

**ONE ELECTION IN A FEDERAL FRAMEWORK: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS****Dr. Mala Kumari**

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*Corresponding Author: Dr. Mala Kumari***DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.10537236****Abstract:**

The concept of synchronizing multiple elections into a single event, often referred to as "One Election," has gained prominence in recent years, particularly within federal countries. This research paper provides a comprehensive examination of the global experiences with One Election in federal contexts, aiming to shed light on the advantages, challenges, and insights garnered from such endeavors. The paper commences with a literature review, offering a critical assessment of the existing body of research related to One Election and its relevance in federal systems. This review highlights the potential benefits of One Election, such as increased efficiency, reduced costs, and enhanced governance, while also addressing the complex challenges and concerns tied to its implementation. Federalism's role in shaping electoral processes is explored in depth, elucidating how the distribution of powers and responsibilities across different levels of government impacts the feasibility and execution of One Election initiatives. The paper navigates through the intricacies of federal structures and their influence on electoral synchronization. Drawing on global case studies encompassing diverse federal countries, including India, the United States, and Australia, the research conducts a rigorous comparative analysis. These case studies offer valuable insights into the experiences of nations that have embraced or contemplated One Election within their federal frameworks, enabling us to discern patterns, successes, and failures.

In conclusion, the paper distills lessons learned and best practices from the global experiences with One Election in federal countries. It culminates in policy recommendations that can guide federal governments contemplating the adoption of One Election, underscoring the potential to transform electoral landscapes and strengthen democratic processes. As the global landscape of electoral systems evolves, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between federalism and electoral synchronization.

Keywords: *One Election, Simultaneous Elections, Synchronized Elections, Federalism, Federal Structure, Electoral Systems, Global Experiences, Electoral Challenges and Governance Efficiency.*

Introduction:

Elections are the cornerstone of democratic governance, serving as the essential mechanism through which citizens exercise their right to choose their leaders and representatives. However, in federal countries where governance is divided among multiple tiers of government, conducting elections becomes a complex and intricate process. Each level of government, whether national or subnational, holds its own elections at different intervals, resulting in a staggered electoral landscape that can be resource-intensive and challenging to manage. In recent years, the concept of "One Election," also known as "simultaneous elections" or "synchronized elections," has emerged as a potential solution to streamline the electoral process, particularly in federal systems. One Election involves the synchronization of various elections, held at different levels of government, into a single, unified event. The underlying rationale is to reduce the frequency of electoral events, curb election-related expenses, enhance governance efficiency, and potentially increase voter turnout. This concept has generated considerable interest and debate among policymakers, scholars, and electoral authorities worldwide. The adoption of One Election, however, is not without its complexities and challenges. It necessitates significant

legal and constitutional changes, careful coordination among different levels of government, and a nuanced understanding of the impact of synchronization on democratic processes. Furthermore, the political and logistical hurdles associated with such a reform cannot be underestimated, particularly in diverse and federal contexts. This research paper seeks to provide a comprehensive exploration of the global experiences with One Election within federal frameworks. It aims to shed light on the advantages, challenges, and insights garnered from the implementation or contemplation of One Election in federal countries. By drawing on case studies from diverse federal nations and conducting a comparative analysis, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between federalism and electoral synchronization. In the subsequent sections, this paper will delve into the existing literature on One Election, highlighting its conceptual underpinnings and potential benefits, while also addressing the challenges and concerns it presents. It will explore the role of federalism in shaping electoral processes, elucidating how the distribution of powers and responsibilities across different levels of government influences the feasibility and execution of One Election initiatives. Drawing on global case

studies, including India, the United States, and Australia, this research paper will provide insights into the experiences of nations that have embraced or contemplated One Election within their federal frameworks. Ultimately, this study aims to distill lessons learned and best practices from these global experiences and offer policy recommendations for federal governments considering the adoption of One Election. In a world where the landscape of electoral systems continues to evolve, understanding the dynamics of One Election in federal contexts is essential for strengthening democratic governance and electoral processes.

As such, this research paper embarks on a journey to unravel the complexities, advantages, and challenges of One Election in federal settings, contributing to the ongoing discourse on electoral reform and democratic enhancement in federal countries worldwide.

Literature Review:

The Concept of One Election:

One Election, also known as "simultaneous elections" or "synchronized elections," is a concept that advocates for holding all elections at different levels of government simultaneously. The primary goals of One Election include reducing the frequency of elections, curbing electoral expenses, and enhancing governance

efficiency. Proponents argue that One Election can lead to better policy continuity, reduced disruptions, and increased voter turnout. However, these potential benefits must be carefully weighed against the challenges associated with its implementation.

One Election and Democratic Governance

Scholars have emphasized the role of One Election in bolstering democratic governance. By minimizing the frequency of electoral disruptions, One Election can foster stability and consistency in governance. This stability is particularly crucial in federal countries where multiple levels of government are involved. Moreover, the reduction in election-related expenses can free up resources for other essential government functions, further enhancing governance efficiency (Dwivedi, 2019).

Economic Implications

Economists have explored the economic implications of One Election. A study by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy in India found that synchronized elections could lead to substantial cost savings. This could be especially significant in large federal countries like India, where elections at different levels are frequent and resource-intensive (NIPFP, 2016). Additionally, economists have investigated the potential impact of One Election on macroeconomic stability and investor confidence, given that

frequent elections can create uncertainty in financial markets (Narayana and Kumar, 2018).

Advantages of One Election:**Efficiency:**

One of the key advantages of One Election is its potential to enhance the efficiency of the electoral process. By synchronizing various elections, governments can minimize the time and resources required for election-related activities. This can result in significant cost savings and reduce the burden on electoral authorities.

Case Study: Germany

Germany's federal system is often cited as an example of efficiency achieved through synchronization. Germany synchronizes its federal and state elections, which has been praised for reducing costs and ensuring that citizens only go to the polls once every few years. This approach has led to efficient electoral management and fewer disruptions to governance (Müller, 2017).

Policy Continuity

One Election can lead to better policy continuity as it reduces the frequency of political transitions. With elections occurring less frequently, governments have more time to implement and sustain their policies, which can contribute to more stable governance.

Case Study: Canada

Canada's experience with synchronized elections, particularly at the federal and provincial levels, has been associated with greater policy continuity. The longer electoral cycles allow for more comprehensive policy planning and implementation, reducing the risk of abrupt policy changes with each election (Bélanger and Chagnon, 2020).

Increased Voter Turnout

Synchronizing elections may also lead to increased voter turnout. When multiple elections are held separately, voter fatigue can set in, causing lower participation rates. One Election can potentially address this issue by consolidating electoral events into a single, high-profile occasion that attracts more voters.

Case Study: Belgium

Belgium, with its complex federal structure, has employed synchronized elections at the national, regional, and community levels. This has been associated with consistently high voter turnout compared to countries with separate election cycles. The convenience of voting in all elections on the same day is believed to encourage participation (Reuchamps, 2014).

Challenges and Concerns:**Legal and Constitutional Issues:**

Implementing One Election often requires significant legal and constitutional changes. Federal countries, in particular, face complex

challenges in harmonizing election schedules, as the division of powers between different levels of government may necessitate constitutional amendments.

Case Study: India

India's federal structure has posed legal challenges to the synchronization of elections. The Constitution of India designates separate terms for state legislatures and the national parliament, making simultaneous elections a complex legal issue. Proposals for One Election in India have prompted debates about potential constitutional amendments and the role of the Election Commission in managing synchronized elections (Jain, 2021).

Political Differences among States/Regions:

In federal systems, states or regions may have differing political dynamics, party systems, and electoral cycles. Synchronizing elections can lead to disputes over the alignment of state and national elections, as well as concerns about potential bias in favor of the ruling party.

Case Study: United States

The United States' decentralized electoral system and varying state-level election laws have complicated efforts to synchronize elections. Political differences among states, including differences in party control and legislative priorities, have made it challenging to coordinate election

schedules at the federal and state levels (Tarr, 2018).

Logistical Hurdles:

Organizing One Election on a large scale involves intricate logistics, including the deployment of election personnel, the management of polling stations, and the coordination of security measures. Ensuring the smooth conduct of a single, nationwide election can be a formidable task.

Case Study: Nigeria

Nigeria, a federal country with a history of complex electoral logistics, has faced significant challenges in implementing One Election. The country's vast size, diverse geography, and logistical constraints have posed formidable hurdles to the synchronization of elections at the federal and state levels (Kurfi, 2019).

Federalism and Elections:

The Role of Federalism:

Federalism is a governance system characterized by the division of powers and responsibilities between a central or national government and multiple subnational entities, such as states, provinces, or regions. Federal countries are often characterized by a complex interplay of authorities and jurisdictions, where each level of government possesses distinct powers and competencies. In such systems, elections are not confined solely to the

national level but are also held at various subnational levels.

Federalism's Influence on Electoral Processes

Federalism plays a pivotal role in shaping electoral processes within a country. The division of powers and responsibilities among different levels of government introduces a layer of complexity to the electoral landscape. Each level of government may have its own electoral rules, regulations, and electoral authorities. This complexity can have profound implications for the synchronization of elections.

For instance, subnational governments may have control over certain aspects of electoral administration, such as voter registration or the conduct of local elections. When considering One Election, it becomes crucial to navigate the division of responsibilities and coordinate efforts between the national and subnational levels to ensure a seamless and synchronized electoral process.

Electoral Systems in Federal Countries:

Variety of Electoral Systems:

Federal countries often employ a variety of electoral systems, each with its own set of rules and procedures for electing representatives. These electoral systems determine how citizens' votes are translated into seats in legislative bodies, whether through first-past-the-post, proportional representation,

mixed-member systems, or other methods.

The diversity of electoral systems within federal nations adds another layer of complexity when contemplating One Election. Each subnational entity may have its own electoral system, potentially resulting in different election schedules, processes, and rules. Synchronizing elections requires careful consideration of the compatibility of these systems and the need for uniformity in the electoral process.

Subnational Autonomy and Election Management

In many federal systems, subnational entities, such as states or provinces, have a degree of autonomy over their electoral management. They may establish their own electoral commissions or boards responsible for administering elections at their respective levels. This autonomy can complicate efforts to synchronize elections, as coordination and cooperation between national and subnational electoral authorities become essential.

Furthermore, subnational governments may have the authority to determine certain aspects of the electoral process, such as the timing of local elections or the delimitation of electoral boundaries. Coordinating these decisions with national-level election schedules is a challenging endeavor.

Case Study: Germany

Germany, a federal country, provides an illustrative example of how federalism influences electoral processes. The country conducts elections at both the national and state (Land) levels. National elections determine the composition of the federal parliament (Bundestag), while state elections determine the composition of state parliaments (Landtage). While synchronization exists to some extent, with state elections often held concurrently with federal elections, each state in Germany has a certain degree of autonomy in its electoral processes, leading to variations in electoral schedules and procedures (Hirschmann, 2020).

In conclusion, federalism introduces a layer of complexity into electoral processes within a country, particularly when contemplating the synchronization of elections. The diversity of electoral systems and the autonomy of subnational entities in electoral administration must be carefully considered in the pursuit of One Election. Coordination, cooperation, and legal clarity are essential elements in navigating the complexities of federalism while striving to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes.

Global Case Studies:**India:****India's Federal Structure and the One Election Debate:**

India, as the world's largest democracy and a federal country, has been at the forefront of the One Election debate. The idea of synchronizing national and state elections in India has been a subject of extensive discussion and deliberation. The country's federal structure, with its division of powers between the central government and individual states, has presented both opportunities and challenges for implementing One Election.

Advantages and Challenges in India

Advantages: Proponents of One Election in India argue that it could lead to substantial cost savings, reduced disruption to governance, and enhanced policy continuity. By aligning the election schedules of states with that of the national parliament, governments could potentially focus more on governance and less on perpetual election campaigns (Shastri, 2020).

Challenges: However, India's federal framework has posed legal and constitutional challenges to the synchronization of elections. The Indian Constitution designates separate terms for state legislatures and the national parliament, making simultaneous elections a complex legal issue. Proposals for One Election have prompted debates about potential constitutional amendments and the role of the Election Commission in managing synchronized elections (Jain, 2021).

The United States:**The U.S. Federal System and Electoral Complexity:**

The United States, another prominent federal nation, conducts elections at various levels of government, including presidential, congressional, state, and local elections. The decentralized nature of the U.S. electoral system, with elections administered by individual states and localities, has complicated efforts to synchronize elections.

Challenges in Synchronizing Elections

In the United States, political differences among states, including differences in party control and legislative priorities, have made it challenging to coordinate election schedules at the federal and state levels. While efforts have been made to align certain elections, such as presidential and congressional contests, states maintain significant autonomy over their electoral processes.

Partial Synchronization

Partial synchronization exists in the United States, with some states holding state-level elections concurrently with federal elections. However, achieving complete One Election at all levels of government remains a formidable task due to the diversity of electoral rules and practices across states (Tarr, 2018).

Australia:**Australia's Federal Structure and Electoral Practices:**

Australia, a federal country with multiple states and territories, has a history of conducting elections at different levels of government, including federal, state, and local elections. While synchronization efforts have been explored primarily at the state and local levels, achieving One Election at the federal level remains a complex task.

State-Level Synchronization:

Some Australian states have experimented with aligning their state and local elections, aiming to reduce electoral expenses and voter fatigue. These efforts have been driven by the desire for greater efficiency in the electoral process and improved governance continuity (Sawer, 2014).

Federal-Level Challenges:

At the federal level, achieving One Election poses unique challenges. The coordination of elections for the Australian Parliament and the various state and territory legislatures necessitates careful planning and cooperation among different electoral authorities. Differences in electoral systems and cycles between states and territories further complicate synchronization efforts (Larkin, 2020).

In summary, global case studies, including India, the United States, and Australia, offer valuable insights into the experiences of nations that have embraced or contemplated One Election

within their federal frameworks. These case studies illustrate the diverse approaches, challenges, and complexities associated with electoral synchronization in federal contexts, further emphasizing the need for careful consideration and cooperation among different levels of government.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices:

Legal and Constitutional Clarity:

The Importance of Legal Review:

One of the critical lessons learned from global experiences with One Election is the importance of legal and constitutional clarity. Federal countries contemplating the synchronization of elections should engage in a comprehensive legal review to assess the feasibility of such synchronization within their existing constitutional and legal frameworks.

Recommendation: *Federal governments should collaborate with legal experts and constitutional scholars to identify potential conflicts and ambiguities in existing laws and constitutions. Amendments or legal clarifications may be necessary to accommodate synchronized elections while respecting the principles of federalism and democratic governance.*

Foster Inclusive Dialogue:

Consultation with Stakeholders:

Another essential aspect of successfully implementing One Election is fostering

inclusive dialogue. Consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including political parties, subnational governments, and electoral authorities, is crucial. Building consensus and addressing concerns through open and transparent dialogue are critical steps in the path toward One Election.

Recommendation: *Federal governments should establish mechanisms for engaging in dialogue with stakeholders at all levels of government. This should include consultations, public hearings, and forums for political parties and civil society to express their views and concerns. Inclusivity can help mitigate resistance and ensure that the synchronization process is fair and widely accepted.*

Consider Pilot Programs:

Testing Grounds for Synchronization:

Before implementing One Election nationwide, federal countries can consider the implementation of pilot programs at smaller scales, such as state or regional levels. These pilot programs can serve as testing grounds for synchronization efforts, allowing governments to identify and address logistical challenges and operational complexities before scaling up to a national level.

Recommendation: *Governments should pilot the synchronization of elections in a limited number of states or regions. These pilots should involve*

thorough planning, including the alignment of electoral calendars and the coordination of electoral authorities. Lessons learned from these pilot programs can inform the rollout of One Election at the national level.

Robust Electoral Infrastructure:

Investment in Electoral Infrastructure:

Adequate investment in electoral infrastructure is crucial for the successful implementation of One Election. This includes providing electoral authorities with the necessary resources, technology, and administrative capacity to manage the complexities of synchronized elections effectively.

Recommendation: *Federal governments should allocate sufficient funding and resources to enhance electoral infrastructure. This may include investments in voter registration systems, electronic voting technology, ballot printing, and the training of election personnel. Robust electoral infrastructure is essential to ensure the smooth conduct of synchronized elections.*

Public Awareness and Education:

Informing and Engaging Voters:

Public awareness and education campaigns play a pivotal role in the success of One Election. Voters must be informed about the changes in electoral schedules and processes to ensure their

active participation in synchronized elections.

Recommendation: *Governments, in collaboration with civil society organizations and media outlets, should launch comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the benefits and implications of One Election. These campaigns should include voter education materials, public service announcements, and information on the logistics of voting in synchronized elections.*

In conclusion, the global experiences with One Election in federal countries have yielded valuable lessons and best practices. These insights emphasize the importance of legal clarity, inclusive dialogue, pilot programs, investment in electoral infrastructure, and public awareness campaigns. By adopting these lessons and best practices, federal governments can navigate the complexities and challenges of electoral synchronization, with the potential to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes while preserving the principles of federalism and democratic governance.

Future Prospects and Policy Recommendations:

Future Prospects:

Complexity and Challenges Ahead:

The adoption of One Election in federal countries remains a complex

and multifaceted endeavor. While the concept holds the potential to streamline electoral processes, reduce costs, and enhance governance, its success depends on overcoming numerous legal, logistical, and political challenges.

Adaptation to Evolving Needs

The future prospects of One Election will depend on the adaptability of federal countries to evolving electoral needs and the willingness of governments to embrace electoral reforms that align with the principles of democratic governance.

Policy Recommendations:**Engage in Comprehensive Legal Review:****Assess Legal Frameworks:**

Federal countries considering One Election should engage in a comprehensive legal review to assess the feasibility of synchronization within their existing constitutional and legal frameworks. Amendments may be necessary to accommodate synchronized elections while preserving the principles of federalism and democratic governance.

Recommendation: *Establish a legal task force consisting of constitutional experts, legal scholars, and representatives from all levels of government to conduct a thorough review of existing laws and identify areas requiring clarification or amendment.*

Foster Inclusive Dialogue:**Consultation with Stakeholders:**

Governments should foster inclusive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including political parties, subnational governments, and electoral authorities. Building consensus and addressing concerns are critical steps in the path toward One Election.

Recommendation: *Establish regular forums for dialogue between federal and subnational governments, political parties, civil society organizations, and electoral management bodies. Ensure that consultations are transparent and open to public input.*

Consider Pilot Programs:**Testing Grounds for Synchronization:**

Before implementing One Election nationwide, consider conducting pilot programs at smaller scales, such as state or regional levels. These pilot programs can serve as testing grounds for synchronization efforts.

Recommendation: *Select a limited number of states or regions to pilot the synchronization of elections. Use these pilot programs to evaluate logistical challenges, refine coordination processes, and gather data for evidence-based decision-making.*

Invest in Electoral Infrastructure:

Allocate Adequate Resources:

Adequate investment in electoral infrastructure is essential. Governments should allocate sufficient funding and resources to enhance electoral infrastructure, including voter registration systems, electronic voting technology, ballot printing, and election personnel training.

Recommendation: *Develop a comprehensive electoral infrastructure improvement plan that outlines necessary investments and timelines. Ensure that electoral authorities have access to modern technology and resources to manage synchronized elections effectively.*

Public Awareness and Education:

Informing and Engaging Voters:

Public awareness and education campaigns are vital to the success of One Election. Voters must be informed about the changes in electoral schedules and processes to ensure their active participation.

Recommendation: *Collaborate with civil society organizations, media outlets, and educational institutions to launch comprehensive public awareness campaigns. Provide easily accessible information on the benefits and implications of One Election, and offer clear guidance on voter registration and participation.*

Continuous Evaluation and

Adaptation:

Flexibility and Continuous

Assessment:

Recognize that the process of implementing One Election is an evolving one. Governments should maintain flexibility and be open to continuous evaluation and adaptation based on lessons learned and changing circumstances.

Recommendation: *Establish mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and feedback collection from stakeholders. Conduct periodic reviews of the synchronization process to identify areas for improvement and address emerging challenges.*

In conclusion, the future prospects of One Election in federal countries hinge on the ability of governments to navigate the complexities and challenges while upholding democratic principles. By adopting the recommended policies, federal governments can work toward enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes while preserving the principles of federalism and democratic governance. The path toward One Election may be challenging, but with careful planning, cooperation, and adaptability, it holds the potential to strengthen democratic governance in federal contexts.

Conclusion:

The concept of One Election, which seeks to synchronize multiple elections into a single event, has garnered significant attention in recent years for its potential to streamline electoral processes and enhance governance efficiency. In federal countries, where governance is divided among different levels of government, the challenges and complexities of One Election are particularly pronounced. Through a comparative analysis of global case studies, including India, the United States, and Australia, this research paper has explored the advantages and challenges associated with One Election in federal frameworks.

While the potential benefits of efficiency, policy continuity, and increased voter turnout are appealing, the legal, constitutional, and logistical hurdles cannot be underestimated. The experiences of these federal countries offer valuable insights into the complexities of implementing One Election and underscore the importance of a nuanced approach that respects the principles of federalism and democratic governance.

Lessons learned from these case studies emphasize several key points. Legal and constitutional clarity is essential to navigate the complexities of federal systems and ensure the legality of synchronized elections. Inclusive consultation with all relevant

stakeholders, including political parties and subnational governments, is crucial for building consensus and addressing concerns. Pilot programs at smaller scales can serve as valuable testing grounds, allowing governments to identify and address logistical challenges before implementing synchronization nationwide. Additionally, robust investment in electoral infrastructure and comprehensive public awareness campaigns are critical for the successful conduct of synchronized elections.

The adoption of One Election in federal countries remains a multifaceted endeavor, requiring adaptability and a commitment to democratic principles. As the global landscape of electoral systems continues to evolve, the interplay between federalism and One Election remains a dynamic and evolving field. By learning from global experiences and adopting best practices, federal countries can work toward enhancing their electoral processes and strengthening their democratic foundations.

In conclusion, the path toward One Election is neither simple nor without its complexities. However, the pursuit of electoral synchronization reflects a commitment to improving democratic governance and the efficiency of electoral processes in federal contexts. With careful planning, cooperation among levels of government, and a commitment to the

principles of federalism and democracy, federal countries can embark on a journey toward more streamlined and effective electoral systems.

As governments and scholars continue to explore the possibilities and challenges of One Election, the lessons learned and best practices identified in this research paper can serve as a guidepost, helping federal countries navigate the complexities and challenges of electoral synchronization. The future of One Election is marked by potential, and its successful implementation can contribute to the continued enhancement of democratic governance worldwide.

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