

Centre for Multidisciplinary Development Research (CMDR), Dharwad.

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Policy Recommendations from National Colloquium On

CAPTURING THE DEBATES ON ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

25th July 2025



“One Nation One Election”



Collaborative Program
Centre for Multi-disciplinary Development Research
(CMDR) Dharwad
Maulana Azad National Urdu University
(MANUU) Hyderabad



The Capturing of Debates: One Nation and One Election

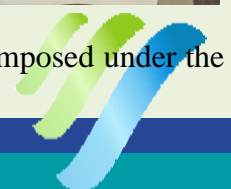


1. Concept Note

After Independence, the constitutional makers have adopted a federal set up with parliamentary executive where the representatives would be elected for a period of five years both the centre and the states. The drafting committee also thought that the Westminster model would certainly provide an opportunity to all the groups to participate in developing the nation. With this set up, India has gone for elections for the first time in the years 1951-1952, where every member of the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies were directly elected by the people. People chose their representatives on 'Universal adult franchise'.

One Nation One Election (ONOE) strategy has been followed until 1967 with exception of Kerala and Odisha where local reasons have forced to be away from the mammoth exercise.

Simultaneous elections will save a lot of money and will help the government to carry forward the developmental projects without much hindrances. It has also been said and observed by many that huge amount of money is spending on conducting the elections in India, both by the candidates themselves and political parties as well as the government (the Election Commission of India). The real motive on spending money is to reach out to the voter, thereby increasing their chances of winning election. If Lok Sabha and Assembly elections happen simultaneously, it would be a natural process. If the same trend is imposed under the



pretext of reducing the election costs, it is highly undesirable, because the monetary concerns cannot be final say over democratic principles. It has been cautioned by Political pundits that frequent elections helped the election commission to impose model code of conduct which in turn restricts/disrupts the day-to-day governance.

India is an amalgamation of 28 States forming its federation based on language, culture, traditions etc., and the Constitution also recognizes the existence of Union Territories, which have a constitutional status of their own in matters of governance, and administration. The intention of one election may force the entire country to move forward in the direction of unitary state rather than a federal one that the constitution envisages. Under simultaneous election, voter choice of choosing their representative may somewhat get blurred because voter will be electing two types of government at the same time, at the same polling booth, on the same day. In such circumstances, the voter tends to vote for the same party both in state as well as the central. This is a rule rather than an exception, not based on assumption but on evidence.

2. Purpose of the Colloquium

The one-day colloquium on **“One Nation, One Election” (ONOE)** jointly organized by the Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), Dharwad, and the Department of Political Science and Sociology at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad, was a timely and significant academic engagement. Held on 25th July 2025 at the Saiyid Hamid Library Conference Hall, MANUU. The event brought together over 100 participants, including policymakers, faculty members, research scholars, students, and civil society representatives. The colloquium aimed to critically examine the theoretical, legal, political, and sociological dimensions of the proposed electoral reform.

One-day colloquium on "One Nation, One Election" (ONOE) was conducted to bring the stakeholders like legal experts, academicians, policymakers, and political leaders together to engage in multi-dimensional dialogue on the proposed electoral reforms. The Colloquium has thoroughly discussed on the topics such as constitutional amendments to Articles 82A, 83, 172, and India's federal structure, regional autonomy. The deliberations also went on issues of decreased administrative burden, reduced election expenditure. Special discussions were held on regional autonomy, regional parties and their existence. More focussed attention was paid to strategies for transition from the current staggered election cycle to a synchronized one.



The feasibility of the constitutional amendments that this may require, the willingness of State governments to agree to the untimely dissolution of their Assemblies, the question of what happens if a government falls before completing its term, and several other such issues remain critical concerns. If simultaneous elections were to become a reality, they could undermine the political diversity that is essential for addressing India’s social diversity.

Themes of the colloquium

The colloquium was broadly categorized into four themes. Under each theme one speaker was invited to deliver keynote speech. There were follow-up discussions on each presentation.

- ❖ One Nation, One Election: Reforming Democracy or Undermining Federalism



- ❖ Simultaneous Elections in India: Problems and Prospects
- ❖ One Nation, One Election: Idea, Challenges and Prospects
- ❖ Electoral Synchrony and Democratic Diversity: A Sociological Nuance on One Nation, One Election in India



Objectives

1. To understand the representation impact of the democratization process,
2. To explore different democratic set up in view of the changes in the election process,
3. To analyze the interface between election manifesto and constitutional mandate

Methodology

The colloquium featured a well-structured academic program that combined keynote addresses and lead presentations by resource persons on specific themes; each presentation was followed by interactive discussions with the delegates, research scholars of the political science and public administration. A total of five academicians were invited for this program to deliberate on the topic on four different themes. More than 45 people have attended this programme

Policy Recommendations

1. Governance

- The political parties and party leaders should reduce their focus on frequent elections, and deploy focus on the government's attention towards long term developmental activities,
- More attention should be paid towards planning and implementation of the welfare schemes for the masses,
- It helps the government to bring consistency in decision-making and reduces the confusion,
- More target-oriented programmes should be replaced with antiquated loophole system,
- With ONOE in place the question of Model Code of Conduct will not arise often in this process and it will not disrupt routine administrative and developmental initiatives,
- ONOE will reduce campaign expenditures for political parties, benefiting smaller regional parties by allowing better financial management.
- Constitutional breakdowns or premature dissolutions of legislatures have less possibility in it.

2. Federal system

- Almost all the speakers of the colloquium suggested that the synchronized election mainly focus (very often) on national issues or overshadowing the local concerns,
- Changing or tinkering with the existing election system in India would adversely affect the limited federalism that the constitution promises to this union of states,
- There is every possibility that weakening of local political choices,
- Bulldozing of federal units may happen by stronger central government,
- Weaken the influence of smaller regional parties and issues, which are contrary to the federal principle of giving importance to local governance and their interests,
- Synchronized elections are against the spirit of federalism and the autonomy of States,



- State governments are democratically elected with people choice for five years and altering their choice or term without their willingness or consent would be an encroachment,
- Simultaneous elections at different levels would logically imply prolonging or shortening of the tenure of various elected bodies,
- In ONOE, the Panchayats and Municipal elections with the general elections would be much more complex and difficult because local self-government is a state subject under Seventh Schedule of List II and it required to amend Article 243E and 243U respectively and Article 243-M



3. Reduced Financial Burden:

- Simultaneous elections would certainly reduce/cut down the financial costs associated with it,
- It reduces the expenditure related to the deployment of resources like manpower, equipment, and security for each and every election in the country,
- The economic benefits include a more efficient allocation of resources for developmental work and better fiscal management, fostering a conducive environment for economic growth and investor confidence,
- The existing method of staggered elections incurs substantial and repeated expenses and it focuses on cost efficiency.
- Since the election happens once in five years, the possibility of transacting black money into the electoral process will get controlled because the elections will be less frequent,

4. Democratic functions

- Since implementation of Simultaneous elections is a very complex process, it shall require several amendments to the constitution,
- ONOE will bring enthusiasm among voters because it happens once in five years and therefore the sense of voting for all-in-one go will be more and this encourages or boost the voter turnout,
- ONOE potentially enhance the democratic structure of the country by increasing public's involvement,
- ONOE reduces the polarization of the voters along caste, religion, and communal lines, as elections are often divisive nature,
- Constitutional challenges involved in synchronizing election cycles, especially in cases of premature dissolution of state assemblies



5. Creating political opportunity

- The ONOE provides equitable political opportunity and responsibility to all the political leaders,
- ONOE restricts the leaders to contest multiple times and elections to monopolize the key positions,
- It allows wide range of leaders to emerge and contribute to the democratic process,



- Media centralization and the marginalization of vulnerable communities in a nationally dominated electoral discourse discouraged,
- ONOE facilitate different social groups to get engaged democratic process and even helps in ensure their representation

6. Regional autonomy

- The data presented by Rahul Verma (*resources person*) revealed that 77 per cent of voters cast their vote for the same party at both national and state levels, compared with 61 per cent when elections are held separately. This pattern significantly favors national parties and weakens regional voices,
- During ONOE, the contestants may bury state and local issues beneath national narratives dominated by larger, better-funded parties,
- Smaller and regional parties may struggle to match the financial condition and media reach of national parties, which again weakens the democratic pluralism.

Outreach and Key Takeaways

The colloquium successfully created a platform for meaningful dialogue on electoral reforms. While logistical advantages and fiscal efficiency were widely recognized by the Colloquium. It even highlighted the same and expressed concern on erosion of federal balance and democratic diversity. Speakers highlighted that simultaneous elections could reduce policy innovation at the state level, and weaken engagement with local issues.

The discussions emphasized the need for constitutional clarity, institutional safeguards, and broad-based public and political consensus. Ultimately, the colloquium reaffirmed that electoral efficiency must not come at the cost of democratic values, inclusiveness, and federal integrity. It called for sustained academic and public engagement to ensure that any reform aligns with India's pluralistic democratic ethos. If implemented, India would set a global example, joining countries like Belgium, Sweden, and South Africa in conducting simultaneous elections.



Participant's List

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