

# PSIR & GS-2

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# India's Pakistan policy needs communication, not talks

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## India's Pakistan Policy Needs Communication, Not Talks

Ultimately, sustainable peace between India and Pakistan cannot be built merely through meetings or declarations. It requires a fundamental transformation in Pakistan's approach towards terrorism, regional stability and bilateral relations. Until that happens, comprehensive dialogue is unlikely to produce meaningful outcomes.



By Anand Kumar | Jul 31, 2026

**Context** The smart choice is not to pick between "full talks" & "total silence" while keeping working channels of communication open with a nuclear-armed Pakistan.

## Facts

India placed the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance: first time in 6 decades, earlier survived wars, military crises and prolonged hostility.

Water flows to Pakistan: India lacks the infrastructure to stop it immediately, but the legal and institutional framework of cooperation stands suspended.



## Analytical Crux

India is right to hold back formal, comprehensive dialogue as long as Pakistan runs terrorism as state policy, but shutting every channel between two nuclear neighbours is dangerous on its own terms. The IWT obedience and Operation Sindoor show India raising the cost of terrorism and refusing to keep cooperation insulated from security. The DGMO hotline and quiet Track-2 in Colombo do the opposite and necessary job i.e. stopping a crisis from sliding into war by accident. There is firmness on terrorism plus open crisis-management channels, because in an age of missiles and compressed decision-times, communication is itself a security tool, not a concession.

## Verbatim Quotes

"Maintaining communication does not weaken deterrence; on the contrary, it strengthens strategic stability by reducing the risks of miscalculation."

—Anand Kumar

# Does Britain's political volatility reflect a broken democracy

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## DEMOCRACY

### Does Britain's political volatility reflect a broken democracy – compared to India's stability?

In Britain, from where India borrowed its system of government, the party and the cabinet still provide enviably robust guardrails of institutional checks.

Debasish Roy Chowdhury

Jul 26, 2026 · 07:35 pm

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## Context

Britain's constant change of PMs is a sign of a working democracy, while India's super-stable government reflects hollowed-out institutions and personalised power.

## Facts

Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*: party-voter differences have stretched while party-party differences have shrunk.

Britain had its 7th PM in 10 years; 25% of Labour voters said Labour & Conservatives had become similar.

V-Dem Institute (Sweden): India as an "electoral autocracy".



## Analytical Crux

Authoritarian systems are stable precisely because they kill off competition, whereas real democracy runs on "organised uncertainty" where leaders can actually be thrown out.

Britain's revolving door, is not decay but accountability. Parties and cabinets work as internal checks & drop leaders who lose public trust. India looks stable, but that calm comes from hollowed-out parties, a rubber-stamp legislature and a cabinet that has stopped behaving as first among equals.

Therefore, stability without built-in-checks is not democratic strength & it can be the surface calm of personalised power.

## Verbatim Quotes

"Downing Street is far better off with the 'revolving door' than the thrones that elected despots are carving out in failing democracies." —Debasish Roy Chowdhury

# Western Ghats conservation with science & dialogue

## Western Ghats conservation with science and dialogue

The Western Ghats, spanning six coastal States of India, are internationally recognised for their rich biodiversity. They contain 39 biodiversity hotspot areas, including national parks, reserved forests, and wildlife sanctuaries declared World Heritage Sites (WHS) by UNESCO in 2012. To protect this natural heritage, the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) was constituted in 2010 under the chairmanship of ecologist, academic, and writer Madhav Gadgil. Its report recommended declaring 142 talukas covering 44 districts in the entire Western Ghats into Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), while sub-dividing it into three Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ). Such a declaration would regulate human activities to protect fragile ecosystems and, once notified under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, would provide legal protection.

### The ESA journey

Following strong local and political opposition in the States concerned to the WGEEP recommendations, the central government constituted a high-level working group headed by Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan in 2012 to review them. The group limited restrictions on economic activities and livelihoods to ecologically sensitive natural landscapes, reducing the area covered to only 37% of the Western Ghats.

Based on this recalibrated report, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) issued the first draft notification in 2014. Since the matter remained unresolved, the Ministry constituted an expert panel headed by former Director General of Forests Sanjay Kumar in 2022 to examine the concerns raised by the stakeholder States. Following the expert panel's deliberations, Gujarat and Goa appear to have agreed to the finalisation of the ESA notification, while Maharashtra has sought a fresh review.

Discussions between the Centre and other States, including Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil



**Madhusudan Bandi**

Faculty member at the Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

The Ecologically Sensitive Area debate highlights the need for balanced, inclusive conservation approaches

Nadu, are ongoing. A "phased rollout" or "State-wise finalisation" is possible after the inclusion of this clause in the 2024 draft notification.

Between 2015 and 2026, five draft notifications were issued as the Centre and States did not reach a consensus. Following the expiry of the last notification, in July 2026, the Ministry has extended the expert panel's tenure by another year.

### The case of Karnataka

Karnataka has 10 districts in the Western Ghats, with 23.4% of the State's population residing there. Around 20,668 square kilometres have been identified for ESA declaration. Regardless of the government's political affiliation, the State has consistently opposed the proposal, citing its potential impact on agriculture, plantations, mining, and infrastructure development.

A study by this writer covered villages located in the proximity of 10 WHS across four districts – Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu, Shivamogga, and Udupi – and three other important sites in Uttara Kannada and Udupi, including the Kali Tiger Reserve, Mundigekere Bird Sanctuary (five acres and a breeding ground for cattle egrets in Sirsi), and Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary. The study highlighted local perspectives on livelihoods and conservation efforts.

In villages adjoining the Kali Tiger Reserve and Kudremukh National Park, some residents reported accepting or considering rehabilitation packages. Those opposing relocation felt that they might eventually have to follow due to declining village populations and the resulting threat to village life. Even villages with granted forest rights have faced challenges due to restrictions on minor forest produce collection and agricultural practices. Concerns were also raised over the rejection of forest rights claims by non-tribals with long-standing residence, including in a village (at least 150 years) near the

Balahalli Reserved Forest. Meanwhile, local officials and some communities supported regulating environmentally harmful activities such as stone quarrying and unplanned tourism projects, including proposals for forest ropeways.

With specific reference to the notifications, it must be noted that local communities faced similar restrictions whenever these areas were declared protected zones, even before the WGEEP was constituted. Many residents believe that buffer zones extend 10 kilometres from core areas and fear possible eviction from their lands. Stakeholders across the study districts unanimously expressed concerns that reliance on satellite imagery for identifying ESA areas was unfair, as they were convinced that it could not distinguish plantation crops such as arecanut, shade-grown coffee, rubber, and coconut from forest cover. They also raised concerns that no committees had physically visited their villages.

In this context, Karnataka's case requires an empathetic approach that addresses genuine stakeholder concerns before a final decision is taken.

### Protecting indigenous communities

In the broader context, the Union government's decision to proceed with the ESA notification for the Western Ghats reflects political will to protect ecology and biodiversity. Conservation efforts cannot be indefinitely delayed as it will result in States losing their control in such areas; ecological systems transcend administrative boundaries.

More importantly, ESA should include indigenous communities living deep within forests, as they naturally follow conservation principles and maintain a sacred, sustainable relationship with the environment despite challenging conditions. Their presence serves as a bridge between forests and mainstream society, while their absence risks the loss of biocultural diversity.

Real Creator IAS Edition <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>

**Context** The long stalled plan to declare Western Ghats an Ecologically Sensitive Area will only work if the government pairs science with genuine dialogue.

## Facts

Western Ghats span 6 coastal states & hold 39 biodiversity sites declared UNESCO world Heritage Sites in 2012.

WGEEP under Madhav Gadgil (2010) : 142 taluks across 44 districts split into 3 Eco Sensitive Zones.

"Phased / State wise" after 2024 draft : Gujarat & Goa agreed to finalisation ; Maharashtra sought fresh review ; talks continue with Karnataka , Kerala & Tamil Nadu.



## Analytical Crux

The conservation fails when it is done to people rather than with them. The Gadgil-Kasturirangan-Sanjay Kumar sequence is a story of the Centre and the states boundaries while livelihoods do not. On the ground in Karnataka, the fear is concrete as buffer zones, eviction, forest-rights rejections, and satellite maps cannot tell a coffee plantation from a forest. The way forward is not to drop the ESA but to make it empathetic & participatory, and above all to keep indigenous communities inside the forests rather than push them out. There is a need of sustainable conservation, federal cooperation & community consent and not one at the price of the other.

## Verbatim Quotes

"Indigenous communities presence serves as a bridge between forests and the mainstream society, while their absence risks the loss of biocultural diversity."

-Madhusudan Bandi



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