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BRIEF ISSUE 171

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
Amit Pratap Singh
| 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 fork in the CEC protest road: Both Opposition and government need to decide

The many stark images of protests being quelled by a repressive state could be wreaking long-term damage on people's trust in institutions and processes. They could sharpen the disconnect between the young and legislatures or parties.

Written by:
Vandita Mishra

7 min read
Oct 22, 2026 06:44 AM IST

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Context

Street protests against the Chief Election Commissioner and the conduct of the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls have followed close on an earlier agitation over the NEET paper leaks.

The two sides are a Union government that answers largely through the police, and a Congress-led opposition joined by civil-society groups steered by the half-formed Cockroach Janta Party. Parliamentary elections are about two and a half years away; elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab come early next year.

The author is the national opinion editor of The Indian Express. She reads the stand-off as politics unfreezing and then jamming, and sets out the choice each side now faces.

The fork in the CEC protest road: Both Opposition and government need to decide

Facts

- ***What the protests follow :*** The agitation against the Chief Election Commissioner and his conduct of the Special Intensive Revision comes close on the heels of the agitation against the NEET paper leaks, in which the Cockroach Janta Party forced a minister to resign in its very first outing.

- ***Where the words have gone :*** The government hurls "anarchist" and "foreign hand" at the other side; Congress and others have hit back with "regime change", a term the author calls unwise, with Bangladesh 2024 and Nepal 2025 as the neighbourhood examples of what the second route costs.

- ***What the ground showed :*** Reporting from Bihar and West Bengal, the author found that "vote chori" had not become the main or decisive issue: Bihar returned Nitish Kumar, and in West Bengal grievances accumulated over 15 years against the TMC network made it an election the BJP won as beneficiary.

Analytical Crux

1. The players in this battle of unequals don't acknowledge each other except in apocalyptic terms: neither concedes any space for manoeuvre to the opponent, nor recognises the possibility of common or middle ground, and the essential staples of negotiation are missing.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. What must worry both government and Opposition is that the many stark images of protests being quelled by a repressive state could be wreaking long-term damage on people's trust in institutions and processes, and could sharpen the disconnect between the young and legislatures or parties.

3. The Congress-led Opposition must make a political judgement: keep the demand focused on recasting the appointment process of election commissioners, which as institutional reform cannot be easily or immediately packaged to the people as a victory, or widen the agenda to other discontents, which will make the stakes more picturesque but may not gather around ECI/SIR/vote chori quite as readily.

Verbatim Quotes

"Politics is becoming unfrozen, but it seems headed into deadlock."

- Vandita Mishra

When Police Act As Magistrate: The Bizarre Case Of Special Executive Magistrates

When Police Act As Magistrate : The Bizarre Case Of Special Executive Magistrates

Manu Sebastian

22 Oct 2026 10:41 AM (13 mins read)



Context

Chapter VIII of the Code of Criminal Procedure, now Chapter IX of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, lets an Executive Magistrate open preventive proceedings against a person thought likely to breach the peace and require a bond; breach of the bond can mean detention for its duration.

In many States a revenue official holds that office. In Delhi and Mumbai, police officers hold it. The detention proceedings against two Cockroach Janta Party leaders brought the arrangement into public view.

The author traces what the Madras, Rajasthan and Delhi High Courts and the Supreme Court have said about a police officer sitting in judgement on a police report.

When Police Act As Magistrate: The Bizarre Case Of Special Executive Magistrates

Facts

- ***The Delhi notification :*** Under Section 70 of the Delhi Police Act, the Commissioner, Additional Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of Police have been empowered to exercise the powers of Executive Magistrates under Chapter VIII CrPC, now Chapter IX BNSS.

- ***What the courts have held :*** In 2023 a Madras High Court division bench in P Sathish @ Sathish Kumar v. State and another quashed the Tamil Nadu orders empowering Deputy Police Commissioners under Section 107 CrPC; the Rajasthan High Court in Pawan Gaur v. State of Rajasthan (2025) and the Delhi High Court in Aldanish Rein v. State of NCT of Delhi (2018) raised their own concerns.

- ***What the new code does :*** Section 15 of the BNSS specifically empowers the notification of police officials not below the rank of Superintendent of Police as Special Executive Magistrate; the Supreme Court held in State of Maharashtra v. Mohammed Salim Khan (1990) that Special Executive Magistrates inherently exercise all powers conferred on Executive Magistrates.

Analytical Crux

1. In most cases the preventive proceedings under Section 107 CrPC, now Section 126 BNSS, are initiated on the basis of a report from the police themselves; if someone within the police machinery is the judge of the police report, even that theoretical concept of independent assessment is lost.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The Madras High Court observed that the entire process of investigation, prosecution and adjudication have now been arrogated by one branch of the executive, the police, and described the arrangement as a game of musical chairs within the police department which plays with a citizen's liberty.

3. The new BNSS, which was supposedly brought to decolonise the legal system, specifically empowers the notification of police officials as Special Executive Magistrate; read with the Supreme Court's judgment in State of Maharashtra v. Mohammed Salim Khan, this creates a legal architecture for an unchecked police state.

Verbatim Quotes

"If khakhi and the judicial robes are blended, the result is executive anarchy"

– Madras High Court, quoted by Manu Sebastian

Balancing power is no job for kitchen scales

Balancing power is no job for kitchen scales

Grand historical analogies feel reassuring, but they are no substitute for trustworthy leadership.

Mark Pierce 21 October 2026 4 min read

A few harsh reality checks have helped us see through some comforting delusions, ones like rules-based order, trickle-down economics, free trade or diplomatic norms.

We might now turn a seriously sceptical eye to the concept of strategy. Current events in the Gulf or in Ukraine, with North Korea and Taiwan, may well leave us wondering how strategic planning is working.

Context

Balance of power is the oldest working idea in the study of international politics: states form coalitions so that no single state becomes predominant. It sits in the PSIR syllabus beside the other approaches to the study of international relations.

This piece turns a sceptical eye on strategy itself, a word in currency for over four centuries, and asks what electorates are entitled to know about plans made in their name.

The author writes for the Lowy Institute's Interpreter. He offers five pointers for voters, of which the balance of power is one.

Balancing power is no job for kitchen scales

Facts

- ***Walls and moats :*** The Great Wall of China ran to 21,000 kilometres and worked mainly against nomadic enemies on horses; the British fortress at Singapore was attacked from behind and surrendered in 1942; France's Maginot line, 720 kilometres long, was outflanked in 1940.

- ***What balancing did not prevent :*** The balance of power never prevented Napoleon's France, Britain with its Empire or the Kaiser's Germany from trying to unbalance the strategic equation, nor did attempts at balancing preclude gang-ups, proxy wars elsewhere, arms races or bellicose threats.

- ***The 1940 case :*** In 1940 Churchill had no plausible strategy for winning the war against Germany; his only residual assets were squadrons of Spitfires, the English Channel and grit, and what followed turned on Germany's attention being diverted towards Russia and on Hitler declaring war on the United States.

Analytical Crux

1. The strategic notion of balancing power, using coalitions to prevent any single state becoming predominant, was another comforting fiction: the balance of power never prevented powers trying to unbalance the strategic equation, nor did attempts at balancing preclude gang-ups, proxy wars elsewhere, arms races or bellicose threats.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. *Intellectual Maginot lines are more dangerous still, for they involve rigidly adhering to dated, static strategies; standing still intellectually means losing, and vestiges of those doctrines linger on in ways which muddle and hobble clear thinking about new strategies.*

3. *When strategies fail, ordinary folk are conscripted into armies, mobilised into factories, rationed, shot and bombed; electorates should insist on knowing the risks and costs they may have to bear, and strategies need to be explained and applied by leaders who inspire trust.*

Verbatim Quotes

"Strategy is not an exclusive, hermetically sealed code, something like Sanskrit epics or pure mathematics."

- Mark Pierce

The Endless Chip War

COGS OF WAR

The Endless Chip War

RAKESH KUMAR

October 22, 2026



Context

Semiconductors are the material base of the technologies states compete over, and the controls, tariffs and shortages around them are old rather than new.

This interview sets out why legacy chips are being phased out, where innovation has slowed, which patterns from chip history are repeating in the race over artificial intelligence, and which chokepoints in the supply chain can be worked around.

The piece is a Cogs of War interview with Rakesh Kumar, the author of Chip Age: How Semiconductors Became the World's Most Powerful Resource. He answers as an engineer, and several widely proposed fixes, he argues, will not do what is claimed for them.

The Endless Chip War

Facts

- ***Where the slowdown shows :*** *A microprocessor's speed now increases only 10 to 15 per cent each year; the computational power of an AI chip falls behind AI models by an additional 200 times every two years; and modern-day GPUs consume hundreds of millions of times more energy than the brain for an equivalent amount of computation.*

- ***The earlier chip wars :*** *The United States used a combination of trade and geopolitical interventions in the mid-1980s against Japanese chip competition, and its denial of chip technology to the Soviet Union crippled the Soviet ability to develop modern precision-guided weapons and manage a competitive economy.*

- ***The lithography chokepoint :*** *ASML in the Netherlands took three decades and tens, if not hundreds, of billions of dollars to master the engineering behind an extreme ultraviolet lithography machine; the technology itself came out in 2001 of a consortium set up in 1997.*

Analytical Crux

1. Several patterns from chip history are repeating in the AI race: "pick and shovel" winners, the importance of software, consolidation of industry, and geopolitical weaponization.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The key challenge is that the Pentagon accounts for a tiny fraction of the overall chip demand, which makes it hard for it to exercise meaningful control over the chip supply chain; procurement mandates work well only during peacetime and are quickly abandoned for procurement speed during conflicts, and supply chains need to be most trustworthy during conflicts and shortages.

3. Instead of attempting to replicate ASML's extreme ultraviolet lithography technology from scratch, the United States should focus on next-generation lithography alternatives, such as nanoimprint lithography and x-ray lithography, that have the potential to leapfrog ASML's extreme ultraviolet lithography roadmap.

Verbatim Quotes

"Chipmaking is arguably mankind's most complex engineering exercise, with supply chains spanning over 40 to 50 countries."

- Rakesh Kumar

Who Will Be the Next UN Secretary-General?

Who Will Be the Next UN Secretary-General?

Six candidates are vying to succeed António Guterres as the United Nations' tenth leader since 1946. Who are they, how are they selected, and what challenges will they face in the role?



From left to right, Michelle Bachelet, María Fernanda Espinosa, Rafael Grossi, Rebeca Grynspan, Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett, and Macky Sall take part in a UN town hall at the UN Headquarters in New York City, on July 23, 2026. Selcuk Acar/Anadolu/Getty Images

Diana Roy
Senior Writer/Editor, Latin America

UPDATED
October 21, 2026 9:52 a.m.

Context

The office of Secretary-General was created with the adoption of the UN Charter in 1945; the first appointment, Trygve Lie, took place in 1946. The winner of the current race becomes the tenth holder of the office.

Six candidates remain in the running. Four of them are women, and no woman has held the office in eighty years.

This CFR backgrounder sets out who the candidates are, how the selection works under Article 97, and what the next holder inherits.

Who Will Be the Next UN Secretary-General?

Facts

- ***The field and the date :*** Six candidates are still in the running, four of them women; the winner takes office on 1 January 2027, succeeding António Guterres as the tenth secretary-general since 1946.

- ***How the choice is made :*** Article 97 of the UN Charter says only that the secretary-general shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council; a candidate must receive at least nine votes in the fifteen-member Council with no veto from the five permanent members.

- ***The rotation claim :*** Only one person from Latin America, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (1982-1991), has held the office, and a September 2025 resolution encourages member states to strongly consider nominating women as candidates.

Analytical Crux

1. Beyond describing the role of the secretary-general, the UN Charter says nothing about the qualifications, desired qualities, tenure, or selection process for the position; given the lack of detail, the United Nations has established criteria over time through resolutions and other documents.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The principle of regional rotation is something that member states have respected for quite a long time, and that tradition was disrupted in 2016, when Guterres was selected, despite the expectation that the next secretary-general would be from the Eastern European regional grouping, which has never held the position.

3. The next secretary-general will have to contend with the United Nations' own internal strife, notably structural reform efforts via the UN80 Initiative, a growing liquidity crisis, and persistent institutional deadlock, and Guterres himself warned that the Security Council is practically paralyzed.

Verbatim Quotes

"an incredibly difficult job for which there are very few specifications and no thanks"

– Esther Brimmer, CFR, quoted by Diana Roy

UPSC LINK

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** Discuss various methods of Balance of Power.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** Theories of international relations which claim objectivity inevitably harbour subjective biases. Elucidate.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2026:** Highlight any five constitutional provisions that restrain the powers of the executive, and evaluate their effectiveness in current times.

- **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, 2026:** Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA.

- **PSIR Paper I, 2025:** There is a debate on the procedure for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners to the Election Commission of India. Analyse its various aspects.

- **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.

- **GS Paper III, 2025:** India aims to become a semiconductor manufacturing hub. What are the challenges faced by the semiconductor industry in India? Mention the salient features of the India Semiconductor Mission.

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