

PSIR & GS-2

DAILY BRIEF

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Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.



PSIR OPTIONAL BY
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SOURCES SCANNED TODAY



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O1

Rethink west asian strategy : Economic & political weekly (EPW)

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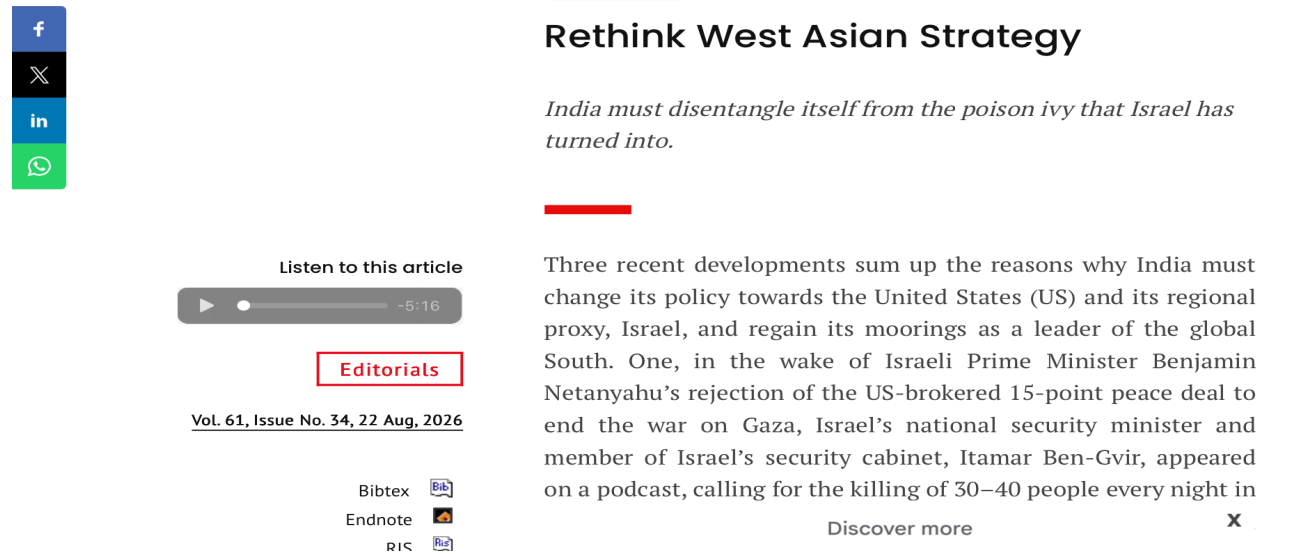
End the culture of secrecy in judicial appointments : The Hindu

ARTICLE

O3

Our central Asia strategy needs less romance, more realism : IE

Rethink west asian strategy



Context India's arms & defence partnership with Israel has become a strategic liability, and India should pull back from it and recover its position as a voice of the global south.

Facts

- Netanyahu rejected US brokered 15 point peace deal to end the war on Gaza.
- Amnesty's Made in India report : shipment - level data on Indian arms exports to Israel, including by state-owned firms.
- UN independent International Commission of Inquiry on occupied Palestinian territory : Israeli forces commit genocide, crimes against humanity & war crimes in Gaza & West Bank.

Analytical Crux

India's Israel policy has crossed from a defence relationship into reputational cost. The argument is not moral outrage but a cost-benefit one. The arms partnership pays a minority of business groups while charging the whole country in the currencies India trades i.e. G20 standing, BRICS+ credibility, EU goodwill, global South leadership. The evidence is documentary and not rhetorical as Amnesty's shipment-level data, a UN commission finding, and the IDF's own admission. However, the principle stated by India at the Knesset, never applied to Gaza. India's West Asia problem in 2026 is a consistency problem & consistency are what the leadership of the global south is built on.

Verbatim Quotes

"India must disentangle itself from the poison ivy that Israel has turned into. India can no longer feign ignorance of the overwhelming evidence of Israel's war crimes."

End the culture of secrecy in judicial appointments

End the culture of secrecy in judicial appointments

The debate over transparency in judicial appointments has resurfaced after Justice Ujjal Bhuyan of the Supreme Court of India recently observed that greater openness in the collegium process would strengthen public confidence and help ensure that merit remains the governing principle. Reformers argue that insulation from political interference was never meant to become insulation from constitutional accountability itself – a question that has remained unresolved for three decades.

The collegium is a judicial creation, not a constitutional one. The First Judges Case (1981) gave the executive primacy in appointments; the Second Judges Case (1993 4 SCC 441) shifted primacy to the collectively formed opinion of the Chief Justice of India and senior judges; the Third Judges Case (1998 7 SCC 739) expanded this into today's five-member collegium. The reasoning was sound, but close to three decades later, the process remains among the least transparent in any major constitutional democracy: no notification of vacancies, no eligibility matrix, no known methodology for assessing candidates. Even Pali Nariman, credited as an architect of the collegium, later turned critic, recalling that it was 'not receptive at all' to the Bar. When the system's own architects concede that it answers to no one, reform can hardly be called interference.

Resolutions without reasons

One has the example of the collegium's own record on disclosure, which has moved backwards, not forwards – perhaps the clearest evidence of an institution retreating deeper into opacity. In October 2017, it began publishing resolutions with brief reasons for elevation, a step then hailed as a foundation for transparency.

That practice thinned steadily, and since November 28, 2024, resolutions have stopped naming which members took part in a decision or disclosing any reasoning at all. In November 2025, then Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai confirmed that the collegium had resolved to stop publishing detailed reasons altogether, citing concern that disclosure could harm the career prospects of candidates – a rationale that would equally justify withholding reasons from every rejected litigant.

This cannot be seen in isolation: the Court, in the MediaOne judgment (2023), held that sealed cover secrecy is 'antithetical to a transparent and accountable system'. If that principle governs the court's own cases, why should a lesser standard govern its own?

This absence of due process has fuelled a recurring allegation: that opacity has allowed



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relatives of sitting and retired judges – the so-called 'Uncle Judges' – an easier passage to the Bench than first-generation lawyers with no lineage to lean on. It is important to remember this is not a complaint from critics from outside alone: former CJI R.M. Lodha himself remarked that nearly one in three High Court judges could be an 'uncle'.

The allegation is not anecdotal: in 2018, the Union government flagged 11 of the 33 names recommended by the Allahabad High Court collegium, noting that they were relatives of sitting or retired judges. A broader assessment in 2025 found that nearly 30% of the Supreme Court judges – roughly 10 of 33 – had familial links to former judges. In January 2025, this issue pushed the collegium to consider barring judges' kith and kin from consideration altogether (the proposal was discussed and in principle it was agreed to have higher scrutiny if candidates are relatives, but legally a bar was not created). That, in itself, is an admission that without a publicly defined selection matrix, there is no objective way to distinguish a meritorious relative from a beneficiary of judicial lineage.

This is where the judiciary's own jurisprudence turns inward. Articles 14 and 16 guarantee equality and equal opportunity in public employment. In *Secretary, State of Karnataka and Others vs Umadevi* (2006 4 SCC 1), the Court held that appointments to public office cannot be made through backdoor methods and must ordinarily follow a transparent procedure open to eligible candidates. If constitutional equality demands openness in the recruitment of a clerk or an engineer, why should the highest constitutional offices remain exempt from comparable standards? To be sure, judicial appointments cannot be reduced to a competitive examination; qualities such as independence and temperament resist quantification. But, qualitative judgment does not require the total absence of procedure. It is prudent to note the irony: the Court itself held, in *CPIO vs Subhash Chandra Agarwal* (2019 3 SCC 1), that the CJI's office falls within the Right to Information Act – a logic never extended to how judges are appointed.

What other democracies do

Other constitutional democracies show that transparency and judicial independence can coexist. In the United Kingdom, the Judicial Appointments Commission publicly advertises vacancies and conducts structured interviews; in South Africa, the Judicial Service Commission invites nominations publicly and conducts televised interviews. None of these systems is

flawless, but each rests on a premise that India has yet to accept: independence is strengthened, not weakened, when citizens understand how judges are chosen.

India's collegium continues to operate as though it belongs to an earlier era of institutional deference. Political theorist Jürgen Habermas argued that democratic legitimacy ultimately rests on the public sphere – an arena where institutions must justify themselves before informed citizens.

This is not abstract: every judicial appointment is now dissected on social media within minutes. The scrutiny of a CJI's own remark comparing youngsters to 'cockroaches' travelled from placards at Jantar Mantar to trending hashtags within hours; it will not take long for such movements to arrive at the doorstep of the higher judiciary itself. Contempt jurisdiction, built for the newsroom and the courtroom gallery, cannot be used to trifle the scrutiny of this scale and anonymity – it is an alarm bell for a system that still keeps its own appointments behind closed doors and resists constructive criticism. Institutions that embrace reform voluntarily emerge stronger; those that resist witness a slow erosion of the legitimacy they seek to protect.

Reform, not retreat

None of this requires dismantling the collegium; it only requires modernising it. A transparent framework could publish anticipated vacancies in advance, invite applications from eligible advocates, disclose objective eligibility criteria, and record reasoned recommendations explaining why one candidate was preferred over another. Confidential inputs on integrity can remain protected – transparency does not demand disclosure of every file, only openness about the process, the criteria and the reasoning behind constitutional appointments.

This is ultimately not a contest between the judiciary and the executive, nor an attempt to weaken judicial independence. It is a question of whether one constitutional value is allowed to eclipse another. The Constitution promises an independent judiciary, but, equally, promises equality, fairness and reasoned decision-making; values that are complementary, not adversarial. The debate of the 1990s was executive versus judiciary. The debate of this decade is opacity versus transparency. Therefore, unless the collegium accepts that independence without accountability breeds the very distrust it was designed to prevent, this asymmetry between what the judiciary demands of every other institution and what it permits of itself will continue to exist.

Context

Collegium's growing opacity of no vacancy notification, eligibility criteria & recorded reasons has become constitutional accountability problem & transparency can be added without dismantling the collegium.

Facts

Justice Ujjal Bhuyan : greater openness in collegium process would strengthen public confidence and help ensure merit governs.

MediaOne (2023) : the court held sealed cover secrecy is "antithetical to a transparent & accountable system."

2025 assessment : 30% of Supreme Court judges i.e. roughly 10 of 33 had familial links to judges.

Analytical Crux

The debate of the 1990s was executive versus judiciary. The debate of this decade is opacity versus transparency. Its strongest evidence is not external criticism but judiciary's own record turned back on itself. Media One against sealed covers, Umadevi against backdoor appointments, Subhash Chandra Agarwal bringing the CJI under RTI, none of it applied to how judges are chosen. The nepotism data of 11 of 33 at Allahabad in 2018 and 10 of 33 in the SC in 2025 matters less as scandal than as proof that without a published selection matrix there is no way to tell merit from lineage. Therefore, the solution is not dismantling the collegium but modernising it. The independence and accountability are complementary constitutional values, & the collegium's error is treating them as a trade-off.

Our central Asia strategy needs less romance, more realism



Context Central Asia has become a confident region with its own agency, and India should replace grand connectivity dreams with a modest, sustained and practical presence.

Facts

■ The 4 trends : growing regional agency, diversified great power ties, Greater Middle East entanglement, diminution of the Afghan question.

■ Central Asian 5 + Azerbaijan signed friendship treaty & Fergana valley disputes among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan settled.

■ Central Asian leaders summits (2025) : with EU, China, Russia, the USA and Japan.

Analytical Crux

India's Central Asia problem is not insufficient ambition but misdirected ambition. The region has changed underneath old policy. 5 vulnerable landlocked states have become a bloc with a treaty, a settled Fugana border and a C-6. In one year, they hosted five separate great power summits which means the Great Game frame, where outsiders act & Central Asia is acted upon. Geography binds India (Pakistan blocks the land route, Afghanistan is unstable, Chabahar & the INSTC are stalled by the Iran-US conflict) and the response is to stop competing where India cannot and compete where it can. The multi-vector & multi-alignment are same instinct in two places, which makes India a natural fit for the region if it offers partnership rather than patronage.

Verbatim Quotes

"Central Asia has never been more courted & perhaps never less amenable to exclusive relationships."

- C. Raja Mohan

- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** "India maintains strong ties with countries that will assure a free and open Indo-Pacific and guarantee greater connectivity with rest of the world. Analyse."
- **GS 2025 Paper II:** "Energy security constitutes the dominant kingpin of India's foreign policy, and is linked with India's overarching influence in Middle Eastern countries.' How would you integrate energy security with India's foreign policy trajectories in the coming years?"
- **GS 2025 Paper II:** "Discuss the evolution of collegium system in India. Critically examine the advantages and disadvantages of the system of appointment of the Judges of the Supreme Court of India and that of the USA."
- **PSIR 2024, Paper II:** "Critically examine the continuity and change in India's Palestine policy in the wake of the ongoing Israel-Hamas War."
- **GS 2024 Paper II:** "Critically analyse India's evolving diplomatic, economic and strategic relations with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) highlighting their increasing significance in regional and global geopolitics."
- **PSIR 2023, Paper I:** "Do you agree that over the years the Supreme Court has become a forum for policy evolution? Justify your answer."

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