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BRIEF ISSUE 175

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 anti-SIR and anti-CEC agitation is now set to become a pro-democracy movement

The anti-SIR and anti-CEC agitation is now set to become a pro-democracy movement

As of now, a call for free and fair elections encompasses the most widely shared sentiment of the people

Written by:
Yogendra Yadav

7 min read
Nov 3, 2026 11:08 AM IST

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Context

The INDIA bloc rally on Sunday did not produce the Chief Election Commissioner's resignation, and no one expected it to. The piece argues that the month-long protest has still achieved more than anyone expected, because the run-up saw the entire Opposition, and not only the INDIA bloc, come together to question the role of the Election Commission of India.

Its argument is that the agitation should now widen from the removal of Gyanesh Kumar and the rollback of the SIR to reclaiming democratic space, and that a call for regime change is at this stage a distraction. A mass movement, on this reading, must keep to the lowest common denominator that holds the widest support, which today is a call for free and fair elections.

The author is a member of Swaraj India and national convenor of Bharat Jodo Abhiyaan. He weighs what the rally settled, names the Uttar Pradesh assembly election as the test of the electoral system's credibility, and compares the next phase of the stir to a river slowing as it descends to the plains.

The anti-SIR and anti-CEC agitation is now set to become a pro-democracy movement

Facts

- ***A full-spectrum vote of no confidence :*** AAP and DMK stayed away from the rally but are with the cause, and non-INDIA bloc opposition parties like the BJD, BRS and YSRCP, which have often supported the government, have also come out against the SIR and the ECI. The author holds that such a vote of no confidence by the entire parliamentary Opposition against the election management body would be unprecedented in any democracy.

- ***Who joined beyond the parties :*** Civil society organisations and movements that have led the campaign against the SIR were present both in the mock parliament on Saturday and at the podium of the Sunday rally, including many farmer organisations and all the youth organisations active in the October protests. The CJP issued a call to support the Opposition rally, and influencers like Dhruv Rathee and farmer leaders like Rakesh Tikait endorsed it.

- ***What the public now knows :*** The Indian Express exposé opened the floodgates of media reporting on the SIR. The public now knows about the questions that surround Form 6, misuse of bulk Form 7 objections, the contentious use of Form 8 to change the final voter list, the weird pattern of voter deletion and bulk filing of anonymous appeals in West Bengal.

Analytical Crux

1. Such a full-spectrum vote of no confidence by the entire parliamentary Opposition against the election management body would be unprecedented in any democracy; this is like all the non-host teams demanding replacement of the tournament referee.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The success of a mass movement depends on floating with the sentiment of the organic protesters, on keeping to the lowest common denominator that ensures the widest possible support; a call for free and fair elections goes beyond the current demands for the removal of the CEC, the repeal of the 2023 Act and the rollback of the SIR, and would also entail reclaiming democratic freedoms like freedom of expression, dissent and protest.

3. For someone who has observed Indian elections closely for the last four decades, the assembly election in UP will be an agnipariksha that will determine whether we can expect anything like fair elections in the minimal sense of the term under the present dispensation; that must be the focal point of the pro-democracy movement.

Verbatim Quotes

"More than a test of Narendra Modi's or Yogi Adityanath's popularity, it will be a test of the electoral system's credibility."

- Yogendra Yadav

Steel policy for 2047 needs to shift focus — from protection to competition

Steel policy for 2047 needs to shift focus — from protection to competition

Other industries such as pharmaceuticals and auto components have shown that reduction in protection does not hurt the industry

Written by:
Montek S Ahluwalia, Shishir Gupta, Rishita Sachdeva

6 min read
Nov 2, 2026 07:24 AM IST

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Context

The Ministry of Steel has released the Draft National Steel Policy: Vision 2047, whose objectives include making Indian steel globally competitive and raising steel exports to 45 million tonnes. The piece accepts the objectives and asks what globally competitive is meant to mean.

Its argument is that the industry's high profitability reflects protection rather than efficiency. A 30 per cent export duty holds the domestic price of iron ore well below the global price, an import tariff of 7.5 per cent with a safeguard duty of 11.5 per cent takes the duty rate to 18 per cent, and Quality Control Orders cover 228 steel products.

Ahluwalia is a distinguished fellow at CSEP and a former deputy chairman of the Planning Commission; Gupta and Sachdeva are senior fellow and associate fellow there. The piece models what happens to profitability if the protection is withdrawn, and sets out four changes: calibrated tariff reduction, privatisation of some public sector plants, removal of the ore export duty and an overhaul of mining policy.

Steel policy for 2047 needs to shift focus — from protection to competition

Facts

- **Where the industry stands :** From producing less than 5 per cent of global steel and ranking ninth in 2000, India has become the world's second-largest steel producer at 170 Mt, far behind China at 961 Mt. Average profitability, measured as EBITDA over sales, was around 15 per cent for 2000-25, which is 3-4 per cent higher than the rest of Indian manufacturing, and the top three Indian steel firms run 3-4 percentage points above their biggest global counterparts for 2015-24.

- **The scaffolding of protection :** An export duty of 30 per cent on iron ore with more than 58 per cent iron content makes the domestic price of the ore 30-40 per cent lower than global prices. A 7.5 per cent import tariff with an 11.5 per cent safeguard duty makes the duty rate 18 per cent, against 3-4 per cent in ASEAN, and Quality Control Orders cover 228 steel products, of which the Gauba Committee has reportedly recommended removing 122 while only 59 have been suspended.

- **What withdrawal would cost :** Under Alternative 1, with tariffs reduced so the price of domestic steel drops by about 6 per cent to Japanese levels, the profitability of the largest private sector steel firm reduces by 25 per cent, that of the largest public sector firm drops by 50 per cent, and that of the fastest-growing large private firm drops by 40 per cent. Under Alternative 2, with export duties on iron ore removed and all ore bought at the global price, the profitability of the largest private firm reduces to approximately 7 per cent, that of the fastest-growing private firm drops by 95 per cent, and that of the largest public-sector firm becomes negative.

Analytical Crux

1. One reason why profitability is high is because we keep iron-ore prices low; an export duty of 30 per cent on iron ore with more than 58 per cent iron content makes the domestic price of the ore 30-40 per cent lower than global prices, so our iron-mining resources are underpaid to benefit the steel industry, which also lowers the incentive to mine causing economic loss for mineral-rich regions.

2. Domestic firms sell steel at a 6-7 per cent premium over a high-cost country like Japan, which has a detrimental impact on downstream industries: in the construction sector steel accounts for around 15 per cent of total project cost, and smaller- and medium-scale industries, which are critical for exports, also face high domestic input costs.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. Other industries such as pharmaceuticals and auto components have shown that reduction in protection does not hurt the industry: import tariffs on pharmaceuticals and automobile parts and components dropped from around 40 per cent in 2000 to 10-15 per cent in 2023, while the share of India's exports of automobile parts in global exports increased from 0.2 per cent in 2003 to 1.5 per cent in 2024.

Verbatim Quotes

"It is a no-brainer that if India is to emerge as a competitive steel producer by 2047, the protection extended to the steel industry must be phased down."

- Montek S Ahluwalia, Shishir Gupta, Rishita Sachdeva

Fifth CPC plenum shows, in Xi Jinping's China, no tiger is too big to fall

Fifth CPC plenum shows, in Xi Jinping's China, no tiger is too big to fall

Chinese military modernisation and expansion is so far advanced that it requires greater political oversight over decision-making within the PLA so that political goals and the military means to achieve them are better aligned

Written by:
Jabin T Jacob,
Devendra Kumar

6 min read
Nov 2, 2026 04:47 PM IST

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Context

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, when Xi Jinping took over as general secretary, discipline inspection and supervisory organs across the country have filed 8.105 million cases and punished 7.922 million officials. The piece argues that the significance of the campaign lies in its sustained targeting of the tigers, the Party officials in senior ranks.

By the end of the fifth plenum of the 20th Central Committee, 51 full and alternate members had been expelled, about an eighth of the membership and an unprecedented number in the post-Mao period. The plenum issued a communiqué on Party self-governance, and the piece reads it for what this approach means beyond China's borders.

The authors are respectively director and associate fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR. They explain how a Central Committee is composed, read the communiqué's language on development and security, and take the promotion of General Zhang Shengmin as a sign of tighter political oversight over the PLA.

Fifth CPC plenum shows, in Xi Jinping's China, no tiger is too big to fall

Facts

- **The scale of the campaign :** Since the 18th National Congress in 2012, discipline inspection and supervisory organs across the country have filed 8.105 million cases and punished 7.922 million officials. Of the millions punished, 963 are officials registered at and supervised by the CPC Central Committee, which is to say very senior officials including Central Committee members.

- **How the Central Committee is built :** Each Party Congress elects a Central Committee of approximately 200 full members and 170-odd alternate members; the full members choose the politburo of about 25, and it is from the politburo that the Standing Committee, including the general secretary, are chosen. Full members include party secretaries and governors of provinces, central government ministers, military leaders at the theatre command level, heads of Central Military Commission departments, and heads of national-level organisations such as the All China Women's Federation and the All China Federation of Trade Unions.

- **An unprecedented purge :** By the end of the fifth plenum of the 20th Central Committee, a total of 51 members, full and alternate, had been expelled, an unprecedented number in the post-Mao period. At the end of the 18th and 19th Central Committees the numbers were respectively 49 and 12, so approximately an eighth of the 20th Central Committee membership were removed before the full term concluded.

Analytical Crux

1. Like other aspects of policymaking, China's economic policymaking too is increasingly top-down and centralised, and Xi seeks to shape local economic policies and their implementation through the appointment of officials who are competent economic administrators and also hew to his political agenda of firm Party control over the economy.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The Party has noted that safeguarding China's development interests has become even more arduous. This is a recipe for greater pressure both on Chinese enterprises engaged abroad and on foreign enterprises doing business in or with China.

3. The CMC was reduced to just two members in January this year and the sole vice-chairman, General Zhang Shengmin, a political commissar with a focus on anti-corruption work, not a battlefield commander, has now been promoted to the politburo; this suggests that Chinese military modernisation and expansion is so far advanced that it requires greater political oversight over decision-making within the PLA so that political goals and the military means to achieve them are better aligned.

Verbatim Quotes

"Xi is clearly making a case for his continuance in power for a fourth term at the 21st Party Congress at the end of next year."

– Jabin T Jacob, Devendra Kumar

Morgenthau: A realist ethic



Morgenthau: A realist ethic

A new biography by David Sacks finds the ideals beneath theorist Hans Morgenthau's hard-edged realism.

Ved Shinde 2 November 2026 3 min read

In the long 20th century, no one became more associated with the concept of "realism" than the formidable thinker Hans J. Morgenthau. He was the first to offer a smooth, frictionless theory of international politics, drawing on the Hobbesian view of human nature: humans are conflict-ridden, imperfect, and tragic.

Context

The piece reviews The Realist, David Sacks's new biography of Hans J. Morgenthau, the thinker most associated with realism in the long 20th century and the first to offer a smooth, frictionless theory of international politics drawing on the Hobbesian view of human nature.

Its argument is that Morgenthau's realism sprang from high ideals and not from cynicism. Statecraft, for him, was an ethic of responsibility, and to be real meant objectivity; the review traces this from Max Weber's influence through Morgenthau's flight from Nazi Germany to his criticism of the war in Vietnam.

The author writes in the Lowy Institute's Interpreter. He follows the biography through Morgenthau's life and public career, records the misjudgements Sacks charts, and closes on what realism has become since, and on Henry Kissinger's verdict that everyone who taught the subject after him had to start with his reflections.

Morgenthau: A realist ethic

Facts

- **The life behind the theory :** Morgenthau was born in Coburg in 1904 to a Jewish family under a father of strict German sensibility. Harrowing incidents as a schoolboy left a young Hans convinced that no matter how well he assimilated, he would always be an outsider in Germany, and in a school essay he wrote that "human nature is prone to inclinations that can thwart all law-abiding conduct in their unbridled power".

- **The route to Chicago :** By 1932, as Germany buckled under the dystopia of Nazism, Morgenthau escaped to Geneva, then Madrid, and finally New York. After suffering some years in the vortex of academic politics at the University of Kansas, he secured a temporary teaching position at the University of Chicago and would soon write his seminal tome, Politics Among Nations.

- **Vietnam, and the misjudgements :** Early in the war Morgenthau made it a point to visit Vietnam and evaluate the ground reality himself, and quickly perceived that no concrete American interests were being defended there. Sacks also charts his misjudgement of Anwar Sadat's intentions in making a peace deal with Israel, and covers his deep intellectual bond with the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and his friendship with the philosopher Hannah Arendt.

Analytical Crux

1. Morgenthau found companionship in the works of Max Weber, not to romanticise power but to see it in service of higher values, and this idea would animate Morgenthau's thinking for a long time.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. Morgenthau's grimy and sometimes politically incorrect realism sprung from the kernels of high ideals; for him, statecraft was not simple cynicism, it was an ethic of responsibility, and as he himself put it while evaluating the work of the historian E. H. Carr, it is a dangerous thing to be a Machiavelli, and a disastrous thing to be a Machiavelli without virtù.

3. Morgenthau quickly perceived that no concrete American interests were being defended in Vietnam, and that the war was a morass of misplaced prestige, bluff, and excessive ideological rhetoric; his realism was not a caricature of perpetual hawkism.

Verbatim Quotes

"A true realist did not asphyxiate truth. To be real meant objectivity."

- Ved Shinde

Falklands: Argentina’s new legal fight over the Sea Lion oil project



Falklands: Argentina’s new legal fight over the Sea Lion oil project

Argentina has taken its Falklands oil fight to an international court – but the case may stumble at the first hurdle.

Donald R Rothwell 2 November 2026 5 min read

The longstanding Argentina-United Kingdom Falkland Islands dispute is back in the global headlines. The UK endorsement of the offshore “Sea Lion” project in waters to the north of the islands has seen Argentina respond by commencing a legal challenge.

Context

The United Kingdom's endorsement of the offshore Sea Lion project in waters to the north of the Falkland Islands has brought the Argentina-United Kingdom dispute back into the headlines, and Argentina has responded by commencing a legal challenge under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The challenge is two pronged: an initial request for provisional measures before the Hamburg-based International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, with a final determination by an Arbitral Tribunal to follow. The piece's argument is that although Argentina has framed its claim around UNCLOS, the core of the case is the territorial dispute over the islands, and that is where jurisdiction becomes the first hurdle.

The author writes in the Lowy Institute's Interpreter. He sets the case against the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration and the Chagos Archipelago case, reads the competing titles to the islands, and notes the politics in Buenos Aires, London and Washington that surrounds the hearing.

Falklands: Argentina's new legal fight over the Sea Lion oil project

Facts

- **The project and the timetable :** The Sea Lion hydrocarbon exploitation licences have been granted to Navitas Petroleum operating in conjunction with Rockhopper Exploration, in an area located approximately 107 nautical miles to the north of the islands and covering 541km2. ITLOS hearings are scheduled for 10-11 November 2026, and a decision on that phase of the case can be expected soon after.

- **The competing titles :** Argentina's claim to the Malvinas is founded in Papal Bulls, pontifical decrees dividing parts of the Roman Catholic world, which Argentina argues were given legal substance by the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. There has never been a permanent Argentine settlement on the islands other than temporary military occupation during the 1982 Falklands War; the islands have an approximate population of 3,500, and a 2013 referendum voted by a 99.8 per cent majority to remain a British Overseas Territory.

- **Where jurisdiction bites :** ITLOS, as a tribunal established under UNCLOS, has under Article 286 jurisdiction to determine disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the convention. It does not have the jurisdictional capacity to determine territorial disputes under general international law, which in practice are matters traditionally within the remit of the International Court of Justice.

Analytical Crux

1. Argentina's UNCLOS legal case is that the UK is illegally exploiting the continental shelf seabed to the north of the islands, that Sea Lion will result in environmental impact and damage, and that the UK's conduct in issuing the Sea Lion exploration licences is an aggravation of the dispute over the maritime areas adjacent to the islands.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

2. The most prominent was the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration, where the Philippines neatly sidestepped the territorial disputes and instead focused on China's maritime claims, island reclamation activity, and artificial island building within areas of the Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone, and there was never a need for a determination to be made as to who had territorial sovereignty over what feature.

3. Argentina's claim could therefore fall at the first hurdle, and Buenos Aires is no doubt aware of this challenge; ITLOS, however, has generally been reluctant to take a narrow view of its jurisdiction and to deny hearing a case brought before it.

Verbatim Quotes

"If the UK has sovereignty over the islands, then Sea Lion is a legitimate act of exploration and exploitation of the continental shelf."

- Donald R Rothwell

UPSC LINK

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** What is UNCLOS? Explain its salient features.
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