist policies, and a more cohesive national perspective on various issues. Conversely,

critics raise concerns that such a system might marginalize regional issues, weaken the accountability of state governments, and undermine the principles of federalism.

Implementing this reform would require substantial political consensus and constitutional amendments to establish fixed-term state legislatures. The debate surrounding this proposal underscores the need to carefully balance the potential benefits with the preservation of regional autonomy and effective governance.

CONCEPT OF "ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION"

The proposal to align and synchronise election timings across India has sparked much controversy in recent years. The idea, known as 'One Nation One Election', aims to organise the electoral calendar so that elections for the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and local government units be conducted concurrently or together within a specified cycle. Advocates contend that this election reform will provide substantial cost savings, enhance governance efficiency, alleviate pressure on political parties, curtail populist initiatives, and foster a more cohesive perspective on national problems. By eschewing regular electoral cycles, governments may prioritise long-term policies above transient electoral concerns. At now, both state and national administrations are in a constant state of campaigning, which obstructs efficient governance.

The ECI has endorsed the idea of concurrent elections. The diverse election cycle places a substantial logistical and administrative strain on the ECI, necessitating the recurrent deployment of personnel, equipment, and security forces. Moreover, the protracted enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during staggered state elections hinders governance and the execution of policies. Critics contend that conducting simultaneous elections would obscure regional concerns, weaken federalism, and diminish the responsibility of state administrations. Extensive

²⁸⁶ Adhikari, Pankaj, Sania Mariam, and Robert Thomson. "The fulfilment of election pledges in India." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 54, no. 1 (2024): 133-151.

political agreement and significant constitutional modifications will be necessary to facilitate synchronisation. Regional parties contend that it disproportionately advantages national parties. Incumbent administrations will possess disproportionate authority during their set tenure, resulting in less motivation to provide performance and resolve concerns.²⁸⁷

The Law Commission of India has just published a draft study assessing several methods for implementing a 'One Nation One Election'. The most extreme alternative is altering the Constitution to establish set five-year terms for state assemblies and the Lok Sabha, operating simultaneously. This will need concurrent elections but encounters challenges with no-confidence resolutions, hung assemblies, and house dissolution. Another option would be to have both the federal and state elections at the same time, with each state having the discretion to choose their own election date by a few months. Security, the possibility of combining specific state elections, and the enforcement of multi-county coordination over long periods of time are all issues with this staggered synchronisation paradigm. The third option is to hold separate elections for the Lok Sabha and state legislatures. The expected benefits of electoral synchrony are reduced as a result.

In order to assess feasibility, the Law Commission report stresses the importance of nonpartisan debate. Political unity is essential to "One Nation, One Election," but it has so far proven impossible to achieve. Attempts to align election cycles in the past have encountered difficulties in ensuring consistency. Assembly and parliamentary elections were later separated once the Lok Sabha was dissolved in 1970. It is possible that synchronisation will be disrupted by future dissolution or no-confidence actions. The current political climate

makes constitutional amendments a formidable challenge.

A REVIEW OF HISTORICAL PRACTICES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

The majority of state legislative assemblies and the House of People were elected at the same time from 1951–52 until 1967. The disruption of this trend, however, caused elections to occur almost every year, but at different periods within the same year. Expenditures incurred by the government and other parties are substantial; security forces and election officials are diverted from their main duties for long periods of time; and developmental activities are halted as a result of the Model Code of Conduct's lengthy enforcement.

In its 170th Report on Electoral Law Reforms, the Law Commission of India declared:

"This annual cycle of elections, including those held out of season, should be terminated. We need to go back to the previous situation when all legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha are elected at the same time. It is true that we can't plan for every possible scenario, but whether it's because of Article 356 (which has been less used since the Supreme Court's decision in S.R. Bommai vs Union of India) or something else entirely, holding separate elections for the Legislative Assembly should be considered the exception rather than the rule. 'One election every five years for the Lok Sabha and all Legislative Assemblies.'"²⁸⁸

As stated in the rule,

The "79th Report on the Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections for the House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies", submitted in December 2015, also evaluated the issue and proposed an alternative and pragmatic approach for conducting

²⁸⁷ Chatterjee, Joydeep, and Gautam Dutta. "A systematic literature review to understand the difference between critical factors affecting the national election and state elections in India." *Frontiers in Political Science* 6 (2024): 1323186.

²⁸⁸ <https://onoe.gov.in/>

simultaneous elections in two phases. The report was prepared by the "Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice".

THE NEED FOR ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

India's 2024 Lok Sabha elections are expected to be the most expensive in the country's history, costing an estimated Rs 1,00,000 crore, double the expenditure of the 2019 elections. The rising costs are attributed to the increased number of eligible voters and the growing use of social media in political campaigns.²⁸⁹ Administrative expenses, such as deploying officials and procuring EVMs, have also increased. The Election Commission's budget has expanded to accommodate a larger workforce. The unprecedented scale of the election, lasting 44 days, will mark a key moment in India's democratic history.

A parliamentary panel discussion revealed that the Election Commission of India allocates approximately ₹4,500 crore for organizing elections to both the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. This figure does not account for the additional, often hidden, expenditures incurred by political candidates and parties. The 79th report, titled "Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Assemblies, 2015," produced by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice, recommended a more practical approach involving a two-phase electoral system. The committee's report, presented the previous year, suggested initiating the first phase in November 2016. The proposal advocated for aligning elections for state legislatures whose terms end within six months to one year before or after the designated election date. To facilitate this alignment, the committee recommended

adjusting the terms of certain legislatures—shortening some while extending others.²⁹⁰

The frequent electoral cycles in India place a considerable financial burden on election management. With approximately 900 million eligible voters and over one million polling stations, the logistical demands are immense. Distributing security personnel, polling staff, voting equipment, and other electoral materials across the country's vast and diverse landscape represents a complex challenge. According to the Election Commission of India (ECI), the "expenditure for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, excluding costs incurred by political parties and candidates, surpassed ₹15,000 crore. The cost of managing state assembly elections varies significantly, ranging from ₹300 crore to ₹1,000 crore, depending on the size of the state. Data from the Centre for Media Studies estimated that the total expenses for the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections during the 2012-13 period, covering costs by the ECI, state governments, and candidates, amounted to approximately ₹30,000 crore."²⁹¹

Projections suggest that implementing synchronized elections could lead to a reduction in overall electoral costs by 25-40%. This potential saving could translate to ₹7,500 to ₹12,000 crore per general election cycle, which could be redirected towards social development programs.²⁹² However, a notable concern is the potentially high initial cost of transitioning to a system of simultaneous elections, which might involve advancing or delaying certain state assembly elections to achieve synchronization. Despite this, long-term cost savings are anticipated following the initial adjustment period. Additionally, the benefits of synchronized elections extend beyond financial savings; they promise improved governance,

²⁹⁰ Chatterjee, Joydeep, and Gautam Dutta. "A systematic literature review to understand the difference between critical factors affecting the national election and state elections in India." *Frontiers in Political Science* 6 (2024): 1323186.

²⁹¹ Khare, Shubhank. "One Nation One Election in India." *Issue 3 Int'l J.L. Mgmt. & Human.* 5 (2022): 1309.

²⁹² Bhagat, Parindu, and Mrs Purvi Pokharyal. "CONCEPTUAL REFORMS ONE NATION-ONE ELECTION." *Ilkogretim Online* 19, no. 4 (2020): 3929-3935.

²⁸⁹ Bhatnagar, Arti. "Issue of 'One Nation, One Election' in Indian Perspective." (2024).

enhanced policy stability, and reduced political uncertainty. These advantages collectively contribute to a favorable economic impact, offering a compelling case for considering the reform of aligning election schedules across different levels of government.

The following are some examples of election-related expenditures that may be better managed and reduced by coordinating their execution:²⁹³

- Decreased provisions and amenities at voting stations. Presently, distinct procedures must be established for Parliamentary and Assembly elections conducted many months apart. Synchronisation enables the full use of existing infrastructure.
- E-voting machines are now purchased independently for state and federal elections at regular intervals, which helps to save expenditures. The efficient and consistent sharing of electronic voting machines is made possible by simultaneous elections.
- Cost reductions in the production, printing, and distribution of election materials such as voter slips, ID cards, ballot papers, and result sheets by eliminating duplicate tasks.
- Reduction in human resource expenditures, including polling crew allowances, which are now paid many times annually owing to staggered elections.
- Reduced costs for transporting polling staff and security forces to outlying locations during tightly scheduled election stages.

State police units and home guards are among the primary security organisations responsible for election responsibilities. The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)—including the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, and SSB—were also involved. For the

2019 Lok Sabha elections, more than 700,000 CAPF members were deployed, complemented by approximately 2 million state police officers. The Election Commission of India estimated the expenditure on security personnel for these elections at ₹300 crore. This substantial cost stems from allowances, transport, logistics, and accommodations for the deployed forces. Coordinating elections simultaneously would consolidate security operations into a single cycle, unlike the current practice where Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections are staggered. This consolidation would eliminate duplicated costs related to transport, temporary lodging, and the mobilization of security forces, resulting in considerable financial savings.²⁹⁴

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF ONE-NATION ONE-ELECTION

India, as the world's largest democracy, conducts elections at multiple levels—national, state, and local—throughout the year. These staggered elections, while showcasing the strength of Indian democracy, also present a significant set of challenges. The concept of One-Nation One-Election, wherein simultaneous polls are conducted for the Lok Sabha (national parliament) and all State Legislative Assemblies, is proposed as a solution to mitigate the recurrent election cycles. Proponents argue that such a model offers various benefits, including cost-efficiency, governance stability, reduced political divisiveness, and minimized disruption to public life.

1. Cost Efficiency and Economic Impact

The financial burden of conducting frequent elections is one of the most significant arguments in favour of One-Nation One-Election. Elections in India involve vast expenditures on the Election Commission's logistics, security, public administration, and political parties' campaign expenditures. According to an estimate by the Election

²⁹³ Kaushik, Arun Kumar, and Yugank Goyal. "The desirability of one nation one election in India: Simultaneous elections." *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 44, no. 1/2 (2019): 110-120.

²⁹⁴ Bairagi, Ashutosh. "One Nation One Election in India: A Contemporary Need vis-a-vis a Matter of Mere Discussion." *Issue 2 Int'l J.L. Mgmt. & Human.* 5 (2022): 1726.

Commission of India (ECI), the 2019 General Elections alone cost the exchequer around ₹60,000 crore. Staggered elections in different states further add to these figures. By consolidating national and state elections, the government could drastically reduce these costs.²⁹⁵

The ripple effect of elections on economic activities, particularly on governance and decision-making processes, is another factor. The model code of conduct (MCC) comes into play whenever elections are announced, limiting the government's ability to announce new policies or launch developmental programs. This cyclical imposition of the MCC hampers the smooth functioning of both central and state governments. With One-Nation One-Election, this disruption would occur only once every five years, thus ensuring uninterrupted governance and policy continuity.

2. Improved Governance Stability

One of the key benefits of simultaneous elections is that it promotes governance stability. The current staggered election system results in a constant "campaign mode" where political parties are perpetually focused on upcoming state elections. This focus often diverts attention from the pressing issues of governance. Furthermore, politicians, especially in coalition governments, may delay tough but necessary decisions for fear of losing electoral support in upcoming state elections. One-Nation One-Election would eliminate this frequent electoral distraction, allowing both the central and state governments to function effectively throughout their five-year terms.

This system would also foster long-term policy planning. Elected governments would have a clear mandate for a defined term without the looming threat of state elections. Landmark judgments such as *"Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu"* (1992),²⁹⁶ which dealt with issues of party defection, show that political instability

can arise from electoral pressures. With synchronized elections, governments could potentially avoid such disruptions.

3. Reduced Political Divisiveness

India's diverse political landscape is often marked by heightened political rhetoric and divisiveness, particularly around election periods. The constant cycle of elections—whether state or national—fuels aggressive campaigning and polarizing narratives. With One-Nation One-Election, the political atmosphere would be calmer in the intervening periods. Campaigning, and by extension, political partisanship, would be concentrated only once every five years. This would enable political parties to focus more on governance rather than continually catering to their electoral bases.

Furthermore, staggered elections often lead to inconsistent electoral verdicts, with regional parties or coalitions dominating in state elections while national parties may secure larger mandates in the general elections. This dichotomy can lead to tensions between central and state governments, particularly in states where different political parties hold power. By conducting simultaneous polls, the overall electoral outcome might reflect a more cohesive political landscape, thus reducing friction between state and central governments.

4. Minimized Disruption to Public Life

Frequent elections also cause significant disruptions to public life, especially in the areas of governance, education, and law and order. For instance, large numbers of security personnel are deployed for election duties, often affecting their primary responsibilities. Schools and colleges are frequently used as polling stations, leading to academic disruptions. Additionally, political rallies and campaigns cause logistical challenges, such as roadblocks, traffic diversions, and disturbances to daily life.

With simultaneous elections, these disruptions would be reduced to a single period every five

²⁹⁵ Kumar, Vivek. "One nation one election: Indian perspective." (2022).

²⁹⁶ 1992 (1992) 2 S.C.C.R. 700, [1992] 2 S.C.R. 700, 1992 CanLII 60 (S.C.C.).

years. The consolidation of electoral processes would ensure that the country's administrative machinery, educational institutions, and security forces remain undisturbed for the remainder of the term.

5. Other Countries

Several countries successfully conduct simultaneous elections for different levels of government, demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of the One-Nation One-Election model. For instance, South Africa holds its general and provincial polls simultaneously every five years. This not only ensures uniformity in governance but also reduces election-related costs and public disturbances. Similarly, countries like Sweden and Belgium also conduct synchronized elections, showcasing that consolidated electoral processes can be managed effectively, even in diverse political environments. In the case of Indonesia, a country with a federal structure like India, elections for the national and regional legislatures are held simultaneously. This system has been credited with strengthening democracy by allowing voters to focus on national and regional issues concurrently, thus providing a more holistic electoral verdict. These global examples suggest that India could benefit from adopting a similar model to ensure smoother governance and reduced electoral chaos.²⁹⁷

6. Constitutional and Legal Challenges

Despite the compelling arguments in favour of One-Nation One-Election, the implementation of such a model in India is not without challenges. The primary obstacle is the need for constitutional amendments. Articles 83 and 172 of the Indian Constitution, which deals with the duration of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively, would need to be amended to ensure simultaneous elections. Additionally, the *Representation of the People*

Act 1951, would also require significant modifications.²⁹⁸

Legal scholars and constitutional experts have raised concerns about the practicality of aligning the election cycles of all states with the national elections. State governments, for instance, might face logistical and political challenges in accepting the extension or curtailment of their tenures to synchronize with national polls. Furthermore, the Supreme Court has, in several rulings, including "*S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*" (1994)²⁹⁹, emphasized the federal structure of the Constitution. Critics argue that simultaneous elections could undermine federalism by pushing regional issues to the backseat in favour of national concerns during election campaigns.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST ONE-NATION ONE-ELECTION

The debate over One-Nation One-Election, a system where simultaneous elections are held for the Lok Sabha (national parliament) and all State Legislative Assemblies, has intensified in recent years. While proponents argue for cost-efficiency, stability, and reduced political disruptions, the proposal also faces considerable criticism. Opponents argue that such a system undermines India's federal structure, dilutes regional representation, presents logistical challenges, and poses constitutional difficulties. These concerns must be carefully analyzed to understand why One-Nation One-Election may not be a practical or desirable solution for a diverse country like India.

1. Undermining Federalism

One of the strongest arguments against One-Nation One-Election is its potential to undermine India's federal structure, which is enshrined in the Constitution. India's democracy is built on a fine balance between the Union and the States, with both enjoying sovereign powers

²⁹⁷ George, A. Shaji. "One Nation, One Election: An Analysis of the Pros and Cons of Implementing Simultaneous Elections in India." *Partners Universal International Research Journal* 2, no. 3 (2023): 40-60.

²⁹⁸ Bansal, Meenakshi. "The Concept of One Nation One Election: An Analysis from Indian Perspective." *Think India Journal* 22, no. 4 (2019): 3077-3084.

²⁹⁹ (1994) 3 SCC 1

in their respective domains. As articulated in cases such as *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) 3 SCC 1, the Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized the importance of federalism as part of the basic structure of the Constitution.³⁰⁰

Holding simultaneous elections across the country risks centralizing political discourse and power, potentially diminishing the role and significance of state-specific issues. In a country as diverse as India, different states face unique social, economic, and political challenges. Simultaneous elections could lead to a homogenized political agenda dominated by national concerns, sidelining important local issues. This could disproportionately affect smaller regional parties that rely on state-specific campaigns and policies to connect with voters.

By combining state and national elections, the electorate's attention may focus primarily on national issues, which could marginalize regional leaders and parties. This is especially pertinent in states with strong regional identities, such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Punjab, where regional parties play a crucial role in governance. The fear is that One-Nation One-Election would diminish the significance of regional elections, shifting the political discourse toward national parties and their priorities.

2. Dilution of Regional Representation

Another key concern revolves around the potential dilution of regional representation. India's political landscape is incredibly diverse, with regional parties holding sway in several states. These parties often represent the distinct cultural, linguistic, and political aspirations of their regions. In the current staggered election system, regional parties can focus on state-specific issues, connecting with the electorate on a grassroots level. Simultaneous elections

could weaken this connection, as voters might prioritize national issues over regional ones.

Studies show that during simultaneous elections, voters tend to vote uniformly for the same party at both the national and state levels, a phenomenon known as "electoral synchronization." This trend can be observed in countries like South Africa, where simultaneous elections for national and provincial legislatures have led to the dominance of national political narratives at the expense of regional concerns. This uniformity in voting behaviour can diminish the electoral success of regional parties, which depend on state-specific agendas.

For instance, in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, several regional parties performed well in their respective states, despite being in opposition to the ruling party at the center. In simultaneous elections, the dominance of national issues could drown out regional voices, undermining the diversity of political representation and potentially leading to the erosion of India's rich multi-party system.

3. Logistical Challenges

The sheer scale of India's democratic exercise is another argument against One-Nation One-Election. India's population exceeds 1.4 billion, with over 900 million eligible voters. Conducting elections for both the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies simultaneously would present monumental logistical challenges. Elections in India already require extensive planning, deployment of security forces, and coordination across multiple government agencies. Holding them all at once would exacerbate these challenges.³⁰¹

A simultaneous election would also place immense pressure on the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure smooth and fair elections across all states. The logistics of managing resources, personnel, and security across the entire country for a single election

³⁰⁰ George, A. Shaji. "One Nation, One Election: An Analysis of the Pros and Cons of Implementing Simultaneous Elections in India." *Partners Universal International Research Journal* 2, no. 3 (2023): 40-60.

³⁰¹ Devi, Seema, Shashank A. Anand, Babu Lal, Shivam Chauhan, Arvind Yadav, and Shiva Kashyap. "One Nation, One Election In Federal Democracies: A Comparative Study Of Global Experiences." *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice* 30, no. 5 (2024): 10298-10301.

could lead to significant administrative hurdles. While the idea of reducing election frequency is appealing, the scale of such a combined election may overwhelm the ECI's capacity, resulting in inefficiencies or disruptions.

Moreover, the possibility of large-scale violence or disruptions in any part of the country during simultaneous elections could have far-reaching consequences. In the current system, if unrest occurs in a particular state during elections, the ECI can defer or reschedule elections in that region. However, in One-Nation One-Election, any disruption could have nationwide implications, affecting the electoral process across multiple states.

4. Constitutional and Legal Issues

Implementing One-Nation One-Election would require significant constitutional amendments. Articles 83 and 172 of the Constitution stipulate the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively. Synchronizing their election cycles would mean extending or curtailing the terms of existing governments, which would require not only constitutional changes but also political consensus. Given India's multiparty democracy, achieving such consensus across political lines seems highly unlikely.

Additionally, the *Representation of the People Act 1951* would need to be amended to allow for simultaneous elections. This raises concerns about the violation of the democratic rights of states to govern themselves and hold elections according to their timelines. Moreover, the potential for state governments to face dissolution through the imposition of President's Rule under Article 356 in case of instability would further complicate the issue. In landmark cases like the "*State of Rajasthan v. Union of India*" (1977),³⁰² the Supreme Court has made it clear that state governments must be allowed to function without undue interference from the center, further highlighting the potential

constitutional complexities of One-Nation One-Election.

5. Global Comparisons and Challenges

While proponents of One-Nation One-Election point to examples like South Africa and Sweden, these comparisons may not fully account for India's unique diversity and scale. In South Africa, for instance, national and provincial elections are held simultaneously every five years. However, South Africa's political structure is vastly different from India's federal system, with fewer provinces and a relatively smaller electorate. Similarly, countries like Belgium and Indonesia conduct simultaneous elections for different levels of government, but these nations are far smaller and less diverse than India. Indonesia, despite holding national and regional elections at the same time, has faced significant logistical challenges. In the 2019 elections, for example, the country saw widespread administrative difficulties, with nearly 500 election officials dying from fatigue and overwork due to the scale of the simultaneous elections. This experience underscores the potential human and logistical toll of attempting to conduct One-Nation One-Election in a country as large and diverse as India.³⁰³

6. Governance Instability

Another potential downside of simultaneous elections is the risk of governance instability at the state level. Currently, if a state government collapses due to a vote of no confidence or internal party issues, fresh elections are called to elect a new government. In a One-Nation, One-Election system, however, such a situation would either lead to the imposition of the President's Rule until the next round of national elections or necessitate fresh elections, disrupting the synchronized electoral cycle.

This could lead to prolonged periods of governance by a caretaker government, which

³⁰² AIR 1977 SC 1361, (1977) 3 SCC 592

³⁰³ Waza, Aarif Mohd. "Assessing the Feasibility and Implications of Implementing One Nation One Election in India." *IJATSS* 1, no. 3 (2023): 185-196.

would lack the authority to make significant policy decisions, potentially resulting in governance paralysis. For instance, the Supreme Court in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) has outlined the conditions for the imposition of the President's Rule, emphasizing that such a measure should be used sparingly. The frequent imposition of President's Rule in states where governments collapse before the next scheduled national election could raise concerns about the erosion of state autonomy and democratic governance.³⁰⁴

CONCLUSION

The concept of "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE), advocating for simultaneous elections across all levels of government in India, has sparked an intense debate around its merits and challenges. Supporters argue that it could bring numerous advantages, such as significant cost savings, enhanced administrative efficiency, and a reduction in the burden on security forces and other election-related machinery. By reducing the frequency of elections, the system could allow governments to focus more on governance rather than being in a constant campaign mode. This would help maintain a continuity of policymaking, preventing frequent disruptions caused by the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct. Moreover, proponents believe that synchronized elections would streamline voter participation and awareness, contributing to a more engaged and informed electorate.

However, the implementation of ONOE also presents considerable challenges and concerns. One of the primary hurdles is constitutional, as it would require amending various provisions, particularly those related to the tenure of the Parliament and state legislatures. There is also the issue of what would happen if a government were to fall prematurely. Managing such situations in a synchronized election framework could lead to complications, especially in maintaining

democratic principles of flexibility in governance. Critics also highlight that the diversity of India's political landscape could be undermined, with regional issues possibly getting overshadowed by national narratives in simultaneous elections. This could reduce the political space for regional parties and diminish their influence on local governance, potentially skewing the democratic process.

Another major challenge relates to the federal structure of India, where states have significant autonomy. Conducting elections simultaneously might be perceived as centralizing power, limiting the political independence of states. Furthermore, logistical issues such as the availability of election infrastructure, coordination of security forces, and voter management across such a vast and diverse country could prove overwhelming.

In conclusion, while the idea of simultaneous elections promises economic and administrative benefits, its execution remains fraught with constitutional, political, and logistical complexities. The debate on ONOE reflects a broader conversation about the balance between efficiency and democratic principles, governance and federalism, and the practicalities of implementing such a sweeping reform in a nation as diverse and populous as India. Any move toward its adoption would require careful consideration of these challenges, a clear roadmap for implementation, and widespread consensus among political actors across the spectrum. Without addressing the underlying concerns, the advantages of cost-saving and efficiency may come at the expense of India's federal structure and democratic diversity. Thus, the decision to move forward with simultaneous elections demands a cautious and inclusive approach that ensures democratic integrity while aspiring toward greater electoral efficiency.

³⁰⁴ Shivani. "One Nation One Election: A New Electoral Reform in India." *Supremo Amicus* 24 (2021): 201.