

Political Dimensions of One-Nation-One-Election Approach

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Abstract

Election is one of the key components in the democratic system of nation but it is considered as the costly affair to conduct the election with government machinery. Billions of money is spent in the elections and this case gets worse when there are repeated elections in the country. As per the reports from The Hindu in year 2016, the Lok Sabha Elections of Year 2014 was the most expensive election with the expenditure of 3426 crores rupees. It was 131% increased expenditure as compared to year 2009. The current government is focusing on the amendments in the constitution so that the common or centralized elections in the country can be implemented with the reduction in the expenditures on the elections. This is the key reason that government is planning to introduce One Nation One Election so that the overall expenditures in the election system can be reduced. This paper is having key highlight on the perspectives and dimensions of the theory of One Nation One Election with the multiple aspects

Keywords: Election System in India, Expenditures in the Elections, One Nation One Election

One-Nation-One-Election Approach:

The concept of One Nation One Election is not very new in the news. This theory was basically proposed by Justice B. P. Jeevan, former head of Law Commission with the excerpts "We must go back to the situation where the elections to Lok Sabha and all the Legislative Assemblies are held at once".

The theory asks for all elections to take place on the same day every five years. Reformers and reports backing this theory suggest that by doing so, we would be able to save costs, resources and time.

Some of the voices that have come out in support of this include former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi, who says in an interview to Bloomberg Quint, "From the Election Commission's point of view this is the easiest thing to happen. The voter is the same, polling stations are the same, and the security needed is the same."

Following table 1 presents the huge increase in the expenditures during Lok Sabha Elections from Year 1952 to Year 2014 and it is evident from the tabular data presented by the Election Commission of India in their official portal eci.nic.in that there is colossal elevation in the expenditures in the last few elections. A number of security forces and government officials are engaged in the elections which consumes huge amount of money as well as government resources.

Table 1. Expenditures in the Lok Sabha Elections in India
(Source: Election Commission of India)

Year of Lok Sabha Election	Expenditures (Rupees)	Increase from Previous Year
1952	104500000	.
1957	59000000	-45500000
1962	73200000	14200000
1967	107969000	34769000
1971	116087450	8118450
1977	230368000	114280550
1980	547739000	317371000
1984	815134000	267395000
1989	1542200000	727066000
1991	3591024679	2048824679
1996	5973441000	2382416321
1998	6662216000	688775000
1999	8800000000	2137784000

2004	13000000000	4200000000
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Figure 1 and Figure 2 depicts the escalation of the values in terms of line graph and bar graph respective. With the presentation of values, the massive amount of expenditures in Crores of Rupees which subsequently increase the overhead on the government resources which should be decreased. There is need to devise and integrate a strong mechanism to reduce these costs associated with the elections in India at different levels of district, state and centre. The move or proposal towards the one nation one election can be effective but it will require a very strong mechanism and consensus in terms of the amendments in the constitution.

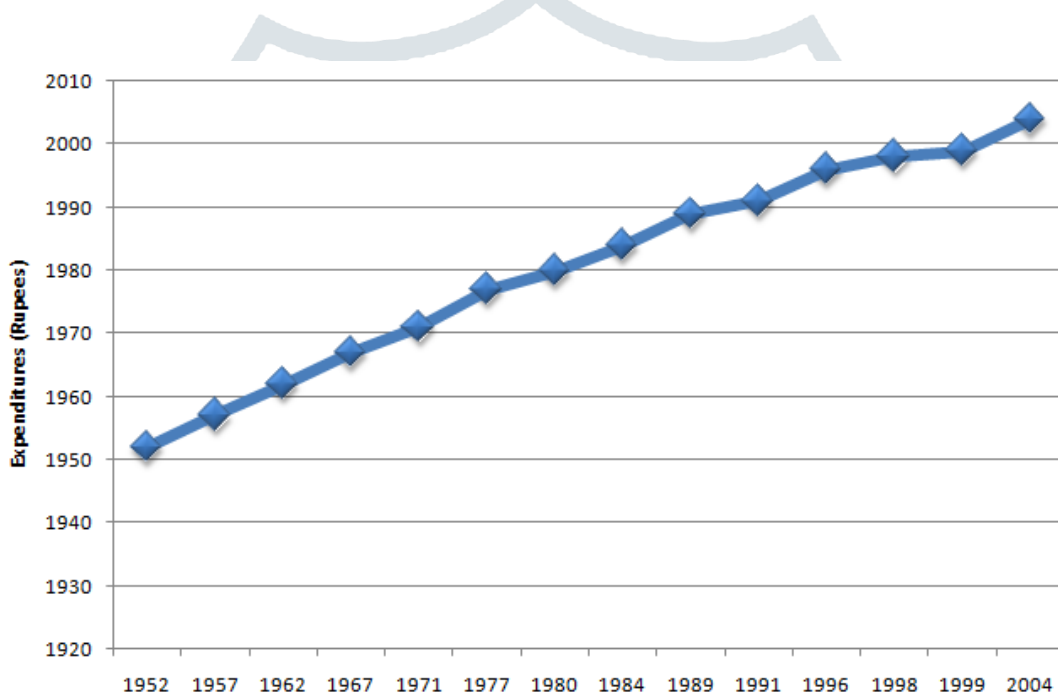


Figure 1. Line Graph based View of the Expenditures in the Lok Sabha Elections in India

The step of one election can be very effectual and resource optimized but the constitutional amendments at the very basic level is a big concern and issue which can be difficult without all party consensus in the movement and passing of the bill with the consent from multiple dimensions in the country for the resource optimization with one nation one election.

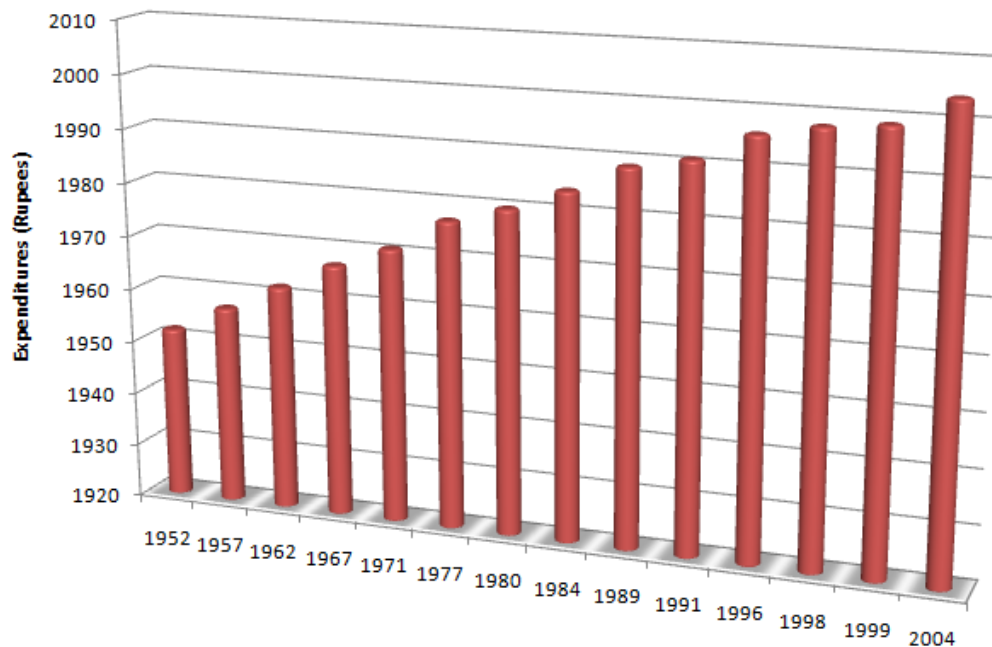


Figure 2. Bar Graph based View of the Expenditures in the Lok Sabha Elections in India

Advantages of One Nation One Election Approach:

1. Optimization of Resources and Cost Cutting

Preparing and conducting elections costs the public exchequer hundreds of crore each time. The money is mostly spent on arrangements, salaries and security. Holding simultaneous polls will lead to significant savings of public funds that can be better utilised elsewhere.

2. More Focus on the Development of Country

With elections taking place at various schedules, political parties and ministers are always in election mode. This disrupts and distorts agendas with parties deferring reforms or make decisions with short-term views, thereby depriving citizens of clear policies. Holding simultaneous elections will ensure that the ministers can dedicate a good four years towards implementing policies and doing constructive work for their constituencies.

3. Reduction in the Expenses by the Political Party

All political parties spend large sums of money in ensuring that no stone is left unturned during campaigning.

4. Effectual Usage of Security Forces

In the elections, security forces are deployed and such resources are required more in the insurgency situations or national security. Other than money, the other significant resource needed in abundance is the deployment of security forces.

Holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures it will free up security forces, who are diverted from their core duties for each election.

5. Effective use of Model Code of Conduct

The repeated implementations of elections cause the activation of model code of conduct and therefore the government is not able to give benefits for social cause because of the elections.

Limitations of One Nation One Election Approach:

1. Overshadowing the states

One of the key fallouts of implementing this is that a bigger 'centralised' agenda would overshadow the states and their regional issues. The current diffused system allows each state to push their individual agenda during state elections – something that would be difficult to do in collective polls. The states and regional parties can be thinking their low end in the centralization of the elections.

2. Reduced mind-share of state-level parties

Separate state elections allow regional parties to attract voters in the gap between central polls since one would be voting separately for the Union and the state. The state level parties are the key obstacles who are not willing to implement it because of their own status and span in the state.

Key Challenges:

1. Not possible -

Lok Sabha elections along with elections to assembly and Panchayats are not as easy as it looks like. It will have various complications as the villages and the cities together gear for voting. There may also be shortage of administrative staff, equipment, logistics and security. Less care at the voting centers may further incite trouble and corrupt processes being carried out unchecked. Ex: booth capturing, rigging.

2. Expenditure can still be reduced -

With the integration of central elections, the repeated costs and expenditures on the elections can be reduced to higher level with the optimization of resources. By bringing a strict limit on election expenses for all parties. Transparency in funding can help in making parties accountable and thereby, reducing the expenditure. State funded elections will be an even better option in reducing the costs.

3. Politicians may become complacent -

Politicians are kept on their toes when they are regularly worried about the routine elections where they will be accountable. They know that they are responsible for the actions of his party members and something goes wrong, they will be held responsible. This fear is good to keep them under control. Reducing the number of elections would make them lazy for the rest of the term and suddenly become hyperactive during the election year.

5. National & State issues -

When both the elections are clubbed, national issues may dominate over state issues and dictate the mood of both state and national votes. State or local issues may take a backseat, which would otherwise be crucial.

6. Constitutional Amendments -

To pass these amendments, they require special majorities in Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha. This would be a challenging task for the Govt. to build consensus among various political outfits, which have certain biases. It requires the rigorous process to amend the rules as this is the basic structure of the constitution and it may be problematic from assorted aspects in the implementation aspects.

Conclusion:

The implementation of one nation one election is not as easy as it looks because of the different election system in the region, state and central level. It is one of the key challenges with the government to integrate the policy of one nation one election with the consent from all the parties including the common man. The theory of one nation one election may be effective but its integration in actual practice is difficult because of the amendments perspectives in the basic structure of the constitution. The basic structure of constitute is considered as not changeable despite of the amendments at any level and it is one of the challenges with the government to implement it with the updation in the base of constitution and election system at different levels including Village, District, State, Central and to incorporate an effective mechanism to reduce the cost with the centralized elections which can be a chaos in upcoming time towards the changes in the foundation of the constitution.

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