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# Legal Perspectives on the Feasibility of 'One Nation, One Election'

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## ABSTRACT

*The 'One Nation One Election' (ONOE) unifies all electoral cycles at the national/federal, state and local government levels by synchronizing the dates to overcome the financial and administrative inefficiencies that are caused by the staggered or non-overlapping system of holding elections in India. While originally stemming from India's first post-constitution representative electoral model of 1951-52, the ONOE seeks to help the Election Commission of India work more efficiently, reduce the cost of holding elections, and limit the time that the Model Code of Conduct is in force (model code restricts the scope of governance for the parties). ONOE's critics argue that it may distort public perception of the differences between state and national issues, disadvantage small and regional parties, and centralize power anyway, undermining India's federal system, especially if the legislature is overhauled as well. ONOE entails constitutional amendments and a significant amount of logistical planning is required, including aligning divergent electoral cycles and the logistic orchestration of holding simultaneous multi-level national combined elections. However, observers on a high-level committee argue for a staggered rollout of India's post-constitution model of 1951-52 by synchronizing the next major elections. Although this strengthens balance between democratic integrity and administrative efficiency, the big-bang policy model mitigates concerns about patterns of voting and the prioritization or marginalization of local-level issues. Political will is a necessary first step, but successful legal and logistical execution is where implementation faces its biggest hurdle.*

**Keywords:** *One Nation, One Election, Election Commission of India, Voting*

## I. INTRODUCTION

'One Nation, One Election' proposes an extreme rearrangement in the electoral context of India and seeks to link the electoral cycles of both the Parliament and the State Assemblies. This would be to change the present arrangements of holding the elections for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's Parliament) and the State Legislative Assemblies at different points in time over a five-year span. This proposal has been a hot topic of discussions and debates among the various sections of political and academic domains on both its practical, financial and legal

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ramifications. The electoral landscape in India has always been multi-colored and multifaceted, since the Election Commission of India (ECI) conducts elections for the lower house of Parliament – the Lok Sabha – and the various State Assemblies at different intervals. The larger electoral scheme of conducting elections in phases at different times has often been treated as an endemic element of the country's democratic practice and referencing to this pattern of holding elections is almost a given. India adopted the model of 'One Nation, One Election' when it adopted the Constitution in 1950. The arguments to change to 'One Nation, One Election' have emerged from a few framing reasons. First, cost savings are a goal for every aspect of a budget, and the ECI spends an enormous sum on the elections. It is widely expected that unifying the elections will reduce the quantum of money allocated to this activity. Second, the painting of the entire Indian landscape in the colors of the elections and the movement of democratic politics puts a massive burden on administration, and the ECI has felt this for years. Third, the temporary model code of conduct that comes into being during the election period lasts for a brief period. Proponents also argue that the power to call for election is the power to extend its validity beyond the given timeframe, and hence the code also puts severe limitations on the policies governments can adopt and the measures they can pursue. This curbing of the policymaking process affects governance to the extent that it might become an actionless phase in the term of the legislature. Lastly, and most importantly, during the election period, a sort of paralysis seizes the functioning of government departments, public servants hesitate to take decisions, and the offering of contracts and concessions remains suspended. Calling elections too frequently, many have argued, may be bad for 'Public Good' due to the extensive disruption to public life and livelihood, and during the long election times, the economy goes through a prolonged slowdown. When we speak of 'One Nation, One Election', we state that we believe the legislative and territory of the Union (Parliament) and the states (the legislatures of the states) and local bodies (urban/rural) should all be contested in the same period of time. That is, they should be held on the same dates, ideally in the same cycle, say once every five years. The interlinking of the legislatures of the Union and the states so that elections are held on the same date is not a new idea. There are already provisions in the law for this. The purpose of this article and our book is not to discuss the technical aspects of this idea, but to argue for the concept itself. This is the case for 'One Nation, One Election'. Experts indicate that three important objectives will be met by consolidating the electoral calendar. This would promote administrative efficiency, and help to keep expenditures low. The disruption to mundane governmental affairs caused by the clamping down of the election code of conduct on hold for a period leading up to and overlapping the period of elections would be curtailed significantly.

There is nothing new about having simultaneous elections worldwide. In fact, a number of democracies such as Sweden, South Africa and Indonesia organised their elections to higher and lower levels of government on the same day. For example, in 2019, Indonesia held its largest election since the end of authoritarian rule in 1999 by having simultaneous legislative and presidential elections. The election was also held across the country's archipelago and was commended by Indonesian scholars for its organizational efficiency and success. Indonesia achieved a very high voter turnout this time, which would not have been possible if the country continued with staggered elections to lower-tier legislatures. Sweden has a long record of holding general, regional and local elections on the same day. This policy has contributed to ensuring very high voter participation in Sweden and a greatly simplified election arrangement. Looking at the above examples, it is clear that off-year elections can indeed offer administrative and financial advantages, but it is also obvious that there are no one-size-fits-all approaches and the success of this system would always depend on the specific legal, social and political context of every country. The challenges that India faces, on account of both her size and diversity, might perhaps be more extreme relative to any other country, big or small, and diverse or not. The theoretically plausible advantages of the One Nation One Election model are often cited by its supporters: The government and the Election Commission of India (ECI) will save a lot of money as the cost of organizing multiple elections in a five-year cycle will be huge. The model would increase the administrative efficiency of government as it would free up some government resources that are otherwise utilized for election preparations and management. The Model Code of Conduct, which is enforced in areas where elections occur, often slows down the implementation of new government schemes and projects. If these schemes have to be implemented across the country, the Code requires the adoption of a one-nation-one-election system. One Nation One Election could promote higher voter turnouts as the electoral process would become simpler for the electorate, and more people may vote. At the opposite pole, theoretical arguments against One Nation One Election are equally persuasive. These contend that synchronization of elections might upset the federal structure of India by blurring the distinction between state-level and national-level issues. Voters might fail to distinguish between the levels of government for which they are voting and, in the process, 'nationalize' local issues. Smaller, regional parties that perform a crucial role in the multi-party democracy of India might also be disadvantaged. Additionally, there is a fear that One Nation One Election could bring about an extended phase of electoral passivity, which in turn may raise issues of political accountability and governance. The logistical challenge of holding a single, simultaneous nationwide election in a country of India's size and diversity also calls into

question whether the ECI will be able to manage such formidable processes without ‘shortchanging’ the integrity and fairness of electoral processes. Bringing together the pros and cons, the theoretical contours of the ‘One Nation, One Election’ plan leave us with a matrix of options. Whether it is pragmatic or desirable for India at this stage to reorganize its elections along these lines needs to be measured with reference to the specifics of the Indian democratic fabric, its capacity for execution, and its broader objective of delivering more genuine and effectual elections while not subverting democratic ethos and federalism. Constitutional and Legal Foundations

The fundamental law of India on the conduct of the electoral process is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, which lays out provisions for conducting the elections (including to the offices of the President and Vice-President) in articles 324 to 329. Article 324 creates the Election Commission of India (ECI), an autonomous body which supervises, directs and controls the whole process of holding elections to the Parliament, to the legislature of every state and to the offices of the president and vice-president of India. This foundational provision renders the ECI a pivotal player in maintaining the credibility of the electoral process. Further, two provisions – Articles 325 and 326 – reflect the principles of adult suffrage, by stating that no citizen of IA ‘shall be disqualified on account of religion, race, caste, or sex from being registered as a voter or from voting at an election’. Article 326 goes on to require that ‘not less than’ 18 years of age shall be the age for all citizens to exercise the franchise. A democratic polity based on fundamental principles of equality, freedom and participation – this is how the Constitution envisioned the ‘quintessence of democracy’.

#### **(A) The Role of the Election Commission of India as per the Representation of the People Act**

The constitutional provisions are further explained through the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which confer the ECI with the powers and functions for the conduct of free and fair elections: the preparation and revision of electoral rolls, electoral conduct and the adjudication of election disputes, respectively. The multifaceted role (as provided in these Acts) of the ECI includes delimitation of constituencies; the Model Code of Conduct, and the regulation of political parties and candidates.

#### **(B) Constitutional Amendments Required for Implementation**

Bringing in ‘One Nation, One Election’ would require constitutional amendments and also several changes to the electoral laws. The main difficulty stems from the fact that the government exists in three tiers – central, state and local – with each having its own schedule.

Consequently, modifying the tenure of the legislative bodies to bring their election cycle in tandem would tinker with the Constitution's commitment to periodic elections, which is a core democratic principle. Making change to the law to allow for One Nation One Election seems likely to involve a constitutional amendment. This seems likely to involve amendments to Articles 83, which provides for the tenure of Houses of Parliament, and 172, which provides for the tenure of state legislatures. It will have to establish a fixed term for all the legislatures so that every party can be elected together in single elections. To enable the change, a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in each House of Parliament will have to support it, including ratification by a simple majority of the state legislatures. This is under Article 368, the amendment procedure in the Constitution.

### **(C) Legal Hurdles in Synchronizing National and State Elections**

There are also technical legal problems in synchronizing national and state elections. The first issue concerns the terms of legislative bodies. These differ among states, with different assemblies set to begin and to end at various times. This means that synchronizing elections would either leave some assembly halfway through its term, or would need to extend some assemblies. The longer the extension, the more this move would undermine the legislature's claim to have a separate and distinct mandate from the people.

Second, conducting simultaneous elections in India is not easy logistically given the diversity and geographical expanse of the country. The ECI would need dedicated resources and extensive planning to hold the elections smoothly and uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

There is the problem of petitioning and litigation. Given the substantial nature of such measures as an amendment to the Constitution, any action that might alter the electoral process is likely to be challenged through petitions before the judiciary, especially before the Supreme Court of India, which invariably would have the say in interpreting the Constitution. The Court would be required to consider whether such actions violate the Constitution's commitment to democratic values and rights of individuals, including equality (Article 14), freedom of speech and expression (Article 19), and the right to assembly (Article 19(1)(c)).

If 'One Nation, One Election' were implemented in India, it will pose a significant legal and constitutional challenge. Implementing it from a legal and constitutional perspective would require a delicate balance between the democratic gains and the federal principles. Furthermore, the operational and administrative implementation of such a system would be immense. It is not only a matter of balancing the incentives for efficiency against the incentives for democratic

deliberation and federalism. There is also the voluminous legal and logistical task of an operational switchover. Consensus among the political parties, and the whole system's ability to get the judiciary to support the requisite constitutional amendments, would be some of the key factors for the viability and success of One Nation One Election.

## **II. ANALYSIS OF THE REPORT ON ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION: A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE**

This memorandum comments on the report of the high-powered panel led by the Honorable former President Ram Nath Kovind on the feasibility of bringing simultaneous elections to the seven levels of government in India when it was presented to the President of India Draupadi Murmu earlier this month. The report extensively discussed the constitutional, logistical and political challenges in implementing 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) by making a few modifications in phases.

### **(A) Introduction**

However, the theory of ONOE aims to integrate all elections — of the Lok Sabha (the House of the People), State Legislative Assemblies, Municipalities and Panchayats — so that electoral frequency and associated costs decrease. This could induce a focus for the executive in delivering to the electorate.

### **(B) Legislative Framework and Constitutional Considerations**

#### *1. Phase I Implementation: Lok Sabha and State Assemblies Elections*

The recommendation suggests that the preliminary phase of concurrent polls include the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly elections: The suggested course of action is in tune with the practices of the initial decades after independence with concurrent polls conducted under the then extant constitutional scheme and, thus, it is without any claim of unconstitutionality.

#### *2. Challenge of Mid-term Dissolutions*

In order to take care of mid-term dissolutions after a hung parliament or a vote of no confidence, the panel suggests that the next elections should only stand for the remainder of the term, and the cycle should continue.

#### *3. Amendment to Constitutional Provisions*

Therefore, this new ONOE change does require an amendment to provisions 83 and 172 of the Constitution pertaining to the tenure of Houses of Parliament and those of state legislatures, respectively. The committee proposes four new provisions to enable simultaneous elections –

Article to Article 325 on a uniform electoral roll and on the uniformity of identity cards of all citizens. As Phase I of the process doesn't require ratification by the States, it can be implemented through an easier procedure.

### **(C) Logistical and Operational Challenges**

ONOE requires extensive planning for procuring Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), and for deploying human resources. The Election Commission of India has to derive a detailed plan for logistics for conduct of elections in all the three tiers of government.

### **(D) Unaddressed Concerns and Potential Implications**

Other fears, like faulty voting patterns and usurping regional political issues, are not tempered. The panel report is criticized, for example, by Justice Ajit Prakash Shah in *The Liberal State* (2013), who warns that, even if no formal censorial system is enforced, it can still 'derogate the political ethos of democracy' by promoting the 'race for power with only a restricted consideration of performance or regional issues.

Though the Kovind-led panel's report represents a proposal with a clear architectural outline about ONOE, it also simultaneously shows the delicate balance between constitutional fidelity, practical viability and the health of democracy, and requires further discussion and refinement to marry the siren call of ONOE's benefits with the values that can sustain India's democracy.

## **III. CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION**

When we come to the very specific proposals for 'One Nation, One Election', we find that we are really talking about constitutional, legal and pragmatic challenges. Each category of challenge brings with it a set of difficulties that a decision-maker in the current context needs to fully understand and plan for, to overcome.

### **(A) Constitutional Challenges**

There is also the intrinsic difficulty posed by the constitutional amendment procedure. One Nation One Election can be achieved only through a constitutional amendment, and the bar to doing that is extraordinarily high. Through article 368, the constitution lays down the procedure for amendment. Any constitutional amendment is voted on in Parliament, and requires a two-thirds majority of each House for approval. An amendment that affects the federal structure of the country, or the functioning of the states, must also be ratified by at least half the state legislatures. Thus, converting the idea of One Nation One Election into statute requires a broad-based agreement across India's diverse and polarized party structure.



### **(B) Impact on Federalism and Autonomy of States**

The possible impact of One Nation One Election on India's federal system and the relative autonomy of the states is the third constitutional dimension to be concerned about. The distribution of powers between center and states, and the concomitant relative autonomy of the states in their governing, lies at the heart of India's federal structure. If elections are to be synchronized, then both the nature of the issues before the legislatures and their perception among voters as state versus national may get blurred. One Nation One Election could result in greater centralization of power and erode the federal principle giving states relative autonomy, as they have been envisaged to act as a space for redressing the interests and aspirations of the diverse population residing in the states. Additionally, this could deny states the political autonomy to articulate and address local needs. National parties and their programmes, at the risk of overshadowing local issues, may take over.

### **(C) Legal Challenges**

As far as legislation existing in the books is concerned, there are numerous legal impediments involved in altering the tenure and timings of existing legislative bodies to implement One Nation One Election. Just the amendment of Parliament's constitutional provisions for this purpose will be difficult. Subsequent changes may be required to other laws such as the Representation of the People Act 1951, which specifically governs the tenure and duration of Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, and related statutes. There are also limitations on how a Parliament bill can be passed without amending the Constitution. Questions are bound to arise as to whether it is legal to alter the term of legislative bodies without a mandate expressly given by the electorate to do so.

In this context, it is important to note that the Supreme Court (the highest judicial interpreter of its constitution) of India has in the past decided some landmark cases adjudicating the constitutional provisions relating to elections. For example, in its ruling on the 'anti-defection law' in the case *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu*, the Supreme Court of India displayed remarkable involvement in elections-related matters. Any attempt to implement One Nation One Election will have to pass the scrutiny of the judiciary. This will involve examining whether such an exercise squares with the proclaimed tenets of democracy and people's voting rights, as laid down in the Constitution. Therefore, encounters with the past of legal constitutionalism by the electoral realm will not be unusual if the judiciary weighs in on the legality and constitutionality of such an undertaking. The judicial interpretations of 'One Nation One Election' might bestow upon its life and new legal precedents.

### **(D) Practical Challenges**

Conducting simultaneous elections in India's geographically and socioeconomically diverse terai is no minor logistical task ECI would need to address the logistics of shipping electronic voting machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) to millions of polling stations, securing the 'critical chain' from the manufacturing of equipment to their reach at individual polling booths, training tens of millions of polling officers and workers, and so forth. Things can go wrong here without compromising the fairness or inclusivity of the elections.

One Nation One Election requires a massive voter education/outreach initiative to inform the electorate regarding the new regime and how eleven to 15 different offices may be listed on a ballot during a single session. Every detail, from how a vote should be cast to the possibility of conflicting nominees from different parties running for the same post, must be explained clearly and simply. If votes are not cast or counted because of headaches caused by confusion or inattention, then the right to peaceful transition of power would have been denied, making One Nation One Election an assault on the democratic process. Overcoming language and literacy disparities, as well as cultural divides, is no minor proposition.

## **IV. POTENTIAL LEGAL SOLUTIONS**

The range of problems that such an ambitious plan as One Nation, One Election faces in India are likely to be legal as well. This segment assesses some of the possible legal solutions – constitutional amendments, a clear plan of coordination of Centre to suit each other, the role of the judiciary in facilitating the plan, and the requisite legislative reforms. These solutions explore the possible ways of implementing a One Nation, One Election plan within the legal framework to make it legally possible as an electoral reform in India. Analysis of Proposed Constitutional Amendments

One crucial step towards enforcing One Nation One Election is amending the Constitution to facilitate having elections at the same time. Among other things, it involves identifying exactly which articles need to be amended. Some such provisions that likely would need to be changed are Articles 83 and 172, which determine the durations of the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies of states respectively. The duration of the Lok Sabha is five years, and many MLAs are elected for the same duration. However, different states hold elections at different times, defeating the purpose of having national elections at the same time. Similarly, Article 85 lays down the grounds on which the Lok Sabha can be dissolved, and the corresponding provisions for the state assemblies are laid down in Article 174. One of the grounds under which the prime

minister can seek the President's approval for dissolution of the Lok Sabha is when 'the president consults such Council of Ministers' – while there is no explicit equivalent for the state assemblies, Article 174 provides for the Chief Minister to recommend dissolution in similar circumstances. Hence, constitutional amendments that limit the executive's power to dissolve legislative bodies prematurely – allowing all bodies that are directly elected by the people to serve fixed terms – might be necessary. Such amendments call for a pan-political consensus, as an amendment to the constitution in India requires not just a two-thirds majority in both the Houses of Parliament but also the concurrence of at least half the number of state legislatures as specified in Article 368 of the constitution. The ambivalence regarding One Nation, One Election argument calls for political will as well as political consensus in order to bring about a federal harmony.

#### **(A) Strategies for Aligning the Terms of Legislative Bodies**

The sequencing of legislative terms to make it possible for these bodies to establish a single election brings with it significant logistical and legal issues. Temporary transitional arrangements might be required to shorten or lengthen the terms of existing legislative bodies to bring all elections onto the same day. Although the administration of such interim arrangements could take the form of ordinary legislation, the transition to that new system is likely to require interim provisions that would need to be carefully drafted and carefully considered as a whole in order to pass a legal scrutiny of constitutional validity and the democratic mandate. A compromise might be a staged approach to One Nation One Election – an election held at the same time in every polling station in the country. This can be implemented in stages. First, a state where the term of legislative assembly elections aligns with Lok Sabha terms synchronizes its election date with others. This process can be extended to all states.

#### **(B) Legislative Reforms Needed to Support the New Electoral System**

However, changing the election system to accompany the constitutional amendments is even more daunting than obtaining support for the amendments through legislative consensus in a divided parliament. One Nation One Election calls for sweeping legislative changes. Many of the details of staging simultaneous elections would be left to the Legislature through legislation. Amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and 1951, which govern elections in India, are necessary to account for the many details of staging a simultaneous set of elections. The law would have to spell out step-by-step procedures for the phasing of elections. The shortening of the life of legislative bodies would need to be legally defined. And the law would

need to specify the conditions under which elections could be conducted outside of the coordinated calendar, for example, after a vote of no confidence. Furthermore, it must contain provisions for ensuring that the Election Commission of India, the body responsible for conducting elections in India, is adequately resourced (financially, technologically and with human resources), so as to strengthen its ability to conduct simultaneous polls at the largest scale in the world. It involves improving overall e-voting technologies, sophisticated inbuilt security measures to secure the integrity of the electoral process, and larger scale voter education campaigns so as to inform the electorate of the functioning of the newly introduced system.

A shift to ‘One Nation, One Election’ requires a combination of constitutional amendments to be accompanied by strategies of planning in advance, judicial supervision, and legislative reform to make the process fair and democratic. The legal steps suggested here are vital because the challenges to synchronizing electoral cycles are enormous, and the process to shift to One Nation One Election could either harm or strengthen India’s democratic polity and electoral integrity.

## **V. IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The concept of ‘One Nation, One Election’ in India has triggered a fierce debate among different stakeholders, especially in relation to its role in democracy and governance.

### **(A) Impact on Democratic Processes**

#### *1. Voter Turnout and Engagement*

One of the anticipated results of the merger of elections is a boost in voter turnout. However, this presumes that voters will find it easier to track candidates and issues if there is more than one election a year. This assumption must be examined carefully, as it is more ambiguous than it appears. While consolidating the election into a single day might make it easier for voters overall, it could also make it harder for their concerns to be heard, especially on a state or local level. The more complex a ballot is for voters in a simultaneous election schedule, the less likely they are to cast their votes. International comparisons regarding electoral systems for elections conducted at widely varying intervals in countries like Sweden fail to reach a general consensus about the effect on turnout. Therefore, any assumed benefits of simultaneous elections on voter engagement in India must be underpinned by robust voter education and outreach calibrated to the peculiarities of simultaneous elections.

## 2. *Impact on Political Parties and Campaign Strategies*

It would shape the national political context for parties, as smaller, regional parties may be unable to compete with larger, national parties that dominate campaign issues and fundraising. It may trivialize local and state issues and campaigns by generating national narratives. Moreover, the sheer concentration of elections would require parties to consider shifting strategy: the promise of more nationalized campaigns across the states could marginalize state-specific issues, favoring broad-based national campaigns. The cost of campaigning in simultaneous elections could be prohibitive for smaller parties with little or no resources, a situation that can lead to limited plurality and diversity of India's political landscape.

### **(B) Impact on Governance**

Supporters of One Nation One Election say that there will be greater policy continuity and governance stability if the timings of governments at the central and state levels are synchronized. Governments that are elected all at once will be able to implement coherent policy or execute policies with fewer wrinkles compared with those with staggered tenures, especially because of the change in policy orientation required to reverse the policies of previous governments. This will allow for greater long-term planning and execution of the policy. But this benefit is seen only if the political system works as intended after implementation. Electoral checkpoints encourage policy continuity, but they also can breed a false sense of security and reduced responsiveness among elected officials unless counterbalanced by robust checks and balances.

#### 1. *Administrative Efficiency and Cost Implications*

The most oft-cited benefit of One Nation One Election is that it will result in both greater administrative efficiency and saving of election-related costs. At present, when nearly the same resources are being repeatedly mobilized less than two years apart from each other, this is no mean feat. Each time, it is not only diverting huge administrative concentration and expenditure away from governance activities, it's also financially very costly. Moreover, through consolidated elections, a saving on logistical expenses, such as security, transportation and deployment of staff, could be made, which could in turn be diverted to developmental and welfare activities. The administration would also save time that would otherwise be spent in giving repeated elections, and the consequent pressure on the machinery to get ready for elections as well as other administrative activities. Having said that, the first shift to One Nation One Election will require considerable investment, be it in updating the electoral infrastructure, training personnel, or running public awareness campaigns. One has to weigh the long-term

monetary savings with short-term investment and logistical complexities in running such a full-scale reform.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Strategic and policy-level discussions about One Nation, One Election, in India – as the proposal is called – bring together questions that go beyond routine logistics and costs of election administration. They also reach deeper dimensions about constitution and democracy. The proposal to align elections in India has both long-term challenges and immediate opportunities for how India is governed, how elections are conducted, and how citizens' participation in electoral processes can be deepened. The One Nation, One Election model also promises important efficiency gains from the logistical and administrative point of view: electoral cycles would be consolidated, potentially saving immense costs of conducting elections, namely security, transportation and manpower mobilization. The above gains might be realized at the cost of one-time investment in infrastructure, particularly voter education and training. In sum, the merits of electoral reforms like the One Nation, One Election model deserve serious attention given that the performance of institutions is at the core of public policy today.

More importantly, One Nation, One Election seems very difficult to implement against India's constitutional and legal hurdles. It would necessitate major amendments to the Indian Constitution, especially to Articles 83 and 172 governing the duration of the Lok Sabha and of state legislative assemblies, respectively. This may only happen if India's elite were to come together in a consensus that is all but impossible in India's heterogeneous and polarized polity. The changes affecting India's federal structure and the autonomy of states appear dramatic, if not clearly unconstitutional, and may well spell the end of local issues. Smaller regional parties may find it difficult to survive. It seems extremely likely that One Nation, One Election would affect voting behaviour in the long term. While simplifying the electoral process could promote turnout and voter engagement, it's likely that the fusion of local, state and national issues into a single electoral event would diminish the emphasis on local government and local issues – and could disenfranchise voters whose primary concerns are not addressed at the national level. Voter education campaigns could play a significant role in ensuring that voters are able to cast ballots that reflect their preferences with respect to multiple levels of government. To conclude, the advocacy or realization of 'One Nation, One Election' is a grand enterprise that comes with enormous if not insurmountable implications. While undeniable administrative and economic benefits on account of cost savings and besides policy continuity cannot be over-emphasized,

the legibility of the entire endeavor – engaging concerns that are structural, constitutional, legal as well as democratic – also cannot be underrated. Given that at stake are enormously consequential changes to political process and, so, the very underpinning of India’s political and democratic set-up, questions of harm and injury to India’s federalist safeguards, its democratic ethos and its institutions are legitimate concerns to be taken into account. Thus, making One Nation, One Election consistent with, and furthering, India’s democratic framework would surely require a transition strategy that does not end before an amendment to the Constitution and that is one capable of attracting the kind of broad political buy-in that such legal-institutional changes would need. Neither seems likely. Besides, it will require a steadfast commitment by all concerned to voter education and engagement – something that election administrators in India have already acknowledged to be paramount to election processes as it is. As India engages with this potentially significant and far-reaching electoral reform, the crux of the matter is its ability to navigate the tensions between efficiency on the one hand, and the protection of the values of democracy and federalism inherent in the diverse unity of voice and the underpinning expression across the length and breadth of a profoundly diverse India on the other.

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