

The Nation-State in the Age of Uncertainty: Why India Needs One Nation, One Election

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The modern international system is becoming more uncertain, with geopolitical conflicts becoming more severe, long-term wars, economic pressure, and strategic insecurity. Unlike the earlier globalization-induced arguments that postulated the decline of the state authority, the nation-state has once again become the main actor in International Relations, charged with the responsibility of bringing about security and coherency in policies as well as strategic independence. In this respect, the idea of One Nation, One Election (ONOE) not only as domestic electoral change but also as an institutional tool that has great international consequences. The main core argument is that the capacity of India to act as a coherent nation-state in an unpredictable global order lies on the political stability and harmonized governance within the country. The internal sense as a united nation for India is utmost priority to combat its external rivals in contemporary global challenges like countering China's expansionist policies, the United States trade policies and protectionist steps and the persistent threats of cross border terrorism. According to the International Relations, a nation-state is characterized by a sovereignty, territorial integrity, centralized political power, as well as legitimacy to govern a specified population. Classical and Neo-Realist theorists like Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz theorize the state as the unit of analysis, mainly driven by the demands of survival, power and pursuit of national interest in an anarchic international order. In this sense, the issue of domestic political stability is not just internal but a vital source of external power, which allows states to develop and support consistent foreign policies. On the other hand, the continual election fragmentation may create policy instability, strategic inconsistency and diminish the ability of a state to take decisive action in the international system.

India's Major External Challenges

The recent global landscape that India has been facing is characterized by an era of uncertainty that is characterized by the growing multipolarity coupled with a revival of the great-power competition. With this, constant threats of insecurity in the region and international border issues have remained a challenge to the strategic preparedness of India. The external environment has also been complicated by the economic warfare such as sanctions regimes and disruption of global supply chains. Under these circumstances, states need political attention to long-term country strategy, diplomacy, and security. Nevertheless, regular election patterns have the effect of focusing political leadership and administrative machine into short-term mobilization and partisan politics. This domestic obsession is dangerous because it is likely to undermine the continuity of strategy and will limit creativity

in reaction of India to changing external conditions. State capacity in International Relations is the capability of a state to mobilize and extract resources, make decisions of authority and international reactions to internal and external threats. The electoral cycles occurring on a continuous basis and in overlaps are likely to undermine this ability by promoting policy populism at the cost of strategic planning. The regular enforced imposition of the Model Code of Conduct serves only to limit governance with postponement in major administrative decisions and policy-making. Furthermore, the constant elections promote the disjointed political rhetoric, which is usually controlled by the regional and short-term interests as opposed to the national interests. All these processes weaken the functionality of India as an integrated and coherent nation-state and, therefore, enhance its efficiency as a strategic actor in the international system.

One Nation, One Election as a Mechanism of Political Cohesion

One Nation, One Election (ONOE) can be perceived as the institutional mechanism that seeks to align political power instead of weakening the federalism of India. ONOE can support the emergence of a more unified political discourse by bringing electoral cycles closer together, promoting the national level of issues to be articulated in concert with the regional issues. Synchronized election can also minimize the effects of political polarization created by the continuous campaigning and allow long periods of uninterrupted governance that allows policy continuity. In the context of International Relations, ONOE must be considered as a structural reaction to the systemic pressures of an uncertain world order that reinforce political solidity and the state power and not as a narrowly viewed administrative or procedural change. The International Relations theory defines a direct correlation between the internal political unity and the projection of the power. Firm and consistent governments will maximize the ability of a state to perform effective strategic signalling, which enables the adversaries to make a clear determination of the resolve and intentions of the state. The political stability further promotes credibility in the negotiation of diplomatic relations, since the promises of the state are more relevant to be seen as committed and safe. Moreover, continuity of governance guarantees the continuation of consistency in the defense planning and foreign policy implementation which is critical in an anarchical international system. In this regard, One Nation, One Election (ONOE) helps in strengthening the strategic positions of India by institutionalizing political stability and continuity of policies, instead of weakening democratic procedures.

In International Relations the national interest is known to be the united interests in the security of the state, in the stability of the economy and the international position of the state, and the sub-national electoral interests are usually influenced by local and short-term political interests. Although the principle of federalism continues to be a pillar of the Indian constitutional order, the periods of increased uncertainty on the international level require the imperativeness of the national priorities in shaping the political decisions. One Nation, One Election (ONOE) will be able to encourage the shift of the political rhetoric to the concerns of national security, economic stability, and the position of India in the world arena. By levelling all electoral contests and other national political activities through a common national timetable, ONOE fosters a close unity and wholeness in political debates and

enhances the command of national interest without dispensing regional diversity. Often the arguments by those that One Nation, One Election (ONOE) undermines democratic practice confuse the quantity of elections with the quality of democracy. Democratic stability does not only rely on the ability to compete in unending and electoral competition but effective and responsible governance. Repeated and recurring electoral contests may result in voter exhaustion, watering down of voter accountability in favor of issues, and the promotion of short-term populism at the expense of serious policy analysis. Conversely, ONOE aims at centralizing the democratic procedures through the avenue of offering more visible electoral frameworks and extended governance terms. In this view, ONOE is an expression of a democratic consolidation and not a democratic contraction, enhancing the institutional basis of a strong and working democracy in an elaborate political and international landscape.

Strengthening the Indian Nation-State in 21st Century.

The modern era of insecurity, characterized by geopolitical competition, economic coercion, political insecurity in the regions, and the strategic uncertainty, has reinstated the primacy of well-organized nation-states in world politics. However, unlike the previous belief that globalization would erode state power, the international system is more and more rewarding to political stability, policy consistency as well as being strategic. In this regard, the internal political organization of India obtains the direct usefulness on its performance abroad. The main thesis put forth in this analysis is that One Nation, One Election (ONOE) is a structural reform that can help the Indian nation to become stronger and more capable of executing its long-term governance and strategic planning without jeopardizing the democratic principles of India. By aligning the electoral cycles, ONOE will help to end the structural fragmentation that the history of political elections has created over time and distracted the political leadership and the administrative machine of India in long-term governance and strategic planning. Unified electoral schedule allows continuity of policy execution, strengthening of state capability and also the credibility of Indian commitments in foreign and security policy. In terms of International Relations, domestic political unity is a direct contributor of external power, through better strategic signalling, diplomatic trustworthiness and preparedness to face armed confrontation. ONOE, however, is not to be interpreted as an administrative innovation, but rather an institutional reaction to systemic pressures in the uncertain international order. Notably, ONOE does not exclude the federal diversity or democratic representation. Rather, it is aimed at resetting democracy to good governance, better accountability and extended national interest. Through this, it helps to strengthen the primacy of national interest and at the same time, the sub-national ambitions are accommodated through a cohesive political unit. In prospect, a politically stable and institutionally consistent India would be in a better place to be a responsible democratic power, which can protect its sovereignty, promote economic resilience, and positively contribute to world order in an ever-more unstable world.