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A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE "ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION" PROPOSAL IN ORDER TO ASSESS THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF COORDINATED ELECTIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This Paper examines the potential benefits and drawbacks of holding synchronized elections across India, a concept sometimes referred to as "One Nation, One Election." The goal of this suggested modification is to reduce the frequency of electoral cycles by coordinating the dates of municipal, state, and federal elections. The research concludes that while standardizing polls would reduce the costs of election management, security, and governance disruptions, it might result in significant cost savings for both state and federal administrations. It is anticipated that savings would surpass ₹45 billion annually. The impact on state governments is twofold: state officials may have more time to concentrate on governing rather than campaigning, but national concerns may take precedence over regional ones. Although voters would feel less fatigued, they would also be deprived of the chance to express their dissatisfaction with state administrations at irregular intervals. Coordinated elections may benefit companies by lowering political volatility and increasing policy uniformity. Long-term one-party rule, however, carries the danger of reducing governmental supervision. Furthermore, national parties are probably going to outperform regional ones. All things considered, coordinated elections may improve the effectiveness of government and support political and economic stability. However, there are serious worries about the possible negative effects, which include decreased regional autonomy and less governmental responsibility. Although synchronized elections have many advantages, the research comes to the conclusion that more electoral changes may be necessary to minimize any possible harm to regional representation and

accountability. This synopsis highlights the key conclusions of the whole investigation and clarifies the many factors to be taken into account when assessing this important election reform proposal.

Key Words: Nation, Election, People, Politics, One Nation One Election.

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.¹

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 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.²

In contrast to state elections, which typically take place in one to five stages, the 2019 Lok Sabha election was held in seven parts, from April 11 to May 19. Millions of election workers and security officers must be mobilized for this lengthy procedure in order to oversee voting places around the country. The Model Code of Conduct's enforcement during protracted election seasons also makes it more difficult for the federal and state governments to administer social programs, build infrastructure, and make important policy choices.

¹ Das, Tapan. "One Nation One Election In India: Possibilities and Probable Benefits." (2024).

² Adhikari, Pankaj, Sania Mariam, and Robert Thomson. "The fulfilment of election pledges in India." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 54, no. 1 (2024): 133-151.

Elections in India throughout the 1990s have shown a tendency toward fierce multiparty competition and anti-incumbency sentiment. Voter weariness, growing electoral costs, and administrative efficiency are all hampered by the election schedule's fragmentation. Furthermore, during concurrent state elections, this structure may result in an imbalance where the federal government has an excessive amount of control on state resources and narratives. Public funding of elections, the possibility of recalling MPs, and switching from the first-past-the-post system to proportional representation are just a few of the ideas that have been investigated by a number of well-known committees in an effort to improve the electoral process. The 'One Nation, One Election' concept, which aims to align state and national election calendars, is one of the most contentious initiatives. Supporters contend that this change would result in lower election expenses, more effective government, less populist initiatives, and a more unified national viewpoint on a range of topics. On the other hand, detractors express worries that such a system may diminish the responsibility of state governments, downplay local problems, and compromise federalist ideals. Significant political agreement and constitutional adjustments establishing fixed-term state legislatures would be necessary for the implementation of this reform. The discussion around this plan emphasizes how important it is to carefully weigh the possible advantages against maintaining regional sovereignty and efficient government.

MEANING OF "ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION"

In recent years, there has been a great deal of debate around the plan to synchronize and harmonize election times across India. The concept referred to as 'One Nation One Election' seeks to arrange the electoral calendar in such a way that Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and local government elections are held either simultaneously or in tandem within a designated cycle. Proponents claim that this election reform would reduce the cost of elections significantly, improve the effectiveness of government, ease pressure on political parties, limit populist efforts, and promote a more unified approach to national issues. Governments may prioritize long-term initiatives above short-term political concerns by forgoing regular election cycles. Effective governance is now hampered by the ongoing campaigning of both the national and state governments. Concurrent elections have been approved by the ECI. The ECI must often deploy staff, equipment, and security forces because to the different election cycle, which puts a significant administrative and logistical burden on the organization. Furthermore, administration and policy implementation are hampered by the prolonged use of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during staggered state elections. Simultaneous elections, according

to critics, would hide regional issues, erode federalism, and lessen the accountability of state governments. To enable synchronization, considerable constitutional changes and broad political consensus will be required. National parties are disproportionately favored, compared to regional parties. During their designated term, incumbent governments will have an excessive amount of power, which will demotivate them to perform well and address issues.³ The Law Commission of India has just released a draft report evaluating several approaches for the implementation of 'One Nation One Election'. The most radical option is amending the Constitution to institute fixed five-year terms for state legislatures and the Lok Sabha, functioning concurrently. This will need simultaneous elections but faces obstacles such as no-confidence motions, hung assemblies, and dismissal of the legislature. An alternative would be to conduct both federal and state elections concurrently, allowing each state the autonomy to choose its own election date within a few months' variance. Security, the potential for consolidating certain state elections, and the implementation of multi-county coordination over extended durations are all concerns associated with this staggered synchronization model. The third alternative is to conduct separate elections for the Lok Sabha and state legislatures. The anticipated advantages of electoral synchrony are diminished therefore. The Law Commission study emphasizes the need of unbiased discourse to evaluate feasibility. Political cohesion is crucial for "One Nation, One Election," although it has so far been unattainable. Previous efforts to synchronize election cycles have faced challenges in maintaining uniformity. The assembly and parliamentary elections were subsequently split with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1970. Future breakup or no-confidence measures may interrupt synchronization. The prevailing political environment makes constitutional modifications a significant problem.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL PRACTICES, SUGGESTIONS, AND MODERN 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.

³ 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.

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.’”⁴

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

THE NECESSITY FOR A UNIFIED NATION AND SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections in India are projected to be the most costly in the nation's history, with an anticipated expenditure of Rs 1,00,000 crore, which is double the cost of the 2019 polls. The escalating expenses are ascribed to the augmented population of eligible voters and the expanding utilization of social media in political campaigns. Administrative expenditures, including the deployment of officials and the procurement of electronic voting machines, have also risen. The Election Commission's budget has increased to support a bigger staff. The election's extraordinary duration of 44 days would signify a pivotal point in India's democratic history.

A parliamentary panel debate disclosed that the Election Commission of India designates roughly ₹4,500 crore for conducting elections for both the Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly. This statistic excludes the supplementary, sometimes concealed, costs spent by political candidates and parties. The 79th report, entitled "Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Assemblies, 2015," generated by the

⁴ <https://onoe.gov.in/>

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice, advocated for a more pragmatic strategy encompassing a two-phase electoral system. The committee's report, delivered the prior year, recommended commencing the first phase in November 2016. The plan recommended synchronizing elections for state legislatures whose mandates conclude between six months to one year before to or after the specified election date. To achieve this congruence, the group proposed modifying the durations of certain legislatures reducing some while prolonging others. The recurrent political cycles in India impose a significant financial strain on election administration. The logistical requirements are substantial, given the nearly 900 million eligible voters and more over one million voting places. The allocation of security officers, polling officials, voting equipment, and other electoral materials across the nation's extensive and varied terrain is a significant difficulty. The Election Commission of India (ECI) said that the spending for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, excluding expenses by political parties and candidates, exceeded ₹15,000 crore. The expenditure for administering state assembly elections fluctuates considerably, between ₹300 crore and ₹1,000 crore, dependent upon the state's size. The Centre for Media Studies estimates that the entire expenditures for the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections in the 2012-13 period, including expenses incurred by the Election Commission of India, state governments, and candidates, reached nearly ₹30,000 crore.⁵ 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.⁶ 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, 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

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

⁶ Bhagat, Parindu, and Mrs Purvi Pokharyal. "CONCEPTUAL REFORMS ONE NATION-ONE ELECTION." *Ilkogretim Online* 19, no. 4 (2020): 3929-3935.

and reduced by coordinating their execution:⁷

- 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 house guards are the principal security organizations tasked with election duties. The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), including the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, and SSB, were also engaged. During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, around 700,000 Central Armed Police Force troops were deployed, alongside nearly 2 million state police personnel. The Election Commission of India projected the spending on security personnel for these elections to be ₹300 crore. This significant expense arises from allowances, transportation, logistics, and lodging for the deployed personnel. Simultaneous coordination of elections will unify security activities into a single cycle, in contrast to the existing practice of staggered Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. This convergence would remove redundant expenses associated with transportation, temporary accommodation, and the deployment of security personnel, yielding significant financial savings.⁸

ADVOCACY FOR A UNIFIED ELECTION SYSTEM

India, the biggest democracy globally, holds elections at several levels national, state, and local annually. The staggered elections, whilst demonstrating the robustness of Indian democracy, nevertheless pose considerable obstacles. The One-Nation One-Election idea proposes conducting simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies to

⁷ 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.

⁸ Bairagi, Ashutosh. "One Nation One Election in India: A Contemporary Need vis-a-vis a Matter of Mere Discussion." *Issue 2 Int'l JL Mgmt. & Human.* 5 (2022): 1726.

alleviate the frequent election cycles. Advocates contend that this paradigm has several advantages, including as cost-effectiveness, government stability, less political polarization, and minimal interruption to public life.

1. Cost Efficiency and Economic Impact

The financial strain of holding numerous elections is a major factor for One-Nation One-Election. Elections in India include substantial spending on the logistics of the Election Commission, security measures, public administration, and campaign costs of political parties. The Election Commission of India (ECI) estimates that the 2019 General Elections incurred an expenditure of around ₹60,000 crore. Staggered elections throughout many states contribute to these statistics. The government may significantly save these expenses by merging national and state elections.⁹

The influence of elections on economic activity, especially on governance and decision-making processes, is an additional issue. The model code of conduct (MCC) is activated at the announcement of elections, restricting the government's capacity to introduce new policies or initiate developmental activities. The recurrent enforcement of the MCC obstructs the efficient operation of both federal and state administrations. The implementation of One-Nation One-Election would result in disruption occurring just once every five years, therefore guaranteeing consistent governance and policy continuity.

2. Improved Governance Stability

One of the primary advantages of concurrent elections is that it fosters government stability. The existing staggered election structure engenders a persistent "campaign mode," when political parties are continuously preoccupied with forthcoming state elections. This emphasis often distracts from critical governance challenges. Moreover, politicians, particularly in coalition administrations, may postpone difficult but essential choices due to concerns about jeopardizing political backing in forthcoming state elections. The implementation of One-Nation One-Election will eliminate this recurrent election distraction, enabling both federal and state governments to operate efficiently over their five-year tenures.

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.

⁹ Kumar, Vivek. "One nation one election: Indian perspective." (2022).

Landmark judgments such as “*Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu*” (1992),¹⁰ 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

The political environment of India is often characterized by intensified hyperbole and polarization, especially during election seasons. The perpetual cycle of elections, both state and national, incites fervent campaigning and divisive narratives. The implementation of One-Nation One-Election would result in a more tranquil political environment throughout interim periods. Campaigning, and thus political polarization, would be limited to a frequency of once every five years. This would allow political parties to concentrate more on governing instead of always accommodating their electoral bases. Moreover, staggered elections can result in disparate electoral outcomes, as regional parties or coalitions prevail in state elections, but national parties may get more substantial mandates in general elections. This contradiction may engender difficulties between central and state administrations, especially in states governed by different political parties. Simultaneous polling may provide a more unified election result, hence reducing tensions between state and central administrations.

4. Minimized Disruption to Public Life

Frequent elections result in considerable disturbances to public life, particularly in government, education, and law enforcement. A significant number of security officers are assigned to election tasks, often impacting their regular responsibilities. Educational institutions are often used as voting locations, resulting in instructional interruptions. Furthermore, political demonstrations and campaigns provide logistical issues, including barricades, traffic diversions, and disruptions to everyday life. Simultaneous elections would consolidate these interruptions into a single occurrence every five years. The unification of election procedures would guarantee the stability of the nation's administrative apparatus, educational establishments, and security forces throughout the duration of the term.

5. Other Countries

Numerous nations effectively execute concurrent elections for various governmental

¹⁰ 1992 (1992) 2 S.C.C.R. 700, [1992] 2 S.C.R. 700, 1992 CanLII 60 (S.C.C.).

tiers, illustrating the viability and advantages of the One-Nation One-Election framework. South Africa conducts its national and provincial elections concurrently every five years. This guarantees consistency in governance while also decreasing electoral expenses and public disruptions. Likewise, nations such as Sweden and Belgium execute synchronized elections, demonstrating that integrated electoral procedures may be efficiently administered, even within varied political contexts. In Indonesia, a nation with a federal system akin to India, elections for both national and regional legislatures occur concurrently. This strategy has been recognized for enhancing democracy by enabling voters to simultaneously concentrate on national and regional problems, so yielding a more comprehensive election outcome. These international examples indicate that India may gain from using a comparable approach to facilitate more efficient government and reduce election disorder.¹¹

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.¹²

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)¹³, 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Bansal, Meenakshi. "The Concept of One Nation One Election: An Analysis from Indian Perspective." *Think India Journal* 22, no. 4 (2019): 3077-3084.

¹³ (1994) 3 SCC 1

OBJECTIONS TO ONE-NATION ONE-ELECTION

The discourse around One-Nation One-Election, a framework for conducting concurrent elections for the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies, has escalated in recent years. Although advocates assert benefits such as cost-efficiency, stability, and less political upheavals, the concept encounters significant opposition. Critics contend that this method weakens India's federal framework, diminishes regional representation, introduces logistical complications, and raises constitutional issues. These issues need further examination to ascertain why One-Nation One-Election may not be a feasible or advantageous option for a heterogeneous nation such as 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 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.¹⁴

Conducting concurrent elections nationwide may centralize political discourse and authority, thus undermining the importance of state-specific concerns. In a nation as varied as India, several states have distinct social, economic, and political issues. Concurrent elections may result in a uniform political agenda primarily focused on national problems, while marginalizing significant local matters. This may disproportionately impact smaller regional parties that depend on state-specific campaigns and programs to engage with people.

Combining state and national elections may cause the voters to concentrate mostly on national problems, perhaps marginalizing regional leaders and parties. This is particularly relevant in states with pronounced regional identities, like as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Punjab, where regional parties are essential in governing. The concern is that One-Nation One-Election will undermine the importance of regional elections, redirecting the political dialogue towards national parties and their agendas.

¹⁴ 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.

2. Dilution of Regional Representation

A significant issue pertains to the possible dilution of regional representation. The political landscape of India is very diversified, with regional parties exerting influence in several states. These parties often embody the unique cultural, linguistic, and political ambitions of their areas. The existing staggered election structure enables regional parties to concentrate on state-specific concerns, engaging with the people at a grassroots level. Concurrent elections may undermine this relationship, since voters might favor national concerns over local matters.

Research indicates that during concurrent elections, voters often cast their ballots consistently for the same party at both national and state levels, a phenomenon referred to as "electoral synchronization." This phenomenon is evident in nations such as South Africa, where concurrent elections for national and provincial legislatures have resulted in the predominance of national political discourses, overshadowing regional issues. This consistency in voting behavior might undermine the political viability of regional parties that rely on state-specific platforms.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, some regional parties achieved significant success in their particular states, despite their opposition to the incumbent party at the national level. In concurrent elections, the preeminence of national problems may overshadow regional perspectives, compromising the variety of political representation and possibly jeopardizing India's robust 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.¹⁵

A concurrent election will exert significant pressure on the Election Commission of India (ECI) to guarantee seamless and equitable elections in all states. The logistics of overseeing resources, staff, and security nationwide for a single election may result in

¹⁵ 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.

considerable administrative challenges. Although the concept of decreasing election frequency is attractive, the magnitude of a consolidated election may exceed the ECI's capabilities, leading to inefficiencies or interruptions.

Furthermore, the potential for extensive violence or disturbances in any region of the nation during concurrent elections might have significant repercussions. In the existing framework, if civil disturbance arises in a specific state during elections, the Election Commission of India may postpone or reschedule the polls in that area. Nonetheless, with the One-Nation One-Election framework, any disturbance might have countrywide repercussions, impacting the voting process across many states.

4. Constitutional and Legal Issues

Implementing One-Nation One-Election will need substantial constitutional modifications. Articles 83 and 172 of the Constitution delineate the duration of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively. Aligning their election cycles would need either extending or shortening the tenure of current administrations, hence demanding constitutional amendments and political agreement. In light of India's multiparty democracy, attaining agreement across political factions is very improbable. 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),¹⁶ 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

Although advocates of One-Nation One-Election cite parallels such as South Africa and Sweden, these analogies may inadequately consider India's distinct variety and magnitude. In South Africa, national and provincial elections occur concurrently every five years. Nevertheless, South Africa's political framework significantly diverges from India's federal system, with fewer provinces and a comparatively smaller electorate. Likewise, nations such as Belgium and Indonesia have concurrent elections for many

¹⁶ AIR 1977 SC 1361, (1977) 3 SCC 592

governmental tiers; however, these countries are far smaller and less varied than India. Indonesia has encountered considerable logistical difficulties when conducting simultaneous national and regional elections. During the 2019 elections, the nation had extensive administrative challenges, resulting in the deaths of approximately 500 election workers from exhaustion and overwork owing to the magnitude of the concurrent elections. This example highlights the possible human and logistical costs of implementing One-Nation One-Election in a nation as vast and varied as India.¹⁷

6. Governance Instability

A possible drawback of concurrent elections is the likelihood of government instability at the state level. Presently, when a state government disintegrates as a result of a vote of no confidence or internal party conflicts, new elections are convened to establish a new administration. In a One-Nation, One-Election system, this scenario would either result in the implementation of President's Rule until the subsequent national elections or need new elections, so disturbing the coordinated electoral cycle. This may result in extended durations of administration by a caretaker government, which would be devoid of the ability to implement substantial policy choices, thus causing governmental stagnation. The Supreme Court in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) delineated the criteria for the installation of President's Rule, emphasizing that this instrument should be used judiciously. The recurrent implementation of President's Rule in states experiencing governmental collapse prior to the subsequent national election may provoke apprehensions over the diminishment of state autonomy and democratic governance.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

The "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) initiative, which promotes concurrent elections at all governmental tiers in India, has ignited a vigorous discourse over its advantages and obstacles. Proponents contend that it may provide several benefits, including substantial cost reductions, improved administrative efficiency, and a decrease in the demands placed on security personnel and other election-related operations. Reducing the frequency of elections will enable governments to concentrate more on governing instead of always engaging in campaign activities. This would provide continuity in policymaking, averting frequent interruptions

¹⁷ Waza, Aarif Mohd. "Assessing the Feasibility and Implications of Implementing One Nation One Election in India." *IJATSS* 1, no. 3 (2023): 185-196.

¹⁸ Shivani. "One Nation One Election: A New Electoral Reform in India." *Supremo Amicus* 24 (2021): 201.

resulting from the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct. Furthermore, advocates assert that synchronized elections would enhance voter engagement and knowledge, fostering a more engaged and educated public. Nonetheless, the execution of ONOE also poses significant problems and apprehensions. A major obstacle is constitutional, necessitating amendments to many laws, especially those concerning the term of Parliament and state legislatures. The potential consequences of a government collapsing early are likewise a concern. Administering such scenarios within a coordinated electoral system may result in complexities, particularly in upholding the democratic tenets of government flexibility. Critics emphasize that the variety of India's political landscape may be compromised, as regional problems might be eclipsed by national storylines during concurrent elections. This may constrict the political landscape for regional parties and lessen their impact on local government, thereby distorting the democratic process.

A fundamental problem pertains to India's federal system, whereby states possess considerable authority. Simultaneous elections may be seen as a means of centralizing authority, so constraining the political autonomy of nations. Moreover, logistical challenges include the accessibility of electoral infrastructure, the coordination of security personnel, and the administration of voters across a large and heterogeneous nation may become insurmountable.

In summary, while the concept of concurrent elections offers economic and administrative advantages, its implementation is laden with constitutional, political, and logistical challenges. The discourse around ONOE illustrates a wider dialogue over the equilibrium between efficiency and democratic ideals, governance and federalism, as well as the feasibility of enacting such a comprehensive reform in a country as varied and populous as India. Any progression towards its acceptance requires meticulous evaluation of these issues, a precise implementation strategy, and broad support among political stakeholders across the spectrum. The benefits of cost reduction and efficiency may undermine India's federal system and democratic diversity if the fundamental issues are not addressed. The choice to proceed with simultaneous elections requires a prudent and inclusive strategy that safeguards democratic integrity while aiming for enhanced electoral efficiency.