

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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| ForumIAS |

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The territory question-Why geography still matters in war



Context Technology has made conquest harder rather than irrelevant and that Indian force planning must keep mass and land control alongside precision.

Facts

- Russia from 2014 holds 20% of Ukrainian territory.
- Iran sits astride the Strait of Hormuz : its disruption of energy shipping and threat to American naval bases in Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait.
- China claims all of Arunachal Pradesh & Ladakh ; Pakistan claims Jammu & Kashmir & Sir Creek ; India claims all of Jammu & Kashmir including PoJK.

Analytical Crux

The claim that land no longer matters confuses the difficulty of taking ground with the value of holding it. Ukraine shows that when the political object is territory, drones raise the price of advance without changing the object. Iran shows that state's position on the map and the depth of its landmass are themselves instruments of coercion, which is how a superpower with air supremacy ends up trading away its stated war aims to reopen a strait. For India the operational lesson is a refusal to choose, because against two neighbours who both hold territorial claims, precision without mass is plan for a war that neither China nor Pakistan intends to fight.

Verbatim Quotes

"Modern technology has transformed how territory is contested, but not diminished its strategic value."

— Kartik Bomma Kanti

Behind Israel's west bank push, an october story

Behind Israel's West Bank push, an October story



P R KUMARASWAMY

AHEAD OF the October 27 Knesset election, it appears that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will go to any lengths to return to office. The controversy over building 1,200 housing units in E-1 is just the latest example. East 1, or E-1 for short, is a small piece of territory, about 12 square kilometres, in the West Bank. It is part of the municipal limits of the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and lies east of East Jerusalem. Ma'ale Adumim was established as a settlement in 1975, when Yitzhak Rabin was prime minister, and was upgraded to city status in 1991. With close to 35,000 Israeli citizens (2015 figures), it is one of the largest Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Since the Oslo Accords of 1993, there have been plans to connect Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. The purpose was twofold: To provide territorial continuity between the two and to expand and consolidate Jerusalem's demographic and strategic security.

Under the Taba Agreement of September 1995 (signed just weeks before Rabin's assassination), the E-1 enclave was part of Area C, where Israel has complete security control. The area is largely uninhabited and covers

about 12,000 dunums, or about 12 square kilometres. Since January 1994, weeks after the signing of the Declaration of Principles with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, various Israeli governments have toyed with the idea of establishing a settlement in E-1. Under the Clinton Parameters of December 2000, E-1 was supposed to be part of a swap deal in which Israel would annex Ma'ale Adumim, including E-1, in return for withdrawing from 94-96 per cent of the West Bank. To curb Israeli efforts, the Palestinians have been building individual housing units in the area, which Israel periodically demolishes. Israel's prolonged reluctance to pursue new settlement activity has largely been shaped by American and international criticism.

The latest effort comes amid the forthcoming election. While Likud, led by Netanyahu, still leads the opinion polls, several surveys indicate a dip in the party's seat count. From 32 seats in 2022, pollsters predict a range of 20 to 32 seats, with most forecasting seats in the 20s. Centre-right and right-wing parties appear to be the main gainers at Netanyahu's expense. According to observers, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of the ultranationalist and pronouncedly anti-Arab Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) party, is the real challenger to Netanyahu. As the minister of national security and a member of the security cabinet, Ben-Gvir has been a key factor in Netanyahu's headline security stance since October 7.

While Israel's response to Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Islamic

Republic of Iran has delivered tangible short-term military gains, Netanyahu is struggling to translate them into political gains. Israel is more secure today than in October 2023. The disarmament of Hamas and Hezbollah has become a precondition for peace, stability, and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, respectively. Except for Iran, no major power endorses, let alone contributes to, the survival and strengthening of the "Axis of Resistance". Under President Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria is no longer the conduit for Iranian arms supplies to the Shia militant groups in Lebanon.

Yet, if the opinion polls are any indication, the military "victory" is proving insufficient to win more votes for the Likud. Within the party, Netanyahu has established unchallengeable authority over seat allocations. Out of the top 30 seats, he managed to reserve 11 for candidates considered loyal to him. This pushed several other Likud figures to the margins, with no real chance of entering the Knesset.

However, securing broader endorsement of his leadership among the Israeli population is more challenging. A considerable segment of the population has not forgotten his role, or lack thereof, in the October 7 terror attack. Several senior military and security figures admitted responsibility and resigned. This has not been the case for the political leadership. PM Netanyahu has not taken any direct personal responsibility for Israel's 9/11 moment. True to his style, he has shifted the blame and has not

gone beyond saying that "everyone, from the top to the bottom, shares responsibility".

Above all, Netanyahu and his cabinet have consistently resisted public calls for a national inquiry commission headed by the sitting president of the Supreme Court (equivalent to the Chief Justice of India). In the past, Israel had two such commissions, led by Shimon Agranat (over the Yom Kippur War of 1973) and Yitzhak Kahan (over the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982). Under Israeli law, everyone, including the prime minister, would have to testify under oath and could be cross-examined. So far, Netanyahu has been dodging this. However, should he feel it necessary, he might reverse course and make it an electoral promise.

The new settlement construction in E-1 is part of Netanyahu's efforts to shore up support for his political alliance. A victory of the right-religious coalition is essential to Netanyahu's political future. Losing a few seats to the far right is preferable to handing them to the centre-left Opposition.

The writer teaches contemporary Middle East at Jawaharlal Nehru University

Context

Israel's decision to push construction in the E-1 corridor of the West Bank as election arithmetic rather than territorial policy because Netanyahu needs his right-religious bloc to hold before the Knesset election of 27 October.

Facts



E-1 covers : 12 Km² of Area C, east of East Jerusalem, inside Ma'ale Adumim's limits & 1200 housing units are at issue.



Disarming Hamas & Hezbollah has become a precondition for peace, stability and reconstruction in Gaza and Lebanon.

Analytical Crux

The argument is that a settlement decision the world is reading as territorial policy is better read as electoral arithmetic. E-1 has been available to every Israeli PM since 1994 and none of them built there, because US & international criticism made the cost too high. In 2026 it is not strategic value of corridor but Netanyahu's seat count. The military success and political survival are separate currencies, since Israel is safer than it was in October 2023 and Likud is losing seats, because electorate is pricing in an accountability question the government refused to answer. Bleeding a few votes to the far right costs Netanyahu less than losing them to the centre-left, which is why defiance of US and of the Arab and European chorus is itself the campaign.

Democracy under strain- China's subtle power play



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Democracy Under Strain: China's Subtle Power Play – OpEd

August 25, 2026

By A. Jathindra

Context

China's challenge to the smaller democracies of South Asia is not debt or ports but its doctrine of non-interference applied selectively whenever Beijing's interests are engaged.

Facts

- China described both a near peer competitor to the US and rival to the Western led democratic ecosystem.
- Tilvin Silva: long term governments essential to national transformation and cites Singapore and China as having needed 10 to 20 years to reshape their societies.

Analytical Crux

China question in South Asia moves from ports and debt to the legitimacy of a regime type. The pressure comes from inside, since it is a business leader and a ruling-party general secretary in Colombo who asking whether 5-year cycles can deliver transformation. The Nepal and Sri Lanka episodes then supply the second half of the argument, that non-interference is a doctrine Beijing suspends where its own core interests are engaged & invokes where they are not. For India the neighbourhood competition has become a contest over how a state should be governed, and in that contest India's own democratic record is the instrument rather than its aid budget.

Verbatim Quotes

"Unlike the Soviet Union during the Cold War, China does not export ideology in traditional sense; it works by demonstration rather than by preaching."

— A. Jathindia

- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** "Discuss the potential role India can play in initiating a possible phase of trilateral economic engagement among India, China and Nepal."
- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** "China's growing footprint and a tangible shift in power dynamics in Bangladesh has weakened India's leverage in Dhaka. Comment."
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- **PSIR 2024, Paper II:** "The changing global order and ongoing regional conflicts, with the global powers taking sides, have jeopardised the progress made towards disarmament in the past. Comment."
- **PSIR 2024, Paper II:** "Critically examine the continuity and change in India's Palestine policy in the wake of the ongoing Israel-Hamas War."
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