

PSIR & GS-2 Daily Brief

About this initiative : 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
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Global crises demand more than 'citizen sacrifice' : The Hindu

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Iran and the Forever war trap : Foreign Affairs

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India's external shock is an economic opportunity : Project syndicate

Article - 1 : Global crises demand more than 'citizen sacrifice'

Global crises demand more than 'citizen sacrifice'

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued seven appeals urging citizens to embrace restraint, self-reliance, and responsible consumption amid global uncertainty caused by the America-Iran conflict and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. These included buying local products, conserving energy, avoiding unnecessary foreign travel, prioritising domestic tourism, supporting indigenous innovation, and promoting work from home wherever feasible.

The appeals have drawn mixed reactions from political parties, economists, businesses, and the public. Some view them as practical nationalism suited to an unstable world, while others see them as realism rather than rhetoric. Supporters argue that promoting domestic consumption and reducing external dependence could strengthen India's resilience in a fractured global economy, while some in the social sector see the messages as supportive of healthier and environmentally sustainable lifestyles.



Chandrakant Lahariya
Practising cardiometabolic physician and health policy specialist who has worked with the United Nations system for nearly 18 years

A subtle shift to the citizen
There is merit in these arguments. India, like every other country, must prepare for a more uncertain global environment. Yet, Mr. Modi's appeals warrant closer scrutiny, as they primarily seek to modify citizen behaviour while leaving governments and institutions relatively insulated from equivalent responsibility. In doing so, the burden of managing structural crises is subtly shifted from the state to individuals.

Modern democratic governance rests on an implicit social contract. Citizens pay taxes, obey laws, participate in democracy, and contribute to the economy. In return, governments are expected to provide public goods, social protection, health care, infrastructure, education, economic stability, and strategic preparedness. Governments exist not merely to advise citizens during crises, but to build systems resilient enough to withstand them. Yet, they often fall short of fulfilling this contract, with even electoral promises only partially implemented before being repackaged for future elections.

When elected governments increasingly respond to structural economic or geopolitical shocks by urging citizens to consume responsibly, sacrifice, adapt, or remain resilient, without simultaneously undertaking matching institutional reforms, the social contract begins to weaken. Long-term opportunities for structural correction are gradually replaced by behavioural messaging and symbolic appeals.

This phenomenon, of course, is not unique to India. Across the world, governments confronting inflation, climate stress, energy insecurity, or economic slowdown routinely ask citizens to reduce consumption, recycle more, conserve electricity, or embrace austerity. Individual behaviour certainly matters. But such appeals often obscure the much larger responsibility of states and corporations in shaping systemic

National resilience requires strong institutions, not merely behavioural appeals alone

outcomes. That is why a wider public dialogue and deeper reflection on these issues become essential. Behavioural appeals may generate symbolic solidarity, but symbolism cannot become a substitute for institutional preparedness.

Question for the government
The modern global economy is extraordinarily interconnected. Food security, climate change, financial systems, and technological ecosystems all transcend national borders. No country, including India, can insulate itself through behavioural nationalism alone. The danger lies in oversimplifying complex structural challenges into moral obligations for citizens. Patriotism, however emotionally resonant, cannot replace long-term economic planning, institutional competence, and policy coherence. National resilience is built through capable institutions and sustained public investment.

There is also an uncomfortable asymmetry. Citizens are repeatedly advised to conserve, adjust, and become self-reliant. Yet, why are governments not publicly issuing equivalent commitments to transparency, regulatory stability, public investment, and institutional reform?

Instead of focusing primarily on what citizens should do for governments during crises, one may ask a more foundational democratic question: what should governments do for citizens during periods of global instability? If these seven appeals were reconstructed from a citizen-centric perspective, the priorities would look very different.

First, governments must invest far more seriously in social protection systems. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that resilient societies are built not only through disciplined citizens, but also through strong public institutions. Yet, improvements since then have remained uneven. In health care, the expansion of private and corporate services has often outpaced the strengthening of public systems. Future resilience requires sustained investment in primary health care, disease surveillance, nutrition, mental health, emergency preparedness, education, and other social sectors.

Second, governments must confront rising economic inequality rather than relying excessively on consumption patriotism. Economic resilience cannot emerge from patriotic appeals alone when millions remain financially insecure, unemployed, or trapped within informal labour systems and the gig economy without adequate social protection.

Third, governments must prioritise long-term investments in education, scientific research, and public universities. Genuine self-reliance is built through decades of investment in laboratories, universities, manufacturing ecosystems, scientific temper, and innovation capacity. It is not enough merely to establish Indian campuses of Ivy

League universities; Indian universities and research institutions must themselves emerge as among the world's leading centres of knowledge and innovation.

Fourth, governments must strengthen transparency, public trust, and their handling of widespread public anxiety and uncertainty. During crises, trust becomes a strategic national asset. Citizens cooperate when governments communicate honestly, acknowledge uncertainties, and allow independent institutions, experts, and media to function freely.

Fifth, governments must invest far more seriously in climate resilience and sustainable urbanisation. Asking citizens to conserve electricity while cities continue to suffer from poor planning, inadequate public transport, shrinking green spaces, and worsening environmental degradation addresses symptoms rather than causes. While the push for electric vehicles and alternative energy is welcome, quality urban infrastructure remains inadequate. Failed initiatives such as smart cities are rarely evaluated critically and are instead quietly forgotten.

Sixth, governments must reduce regulatory unpredictability and create stable, fair policy environments for businesses, workers, researchers, and entrepreneurs. National resilience depends upon predictable governance and institutional consistency.

Seventh, governments must protect democratic dialogue instead of allowing criticism to be routinely framed as anti-national. Democracies become stronger through open debate, institutional criticism, intellectual diversity, and democratic course correction.

The need for strong institutions
None of this implies that citizens have no responsibilities. Responsible consumption, environmental awareness, social solidarity, and support for domestic capabilities are important civic virtues. But they cannot substitute for governance itself. Democracies cannot function sustainably if governments merely offer behavioural advice while citizens bear the consequences of structural vulnerabilities.

The larger danger of behavioural politics is that it normalises institutional underperformance. Individual responsibility matters, but it cannot become the primary response to fundamentally structural problems.

India aspires to become a major economic and geopolitical power. Achieving that ambition will require strong institutions, evidence-based policymaking, investment in human capital, and a renewed social contract in which governments accept greater responsibility for national resilience. The true test of leadership during crises is whether governments demonstrate the accountability, foresight, and policy seriousness needed to protect citizens in an increasingly uncertain world.

Context Asking citizens to sacrifice during global crises is not enough; national resilience needs strong institutions, public investment, transparent governance & a renewed social contract.

Facts

Trust, transparency, social protection & public health-central to crisis management.

Behavioural politics - favours weak governance and institutional under-performance.

Democratic governance is a social contract where citizens pay taxes & obey laws, while governments provide public goods and social protection.

Analytical Crux

The appeals shift the burden of structural crises from the state to individual citizens. The argument is against making citizens the main shock absorber of every crisis. In a democracy, the duty of the state is to build systems that protect people before asking people to adjust. Patriotism can support policy, but it cannot replace policy. Crisis management must move from citizen sacrifice to state responsibility.

Verbatim Quotes

“Patriotism, however emotionally resonant, cannot replace long-term economic planning, institutional competence and policy coherence.”
—Chandrakant Lahariya

“Democracies become stronger through open debate, institutional criticism, intellectual diversity and democratic course correction.”
—Chandrakant Lahariya

Article - 2 : Iran and the Forever war trap

Iran and the Forever War...

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Iran and the Forever War Trap

In Trying to Avoid a Quagmire, America Found a Dead End

LAWRENCE D. FREEDMAN

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A U.S. Tomahawk missile at an undisclosed location, March 2026
U.S. NAVY PHOTO

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[More by Lawrence D. Freedman →](#)

Context America's attempt to avoid another Middle East "forever war" pushed it into a different trap: a short, high-tech military campaign that destroyed many targets but failed to secure its political goals.

Facts

■ Operation Epic Fury failed: neither regime change nor eradication of Iran's nuclear programme.

■ Military power is coercive; it can pressurise the enemy but cannot "take what it wants."

Analytical Crux

Trump criticised America's earlier "forever wars" in the Middle East. However, military superiority is not same as strategic success. Airpower, missiles & AI can destroy assets, but they cannot force a regime to surrender or change its political behaviour. The US avoided sending large ground forces because it feared another quagmire like Vietnam, Afghanistan or Iraq. The Iran case shows that a weaker state can resist if it has political will, geography and the ability to impose economic costs. The tactics can win attacks, but strategy must secure political results.

Verbatim Quotes

"American tactical brilliance could not deliver strategic success. The conflict with Iran shows that Washington has fallen prey to the short-war fallacy."

- Lawrence D. Freedman

Article - 3 : India's external shock is an economic opportunity



Context India has strong domestic fundamentals, but its external account remains vulnerable. The present global shock should be used to build long-term resilience.

Facts

India's vulnerability → \$ 280 - 300 billion merchandise trade deficit.

\$37 billion foreign capital outflows from stock market since January 2025.

R&D investment should rise from 0.6 - 0.7% to 2 - 3% of GDP for long-term competitiveness.

Analytical Crux

India's domestic growth story is strong, but its external account is the weak point during geopolitical shocks. Its solution is not austerity, but resilience through buffers, diversification, exports, power sector reform, AI and R&D.

In the longer term, India must reduce the economy's oil intensity, so the next shock feels smaller. India's strategic autonomy will depend not only on diplomacy, but also on energy security, external stability and technological strength.

Verbatim Quotes

"India must ringfence its external account without choking growth. Beyond energy, it must diversify payment systems, rebuild manufacturing competitiveness and strengthen AI sector."

- Gaurav Dalmia and Chetan Aggarwal

- **2024 PSIR Paper II:** “Critically examine the role of political parties in sustaining and stabilising democracies in the developing societies.”
- **2025 PSIR Paper II:** “China’s growing footprint and a tangible shift in power dynamics in Bangladesh has weakened India’s leverage in Dhaka. Comment.”
- **2025 GS 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.”
- **2025 GS Paper II:** "Constitutional morality is the fulcrum which acts as an essential check upon the high functionaries and citizens alike...." In view of the above observation of the Supreme Court, explain the concept of constitutional morality and its application to ensure balance between judicial independence and judicial accountability in India.
- **2024 GS Paper II:** Explain the reasons for the growth of public interest litigation in India. As a result of it, has the Indian Supreme Court emerged as the world's most powerful judiciary?

PSIR & GS2 Daily Brief

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