

ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

There is currently a dispute in the nation around the idea of one nation, one election. However, implementing the system of simultaneous elections will be extremely difficult given the complex and diversified political landscape of our nation. The benefits and drawbacks of the "one nation, one election" idea are also discussed in this essay. In conclusion, this concept needs to remain consistent through the adoption of dynamic modifications. Because votes have greater power than bullets, the issue is not just about elections but also about good administration. More recently, the President of India and the Prime Minister supported the idea of one nation one election. In conclusion, nowadays everything is done to gain votes. One political party tries to show the other political party down. Now a question is India really ready for one nation one election? This essay explores the idea of "one nation, one election" from both a historical and global standpoint.

Keywords: One Nation One Election, Votes, Simultaneous Elections.

INTRODUCTION

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In today's India, all political parties use the phrase "one nation, one election" as a catchphrase. Elections and political processes serve four practical goals in a democracy. First, they should support the greatest and brightest in public life. Second, the most honest, competent, and public-spirited politicians capable of serving the common good must be electable by ethical methods. India is the world's largest democracy. Elections are the most important and fundamental aspect of politics under a democratic form of government. Democracy can only operate if elections are free and fair, not controlled and rigged. However, for a variety of reasons, the democratic system is not functioning correctly, and the average citizen believes that the voting process is flawed. Over the years, the Indian voting system has suffered from major problems. Thus, our country's election process is seen as the root cause of political corruption. In ideal circumstances, an unprejudiced and upright individual who is public-

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spirited and wishes to serve the people should be able to compete for and be chosen as the people's representative.¹

BACKGROUND

Since 1983, when the Election Commission originally proposed the notion, it has existed. Nonetheless, concurrent elections were common in India up until 1967. In 1951–1952, all state legislative legislatures and the House of People (Lok Sabha) had concurrent general elections. In the ensuing three general elections—1957, 1962, and 1967—that practice persisted. However, the pattern was broken in 1968 and 1969 when certain legislative assemblies were prematurely dissolved. The Lok Sabha was also prematurely dissolved in 1970, and new elections were conducted in 1971. As a result, only the First, Second, and Third Lok Sabhas had completed five-year terms up until 1970.²

INDIAN ELECTIONS: PAST AND PRESENT

Comparing our legislative system to the American one reveals how much more intricate, challenging, and unique it is. Furthermore, the notion of "One Nation, One Election" is not novel. From 1951–1952 till 1967, we conducted elections for the Lok Sabha and legislatures. Regarding "One Nation, One Election's" effectiveness, there are no disagreements. Its execution and the means of enforcing it throughout India are the issues that require attention. We must also work for a consensus since the Parliamentary system is based on customs and traditions, and it is now challenging to force one's will on all of the political parties.

It is conceivable to synchronize elections from the Lok Sabha to state assemblies and even municipal entities; what matters is how this synchronization may be achieved in accordance with established customs and traditions. The set duration of the Lok Sabha is the most crucial factor that allows for synchronization. The remaining assembly durations can thus be added to or decreased if we maintain this criterion (the next Lok Sabha elections are scheduled for 2024). Furthermore, the notion of holding simultaneous elections highlights some crucial information regarding the exchequer's funding in relation to polling costs, party expenses, etc. When the

¹ *one nation one election*. (2020, March 30). Lawbhoomi. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from <https://lawbhoomi.com/one-nation-one-election/>

² *Examining One Nation, One Election*. (n.d.). Drishti IAS. <https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-editorials/examining-one-nation-one-election>

first Lok Sabha elections were held in 1951–1952, there were incredibly few political parties, candidates, and even polling place fees.³

Elections to the Lok Sabha, state legislatures, and even municipal bodies might be synchronized; what counts is that this synchronization be accomplished in a way that respects long-standing customs and traditions. Most importantly, synchronization is made possible by the Lok Sabha's fixed duration. If this condition is upheld, then the lengths of the remaining assemblies can be increased or lowered (the next Lok Sabha elections are slated for 2024).

Moreover, the idea of concurrent elections brings to light some important details about the exchequer's financing of party expenditures, polling fees, etc. There weren't many political parties, candidates, or even polling place fees when the first Lok Sabha elections were held in 1951–1952.⁴

ADVANTAGES OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

Voter impact from black money will be diminished because party funding will not be needed repeatedly, reducing the need for parties to use deceptive fundraising techniques. Every time elections are approaching, caste politics and casteism flare up. Cut costs The "One Nation, One Election" strategy benefits non-resident Indians because it will only require them to go once in order to vote for a party's worthy candidate. Concurrent elections may also help reduce corruption and create a more favorable socioeconomic environment. Quick Development Process The government machinery is operating without hiccups. The effectiveness of governance is an increase in the percentage of voters—voters are encouraged to participate via concurrent elections Concurrent voting saves both money and time.⁵

DISADVANTAGES OF ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

Huge Equipment and Resource Requirements Constitutional Issues: Because of the nation's democratic system, one-time elections appear to be nearly impossible. Election Results Delay looming large above the US Hung gatherings Change of coalition Expenses rise.⁵

³ Para 4 – Report of the Parliamentary Standing committee on Personnel, Public grievances, Law and justice – 79th report (Dec 2015) on the topic of simultaneous elections

⁴ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/one-nation-one-election/article28073916.ece>

⁵ <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/one-nation-one-election-1561032672-1>

THE ELECTION COMMISSION HAS THE FOLLOWING LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

Conducting simultaneous elections would undoubtedly present logistical challenges. Normally, each polling place uses a single voting machine for elections. If we were to hold multiple elections at the same time, the requirements for VVPATs and EVMs would triple, as each polling location would need to have two sets of machines. Additionally, poll workers would need to meet extra qualifications. Transporting all of these materials to the polling stations would be difficult, and there would be a greater need for transportation, more poll workers, and increased central police presence.

Even now, many states struggle with storing EVMs. After elections, there's a significant challenge in finding storage space, leading some states to rent warehouses. If we were to hold simultaneous elections, we'd face the issue of storing twice as many EVMs and VVPATs. This would create logistical challenges and require additional funding.⁶

Therefore, there would be a significant one-time cost, but there would also be a significant saving on both counts. Furthermore, elections won't always be in session in this nation. There will be beneficial administrative work being done by the government. The Model Code of Conduct now goes into effect in some areas of our nation every five to six months. All developmental initiatives often suffer in those areas when the Model Code of Conduct is being enforced. Having said that, if both elections are held at the same time, it won't be too problematic for the Election Commission.

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS

In *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court ruled that States have their own constitutional existence and play an equal part in people's political, social, educational, and cultural life as the Union.

The Constitution mandates a five-year tenure for state legislatures, beginning with the first meeting date. A similar clause governs the term of the Union Parliament. As a result, the

⁶ Admin. (2022, December 12). *One Nation One Election: RSTV - The Big Picture, Discussion on the recent proposal*. BYJUS. <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/one-nation-one-election-rstv-big-picture>

implementation of a unified election method would need a change in the current durations of a number of state legislatures.⁷

DOES CONTINUAL CAMPAIGNING DISRUPT GOVERNANCE PROCESSES?

India has 31 legislatures that go to the polls every five years. Elections are also held in our nation at least twice or three times every year in various states. This has an impact on the concept of governance, particularly good governance. When we acknowledge that elections must be held concurrently every five years, this is no longer a holiday, but rather a huge festival or a "Maha Utsav." The whole administrative apparatus of the Election Commission of India, paramilitary forces, citizens, administrative officials, political parties, and candidates would have to be prepared for this massive exercise after a 5-year hiatus. Aside from ensuring electoral coherence, this would result in governance, allowing voters to evaluate government policies and programs at both the state and national levels.

It would be difficult, but not impossible, for the Election Commission of India to do this process every five years. The government of India engaged around 2,60,000 paramilitary soldiers during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Aside from that, 10,00,000 police officers were called into duty throughout the states.

There were also about 10,00,000 voting stations around the country. Thus, if each polling station is staffed by approximately four people, plus one BLO (Booth Level Officer), for a total of five people, we arrive at a figure of approximately one crore people involved in the election process. So, if all assemblies and the Lok Sabha elections are held at the same time (once every five years), expenditures may be saved and optimized.

GLOBAL-VIEW ON ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Simultaneous elections have a worldwide perspective as well. This technique has been successfully implemented in a number of countries throughout the world under comparable conditions.

In South Africa, elections for the national parliament, province legislatures, and local councils take place at the same time every five years. 'Party-list proportional representation' comes next.

⁷ Team, N. I. C. A. (2024, January 24). Feasibility of 'One Nation, One Election - Current Affairs. *Current Affairs - NEXT IAS*. <https://www.nextias.com/ca/editorial-analysis/24-01-2024/feasibility-of-one-nation-one-election>

In Sweden, parties are allocated seats based on the proportion of votes they receive in elections. Elections for county and municipal councils take place simultaneously.

Belgium has five different types of elections, with European and federal elections occurring every five years, coinciding. In Indonesia, presidential and parliamentary elections will be conducted concurrently beginning in 2019. They amended its constitution, knocking out several clauses as invalid.

According to the German constitution, a no-confidence resolution cannot remove a chancellor on its own. They must also agree on specific alternatives. Bolivia, the Philippines, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Guatemala are among the many other countries. They all, however, have a presidential form of government, with elections taking place concurrently with legislative elections.⁸

DIVERSE REPORTS

The 79th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice proposed a two-phase election timetable, the first concurrent with Lok Sabha elections and the second at the Lok Sabha's mid-term. The report also suggested that in order to hold early elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, one of two conditions must be met:

- (i) a motion for an early general election must be agreed to by at least two-thirds of all members of the House; or
- (ii) (ii) a no-confidence motion must be passed by the House, with no alternative government being confirmed within 14 days of passing a confidence motion.

The report found that such change was "important for India if it is to compete with other nations in the developmental agenda on a real-time basis as a robust, democratic country".⁹

In its 170th report (1999), the Law Commission of India proposed that Lok Sabha and State Legislative elections be held simultaneously. It proposed that elections for legislative assemblies, whose terms finish six months after the national elections for the Lok Sabha, be

⁸ <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/opinion-one-nation-one-election-is-holding-simultaneous-polls-feasible-in-india-2113801.html>

⁹ <https://www.clearias.com/simultaneous-elections-india/>

combined. However, the results of such elections might be announced at the conclusion of the assembly's term.

The Election Commission also expressed its principled support for simultaneous elections.

CONCLUSION

Elections to all three levels of constitutional institutions should ideally take place in a synchronized and coordinated manner, as implied by the term "simultaneous elections," or preferably simultaneous elections. This essentially means that votes are cast on a single day to elect representatives to every level of government. "The best persons available must be picked to serve as the people's representatives in order to properly rule the nation if democracy is to continue. The greatest candidates for this are men with strong moral and ethical principles who secure a majority of the vote. Therefore, in a healthy democracy, voters should have the option to select none of the aforementioned buttons, as this will force the political parties to select a sound option."¹⁰

The concept of "one nation, one election" offers many advantages, but it also has certain drawbacks. If the parliament could remove all obstacles to the program's implementation in India, it would have a self-healing effect on the nation's economy. In conclusion, the government has not yet given a comprehensive breakdown of all the difficulties associated with having elections at the same time. Forming an expert committee to look into all facets of this complex public policy issue is a great idea, but it has to be carefully thought through and agreed upon.

¹⁰ "Election Commission of India: Provision for 'None of the Above' option on the EVM/Ballot Paper 0 Instructions" (PDF). Eci.nic.in. Retrieved 2017-04-02

