

Legal and Constitutional Framework of One Nation Simultaneous Elections in India: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The concept of "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) proposes synchronizing elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies across India, reviving a practice that existed from 1952 to 1967. This research article provides a comprehensive analysis of the legal and constitutional framework governing simultaneous elections in India, examining the constitutional provisions requiring amendment, judicial perspectives, implementation challenges, and implications for Indian federalism. Through systematic review of scholarly literature, legal documents, and policy reports, this study identifies that implementing ONOE necessitates amendments to Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174 of the Indian Constitution, along with modifications to the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The analysis reveals significant legal challenges including the need for fixed terms for legislative bodies, mechanisms to address premature dissolution, and concerns regarding federal autonomy. While proponents argue that simultaneous elections could save over ₹45 billion annually and reduce governance disruptions, critics highlight risks to regional representation, federal principles, and democratic accountability. The study concludes that while ONOE holds potential for administrative efficiency, its implementation requires extensive constitutional amendments, broad political consensus, and careful consideration of India's federal structure and democratic diversity. This research contributes to ongoing policy debates by providing a comprehensive legal and constitutional analysis of simultaneous elections in India.

Keywords: *One Nation One Election, Simultaneous Elections, Constitutional Amendments, Indian Federalism, Electoral Reforms, Legal Framework*

India, the world's largest democracy, conducts elections at multiple levels—national, state, and local—with consistent frequency. Since independence in 1947, the country has witnessed over 400 elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, demonstrating the robustness of its democratic institutions. However, the staggered nature of these elections has prompted debates about their impact on governance, administrative efficiency, and economic development. The concept of "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) has emerged as a significant electoral reform proposal aimed at synchronizing the election cycles of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies across India (Bhatnagar, 2024; Lamani & Balavantagol, n.d.).

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The idea of simultaneous elections is not new to India. From 1952 to 1967, the country successfully conducted synchronized elections for both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies (Krishnan & Rangrez, n.d.; A. Kumar, 2024). This practice, however, was disrupted due to the premature dissolution of several state governments and the Lok Sabha itself, leading to the current system of staggered elections (A. Singh & Jain, 2024). The revival of simultaneous elections has gained renewed attention in recent years, with proponents arguing that it would reduce election-related expenditure, minimize policy disruptions caused by the Model Code of Conduct, and allow governments to focus on governance rather than perpetual electioneering (Bhagat & Pokharyal, 2020).

The legal and constitutional framework governing elections in India is primarily derived from the Constitution of India, particularly Articles 83, 85, 172, and 174, which prescribe the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies (Lohitha, n.d.). Implementing simultaneous elections would require substantial amendments to these constitutional provisions, along with modifications to various statutory laws including the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (V. Kumar, n.d.). The complexity of India's federal structure, with its division of powers between the Union and States, adds another layer of legal and constitutional challenges to this proposal (Ahmed et al., 2024).

The debate surrounding ONOE encompasses multiple dimensions—constitutional, legal, political, administrative, and federal. Supporters emphasize potential benefits such as cost savings estimated at over ₹45 billion annually, reduced administrative burden on the Election Commission of India, decreased voter fatigue, and enhanced governance continuity (A. Kumar, 2024). Critics, however, raise concerns about the implications for federalism, the potential marginalization of regional parties and state-specific issues, the logistical challenges of synchronization, and the fundamental question of whether such a reform aligns with the basic structure doctrine of the Indian Constitution (S. Kumar, 2022; R. K. Singh, 2025).

This research article undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the legal and constitutional framework of simultaneous elections in India. It examines the constitutional provisions that would require amendment, analyzes judicial perspectives and legal challenges, evaluates the historical context and implementation feasibility, and discusses the broader implications for Indian democracy and federalism. By synthesizing scholarly literature, legal documents, and policy reports, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on electoral reforms in India and provide insights for policymakers, legal scholars, and stakeholders interested in understanding the complexities of implementing ONOE.

The significance of this research lies in its systematic examination of the legal and constitutional dimensions of a proposal that could fundamentally reshape India's electoral landscape. As the government and various stakeholders continue to debate the merits and challenges of simultaneous elections, a thorough understanding of the legal framework, constitutional requirements, and potential implications becomes essential for informed decision-making and policy formulation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The literature on simultaneous elections in India has grown substantially in recent years, reflecting increased academic and policy interest in this electoral reform proposal. Scholars have examined various dimensions of ONOE, including constitutional requirements, legal

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challenges, historical precedents, comparative perspectives, and implications for Indian democracy and federalism.

Several studies have focused on the constitutional and legal framework required for implementing simultaneous elections. Ranjithkumar conducted a comprehensive constitutional and governance analysis, mapping the specific constitutional articles requiring amendment and citing relevant Supreme Court judgments (Ranjithkumar, 2024). The study employed doctrinal and comparative legal approaches to examine the impact on Indian federalism and democratic accountability. Similarly, Lamani et al. provided a detailed constitutional analysis arguing for ONOE, identifying necessary amendments and incorporating Election Commission reports alongside Supreme Court cases (Lamani & Balavantagol, n.d.). These studies emphasize that any move toward simultaneous elections must address fundamental legal and procedural aspects while considering constitutional flexibility.

The constitutional provisions most frequently identified as requiring amendment include Articles 83 (duration of Houses of Parliament), 85 (prorogation and dissolution of Parliament), 172 (duration of State Legislatures), and 174 (prorogation and dissolution of State Legislatures) (Bhatnagar, 2024; V. Kumar, n.d.; Lohitha, n.d.). Bhatnagar noted that implementing ONOE necessitates establishing fixed tenures for both Union and state assemblies, allowing dissolution only in emergencies, which requires a two-thirds majority in Parliament and state consent (Bhatnagar, 2024). Singh highlighted that a minimum of five constitutional amendments would be necessary to overcome constitutional obstacles (R. K. Singh, 2025).

Historical analysis reveals that simultaneous elections were successfully practiced in India from 1952 to 1967, during which the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections were held concurrently (Krishnan & Rangrez, n.d.; V. Kumar, n.d.; Parthasarathy, 2023). Kumar examined this historical context, analyzing the factors that led to the discontinuation of synchronized elections, primarily the premature dissolution of state governments and the Lok Sabha due to political instability (A. Kumar, 2024). This historical perspective provides important insights into both the feasibility and potential challenges of reviving simultaneous elections.

The literature also addresses judicial perspectives and legal challenges. Howladar argued that simultaneous elections could violate Articles 83(2) and 172(1) of the Constitution, which provide five-year terms for the Lok Sabha and state legislatures unless dissolved earlier, without guaranteeing fixed terms. The study referenced the Constitutional Bench judgment in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* regarding the dissolution of State Legislative Assemblies by the President, highlighting concerns about potential misuse of Article 356 (President's Rule) in a simultaneous election scenario (Howladar, 2014). Jamtani undertook a comprehensive legal inquiry into the constitutional amendments required for ONOE, evaluating implications on federalism, electoral integrity, political accountability, and the basic structure doctrine (Jamtani, 2024).

Cost-benefit analyses feature prominently in the literature. Bhatnagar estimated that simultaneous elections could save over ₹45 billion annually by reducing expenses related to election administration, security, and governance disruptions (Bhatnagar, 2024). Vijayasenan concluded that ONOE could reduce election burden and expenditure, saving significant funds for development while offering benefits like focused governance and reduced disruption. However, these studies also acknowledge challenges including increased administrative needs and potential impacts on state autonomy and smaller parties.

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The implications for federalism constitute a major theme in the literature. Kumar analyzed the substantial constitutional and legal challenges of electoral synchronicity for India's parliamentary federal democracy. Lohitha examined the proposal through the lens of federalism and democratic processes, noting that India's early electoral framework envisioned a unified system (Lohitha, n.d.). Critics argue that ONOE might impact state autonomy, harm smaller regional parties, and centralize electoral processes in ways that could undermine federal principles (R. K. Singh, 2025).

Comparative perspectives have also been explored. Ranjithkumar compared practices in the United States, Australia, Canada, and Germany, evaluating party willingness and administrative capacity (Ranjithkumar, 2024). Nihal provided a detailed comparative framework using global case studies to illuminate opportunities and pitfalls for implementing ONOE in India (Nihal, 2025). These comparative analyses offer valuable insights into how other federal democracies manage electoral synchronization.

Recent literature has examined institutional perspectives, particularly those of the Law Commission, NITI Aayog, and the Election Commission of India. Singh noted that these bodies have submitted reports acknowledging that implementing ONOE would require constitutional changes, parliamentary approval, and broad consensus among political parties. The 79th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee (2015) highlighted potential cost savings when Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly elections are held simultaneously.

Implementation challenges and feasibility assessments form another significant strand of literature. Waza assessed the feasibility and implications of ONOE, examining advantages and challenges including its impact on democratic principles, political parties, and voter behavior. Singha investigated the complicated issues of holding simultaneous elections in a country as diverse as India, exploring implementation limits, constitutional consequences, logistical issues, uneven political cycles, and potential impacts on regional parties and federalism. These studies emphasize that while ONOE holds promise for improving governance and efficiency, it requires a nuanced approach that respects India's diversity and federal principles.

The literature reveals a consensus that implementing simultaneous elections in India is constitutionally and legally complex, requiring extensive amendments, broad political consensus, and careful consideration of federal principles. While potential benefits in terms of cost savings and governance continuity are acknowledged, scholars emphasize the need for phased implementation, consensus building, and infrastructural improvements. The debate continues to evolve, with recent contributions examining the High-Level Committee Report on Simultaneous Elections (2024) and subsequent Cabinet decisions.

Despite the growing body of literature, gaps remain in understanding the practical mechanisms for addressing premature dissolution of legislatures, the precise legal procedures for constitutional amendments, and the long-term implications for regional representation and democratic accountability. This research article aims to contribute to filling these gaps through a comprehensive analysis of the legal and constitutional framework of simultaneous elections in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research employs a doctrinal legal research methodology combined with systematic literature review to comprehensively analyze the legal and constitutional framework of One

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Nation, One Election in India. The study is qualitative in nature, focusing on the interpretation and analysis of constitutional provisions, legal documents, judicial pronouncements, and scholarly literature.

Research Design: The research adopts an analytical and descriptive approach, examining the constitutional and legal dimensions of simultaneous elections through multiple lenses—historical, comparative, and normative. The study is structured to address key research questions: (1) What constitutional provisions require amendment for implementing ONOE? (2) What are the legal and judicial perspectives on simultaneous elections? (3) What are the implementation challenges and feasibility considerations? (4) What are the implications for Indian federalism and democracy?

Data Sources: The primary data sources for this research include:

- Constitutional texts, particularly Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356 of the Indian Constitution
- Judicial pronouncements and Supreme Court judgments related to elections and federalism
- Reports from the Law Commission of India, NITI Aayog, and the Election Commission of India
- The High-Level Committee Report on Simultaneous Elections (2024)
- Statutory provisions including the Representation of the People Act, 1951

Secondary data sources comprise scholarly articles, research papers, and academic publications examining various dimensions of simultaneous elections in India

Analytical Framework consists of Constitutional Analysis, Legal Doctrinal Analysis, Comparative Analysis and Thematic Analysis

Data Synthesis: The enriched paper table was analyzed to extract information on three key dimensions: (1) Constitutional Provisions and Amendments Required, (2) Legal and Judicial Perspectives, and (3) Key Findings and Recommendations.

RESULTS / FINDINGS

Constitutional Provisions and Required Amendments

The analysis of scholarly literature reveals that implementing One Nation, One Election in India necessitates substantial amendments to multiple constitutional provisions. The Constitution of India, in its current form, does not mandate fixed terms for the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assemblies, allowing for premature dissolution under specific circumstances. This flexibility, while important for parliamentary democracy, poses a fundamental challenge to the synchronization of elections.

Key Constitutional Articles Requiring Amendment:

Article 83 governs the duration of the Houses of Parliament, specifying that the Lok Sabha shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting unless dissolved sooner. To implement simultaneous elections, this article would need to be amended to establish a fixed five-year term with limited provisions for premature dissolution. The amendment would need

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to address scenarios such as loss of confidence, ensuring that any premature dissolution triggers a mechanism to maintain electoral synchronization.

Article 85 deals with the prorogation and dissolution of Parliament. Current provisions allow the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha on the advice of the Prime Minister. For ONOE, this article would require modification to restrict dissolution to specific circumstances and to establish procedures for maintaining electoral synchronization even when premature dissolution occurs.

Article 172 prescribes the duration of State Legislatures, providing that every State Legislative Assembly shall continue for five years unless dissolved sooner. Similar to Article 83, this provision would need amendment to establish fixed terms for state assemblies, with carefully defined exceptions for premature dissolution that do not disrupt the overall synchronization framework.

Article 174 governs the prorogation and dissolution of State Legislatures. Amendments to this article would need to align state assembly dissolution procedures with the requirements of simultaneous elections, potentially limiting the Governor's discretion to dissolve assemblies except under specified circumstances.

Article 356 (President's Rule) presents a particularly complex challenge. This provision allows the President to assume state government functions when constitutional machinery fails. Howlader raised concerns about potential misuse of Article 356 in a simultaneous election scenario, referencing the Supreme Court's judgment in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (Howlader, 2014). Any amendment framework must address how President's Rule interacts with the requirement for electoral synchronization, ensuring that this provision is not misused to manipulate election timing.

Additional Constitutional Considerations:

Beyond these primary articles, scholars have identified several other constitutional provisions requiring attention. Bhatnagar noted that implementing ONOE requires establishing fixed tenures for both Union and state assemblies, allowing dissolution only in emergencies, which necessitates a two-thirds majority in Parliament and ratification by at least half of the state legislatures. Singh concluded that a minimum of five constitutional amendments would be necessary to overcome constitutional obstacles (A. Singh & Jain, 2024).

The 79th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee suggested amendments to Rule 198 of the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure to introduce a parallel confidence motion mechanism. This would allow for the formation of an alternative government without necessitating fresh elections, thereby maintaining electoral synchronization even in cases of government instability.

Mechanisms for Addressing Premature Dissolution:

A critical challenge identified in the literature is developing mechanisms to address premature dissolution of legislatures while maintaining electoral synchronization. Several approaches have been proposed:

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1. **Constructive Vote of No Confidence:** Similar to the German model, this mechanism would require the legislature to simultaneously vote out the existing government and vote in an alternative government, reducing the likelihood of premature dissolution.
2. **Residual Term Approach:** If a legislature is dissolved prematurely, the newly elected body would serve only the remaining term of the original five-year cycle, ensuring that the next regular election remains synchronized.
3. **Restricted Dissolution Provisions:** Limiting the circumstances under which dissolution can occur, such as requiring a supermajority vote or restricting dissolution to the final year of the term (Jamtani, 2024).
4. **Statutory Amendments:** Beyond constitutional amendments, implementing ONOE would require modifications to the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and other electoral laws. These statutory changes would need to address practical aspects such as election scheduling, nomination procedures, campaign periods, and the application of the Model Code of Conduct across multiple states simultaneously.

The constitutional amendment process itself presents challenges. Article 368 of the Constitution prescribes the procedure for constitutional amendments, requiring a special majority (two-thirds of members present and voting, and an absolute majority of the total membership) in both Houses of Parliament. For amendments affecting federal relations, ratification by at least half of the state legislatures is also required. Achieving this level of consensus on ONOE-related amendments would necessitate extensive political negotiation and consensus-building across party lines and between the Union and States.

Legal and Judicial Perspectives

The legal and judicial dimensions of simultaneous elections in India encompass constitutional interpretation, judicial precedents, and legal challenges that would arise from implementing ONOE. While there is no single landmark Supreme Court judgment directly addressing the constitutionality of simultaneous elections, several judicial pronouncements and legal principles are relevant to this debate.

The Supreme Court's judgment in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) is particularly significant for understanding the legal constraints on implementing ONOE. This case established important principles regarding the dissolution of State Legislative Assemblies under Article 356 (President's Rule). The Court held that the dissolution of a state assembly requires parliamentary approval and cannot be done arbitrarily. In the context of simultaneous elections, this judgment raises concerns about potential misuse of Article 356 to manipulate election timing or to bring state elections in sync with national elections through premature dissolution.

Several studies reference Supreme Court judgments on election timing and the duration of legislative bodies, though specific case names are not always detailed in the available literature. The constitutional analysis conducted by various scholars suggests that the judiciary would likely scrutinize any ONOE implementation framework through the lens of the basic structure doctrine, which prevents amendments that alter the fundamental features of the Constitution.

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Legal Challenges and Constitutional Concerns:

Howladar argued that simultaneous elections could violate Articles 83(2) and 172(1) of the Constitution, which provide five-year terms for the Lok Sabha and state legislatures unless dissolved earlier, without guaranteeing fixed terms. The current constitutional framework is premised on parliamentary democracy's flexibility, allowing governments to fall and be reconstituted based on confidence votes. Imposing fixed terms would represent a significant departure from this principle and could be challenged as altering the basic structure of parliamentary democracy.

Article 329 of the Constitution, which provides a "Bar to interference by courts in Electoral matters," has implications for judicial review of ONOE implementation. This provision limits the judiciary's power to interfere in electoral processes, potentially restricting challenges to the mechanics of simultaneous elections once implemented. However, constitutional challenges to the amendment process itself or to the fundamental alteration of federal principles would likely remain justiciable.

Federal Principles and Legal Constraints:

The legal analysis reveals significant concerns about ONOE's compatibility with federal principles enshrined in the Constitution. The substantial constitutional and legal challenges of electoral synchronicity for India's parliamentary federal democracy. The federal structure of India, with its division of powers between the Union and States (Seventh Schedule), is considered part of the basic structure of the Constitution. Any electoral reform that undermines state autonomy or centralizes power excessively could face constitutional challenges.

Jamtani's comprehensive legal inquiry examined the interplay between ONOE and constitutional principles such as federalism, separation of powers, and the basic structure doctrine. The study emphasized the delicate balance between ensuring uniformity in election schedules and preserving the autonomy of state governments in the electoral process. The legal ramifications of centralizing election schedules could include challenges based on violation of federal principles and undue interference with state autonomy.

Election Commission's Legal Authority:

The Election Commission of India, established under Article 324 of the Constitution, has superintendence, direction, and control over elections. The legal framework for ONOE would need to clarify the Election Commission's role and authority in conducting simultaneous elections across the country. Kumar et al. examined the essential role of the Election Commission in conducting all major elections simultaneously, discussing logistical benefits and cost reductions. The legal framework would need to ensure that the Election Commission has adequate powers, resources, and independence to manage the complex logistics of nationwide simultaneous elections.

Representation of the People Act, 1951: This statutory framework governs the conduct of elections in India. Implementing ONOE would require substantial amendments to this Act to address issues such as:

Synchronization of election schedules

1. Procedures for by-elections and their impact on the overall cycle

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2. Application of the Model Code of Conduct across multiple states
3. Nomination and campaign procedures for simultaneous elections
4. Dispute resolution mechanisms

Legal Feasibility and Consensus Requirements:

The legal literature emphasizes that implementing ONOE is not merely a technical legal exercise but requires broad political and legal consensus. Singh noted that the Law Commission, NITI Aayog, and Election Commission have acknowledged that implementation requires constitutional changes, parliamentary approval, and broad consensus among political parties. Debroy emphasized that eventual implementation would require significant constitutional and statutory amendments along with consensus amongst key stakeholders (Debroy & Desai, 2017).

The legal framework must also address practical scenarios such as:

1. What happens if a state government falls mid-term?
2. How are by-elections managed without disrupting synchronization?
3. What legal mechanisms ensure that premature dissolution does not cascade into desynchronization?
4. How are hung assemblies and coalition instability addressed within a fixed-term framework?

Constitutional Validity Concerns:

Legal scholars have raised questions about whether ONOE, even if implemented through constitutional amendment, could be challenged as violating the basic structure doctrine. The basic structure doctrine, established in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973), holds that certain fundamental features of the Constitution cannot be amended even by Parliament. If ONOE is perceived as fundamentally altering parliamentary democracy, federalism, or the separation of powers, it could face constitutional challenges despite being enacted through proper amendment procedures.

Historical Context and Evolution

Understanding the historical context of simultaneous elections in India is essential for evaluating the feasibility and implications of reviving this practice. The evolution of India's electoral system from synchronized to staggered elections provides important lessons for contemporary policy debates.

Early Period of Simultaneous Elections (1952-1967):

India successfully conducted simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies during the first four general elections from 1952 to 1967. This period, characterized by the dominance of the Indian National Congress and relative political stability, demonstrated that synchronized elections were operationally feasible. Kumar noted that this historical practice provides evidence that simultaneous elections can function effectively in the Indian context.

During this period, the electoral framework envisioned a unified system where national and state elections occurred concurrently. This synchronization was not the result of constitutional

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mandate but rather emerged from the timing of independence and the initial formation of state governments. The practice facilitated administrative efficiency and allowed the Election Commission to deploy resources more effectively.

Breakdown of Synchronization (1967 onwards):

The synchronized electoral cycle began to break down in the late 1960s due to several factors:

Premature Dissolution of State Governments: Political instability led to the premature dissolution of several state assemblies, disrupting the synchronized cycle. Coalition governments proved unstable, leading to mid-term elections in various states.

Dissolution of the Lok Sabha: The Lok Sabha itself was dissolved prematurely on multiple occasions, further disrupting synchronization. The fourth Lok Sabha was dissolved in 1970, and subsequent dissolutions occurred in 1977, 1979, and 1991.

President's Rule: The frequent imposition of President's Rule under Article 356 led to the dissolution of state assemblies and necessitated fresh elections at different times.

Political Fragmentation: The decline of single-party dominance and the rise of regional parties and coalition politics increased government instability, making synchronized elections difficult to maintain.

Parthasarathy's critical analysis noted that the constitutional problem of maintaining simultaneous elections emerged as the political landscape became more complex and competitive. The breakdown of synchronization was not due to constitutional design flaws but rather reflected the dynamic nature of Indian democracy and the legitimate exercise of parliamentary principles allowing for government formation and dissolution based on confidence votes.

Attempts at Revival:

The idea of reviving simultaneous elections has been periodically discussed since the 1980s. The concept gained renewed attention in recent years, particularly after 2014, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi publicly supported the idea. Several institutional bodies have examined the proposal:

1. **Law Commission of India:** The Law Commission has submitted reports examining the legal and constitutional feasibility of simultaneous elections, acknowledging the need for constitutional amendments and broad consensus.
2. **NITI Aayog:** The government think tank has analyzed the potential benefits and challenges of ONOE, contributing to policy discussions.
3. **Election Commission of India:** The Election Commission has provided perspectives on the logistical and administrative aspects of conducting simultaneous elections.
4. **79th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee (2015):** This report highlighted potential cost savings when Lok Sabha and state legislative assembly elections are held simultaneously.

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5. High-Level Committee Report on Simultaneous Elections (2024): This recent report represents the most comprehensive institutional examination of ONOE, leading to Cabinet endorsement and renewed policy momentum.

Lessons from Historical Experience:

The historical analysis yields several important insights:

1. Feasibility: The successful conduct of simultaneous elections from 1952-1967 demonstrates operational feasibility, though the political context was significantly different.
2. Political Stability: Synchronized elections are easier to maintain in periods of political stability and single-party dominance but become challenging in coalition and multi-party contexts.
3. Constitutional Flexibility: The breakdown of synchronization occurred not due to constitutional rigidity but because the Constitution appropriately allows for government instability and premature dissolution—features essential to parliamentary democracy.
4. Restoration Challenges: Once synchronization is lost, restoring it requires either waiting for natural convergence (which could take decades) or actively intervening through premature dissolution or term extension—both problematic options.

Implementation Challenges and Feasibility

The literature identifies numerous implementation challenges and feasibility considerations for ONOE, spanning logistical, administrative, political, and constitutional dimensions.

1. Logistical and Administrative Challenges: Conducting simultaneous elections across India's vast and diverse geography presents enormous logistical challenges. Singha investigated the implementation limits and complexity, highlighting constitutional consequences, logistical issues, uneven political cycles, and potential impacts on regional parties and federalism (George, 2023). The Election Commission would need to manage elections in all states simultaneously, requiring:
2. Massive Resource Deployment: Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines, polling personnel, and security forces would need to be deployed nationwide simultaneously.
3. Personnel Requirements: Millions of polling officials, security personnel, and administrative staff would be required concurrently, straining available human resources.
4. Security Arrangements: Ensuring adequate security across all polling stations simultaneously would be challenging, particularly in sensitive areas.
5. Infrastructure Needs: Polling stations, storage facilities for EVMs, and counting centers would need to be operational across the country at the same time.

Synchronization Mechanisms:

A fundamental challenge is how to achieve initial synchronization and maintain it over time. Several approaches have been discussed:

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1. **Premature Dissolution:** Dissolving some state assemblies early to align with the Lok Sabha election cycle. This approach raises democratic legitimacy concerns and could be challenged legally.
2. **Term Extension:** Extending the terms of some assemblies to align with the next synchronized cycle. This also raises constitutional and democratic concerns.
3. **Phased Implementation:** Gradually bringing states into synchronization over multiple election cycles, though this delays full implementation.
4. **Residual Term Approach:** When premature dissolution occurs, the new assembly serves only the remaining term, maintaining long-term synchronization.
5. **Addressing Premature Dissolution:**

The most significant implementation challenge is managing premature dissolution of legislatures without disrupting synchronization.

The literature proposes several mechanisms:

1. **Constructive Vote of No Confidence:** Requiring simultaneous vote-out of the existing government and vote-in of an alternative government, reducing premature dissolution.
2. **Restricted Dissolution Provisions:** Limiting circumstances under which dissolution can occur.
3. **Caretaker Governments:** Allowing caretaker governments to function until the next synchronized election cycle.
4. **By-elections for Residual Terms:** Conducting by-elections for assemblies that are dissolved prematurely, with the new assembly serving only the remaining term.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, and none perfectly resolves the tension between maintaining synchronization and preserving parliamentary democracy's flexibility.

Political Feasibility:

Achieving political consensus for ONOE is perhaps the most significant challenge. The literature identifies several political considerations:

1. **Consensus Building:** Implementation requires broad consensus among political parties, which is difficult given divergent interests. National parties may support ONOE, while regional parties often oppose it, fearing marginalization (George, 2023).
2. **State Autonomy Concerns:** State governments and regional parties view ONOE as potentially undermining state autonomy and federal principles.
3. **Electoral Advantages:** Concerns exist that ONOE might benefit the incumbent party or national parties at the expense of regional parties.
4. **Constitutional Amendment Process:** Achieving the required two-thirds majority in Parliament and ratification by half the states requires extensive political negotiation.

Cost-Benefit Considerations:

While proponents emphasize cost savings, the implementation itself would require substantial initial investment. Bhatnagar estimated annual savings of over 45 billion rupees from reduced election administration, security, and governance disruption costs. However, the initial costs of achieving synchronization, upgrading infrastructure, and procuring additional EVMs and VVPATs must be considered.

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Voter Behavior and Democratic Participation:

Concerns exist about how simultaneous elections might affect voter behavior. Critics argue that national issues might overshadow state-specific concerns, reducing the accountability of state governments. Conversely, proponents suggest that simultaneous elections could reduce voter fatigue and potentially increase participation.

Federal Implications:

The implementation of ONOE has significant implications for Indian federalism. Kumar et al. analyzed the implications for India's parliamentary federal democracy, highlighting substantial constitutional and legal challenges. The concern is that synchronizing elections might centralize political discourse, reduce attention to state-specific issues, and undermine the autonomy that is fundamental to federal systems.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

The Federal Question

At the heart of the ONOE debate lies a fundamental tension with India's federal identity. The country's division of powers between the Union and States, enshrined in the Seventh Schedule, is considered part of the basic structure that no amendment can touch. Critics warn that holding all elections simultaneously would allow national narratives to drown out state-specific concerns and the regional voices that carry them.

The worry is not merely symbolic. When voters choose national and state representatives on the same day, they tend to think in national terms. Regional parties, which have long served as custodians of local identity, may find themselves sidelined — not by any constitutional change, but by the sheer gravity of a nationwide electoral moment. Smaller outfits, already stretched thin, would face the burden of multi-front campaigns while well-funded national parties capitalize on the unified stage.

Defenders argue that electoral timing is procedural, not substantive — synchronizing elections does nothing to touch the legislative powers states hold over their own subjects. Critics remain unconvinced. The current staggered system gives voters a continuous mechanism to hold governments accountable. Mid-term state elections frequently function as informal referendums on the Centre, sending signals that redirect national policy. Under ONOE, these intermediate checkpoints disappear, and with them, a layer of democratic responsiveness that many consider invaluable.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

The financial case for ONOE rests on estimated savings of over ₹45 billion annually — drawn from reduced administration costs, fewer security deployments, and less frequent disruption from the Model Code of Conduct. With some part of the country perpetually in election mode, governments remain trapped in a cycle of campaigning rather than governing. A single electoral season would free up longer stretches of uninterrupted governance and allow the Election Commission to concentrate its capacity rather than manage a rolling calendar year-round.

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Yet the initial price of implementation would be steep — massive procurement of EVMs and VVPATs, infrastructure upgrades, large-scale training, and the legally fraught task of aligning assembly terms through premature dissolutions or extensions. Critics also note that ₹45 billion, while substantial in isolation, is a slim fraction of total government expenditure. Whether these savings justify the constitutional complexity involved — particularly when the proposal's claimed impact on corruption and black money remains unproven — is a question the numbers alone cannot answer.

Political and Administrative Considerations

No reform of this scale moves without consensus, and consensus is far from assured. National parties broadly support ONOE, recognizing that a simultaneous election plays to their organizational and financial strengths. Regional parties are wary, understanding that their power rests on concentrating attention on local issues — an advantage that risks being diluted in a national electoral wave. Opposition parties have additionally raised concerns that synchronization could entrench whichever party commands the national stage at the moment of reform.

The Law Commission, NITI Aayog, and Election Commission have all acknowledged that ONOE requires significant constitutional amendments and broad political agreement. Without it, even a well-designed framework risks being perceived as partisan. On the ground, simultaneous elections would demand coalition negotiations, candidate selection, and voter education across both national and state levels at once — compressing into a single season the political work that currently unfolds gradually across years.

Comparative Assessment

The United States holds federal and state elections simultaneously with federalism intact — but its presidential system with fixed terms sidesteps India's core parliamentary challenge: what happens when a government falls mid-term. Germany is more instructive. Its constructive vote of no confidence requires that removing a government must simultaneously install a replacement, reducing instability without abandoning parliamentary accountability. Crucially though, Germany does not synchronize federal and state elections, preserving distinct political dynamics at each level.

Australia and Canada similarly keep national and subnational elections on separate tracks, demonstrating that federal balance is a function of constitutional design and political culture — not of electoral simultaneity. The comparative lesson is clear: simultaneous elections are not inherently incompatible with federalism, but the surrounding mechanisms matter enormously. India cannot transplant any foreign model wholesale. It must design a framework suited to its parliamentary traditions and political diversity — and a phased approach, rather than a single sweeping overhaul, may be the more prudent path forward.

CONCLUSION:

One Nation, One Election is neither a panacea for India's governance challenges nor an inherent threat to democracy and federalism. It is a complex reform proposal with genuine potential benefits and legitimate concerns. The key question is not whether ONOE is inherently good or bad, but whether it can be designed and implemented in a manner that achieves administrative

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efficiency while preserving the fundamental principles of Indian democracy—federalism, accountability, representation, and constitutional governance.

The path forward requires moving beyond polarized debates to engage in careful constitutional design, extensive stakeholder consultation, and phased implementation with built-in safeguards and evaluation mechanisms. Only through such a thoughtful and inclusive process can India determine whether simultaneous elections can be successfully adapted to its unique constitutional framework and democratic traditions.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse by providing a comprehensive analysis of the legal and constitutional dimensions of ONOE. As India continues to debate this significant reform proposal, informed understanding of the constitutional requirements, legal challenges, historical context, and federal implications becomes essential for policymakers, legal scholars, and citizens engaged in shaping the future of Indian democracy.

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Conflict of Interest

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