



One Nation, One Election

2 pager notes | Polity | Current Affairs Urgent Importance

[Syllabus Portion Targeted:

General Studies II: Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these; Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.]

Introduction

One Nation, One Election refers to the idea of holding simultaneous elections for the **Lok Sabha (House of the People) and State Legislative Assemblies in India**. The concept aims to streamline the electoral process by reducing the frequency of elections across the country.

Historical Background

- **1951-1952:** The first general election in India was held simultaneously for both the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies.
- **1957, 1962, and 1967:** The trend of simultaneous elections continued.
- **1968-69:** Due to political instability and the premature dissolution of some State Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha, the cycle of simultaneous elections was disrupted. The practice has not been revived since then.

Committees and Reports on ONOE

- **Law Commission of India (170th Report):** Recommended simultaneous elections to minimize disruptions in governance and reduce election expenditure.
- **Election Commission of India (2015):** Supported ONOE in principle but raised concerns over logistical and constitutional challenges.
- **NITI Aayog (2017):** Proposed a roadmap for simultaneous elections, suggesting a gradual phase-in of the system by aligning State and national election schedules.
- **Parliamentary Standing Committee (2015):** Supported ONOE but emphasized the need for careful planning and the possibility of amending the Constitution.

Committees Opposed/Expressed Concerns

- The **Second ARC** didn't outright oppose **ONOE**, but it highlighted the **benefits of staggered elections**, suggesting that periodic elections allow for continuous checks on governance at different levels.
- **Constitutional Experts:** Several experts have raised concerns regarding the violation of the federal structure, where the autonomy of the states in determining their own election timelines may be compromised.

5 Positive Points on ONOE



| Clear your doubts now.



1. **Cost Efficiency:** It would significantly reduce the cost of conducting multiple elections by sharing resources like personnel, polling booths, and security forces.
2. **Governance Stability:** Frequent elections hamper governance due to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). Simultaneous elections would provide uninterrupted governance for a fixed tenure.
3. **Reduced Electoral Fatigue:** It will reduce the strain on voters, political parties, and administrative machinery involved in frequent elections.
4. **Improved Policy Implementation:** A synchronized election cycle can lead to better long-term planning and policy execution by the government.
5. **Reduced Impact of Populism:** Since elections would be held once in five years, it may curb the tendency of governments to engage in populist measures frequently to win over voters.

5 Negative Points on ONOE

1. **Logistical Challenges:** Conducting simultaneous elections across such a large and diverse country with varying local issues and electoral timelines could pose massive logistical hurdles.
2. **Federal Concerns:** It may weaken the federal structure by reducing the autonomy of states to call elections as per their circumstances.
3. **Loss of Immediate Accountability:** In the absence of mid-term elections, voters might have to wait longer to hold governments accountable, leading to dissatisfaction.
4. **Political Overload:** A single election covering both national and state issues may overwhelm voters and dilute the focus on regional issues.
5. **Constitutional Amendments:** Implementing ONOE would require multiple constitutional amendments, including those affecting the tenure of state legislatures, which could lead to legal and political challenges.

Challenges in Implementing One Nation, One Election in India

1. **Constitutional Amendments:** Articles like **83, 85, 172,** and **174** would need to be amended to align the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Achieving a political consensus on such amendments is a major hurdle.
2. **Premature Dissolution:** The premature dissolution of a State Assembly or Lok Sabha would disrupt the ONOE cycle, requiring mechanisms to handle mid-term dissolutions.
3. **Logistics and Security:** Managing logistics and security for conducting simultaneous elections in a country as large and diverse as India is a monumental challenge.
4. **Regional Variations:** India's diversity means that regional issues differ greatly. Simultaneous elections might blur the distinction between national and state issues, causing regional interests to be underrepresented.
5. **Political Consensus:** Building political consensus is difficult, as regional parties fear losing their prominence in simultaneous elections, which may be dominated by national narratives.

PRELIMS MCQ

With reference to One Nation, One Election, consider the following statements:

1. It reduces the frequency of elections and promotes governance stability.
2. NITI Aayog has provided a detailed roadmap for its implementation.
3. Simultaneous elections have never been practiced in India before.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only





- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

MAINS Question

Discuss the concept of 'One Nation, One Election'. What are the constitutional, logistical, and political challenges in implementing this reform in India?

ANSWERS with Explanation

PRELIMS-

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** One Nation, One Election (ONOE) aims to reduce the frequency of elections and improve governance stability by conducting simultaneous elections for both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** NITI Aayog has indeed suggested a roadmap for the implementation of ONOE, detailing possible ways to phase it in over time.
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Simultaneous elections were practiced in India until 1967, after which the cycle was disrupted due to political instability.

MAINS- points that must be in your answer-

1. Concept of One Nation, One Election:

- The idea aims to synchronize Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly elections to reduce the frequency of elections.
- It was practiced until 1967, after which elections became staggered due to premature dissolutions.
- The government and various committees, including NITI Aayog and Law Commission, have proposed this reform for cost efficiency and governance stability.

2. Constitutional Challenges:

- Amendments Required: Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356 need to be amended to align the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- The federal structure could be impacted, as states may lose autonomy in determining election schedules.
- Premature Dissolutions: Managing elections in case of the premature dissolution of the Lok Sabha or State Assemblies is a major hurdle.

Example: A state's premature dissolution would disrupt the synchronized election cycle.

3. Logistical Challenges:

- Scale of Elections: India's vast population and geographical diversity make it challenging to conduct simultaneous elections efficiently.
- Security Requirements: Large-scale deployment of forces to ensure smooth elections nationwide at one time is a logistical issue.
- Voter Management: Managing voter lists, polling stations, and voting equipment like EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) for both national and state elections simultaneously is a difficult task.

Example: Ensuring sufficient EVMs and VVPATs for simultaneous elections across 29 states and union territories.

4. Political Challenges:

- Opposition from Regional Parties: Regional parties may fear being overshadowed by national issues during combined elections, as national parties might dominate the electoral narrative.





- **Electoral Campaigns:** Combining national and state election campaigns could lead to a loss of focus on regional issues, diluting the importance of state-level governance.
- **Disruption of Accountability:** Staggered elections allow voters to hold governments accountable periodically, which could be undermined by ONOE.

Example: Regional leaders like Mamata Banerjee (West Bengal CM) and others have expressed concerns over the dominance of national issues over regional priorities in ONOE.

ADDITIONAL INFO: Constitutional Amendments Required for ONOE

1. **Article 83 – Duration of Houses of Parliament**

- **Current Provision:** Article 83(2) states that the Lok Sabha shall have a term of **five years** from the date of its first sitting unless dissolved earlier.
- **Amendment Needed:** To ensure simultaneous elections, would require changes to accommodate mechanisms for fixed terms or early dissolution while aligning with the election cycle.

2. **Article 85 – Dissolution of Lok Sabha**

- **Current Provision:** Article 85(2)(b) provides for the dissolution of the Lok Sabha by the President before the completion of its full term.
- **Amendment Needed:** This article will need to be modified to limit premature dissolution or provide for alternative arrangements like caretaker governments in the event of dissolution until the next synchronized election.

3. **Article 172 – Duration of State Legislative Assemblies**

- **Current Provision:** Article 172(1) states that every State Legislative Assembly shall continue for **five years** unless sooner dissolved.
- **Amendment Needed:** Similar to Article 83, this article would need to be amended to provide mechanisms for fixed terms or alternative arrangements if an Assembly is dissolved before completing its term to align with the national election cycle.

4. **Article 174 – Sessions of the State Legislatures, Prorogation, and Dissolution**

- **Current Provision:** Article 174(2)(b) provides for the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly by the Governor at any time.
- **Amendment Needed:** This article would require changes to ensure that the Governor's power to dissolve an Assembly is either restricted or aligns with the ONOE cycle, possibly introducing provisions for caretaker governments in states that face premature dissolution.

5. **Article 356 – President's Rule**





- **Current Provision:** Under Article 356, if a State government cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the President can impose President's Rule, leading to the suspension of the Assembly.
- **Amendment Needed:** Provisions could be added to extend President's Rule until the next synchronized election, preventing mid-term elections under this article.

Additional Constitutional and Legal Adjustments

- **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** Amendments would be required in this law, which governs the conduct of elections in India, to regulate simultaneous elections and address issues like premature dissolution and by-elections.
- **Anti-Defection Law (Tenth Schedule):** Changes may be needed to prevent frequent defections that can lead to instability, especially if early dissolutions are restricted.

