
REIMAGINING INDIA'S ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Raghav Sakuja, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University)

ABSTRACT

India's staggered electoral calendar has resulted in frequent elections, imposing administrative burdens, financial costs, and governance disruptions. The concept of One Nation, One Election (ONOE), recently formalized through the Constitution One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment Bill, 2024, seeks to synchronize elections of both Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. This paper critically examines the historical evolution of India's electoral cycles, the constitutional and legal framework governing elections, and the rationale behind ONOE. It analyses the potential economic, administrative, and political benefits alongside the challenges relating to federalism, legislative autonomy, and the doctrine of the Constitution's basic structure. Discussing judicial precedents, Law Commission and High-Level Committee reports and scholarly commentaries. The paper provides a balanced assessment of ONOE, highlighting the trade-offs between governance efficiency, democratic accountability, and federal balance.

Keywords: One Nation One Election, Electoral Synchronization, Federalism, Constitutional Reform, Governance Efficiency.

Introduction

In India, parliamentary democracy has been operating on a staggered electoral calendar since the 1970s, with the Lok Sabha polls typically being held every five years and the majority of the State Assembly polls on their own timetables. More often than not between two and three election exercises have been there in the country in a single year with huge administrative and financial inputs. One Nation One Election concept had emerged during the first two decades of independence, whereas in the initial years, both national and state elections were conducted simultaneously. However, in recent decades, successive bursts of untimely dissolutions of assemblies and Proclamation of President's Rule have completely broken this cycle. With Parliament elections in India and different state elections fast following after one another, if not simultaneous, there are perpetual periods of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), distracting officials and security forces from developmental activities.

An HLC was set up in September 2023 by the Government of India to consider the possibility of simultaneously holding elections. In December 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the report of the Committee and introduced a Bill, entitled Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, suggesting the way forward. The establishment of the Committee, proposals in the report, and the introduction of the Bill demonstrates an aspiration towards administrative efficiency, cost savings, and governance stability. However, critics have concerns about federalism, electoral law, and democratic accountability. This paper attempts an in-depth study of ONOE, considering its rationale, legal regime, advantages, and disadvantages, along with the safeguards needed for its implementation. The paper purports to be a thorough and balanced analysis, drawing upon authoritative sources such as constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, reports of the Law Commission and Election Commission, parliamentary debates, and scholarly commentaries.

Historical Evolution of Electoral Cycles in India

After independence, India inherited the British Westminster model with no fixed election dates; legislatures would last five years unless dissolved earlier. After adopting constitution, elections for Parliament Lok Sabha and State Assemblies were conducted together in 1951 and 1957. The first three Lok Sabha elections were followed by simultaneous Assembly polls in the majority of states. This synchronous pattern started deteriorating after 1960's, when the Central

government ousted the Kerala state government through Article 356¹ and elections in Kerala were conducted independently. Subsequently, the fourth general election of 1967 coincided with the majority of states, but electoral and political convulsions soon followed. In 1967 after the defeat of the Congress in a number of states, widespread defections and the regular imposition of President's Rule undermined state elections. In 1971, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi held early national elections. From this point on, the cycle of the Lok Sabha grew more and more out of step with most states. For instance, the Fourth Lok Sabha was dissolved in December 1970 and re-elected in 1971. In the Emergency period 1975–77, the term of the Fifth Lok Sabha was prolonged, followed by which there was a return to a two-year Lok Sabha by the Janata government during 1977–79 and unstable coalitions resulted in two rapid successive elections. Most of the state assemblies even witnessed dissolutions Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were among them. So, by the 1980s onwards, nearly all states had their own election schedule.

Long story short, during pre-independence India there were concurrent polls but political events disrupted the cycle. The present situation is that Parliament and legislatures now follow different schedule, creating multiple election events within a term. Hence, this ONOE bill aims to turn back the historical trend by legislating a re-synchronization of these elections.

Constitutional Framework Governing Elections

The Indian Constitution sets the fundamental electoral structure where both Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies have a maximum lifespan of five years from the date of their first sitting. Article 83(2)² states: "The House of the People, unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting, and no longer." Article 172(1)³ also says that a Legislative Assembly subsists for five years from the first meeting unless dissolved earlier. So, it is evident that five years are the maximum term and neither provision sets a minimum term, echoing a government can fall on a vote of no confidence at any moment. These provisions suggest a continuous obligation to conduct elections periodically. Article 324⁴ confers on the Election Commission of India (ECI) the power to oversee, guide, and manage elections to Parliament and the legislatures of states. The powers of the ECI, such as the timetabling of elections and the delimitation of constituencies, are regulated by any law enacted by

¹ INDIA CONST. art. 356

² INDIA CONST. art. 83(2)

³ INDIA CONST. art. 172(1)

⁴ INDIA CONST. art. 324

Parliament. Traditionally, the ECI has conducted elections on the terms specified by legislatures and constitution. No existing constitutional provision explicitly authorizes the ECI to override legislative terms; rather, elections follow dissolution or term expiry as mandated. The ONOE scheme would essentially expand ECI's role to coordinate timing across jurisdictions, a power which is not explicitly provided under current Article 324. Any changes to the electoral schedule will involve amendments to constitutional provisions. For example, in order to synchronize all terms, Articles 83 and 172⁵ would need to be revised so as to enable certain assemblies to finish earlier or later than their originally five-year duration.

The 129th Amendment Bill formally introduces new Article 82A⁶ regarding the "appointed day" and uniform expiration of terms and aims to modify Article 83(2) and Article 327⁷. All such proposals are required to meet conditions prescribed under Article 368⁸: a constitutional change must be approved by a special majority in both Houses of Parliament, and if the matter is related to states e.g. their legislative periods or special status, it is also required to be ratified by at least half of the state legislature. Article 368(2) in particular mentions certain entrenched provisions which cannot be altered (e.g. independence of the judiciary, representation of states) and those requiring ratification by the states. Although the five-year duration itself is not inherently unamendable, changing the tenure of sitting legislatures invades federal design. The Law Commission has already recommended that changing the timing of elections is a federal matter that will need state assent. Government sources have also argued that the Lok Sabha and State Assembly synchronization amendments may not require ratification, while the synchronization of local bodies would. Several judicial precedents confirm that "free and fair elections" and federalism are integral to the basic structure of the Constitution. In *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*,⁹ the Supreme Court held that secularism and federalism are part of the basic structure, even before the Court pronounces judgement on ONOE, any such amendment that over-centralizes power or erodes periodic legislative accountability is likely to run into a basic-structure challenge. The preamble and structure of the Constitution visualize a union of states with independent legislatures. Critics contend that compulsorily prescribing election dates may blur the center-state division and disturb the balance envisioned by the framers.

⁵ INDIA CONST. art. 172

⁶ INDIA CONST. art. 82A

⁷ INDIA CONST. art. 327

⁸ INDIA CONST. art. 368

⁹ *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*, (1994) 2 SCR 644 (India)

In total, the constitutional framework requires five-year terms and regular elections., Precaution should be taken not to contravene these entrenched principles. As Ambedkar cautioned, "no system. ensures stability and accountability in equal degree," and the parliamentary model was selected to maximize accountability, even at the expense of potential lack of stability. Any reform must then balance stability with the Constitution's promise of frequent elections and federal balance.

Analysis of the ONOE Proposal: Rationale and Objectives

The existing One Nation, One Election idea seeks to constitutionally entrench concurrent five-year periods for the Union and every state. It aims to bring: Continuity of government, Efficient administration, Cost saving, and Voter turnout. In practice, the government's plan would function as follows: On a presidential notification following the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election, all subsequently formed State and UT legislatures would ipso facto lapse at the conclusion of that Lok Sabha's five-year term. Subsequent elections to Parliament and state legislatures would then be conducted simultaneously every five years. If there is a mid-term dissolution by no-confidence or otherwise, a new election would occupy only the balance of the original term, after which the synchronized cycle starts anew.

People in favour argue that India's relentless election cycle puts massive financial burden. The High-Level Committee observed that synchronous polls would provide stability and predictability in governance, minimize policy paralysis and disruption, cut costs, and boost voter turnout. As whenever there is regular election season the Model Code of Conduct is imposed which puts policymaking on ice that means the government cannot initiate new schemes or key announcement. By conducting all elections simultaneously, these MCC phases would also cumulate into one period every five years. Moreover, the HLC also points out that officials and security personnels are repeatedly deployed for election duty, taking them away from development work which is a big headache. The government calculates that holding simultaneous elections would save a lot of money that is spent in the recurring election-related expenses. The HLC and Law Commission both estimate such savings could be in the thousands of crores. It is further put forward that uniform poll dates would save costs of conducting elections to Panchayats and municipalities for a second round and new efficiencies e.g. one voter roll and universal voter card would arise. Another strong argument is that ONOE will sharpen parties' attention to governance instead of continuous campaigning. By lowering the

frequency of elections, governments will be able to focus on long-term economic and social reforms without being constantly interrupted by the campaign cycle. The Law Commission's 2018 draft report¹⁰ also pointed out that "administrative machinery should focus on development activity instead of electioneering." A single election year might also increase voter interest and turnout, as citizens would make a single, holistic political decision determining multiple levels of government simultaneously. Public surveys as quoted by the HLC¹¹ show widespread support: reportedly "over 80%" of 21,500 state respondents were in support of the concept, and 32 of 47 political parties surveyed gave their support. Business lobbies have also reportedly been supportive of ONOE as being pro-growth (by preventing repeated shutdowns). Such views are congruent with the ruling party's official agenda of "development before elections."

Even though there are much arguments in favour of ONOE, still it is crucial to note that not all parties are in favour. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has publicly stated that the Model Code is necessary for free and fair elections. As the ECI explains, MCC restrictions are only applicable in the constituencies/voting period and allow continuation of schemes elsewhere. Hence, from the perspective of ECI, regular elections do not necessarily lead to a freeze in governance; instead, the system guarantees only that incumbents cannot use official means for electoral gains. This puts a question mark over the claim of the government that MCC causes significant disruption. Similarly, experts warn that excessive emphasis on "stability" might compromise accountability. ONOE, by mandating a fixed election calendar, would in effect transplant a fixed-term mentality more suited to presidential systems, potentially undermining the everyday and periodic accountability at the heart of parliamentary democracy. One-size-fits-all has also been criticized as potentially favouring national parties over local or regional ones.

Overall, ONOE's declared goals are to rationalize electoral management and enhance the efficiency of governance. The government's account stresses mass public welfare benefits. But beneath these assertions is a political calculation: it presupposes that minimized electoral disruption is more important than diminished adaptability or state autonomy. The subsequent

¹⁰ Law Comm'n of India, *Draft Report on Simultaneous Elections* (Aug. 30, 2018), https://legalaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/simultaneous_elections/LCI_2018_DRAFT_REPORT.pdf.

¹¹ Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Law and Justice, *High Level Committee Submits Its Report on One Nation, One Election—Simultaneous Elections Core to Aspirational India*, Press Release No. 2014497 (Mar. 14, 2024), <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2014497>.

analysis will evaluate how sound these presuppositions are, and what compromises the proposal involves.

Economic, Political, and Administrative Benefits

Advocates of One Nation, One Election state several benefits, which can be grouped as economic, political, and administrative:

- **Economic Benefits (Savings):** The most widespread benefit that is cited is saving money. Having elections is obviously costly, these expenses involve printing millions of ballots, programming and sending Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter-Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), employment of poll personnel, security deployment, and logistics. By grouping polls together, the state saves from incurring many such sunk costs every year. The Law Commission stated that simultaneous elections would "save public money.". For instance, instead of four independent security deployments for phased elections, a single combined deployment would be sufficient. But the extent of actual savings is controversial. According to The Standing Committee on Law & Justice (2015),¹² while citing ECI figures, direct government spending on elections Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies was approximately ₹4,500 crore in 2015–16 (around 0.25% of the Union budget and 0.03% of GDP). That means, even if it is eradicated entirely, these recurring expenses are a tiny percentage of India's total fiscal expenditures. Such amounts are insignificant compared to overall expenditure, the PRS Legislative Brief observes. Political parties' and candidates' election expenditures are vast, on the contrary. Official data indicate the seven established national parties spent ₹2,378 crore in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, and other research puts overall campaign expenditures in 2024 at an estimated ₹1.35 lakh crore. One argument in support of synchronized elections is that this private expenditure may also be reduced by concentrating contests. However, there is an important point made by ex-CEC S.Y. Quraishi that conduct of simultaneous polls would necessitate triple the present EVM/VVPAT stock (approximately 40 lakhs more machines), involving "thousands of crores of rupees" as an initial investment. Therefore, any net financial benefit is questionable.
- **Administrative Benefits:** Election conduct takes enormous administrative bandwidth.

¹² Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, *Seventy-Ninth Report on the Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies* (Dec. 2015), https://legalaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/simultaneous_elections/79th_Report.pdf.

Bureaucratic officials, police, and defence personnel are deputed for election work for weeks. The Election Commission highlights that under MCC, the majority of officials are prevented from undertaking new development work during election time in a constituency. Conducting elections simultaneously would stretch out the one MCC duration but decrease its frequency. The administration contends that this will leave administrators and security forces less distracted and hence more available for governance between elections. As election events become less frequent, ministries like the revenue and public works ministries might carry out projects without half-way house breaks. The HLC mentioned that parliamentary committees and think-tanks have complained consistently about the "considerable diversion of official machinery" into elections, and feel that ONOE would drastically reduce these interruptions. But the Election Commission disagrees that MCC "disrupts development work and normal public life" to the extent the government asserts. ECI states that the MCC's intention is to ensure impartiality and that it tries hard not to keep people idle for too long. Legally, most projects which were sanctioned prior to MCC can go ahead without any obstruction, and constructions in areas not already conducting polls are not prohibited. Therefore, if less frequent elections translate into proportionate governance benefits remains to be seen.

- **Political and Voter Benefits:** The HLC report claims that conduct of simultaneous elections would "ensure stability and predictability in governance". It means that governments at both levels would be able to plan and execute full-term programs without recurring risk of an unplanned election. Additionally, supporters believe ONOE will stimulate voter turnout. By incorporating national and state issues into a single electoral choice, voting could become higher. A single electoral roll and one voter ID for all tiers, as proposed by the HLC, could make voting easier for the public as well. ONOE could also change party tactics. Larger multi-state parties might get a cohesive platform within the country, whereas smaller caste or regional parties might struggle to campaign in several arenas at the same time. The narrative of the government is that this is a good thing, but critics point out that it might overlook local voices.

In sum, ONOE aims for administrative efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In practice, efficiency gains may be modest, given ECI's view on MCC and the large transition costs flagged by experts. However, politically some stability may be achieved at the cost of reduced legislative flexibility. The actual net benefits will depend on implementation framework and whether

disruptions can be managed.

Constitutional, Legal, and Logistical Challenges

Implementing ONOE raises fundamental legal and constitutional questions. There are several key challenges which include federalism concerns, the basic structure doctrine, term curtailment and extension, and the scope of the ECI's authority.

- **Federalism and States' Autonomy:** India's federal structure which empowers state legislatures to decide their own fate, except as limited by the Constitution. Synchronizing state elections with national ones inherently limits that autonomy. Analogously, in case an assembly of a state was in the middle of its term, it may be prolonged or cut short without consent at the local political level. Impositions like these can lead states to ask themselves whether their freedom to decide when they conduct their elections has been violated. The Constitution provides Parliament with some overriding powers e.g. under Art. 356 but on certain conditions only. The mechanism of the Bill for deferring a state election – enabling the ECI to suggest and the President to direct deferment de facto removes the need for an emergency or President's Rule as would Article 356. The critics say this is a reduction in the threshold of delay in elections. If the term of a state ends and the Bill postpone an election after dissolution, it is not certain who will be in charge of the state for the interim period. This will have federal implications as states would find themselves even more reliant on central endorsements to stabilize their electoral cycles.
- **Doctrine of Basic Structure:** The Supreme Court has ruled that democracy, rule of law, federalism and secularism constitute the unamendable "basic structure" of the Constitution. While election by periods per se is essential to democracy, whether or not ONOE infringes on these essentials is the questionable. Critics argue that rigid synchronization would water down democracy by protecting governments from voter judgment for as long as five years. It would also constrain the scope of political debate if local matters are always voted on a national polling day, local opposition may be derailed. If such a challenge were to materialize, courts would decide if ONOE "destroys or emasculates" any fundamental principle. Thus far, there is no judicial ruling on simultaneous elections, but the debate has been framed in these terms.
- **Term Curtailment and Extension:** To bring all elections into alignment, some

legislature's terms would have to be shortened or lengthened, a legally fraught move. The clauses of the 129th Amendment Bill permit precisely that: assemblies formed immediately prior to the first synchronized poll may be granted less than five years, and if required, the existing Lok Sabha can be limited to accommodate the cycle. Constitutional amendments cannot, however, contravene the tenure provisions of the Constitution unless it is specifically provided for. It can be argued that a five-year period in Article 83 or 172 is quasi-sacrosanct – it could only be changed by a constitutional change, not an ordinance or normal law. The ONOE plan does contemplate a constitutional change, but even this must be approached with caution. ONOE amendments put forward aim to insert one-off extensions and even truncate others prematurely. This revision of term lengths is perhaps the stickiest constitutional problem, since it immediately changes the balance of the people's mandate and legislative intention.

- **ECI Powers and Electoral Laws:** By empowering the ECI to fix state and national elections simultaneously, the Amendment Bill tests Article 324 to its limits. Historically, the ECI cannot alter the term of a legislature – Parliament alone by law decides the dates of elections. Normally, Article 356 allows postponing polls only during emergencies and only if ECI certifies it. The ONOE provisions would bypass those safeguards. The resultant ambiguity about caretaker governments and election timetables could trigger legal uncertainty. In addition to all this, many election laws would need to be changed. The Representation of the People Act, 1951, mandates the timing and conduct of elections. All such legislation would need to be harmonized with a simultaneous-poll regime. For example, if an assembly is pre-emptively dissolved, Section 151A¹³ mandates fresh elections within six months; would ONOE overrule this? A related issue is the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). The government's argument in favour of ONOE relies in part on the notion that MCC inhibits governance. The ECI answers that MCC itself is a product of consensus and is not bound to disrupt development as asserted. The ECI further states that it already attempts to keep MCC at the minimum necessary duration.
- **Other Logistical Issues:** On top of legality, logistics of concurrent polls are intimidating. India's geographical and demographic size is unmatched. Conducting elections for more than 900 million voters in 28 states and 8 Union Territories in one go needs gigantic planning. Weather conditions, school or harvest timings and security conditions differ

¹³ *The Representation of the People Act, 1951*, § 151A (India).

vastly. ECI generally stages elections to overcome these disparities; ONOE might call for timing even during conflicting seasons. Past CEC Quraishi points out matters of practicality: for example, national and state polls coinciding but local (panchayat/municipal) elections taking place 100 days later (as proposed) would leave villagers two big elections within a short time. He also points out that voters and polling officials would not need to make return trips to booths, but that if not managed properly, voter fatigue exists. ECI statistics indicate that simultaneous polls would necessitate tripling the polling machines and officials on election day. This is not just the cost of hardware, but training and mobilizing millions more polling officials and security personnel on one multi-tier election day. The scalability of this being done so smoothly is untested. Lastly, voting behaviour under an interim election is unknown. PRS points out that Sweden and Belgium have mechanisms whereby a successor chosen in a snap poll only serves out the balance of the term. Voters can approach such elections differently, perhaps less so if the next election is only a year away. Whether Indian voters will be disheartened by a "short-term" election remains to be seen.

Collectively, the challenges are considerable. Constitutional restrictions and pragmatic workability must be met by the reforms. The ONOE suggestion, in its current form, has been called "flawed" by several experts. The government's second step should be to sharpen the strategy and possibly include safeguards before a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Recommendations for Amendments and Phased Implementation

In light of hindrances discussed above, a phased and well-tuned ONOE strategy is necessary. In accordance with official reports and expert opinions, for such purpose recommended measures are as follows:

- **Constitutional Amendments:** Term adjustments and synchronized cycles must be specifically authorized by amendments. The Constitution 129th Amendment Bill itself seeks major changes: adding Article 82A to provide an "appointed day" and stipulate that subsequent Lok Sabha and Assembly terms conclude simultaneously; modifying Article 83 to enable shorter terms and adding a mention of "simultaneous elections" in Article 327. These are the essentials. Article 172 and Article 174 also need to be amended in pari materia. New Article 324A is proposed to authorize Parliament to schedule local body elections in tandem with state and national elections.

- **Ratification by States:** In respect of federalism and to prevent legal challenge, amendments altering states' terms must be ratified by a majority of states as prescribed under Article 368(2). The Law Commission and others call for this as a democratic protection. In reality, the government must obtain legislative support across party lines and state governments before passing the bill. Establishing a wide consensus will legitimate ONOE and minimize litigation risk.
- **Transitional Phasing:** The current misaligned terms cannot be all adjusted at the same time without intervention. The Law Commission considered options: e.g., aim 2029 to align by either lengthening short assemblies or shortening long ones. The HLC report suggested beginning with the next LS election 2024 and phasing in changes by 2029–2034. Any proposal should keep the periods of very short assemblies to a minimum. One of the solutions is to prolong the lifespan of assemblies whose next scheduled election is soon after the first synchronized poll, instead of cutting it short, so as not to have numerous one-year governments. Some assemblies that otherwise would run much longer might, on the other hand, require a short curtailment. All such variations have to be sanctioned by the constitutional amendments.
- **Anti-Defection Timelines:** Amendments to the Tenth Schedule could require Speakers or Presiding Officers to rule on defections within a fixed time. This avoids political manipulation of defectors' status and reduces instability, further helping to keep the cycle on track.
- **Election Commission Role:** The amendments should clarify the criteria and limits for ECI's power to delay a state poll. For example, postponement should be allowed only under objectively specified conditions such as natural calamity, law-and-order emergency, etc, rather than at ECI's general discretion. Ideally, the law should require parliamentary approval if an election is delayed beyond six months of dissolution, mirroring the checks in Article 356.
- **Single Electoral Roll and EPIC:** To take full advantage of synchronization, the government must complete a National Electoral Roll and universal single voter ID (EPIC). This will involve merging databases into one central list. The HLC has suggested this to enhance transparency and voter convenience.

- **Local Body Elections:** The intention is to conduct simultaneous polling of local bodies such as Panchayats and municipalities within 100 days of the general polls. As a temporary measure before that phase, no firm commitment is necessary. Yet, a delay of over 100 days should be avoided, lest the whole concept of "one election" is defeated.
- **Comparative Learning:** The government can learn from other foreign nations. Practices such as ballot design for multiple contests or voter education campaigns must be adopted in India.
- **Phased Implementation with Review:** Considering the magnitude, it would be wise to implement ONOE in phases and review the results. For instance, begin with aligning parliament with a portion of states that are willing to opt-in. Learn from that pilot before making a national transition. The Standing Committee and Law Commission can be tasked with tracking impact following every election cycle.
- **Accountability Safeguards:** Implement legal steps to sustain accountability, ensure that the normal legislative oversight continues to be solid during any extended term; mandate legislature's performance audits at mid-point; and maintain opposition rights in the new system.

One Nation, One Election would require a bundle of constitutional amendments and supporting legislation: Articles 83, 172, and 327, revision of the Representation of the People Act, and legislative changes to UT and Panchayat/Municipal Acts. It also requires careful phasing to adapt existing terms, counter-measures to circumvent abuse, and civil society involvement to foster acceptance.

Comparative Perspectives from Other Countries

India's ONOE proposal can be compared with electoral systems around the globe. Some democracies do have simultaneous multi-tier elections, but circumstances are varied.

- **Europe:** Sweden and Belgium, among others, hold national, regional, and local elections on a single day. Sweden has its Riksdag (Parliament), county councils, and municipal councils elect every fourth year on a set date. Notably, Swedish statute states that if there is an early parliamentary election, the new parliament serves out only the balance of the

four-year term. Belgium's Constitution, as of 2014, requires parliamentary and regional elections to be held at the same time as European Parliament elections. Likewise, if an early election is called, the next legislature's term will be for the balance of the tenure. These illustrations recommend one approach to managing mid-term polls under ONOE: by providing that any mid-term election's winner receives only the remaining term, thus falling back into line.

- **Asia:** In Indonesia, 2014 national reforms established a single ballot day for President, national parliament, and local parliaments. Indonesians have been electing the President, House of Representatives, and provincial assemblies at the same time since 2019, every five years. India's situation is different – Indonesia has far fewer voters 270 million compared to 940 million of India. The Philippines also conducts presidential, senatorial, and House elections together, although local elections are conducted separately. Interestingly, Pakistan's Constitution had provided for simultaneous national/provincial polls until a 1970 Supreme Court decision held that out-of-phase polls were possible, and thus, separate elections have been held since then. Nepal, since its 2015 constitution, has synchronized federal, provincial, and local body elections, which it attempted in 2017 though some local polls were postponed for technical reasons.
- **Africa:** South Africa holds its National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures simultaneously every five years, but not its municipal elections. The South African Electoral Commission recommends that it is best practice to hold the two upper levels together.

Simultaneous elections are not new anywhere in the world, but India's idea is distinctive in scale. The comparative illustrations infer that short-term governments are feasible if legally limited, fixed election dates can align with two tiers, but (iii) one has to prevent successive elections. Notably, no significant federal democracy like India with robust state autonomy and parliamentary systems has implemented an ONOE-like transformation. Thus, India's policymakers should learn from global experience but adapt carefully to local federal-democratic norms.

Conclusion

The One Nation, One Election proposal is a radical rethinking of India's electoral framework.

It aims to foster efficient governance eliminating the exasperating cycles of frequent short-term elections and concentrating administrative resources on development. There are reasonable economic and organizational efficiencies to be realized, alongside possible improvements in policy continuity. Yet this paper has demonstrated that implementing ONOE involves fundamental constitutional challenges and compromises. Legally speaking, synchronizing elections entails rewiring the very fabric of parliamentary democracy in India. Five-year terms, the doctrine of collective responsibility, and federal autonomy all central features would be changed. The suggested amendments e.g. Article 82A, new 324A would need to transit the Basic Structure Doctrine and likely ratification at the state level. One wrong step might trigger judicial invalidation or federal demonstrations. Politically, ONOE's success hinges on wide consensus. The arithmetic deficiency of the ruling party necessitates being persuaded of its merits by opposition parties and state governments. Anxiety regarding the fate of small parties, local rule, and the fairness of elections needs to be dispelled. Administrative challenges for e.g., distribution of millions more EVMs and synchronization of electoral rolls across the country – also require advance planning. Given these considerations, gradual, careful implementation is wise. Rush to constitutional amendments in the first instance without state agreement may trigger resistance. Rather, incremental convergence initially among interested states, unambiguous legal protections and a solid legal framework are necessary.

In summary, "One Nation, One Election" is an unprecedented constitutional change. It might, if carefully thought out and executed, introduce real efficiencies. But it also threatens to concentrate power and undermine federal dynamics if mishandled. The government's legislative framework and the parliamentary committee's examination will decide how these issues are resolved. At present, ONOE's future will depend on whether or not it succeeds in fulfilling its administrative goals without compromising the democratic and federal ethos of the Constitution.