

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 OPTIONAL BY
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| ForumIAS |

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Daily Brief · Source Plan (Monday to Saturday)

Common Daily

The Hindu · The Indian Express · Deccan Herald · The Statesman

read every day, alongside the day's sources below

Day-wise Sources

Monday

ORF (Observer Research Foundation) · *Foreign Affairs* · *The Diplomat*

Tuesday

MP-IDSA · *EPW* (Economic & Political Weekly) · *Gateway House*

Wednesday

Firstpost · *South Asia Monitor* · *ICWA* (Indian Council of World Affairs)

Thursday

ORF · *Frontline* · *Bar & Bench* · *World Focus*

Friday

MP-IDSA · *Carnegie Endowment* · *VIF* (Vivekananda International Foundation)

Saturday

Firstpost · *Project Syndicate* · *The Economist*

As per relevance, articles from other relevant sources such as NatStrat, ThePrint and The Telegraph (India) will also be included.

The UN Isn't Declining. It's Decomposing.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE



United Nations peacekeepers in South Sudan on February 12, 2026. (PI)

COMMENTARY EMISSARY

The UN Isn't Declining. It's Decomposing.

Washington's decision to support some UN functions while letting others wither

Context

Washington's decision to fund some UN functions while starving others is not merely weakening the organisation but pulling it apart into disconnected pieces.

Facts

- *Fewest Security Council resolutions in thirty-five years due to two vetoes by United States and no new UN peacekeeping operation since 2014.*
- **United States owes : UN 4 billion dollars in arrears and Guterres warns of "imminent financial collapse."**
- **The General Assembly's 2023 Gaza truce resolution : case of Assembly stepping up where Security Council failed to act.**

Analytical Crux

Washington is not abandoning the UN or fully backing it. It is running an à la carte relationship, keeping Security Council's stamp of legitimacy while starving the peacekeeping, humanitarian funding. This selective engagement is different in kind from either full disengagement or reform. It is decomposing one integrated peace-and-security system into disconnected pieces. Turkey and Pakistan as new middle-power peacemakers, or European states backfilling peacekeeping in Lebanon pick and choose the pieces for their own purposes. Each time United States extracts the Council's endorsement, as with the Gaza peace plan, without reinvesting in the machinery that grants it, the credibility depletes. As the Security Council freezes, with no new peacekeeping mission since 2014 and fewest resolutions in thirty-five years, General Assembly is gaining ground as the body that steps in from 2023 Gaza truce resolution to Liechtenstein's Veto Initiative. The League of Nations' refugee and health machinery outlived its own institutional collapse and it may be the UN's useful parts, not the whole edifice, that ultimately endure.

Verbatim Quotes

"The UN is not declining so much as decomposing—what was a one-stop shop for peace and security is becoming a bundle of boutiques."

– Stewart Patrick and Theodore Zaritsky

BRICS beyond the rhetoric

Opinion

BRICS beyond the rhetoric

The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi will be judged by whether its promises survive the return of leaders to their capitals.

SIDDHARTH ROY | New Delhi | September 25, 2026 8:56 am



Context

Whether the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi produced practical mechanisms for India and Global South, or only declarations that fade once leaders return to their capitals.

Facts

- **BRICS comprises eleven countries** : representing 49.5 per cent of world population, 40 per cent of global GDP and 26 per cent of global trade.

- The summit stopped short of common BRICS currency, backing local-currency trade and payment interoperability.

- India supported BRICS Risk Lab at Gujarat's GIFT City, and New Development Bank's role in local-currency financing and sustainable-development was reaffirmed.

Analytical Crux

BRICS's test is not the scale of its membership or length of its declarations, but whether an increasingly diverse eleven-member grouping can convert consensus language into working mechanisms. BRICS gives New Delhi another platform to engage the Global South while pursuing strategic autonomy alongside the West, but that same platform inevitably amplifies China's influence too, since China remains the bloc's largest economy. This ambiguity is fundamental to BRICS as it gives India a larger voice while also magnifying that of its strategic competitor. The summit's concrete steps, such as favouring local-currency trade over a common currency. BRICS will matter to the extent that it produces usable alternatives in finance, technology access and infrastructure funding rather than rhetorical ones. Therefore, BRICS cannot replace the multilateral system, but it can make that system less concentrated and more responsive if it produces usable alternatives rather than rhetorical ones.

Verbatim Quotes

"New Delhi has long pursued strategic autonomy, working with the United States, Europe and Japan while retaining substantial relationships with Russia and engaging China despite bilateral tensions."

- Siddharth Roy

about ECI take lid off electoral upheaval



THE EXPLOSIVE investigative report by *The Indian Express* revealing that two Election Commissioners formally recorded written objections at least 14 times over 10 months against decisions taken by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, red-flagging unilateral and “unauthorised” changes to new voter registration forms, and objecting to mass voter deletions during the ongoing SIR exercise, has taken the lid off an electoral upheaval that is insidiously reshaping the contours of Indian democracy. What was conceived as a routine technical cleanup of electoral rolls has mushroomed into a bureaucratic drag-net of unprecedented scale, raising fundamental questions about franchise, citizenship, and administrative overreach.

The news about Delhi’s voter roll would be farcical if it weren’t so grave in its implications: More than half (54.6 per cent) of the Capital’s existing voters have either been struck off the voter roll or been served notices by the Election Commission of India (ECI) asking them to prove that they are genuine. Out of Delhi’s 1.45 crore registered voters, over 80 lakh are currently under the ECI scanner. Approximately 47.5 lakh voters have been marked for deletion under the categories of Absent, Shifted, Dead, or Duplicate. A further 33.13 lakh have been flagged

ancies” and 13.80 lakh left unmapped against the 2002 electoral rolls. By mid-September, over 31.6 lakh notices had been generated. This massive contraction is far from limited to Delhi. Across 17 of the 19 states and Union Territories undergoing the third phase of the SIR, electoral rolls are reportedly shrinking by over 15 per cent. National estimates suggest that overall deletions could wipe out 12 to 13 crore voters nationwide, with Maharashtra alone expected to lose up to 2 crore voters, Delhi shrinking by 35.89 per cent, and Chandigarh by 31.84 per cent. Instead of India’s voters choosing the government, it seems the government, acting through the ECI, will choose the voters.

Curiously, this purge comes on the heels of pre-existing, unexplained deletions. Between January 2025 and June 2026, prior to the launch of the SIR, 1.1 million Delhi voters were inexplicably dropped from the rolls. This anomaly diverges from standard demographic trends. Between the 2020 Assembly and 2024 Lok Sabha polls, around 4,00,000 voters were added; a similar number joined between the 2024 general election and the 2025 state polls. In a country where the adult population has expanded from 99 crore in 2024 to an estimated 103 crore today, logic dictates that electoral rolls should expand in tandem. Instead, analysts like Yogendra Yadav project that the national electorate could contract to 88 crore, effectively disenfranchising up to 15 crore citizens.

The mindless severity of the exercise was brought into sharp relief when the notice list caught prominent public figures from across the official spectrum. Delhi CM Rekha Gupta and her predecessor were flagged; ruling the state apparently confers no immunity. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar is speaking for India at the UN with an ECI-cre-

Disenfranchising genuine citizens in haste is worse than allowing 10 times as many dead voters to

nitaries and institutional heads, including an Election Commissioner, a CBI Director, and a distinguished list of “formers”: A vice president, chief justice, Army chief, and SEBI chairman. The ECI claims this proves the process is non-discriminatory! Yet, this defence highlights the core inequity of the process. While ministers, judges, and high-ranking officials possess the institutional access and resources to rectify technical glitches seamlessly, the average citizen is plunged into administrative chaos. Furthermore, many of these “discrepancies” originate not from citizen error, but from flawed internal ECI databases, such as coding errors where a father’s recorded age of 45 was converted to zero, or a clerk misspelled a name, creating an artificial “logical discrepancy”. Yesterday’s *Express* report from Goa highlights how the ECI’s software has eliminated large numbers of legitimate voters and deprived them of essential benefits from dialysis to transplants for which only voters are eligible. (‘8 emails in 7 days, but valid Goa voters still left out: EC’s flawed system’, *IE*, September 23) The real-world fallout of this process reveals staggeringly inhumane anomalies. In Delhi, 24 out of 70 assembly constituencies now count fewer registered electors than the actual number of voters who cast ballots in the 2025 assembly elections. In polling booth 33 of the Chandni Chowk constituency, 908 out of 909 voters were summarily marked for deletion.

Already troubling was the experience in West Bengal, where 27 lakh voters were flagged for tribunal review due to alleged “logical discrepancies”. The Right to Information (RTI) disclosures revealed that out of 82,000 cases adjudicated, 91 per cent were found to have been wrongly deleted and had to be restored. If nine out of 10 deletions

foundational credibility of the ECI’s algorithms stands compromised. While the Supreme Court has upheld the legality of the SIR, former election commissioner Ashok Lavasa and former CEC S Y Quraishi have openly questioned its fairness. Quraishi has critiqued the decision to treat the 2002 electoral roll as an unassailable baseline for voter mapping, pointing out that even his own father’s name was misspelt in the 2002 data. Equally alarming is the delegation of quasi-judicial power to Booth Level Officers who are effectively tasked with verifying citizenship credentials for long-standing voters. Giving them and unreliable software the authority to decide whether citizens remain entitled to vote risks converting routine documentation checks into arbitrary purges.

Finally, the timing of these revisions raises concerns. In Bihar, Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, the compressed execution of the SIR was scheduled right before major elections. The ECI has yet to provide a convincing rationale for forcing millions of voters into an administrative straitjacket under tight deadlines just weeks before they are due to exercise their franchise, without enough time to appeal and rectify an injustice. Disenfranchising genuine citizens in haste is worse than allowing 10 times as many dead voters to remain on the rolls.

The right to vote is the bedrock upon which democracy rests. When electoral rolls contract while populations grow, when nine out of 10 technical deletions prove erroneous upon review, and when millions of valid voters face disenfranchisement for no fault of their own, the integrity of our democracy is imperilled. Cleaning the voter rolls is a legitimate administrative objective; excluding legitimate citizens in the process is an institutional failure Indian democracy can ill afford. SIR must be rethought or abandoned.

Context

The Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls is disenfranchising genuine voters at a scale that threatens the fairness of Indian elections.

Facts

■ **National estimates** : Special Intensive Revision deletions could remove 1.2 to 1.3 crore voters nationwide, with Maharashtra alone expected to lose up to 1 crore voters.

■ Delhi's electoral roll is shrinking by 25.3 per cent and Chandigarh's by 31.84 per cent under third phase of the revision.

■ **West Bengal** : a Right to Information reply found 91 per cent of 82,000 adjudicated "foreigner" tribunal cases wrongly deleted.

Analytical Crux

The integrity of Indian democracy rests on the principle that every vote counts, and that no eligible citizen is denied their franchise. Special Intensive Revision has inverted the burden of proof where instead of state establishing that a name is bogus before removing it, ordinary citizens must prove their own genuineness within weeks. The deeper institutional point is that internal dissent within the Election Commission. Two Election Commissioners recording formal objections at least fourteen times shows this is not a routine technical exercise but a contested one even inside the body running it. Flawed Election Commission databases, untrained Booth Level Officers exercising quasi-judicial power, and a West Bengal Right to Information reply showing nine in ten "foreigner" deletions were wrongly made, all pointing to errors that are systemic rather than incidental. Removing one bogus name and removing one genuine voter are not equal errors, because only the second one damages the constitutional right to vote. Therefore, disenfranchising genuine citizens in haste is worse than allowing 10 times as many dead voters to remain on the rolls.

Verbatim Quotes

"Instead of India's voters choosing the government, it seems the government, acting through the ECI, will choose the voters."

- Shashi Tharoor

The murky world of political party finance

CASH AS ASSOCIATIONS IN THE MURK OF THE fundamental rights under Article 19. No effort has been made to define and straitjacket their legal character to conform to being a company, trust, society, firm or a not-for-profit company. Even so, they continue to enjoy the benefit of income-tax exemption in an unprecedented and unparalleled manner, sometimes becoming mysterious receptacles of inexplicable monies. Just as there are shell companies that fulfil unstated purposes, there are shell political parties that serve an insidious intent. And thereby hangs a tale.

The mystery of political funding
That tale was partially unravelled by a recent BBC investigation that revealed extraordinary donations received by six Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs). A well-known yet intriguing aspect of Indian politics – ugly and ubiquitous – stands exposed. Political parties and their benefactors thrive in this system, even if it appears reprehensible, unlawful and disturbing.

Earlier, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) released a report on July 18, 2025, which found a 223% rise in the declared income of RUPPs in FY2022-23. It noted that, of the 2,764 RUPPs, only 739 had submitted their financial records for the year to the Election Commission of India (ECI), the sole custodian, under the law, of the fate and fortunes of political parties.

In a press note, “Cleaning up the Electoral System” (August 9, 2025), the ECI said it had ‘delisted’ 334 RUPPs out of 2,854 “as part of a comprehensive and continuous strategy...to clean up the electoral system.” It would be interesting to see whether the six parties in question are part of the ECI’s “continuous strategy”.

On October 16, 1994, T.N. Seshan, then Chief Election Commissioner of India, issued an order under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, in which he highlighted the “adhocism” and the “sorry state of affairs prevailing in almost all political parties in the country, whether recognised National or State parties or registered-unrecognised parties”. He observed, “I have yet to come across any party whose affairs are being run in accordance with

Former Election Commissioner of India and a former Union Finance Secretary

REMAIN ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE CONTRIBUTIONS UNDER Section 29B of the RPA, while their tax treatment is governed by Section 13A of the Income-tax Act. “Recognition” is governed by Order 6 of the Election Symbols Order, which distinguishes between ‘recognized’ and ‘unrecognized’ political parties for the purpose of allotting symbols and lays down the criteria for their classification. T.N. Seshan amended the Symbols Order and introduced Order 16A, which empowers the ECI to “suspend or withdraw recognition of a recognised political party for its failure to observe MCC [Model Code of Conduct] or follow lawful directions and instructions of the Commission”. That provision sits, rather harmlessly, in the statute book, empowering an ECI that has generally been reluctant to strike.

Hence, whether ‘delisted’ or ‘unrecognized’, the parties remain eligible to receive contributions. It is a matter for investigation whether such donations continued to qualify for tax exemptions, given that the intent behind the delisting was to disqualify them.

The scale of ‘political wealth’
A paper published by Venkatesh Nayak, a senior researcher at the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (which was also reported by a leading media site), revealed that 22 political parties collectively had ₹18,742.31 crore at their disposal for the 2024 general election. This included funds in their kitty when the election was announced and ₹7,416.31 crore in donations raised between the announcement and the completion of the election. After the election, these parties had ₹14,848.46 crore remaining in their custody, including cash in hand, money held in bank accounts and fixed deposits, after incurring ₹3,861.57 crore in election-related expenditure during the campaign period, according to the accounts submitted to the ECI.

The study found that, over the last decade, the exchequer ‘lost’ ₹11,813 crore in taxes due to exemptions for political donations, with individual donors and Hindu Undivided Families overtaking corporates in donating to political parties. In FY2022-23, individual donors claimed exemptions worth ₹7,775.95 crore, dwarfing

UNANSWERED RAISED QUESTIONS AND REMAIN unanswered. Most RUPPs were not eligible to receive electoral bonds, as they were restricted to parties that had “secured at least 1% of the votes in the latest Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly elections”. Who, then, made these contributions, and why?

The top court and ECI must act
Political parties have shown scant interest in transparency. They united in resisting the 2013 order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) bringing them under the Right to Information Act. Interestingly, besides the CIC, neither the ECI nor the Supreme Court has shown any inclination to enforce it. The Income-Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate might not consider it a priority to scrutinise the accounts of political parties as they do those of ordinary taxpayers. The ECI lacks the mandate, intent or wherewithal to question the accounts mechanically submitted by political parties. Submission of the accounts is enough to comply with the letter of the law, even if its spirit gasps. How will that spirit be revived, and who will revive it?

It is incumbent upon the Court to order a court-monitored probe into the saga of electoral bonds and the alleged *quid pro quo* in the petitions pending before it. The probe should also examine the phenomenon of ‘insignificant’ RUPPs receiving and spending huge contributions without participating in the electoral process in any substantial manner. Surely, such “shell” parties cannot justify spending crores as “administrative expenses”.

Exercising its powers under Article 324 – described by the Court in the landmark judgment of *Kanhiya Lal Omar vs R.K. Trivedi and Others* as a “reservoir of authority” for the ECI – the ECI should order political parties to have their accounts audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or its nominee. It should also consider imposing a limit on expenditure by political parties during elections, a measure it has recommended repeatedly. Tax exemptions on donations should be limited to the prescribed expenditure limit. All other donations that exceed

Context

India's political parties, left constitutionally undefined and heavily tax-exempt, have become largely unaccountable custodians of large and poorly traced sums of money.

Facts

■ **Political parties** : no mention in the Constitution except in Tenth Schedule and exist legally as "associations" under Article 19.

■ **Twenty-two political parties** : collectively held 18,742.31 crore rupees for 2024 general election and retained 14,848.46 crore rupees afterwards.

■ **Association for Democratic Reforms report, 2025** : 223 per cent rise in declared income of six Registered Unrecognised Political Parties in FY2022-23.

Analytical Crux

One of the enduring ironies of the Indian political system is that political parties, which are considered the principal stakeholders of electoral democracy, do not find a mention in the Constitution, except in the Tenth Schedule. India's political finance regime is not merely poorly enforced but structurally built to avoid accountability. Parties are constitutionally undefined "associations" rather than a legally defined entity, and enjoy sweeping tax exemptions. The Election Commission can "delist" a party without deregistering it, and a delisted party keeps the right to receive donations and claim tax benefits even after being flagged as suspect. 18,742 crore rupees at the disposal of just 22 parties for one election, and a ten-year tax loss of 11,813 crore rupees, show a systemic feature of Indian democracy rather than a marginal abuse. Since the Election Commission lacks the mandate to compel real scrutiny and the courts and tax authorities treat party accounts as a low priority, only a Comptroller and Auditor General-style audit and a court-monitored probe into electoral bonds can close the gap between the letter of disclosure law and its spirit.

Verbatim Quotes

"Just as there are shell companies that fulfil unstated purposes, there are shell political parties that serve an insidious intent."

– Ashok Lavasa

Africa's Critical Minerals: Beyond the Mine

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Africa's Critical Minerals: Beyond the Mine

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Context

Africa's vast reserves of critical minerals will become economic power once the continent moves from extraction to processing and manufacturing at home, with India placed as a potential partner in that shift.

Facts

Africa holds more than a quarter of the world's known critical-mineral reserves, and 60 per cent of global reserves of platinum group metals, tantalum, cobalt and chromium.

Annual exploration spending in Africa remains lower than in Australia and Canada despite Africa's greater mineral potential.

2026 New Delhi Declaration under BRICS : called for reliable, diversified critical-mineral supply chains with benefit sharing and local processing for resource-rich countries.

Analytical Crux

Having minerals in the ground does not automatically translate into economic power. Africa holds a quarter of the world's known critical minerals, but most of the economic value is realised after those minerals leave the continent in raw or barely processed form. Three structural constraints stand between Africa and that shift, i.e. weak infrastructure that makes even extraction costlier than in comparable economies, exploration spending below Australia's or Canada's despite larger reserves, and the limited market size of individual African states. *The more durable partnership lies in combining India's experience in digital infrastructure, skills training and renewable energy with African industrial priorities, rather than treating Africa only as a supplier of raw material for India's own energy transition.* Africa's advantage will be decided not by how much is extracted, but by how much value is generated afterwards in processing, jobs and community benefit. The challenge, therefore, is not simply to mine more, but to capture more value from what is mined.

Verbatim Quotes

"Its critical-minerals advantage will matter most when it begins to generate value not only beneath the ground, but across the economies and communities above it."

- Dr Shambhavi Anand

- GS Paper II, 2026: “BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South.” Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings.
- GS Paper II, 2026: Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters?
- GS Paper II, 2025: “The reform process in the United Nations remains unresolved, because of the delicate imbalance of East and West and entanglement of the USA vs. Russo-Chinese alliance.” Examine and critically evaluate the East-West policy confrontations in this regard.
- PSIR Paper II, 2025: “Non-Alignment 2.0 underscores India’s unique aspiration to emerge as a site for an alternative universality.” Comment.
- PSIR Paper II, 2024: “India must strive to become a semi-permanent member of the UNSC, rather than a permanent member without the right to veto.” Comment.
- PSIR Paper II, 2024: Discuss the potential role that India could play as the leader of the Global South in realising the goal of establishing a new international economic order in the 21st century.

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