

PERSPECTIVES

GLOBAL AFFAIRS & INDIAN POLITICS



Rise of New

JAPAN

Japan has given up its post-War pacifism and is working to become a major military power. The turn is historic, and promises to transform the geopolitics of Asia and the world.



PSIR CURRENT
AFFAIRS

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PREFACE

Welcome to "Perspectives," a beacon of knowledge brought to you by the RausIAS PSIR team, tailored to illuminate the depths of political science and international relations for UPSC aspirants.

Rooted in the fundamental principles of political science—justice, equality, liberty, and development—this magazine serves as a compass guiding you through the labyrinth of current affairs. Our aim is to shed light on the intricate web of global events, ensuring that your perspectives are not merely shaped by ignorance but are illuminated by informed deliberation.

In this edition, we delve into the tumultuous landscape of international relations, exploring the dynamics of power and governance on the global stage. From the **Rise of Japan** to the imperative of **reversing the global democratic recession,** we navigate through the complex tapestry of geopolitical realities.

Additionally, we highlight the exceptional **contributions of women in French diplomacy** and the ramifications of events in Gaza on the rules-based order.

Through the lens of esteemed scholars, **we dissect key concepts of international relations theories** and their applications to contemporary events. Aspiring civil servants embark on a journey of discovery, armed with a nuanced understanding of global affairs.

With **"Perspectives on Polity and Global Affairs,"** we equip UPSC aspirants with the essential insights necessary to navigate the challenges of the examination and make meaningful contributions to the future of our nation and the world.

Join us as we unravel the complexities of governance, diplomacy, and power dynamics, empowering you to forge a path towards a brighter tomorrow.



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RISE OF JAPAN

C Raja Mohan

Japan is undergoing a significant shift from post-World War II **pacifism to actively pursuing a role as a major military power.** This transition, historic in nature, is poised to reshape the geopolitics of Asia and the world, aligning with India's objective of fostering a multipolar Asia. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's recent address to the United States Congress marks a pivotal moment, signalling Japan's assertive presence on the global stage.

Japan's pacifism was compensated by its bilateral military alliance with the United States. Being a protectorate of the US in Asia, Japan was free to focus its energies on rebuilding its economy and becoming a commercial and technological powerhouse by the late 1960s. By the turn of the 1970s, Japan became the world's second largest economy, behind only the US.

The transformation in Japan's stance is rooted in both external and internal factors.

Externally, the rise of China, deepening military alliances between China and Russia, North Korea's growing military capabilities, and concerns about the US potentially withdrawing its security protection have prompted Japan to reassess its security posture. Internally, conservative factions in Tokyo advocate for Japan to shed its post-war constraints and assume a more proactive role in regional security affairs.

To bolster its military capabilities, Japan has increased defense spending, acquired cruise missiles for counter-strike capability, eased restrictions on weapon exports, and initiated collaborative military-industrial projects with allies like the United States. Additionally, Japan and the US are revising their command-and-control framework to enhance integration and coordination.

In terms of diplomacy, Japan has endeavored to reconcile historical disputes with South Korea and has shown support for Ukraine in its conflict with Russia, signaling a willingness to engage in global security issues beyond its immediate region.

The implications of Japan's newfound assertiveness are significant, potentially altering the regional security landscape. Despite concerns about the sustainability of these policies, structural factors and external dynamics suggest a degree of continuity in Japan's strategic orientation.

From India's perspective, Japan's transformation presents opportunities for enhanced cooperation, particularly in the realm of military-industrial collaboration. India sees a politically resolute and militarily strong Japan as conducive to its vision of a multipolar Asia, fostering stability and balance in the region.

AN ELUSIVE GRAND BARGAIN

C Raja Mohan

As the world's largest economies with massive interdependence and as leading military powers, the US and China's imperatives to engage are real. So are the contradictions between Washington and Beijing

The USA's China strategy of **"responsible competition,"** aiming to cooperate with China where possible while challenging it where necessary to prevent conflict is being taken up by Joe Biden Administration. It highlights concerns within the Indian strategic community regarding the sustainability of balancing competition and cooperation with China.

Despite being far from Asia and facing no direct threats from China, **the US seeks to accommodate China due to economic interdependence and military power.** However, tensions arise due to the perception of China's economic threat and attempts to dominate emerging technology sectors.

The recent developments in US-China relations are notable like high-level communication between Biden and Xi Jinping and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's visit to China. Yellen aims to convey a message of mutual economic benefit while addressing concerns about China's dominance in technology sectors.

On the competition front, Biden's state visit with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida **underscores the importance of the Indo-Pacific in US strategy,** with a focus on deepening military-technological partnerships. The US seeks to involve Japan in the AUKUS initiative to jointly develop advanced military technologies, contributing to regional security amid China's assertiveness.

The **US strategy of building minilateral institutions to strengthen alliances** and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, Biden's trilateral summit with the President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., aims to support Manila's stance against China in the South China Sea dispute. The US encourages Asian countries to develop partnerships with each other, reinforcing the Asian security network to pool military resources and enhance deterrence.

In contrast, **China's focus is on reviving bilateral ties with the US and asserting its primacy in Asia.** However, Beijing's approach alienates its neighbors, providing greater agency for countries like India in navigating the geopolitical landscape. While the US actively courts China's neighbors and promotes cooperation, China's pursuit of a Chinese sphere of influence leaves its neighbors marginalized. For now, at least, there is little evidence that the Chinese leadership is rethinking its Asian strategy

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HOW DELHI MAPS THE WORLD

C Raja Mohan

An audit of Indian foreign policy over the last decade shows that island states and territories from the South Pacific to the African coast have become new nodes in India's changing strategic geography

The resurfaced strategic focus of Delhi on Katchatheevu, an island between India and Sri Lanka, is due to BJP's electoral strategy in Tamil Nadu. However, it also zooms out to assess India's foreign policy over the last decade, highlighting the emergence of island states and territories as key components of India's evolving strategic landscape.

From the Maldives to Papua New Guinea and the Agalega island in Mauritius, **India has intensified its engagement with island nations**, recognizing their strategic importance. The concept of the "Indo-Pacific," initially proposed by Japan's Abe Shinzo, faced resistance in Delhi but has since been embraced, particularly amidst deteriorating relations with China. This has led to the establishment of the Quad, comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the US, as an institutional anchor in the Indo-Pacific.

India's evolving approach towards "Eurasia," driven by Russia's influence and **India's quest for a multipolar world highlight that while India's interest in continental Asia initially centered on inner Asia, it has now expanded to include Europe**, which was previously neglected in Indian foreign policy.

High-level exchanges and increasing trade with Europe underscore India's growing engagement with the continent.

India's expanding geographic vocabulary, including new regions like the Nordic-Baltic coalition, the Med 9, and the Caucasus, which have become significant for India's strategic interests. Additionally, it discusses the shifting focus away from "South Asia" towards sub-regional and trans-regional cooperation, prompted by SAARC's failure.

Looking ahead, it is to be noted that **regions are not fixed entities and highlights the potential strategic significance** of emerging geographies like "Zomia" and "Khorasan." Zomia, encompassing areas of Northeast India, Southwest China, and Southeast Asia, faces challenges due to ethnic diversity and weak state control. Meanwhile, Khorasan, encompassing parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, is experiencing tensions and instability, drawing India deeper into their geopolitics.

REVERSING THE GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC RECESSION

Despite the disillusionment, for a variety of reasons, the need to fortify democratic foundations has to be ongoing and collaborative

P. John J. Kennedy



A Pew Research Center survey conducted between February 20 and May 22, 2023, covering 24 countries highlights that -

Global Shift Away from Trust in Democracy:

The survey indicates a **decline in trust in democratic systems** globally, with only 77% of respondents expressing optimism about representative democracy. **Support for alternative governance models such as direct democracy, rule by experts, and authoritarian government has increased**, with 70% endorsing direct democracy and 26% showing acceptance of authoritarian models. Factors driving this shift include perceptions of delays in decision-making and the promise of quicker economic development under concentrated power.

Indian Perceptions: Indian respondents' support for representative democracy has decreased from 44% in 2017 to 36% in 2023. Conversely, **the preference for a powerful leader with significant authority** has risen from 55% to 67% during the same period. Technocracy- Support for rule by experts has also increased significantly, from 65% to 82%.

Notably, a striking shift is the **overwhelming preference for military rule or governance** by an authoritarian leader, with 85% of Indian respondents favoring it.

Global Perception of India's Democracy:

Various agencies and reports characterize contemporary India's democracy as a "hybrid regime," ranging from "free to partly free" to "electoral autocracy" or a "flawed democracy." **The Democracy Report 2024 by the V-Dem Institute downgrades India across multiple metrics** compared to its assessment in 2018, reflecting a growing global perception of a decline in India's democracy.

ON MYANMAR, INDIA NEEDS A RETHINK

Strengthen Democratic Foundations:

Despite challenges such as corruption, eroded trust, unemployment, and electoral doubts, fortifying democratic foundations is essential. Two seminal works are highlighted as potential guides: **"Strengthening Democracy by Design"** by Thomas and Upchurch, which outlines four pillars of robust democracy, and **"The Civic Bargain: How democracy survives"** by Manville and Ober, which emphasizes the importance of a strong civic bargain system for democracy to thrive.

Dialogue and Inclusivity: Governance should prioritize inclusivity and unity while addressing political polarization and societal needs like economic inequality, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Investments in education, including critical thinking and media literacy, are crucial, along with integrating the study of the Constitution into curricula to foster transformative perspectives.

Promoting dialogue and negotiation strengthens democracy's foundation, creating an inclusive space where all voices are acknowledged and concerns addressed.

Delhi should engage in dialogue with Myanmar's National Unity Government and local forces along the 1,600 km border

Myanmar's army reclaimed Myawaddy from a coalition of ethnic armed groups and pro-democracy fighters, with the Border Guard Force (BGF) emerging as a significant player due to its regional dominance and involvement in criminal activities.

Myanmar has historically struggled to maintain control over its territory due to conflicts between the majority Bamars and ethnic minority groups. However, the situation has worsened since the 2021 coup, with the army losing control over much of the country, leading to increased involvement of trans-border illegal groups. As the threat from the collapsing authority of the Myanmar state envelops the rest of the region, the intervention of external powers has become acute.

The collapse of authority in Myanmar has led to a regional crisis, attracting intervention from external powers. China has deepened its involvement in Myanmar's internal affairs, while the US supports the pro-democracy movement and provides significant assistance under the Burma Act of 2021.

Despite implications for India's security, there has been minimal debate in Delhi regarding the Myanmar crisis. It's argued that India's previous policy bias in favor of Myanmar's army is outdated, and there's a need for a new approach.

Delhi should engage with Myanmar's National Unity Government and local forces along the 1,600-km border to safeguard India's interests effectively.

WARMER MOSCOW-BEIJING TIES ARE A CHILLING SIGNAL FOR NEW DELHI

The strategic convergence between China and Russia, emphasizing their shared views on challenging the US-led Western order. Both nations oppose unilateralism and hegemony while advocating for multipolarization in international relations.

Sergey Lavrov, Russian foreign minister, stressed that **“Russia-China relations have reached an unprecedented high level... surpassing the old Cold War military alliance”** between the PRC and the Soviet Union. Both see **parallels between NATO and groups like QUAD**, in deliberate attempts to undermine the success and appeal of these groupings..

There are visible joint efforts of China and Russia to shape a new world order, **utilizing forums like BRICS and SCO to propagate anti-Western narratives**. Beijing and Moscow share a deep sense of discontent with what they believe is a Western-designed and dominated international order. Their vision prioritizes major powers' interests and spheres of influence, diverging from India's desire for greater representation for Global South countries.

Russia's intention of forming a new security structure in Eurasia underscores the depth of the Sino-Russian partnership and raises concerns for India. Despite challenges and divergences between China and Russia, such as differing economic stakes and the importance of personal relationships like Putin-Xi, the dialogue indicates the wheels are in motion for closer cooperation.

The evolving dynamics between China, Russia, and the West has deep implications for India's strategic interests, particularly in light of its relationship with China and dependence on Russian arms supplies. **Russia is now a pariah when it comes to the so-called “Western globalisation model”**.

Its urgency for alternatives is far greater. China, on the other hand, is seeking to firewall itself while maintaining deep interlinkages that serve its development.

THE ASIAN EDGE

Important new political and military markers are being laid down by the US and China in Asia. Delhi will have an important role to play

The recent developments in Asia, like summits between US President Joe Biden and the leaders of Japan and the Philippines and China's reaction to these **events highlight laying down new political and military markers in the region.** It also suggests that a potential conflict between the US and China in Asia could have profound global consequences.

India, given its strategic partnership with the US and ongoing military standoff with China in Himalayas, would inevitably be impacted by any such confrontation. Furthermore, India's role in shaping the evolving Asian dynamic is emphasized, suggesting that **Delhi now holds a significant position in influencing regional affairs.**

A key outcome of the summits is the **transformation of Japan into a potential military powerhouse in Asia**, as evidenced by agreements to integrate military command structures with the US and actively contribute to deterring Chinese military coercion in the Indo-Pacific. Japan's willingness to defend the territorial sovereignty of the Philippines against Chinese pressure in the South China Sea, along with economic cooperation agreements with Manila as alternative to China's BRI, signals a shift towards a more assertive regional role.

China's response to these developments has been characterized by warnings against what it perceives as **"bloc politics"** and attempts by the US to create a **"mini NATO"** in the region. Beijing aims to counter American efforts to isolate it in Asia by hosting diplomatic engagements with regional leaders and thwarting economic decoupling from China.

Despite some in Delhi speculating about a potential Chinese outreach to prevent India from aligning closer with the US, caution is advised, with restoring peace and tranquility on the border remaining a precondition for any potential political reset with China.

Some in Delhi believe **Beijing may be ready for a fresh outreach to prevent India from getting closer to the US** and boosting an Asian coalition against China. Delhi has long nurtured these illusions, only to be disappointed every time.

In the evolving power dynamics in Asia, with Japan emerging as a key player, China asserting its influence, India's strategic role is becoming increasingly significant in shaping the region's future.

FOR PEACE IN SUBCONTINENT, BOTH ARABIA AND PERSIA MATTER

There remains room for peace in West Asia, despite Iran-Israel clashes. India should put its weight behind Arab plans for two-state solution

The recent military exchanges between Israel and Iran, which, despite their intensity, managed to avoid escalating into a wider conflict. **It suggests that both nations exercised caution in their strikes, focusing on military targets and avoiding major civilian casualties.** This careful approach, coupled with communication channels and early warnings, likely contributed to preventing a significant escalation.

There is an underlying dynamic in the Middle East, particularly the tensions between Iran and Sunni Arab states, **highlighted by the willingness of moderate Arab leaders, notably Jordan and others to a lesser extent, to support Israel against Iranian aggression.** This collaboration underscores a convergence of interests aimed at countering Iran's influence and its support for proxies like Hamas.

India's support for the Abraham Accords and its reluctance to be drawn into the conflict between Gulf Arabs and Iran. Recognizing the importance of maintaining relations with both sides, India is urged not to remain a passive bystander in the Middle East. Instead, it should leverage its diplomatic influence to support Arab-led initiatives for a two-state solution in Palestine.



India has high stakes in promoting peace in the Middle East, given its significant interests in the region called **India's extended neighbourhood.** India should actively engage in supporting Arab-Israeli peace efforts, particularly by advocating for a ceasefire in Gaza, commitments to a Palestinian state, and mobilizing resources for reconstruction.

Middle East is littered with failed initiatives, but the current crises in the region may have opened some wiggle room for thinking boldly about peace, and at this hour, India must find a way between Tehran's cynical hijacking of the issue and Tel Aviv's equally cynical refusal to abide by the promises it has made on Palestinian statehood.

INDIA'S NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE RIGHT

The Supreme Court of India's landmark ruling in **M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others v. Union of India and Others** (referred to as "M.K. Ranjitsinh") on March 21, 2024, marks a significant milestone in constitutional climate litigation in India. Led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, a three-judge bench established a groundbreaking constitutional right to be free from the adverse impacts of climate change, drawing upon Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) and Article 14 (right to equality) of the Indian Constitution.

In the judgment, **the court formulated a new fundamental human right related to climate change**, connecting it directly with the rights enshrined in **Article 21 and Article 14** of the Constitution. By anchoring the right against the adverse effects of climate change under **Article 14 (the fundamental right to equality)**, the court emphasized the **unequal vulnerabilities and hardships** faced by communities within India due to climate change based on their geographical and economic circumstances.

Furthermore, the **court underscored the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21** as a basis for the newly recognized climate-related right. The judgment expands on the existing constitutional framework by integrating climate change considerations into fundamental rights, particularly emphasizing the intersection between environmental protection and human rights.

Despite some shortcomings in addressing the immediate issue regarding threats to endangered bird species from overhead power lines, the judgment represents a pivotal development in constitutional climate litigation. The court firmly established a new fundamental human right related to climate change, connecting it with the right to a clean environment previously recognized in the Constitution. Additionally, the judgment underscores the vulnerability of certain groups, such as indigenous communities and those in specific geographical areas, to climate change impacts.

M.K. Ranjitsinh also highlights the tension between India's pursuit of net neutrality and potential ecological costs. By affirming a right against the adverse effects of climate change, the ruling sets a crucial precedent for future cases addressing similar conflicts.

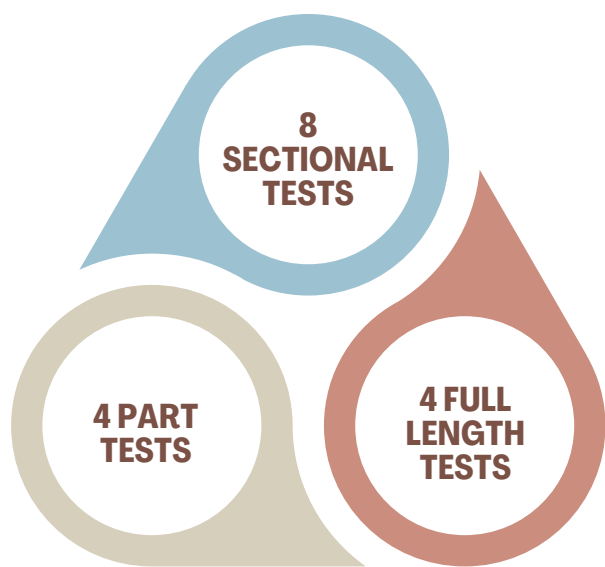
The case originated from a writ petition seeking preservation of the endangered **Great Indian Bustard** affected by overhead transmission lines. The court's examination of India's commitments under the Paris Agreement and renewable energy targets emphasizes the importance of environmental preservation in national policies.

While the judgment is a significant step towards climate-informed rights litigation in India, **it raises concerns due to its anthropocentric approach and oversight of ecocentric law principles.** The court's enthusiastic endorsement of solar energy overlooks potential negative impacts, and its reliance on cost-efficiency calculations is criticized for disregarding urgent climate and biodiversity concerns.

The absence of comprehensive climate legislation in India underscores the need for stronger legal frameworks to address climate justice. While M.K. Ranjitsinh strengthens claims for climate-related rights before the judiciary, it highlights the imperative for integrated climate protection laws to align with India's net-zero emissions goals by 2070. Engaging with climate legislation remains critical for ensuring effective climate justice and institutional clarity moving forward.

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MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT NEEDS

REFORMS

A significant gap in the present framework is that the Model Code of Conduct for elections has not clearly spelt out the consequences of defaults, thus diluting its deterrent effect

The MCC is a consensus document. This means that political parties have themselves agreed to keep their conduct during elections in check, and to work within the Code. **The philosophy behind the MCC is that parties and candidates should show respect for their opponents, criticise their policies and programmes constructively,** and not resort to mudslinging and personal attacks.

The MCC forbids ministers (of the central and state governments) from using official machinery for election work and from combining official visits with electioneering. Advertisements extolling the work of the incumbent government using public money are to be avoided.

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a set of guidelines agreed upon by political parties to ensure fair conduct during elections. It emphasizes respectful campaigning, constructive criticism of opponents' policies, and discourages personal attacks. The MCC prohibits the use of official machinery by ministers for electioneering, advertisements praising the government using public funds, and making announcements or appointments to influence voters during the election period.

Originating from Kerala in 1960, the MCC was formally adopted by the Election Commission (EC) in 1974 and has since evolved through revisions. The MCC's evolution includes additions like guidelines for party manifestos. While some critics argue for legal enforcement of the MCC, it continues to be effective due to moral and public opinion pressure. The EC can penalize parties violating the MCC under existing electoral laws, although legislative backing for enforcement remains debated.

Why MCC needs more teeth?

The political environment in the country has sharpened, **blunting the efficacy of the MCC**. Instances of violations are rising, becoming rampant and rabid. Political leaders are deploying their prestige, firepower and demagoguery like never before and finding ingenious ways to remain in the shadow zone between the letter and the spirit of MCC. **Money has replaced muscle; technology has provided a shining armour**. Chicanery in dodging the MCC has a higher premium than the inclination to adhere.

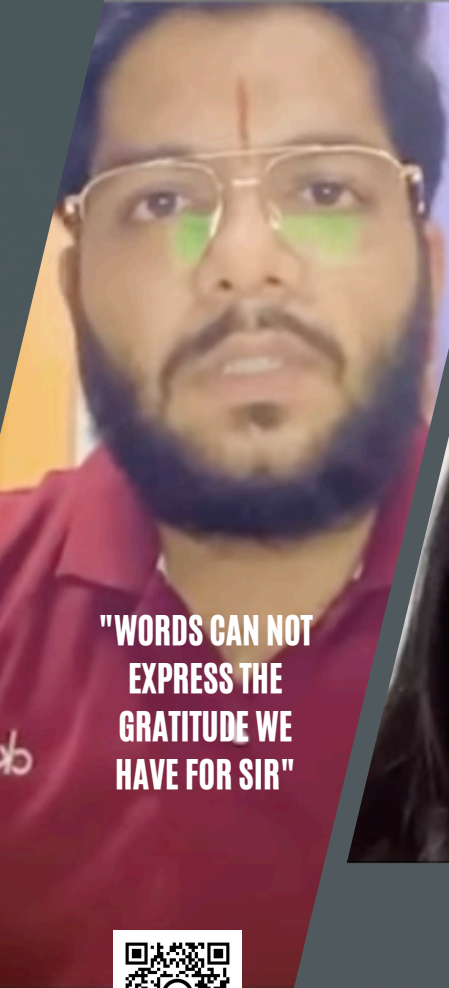
While the MCC draws its strength and sanctity from the strict, prompt and non-discriminatory enforcement by EC, **there is a need to remodel it by imposing more reasonable restrictions in a non-discriminatory manner**. This is essential to restore a certain degree of decorum and discipline in public discourse.

A significant gap in the present framework is that the **MCC has not clearly spelt out the consequences of defaults**, thus diluting its deterrent effect. It is **necessary to specify punitive measures in a fair**, transparent and predictable manner, especially with respect to serious violations such as hate speech invoking communal and caste feelings to secure votes, offering inducements for garnering votes, using foul, filthy and abusive language against political opponents, indulging in political propaganda by invoking, praising, questioning or criticising the Indian armed forces, etc.

Such violations should attract severe consequences that could be graded and made known publicly. For example, the first case of any such violations could attract a ban on campaigning for a specified period; the second could entail a ban for a longer period and the third would debar the concerned candidate or political functionary for the entire period while the MCC is in force. Such a ban would mean a complete prohibition on all public appearances and interaction on all forms of media. It should provide that those found in repeated violation would not be eligible to be categorised as star campaigners in subsequent elections for a certain length of time.

Parties, leaders and violations: In a rather deft move, the EC has taken the unprecedented step of serving political parties notice for violations alleged to be committed by individuals. **Perhaps the time has come for MCC to initiate punitive action against political parties if its functionaries or star campaigners are involved in proven cases of MCC violation**. The mechanics of this should also be suitably incorporated into the revamped MCC without absolving individual offenders.

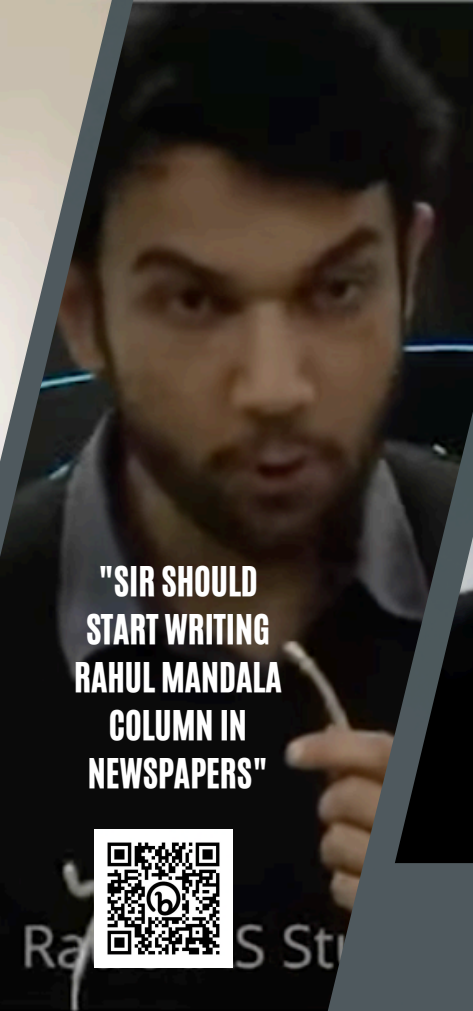
In MCC violations directly connected with specific provisions of extant law under various Acts, it ought to be the responsibility of the law enforcement machinery to initiate legal action. If that has not been done and a complaint is received and action is taken by the EC, it should be mandatory that legal action by the law enforcement machinery should automatically follow even if there is no specific direction by the EC.



"WORDS CAN NOT EXPRESS THE GRATITUDE WE HAVE FOR SIR"



"I COULD NEVER EXPECT TO LEARN SO MUCH IN MY OWN GRADUATION SUBJECT"



"SIR SHOULD START WRITING RAHUL MANDALA COLUMN IN NEWSPAPERS"



"RAHUL SIR BECAME MY GO TO PERSON FOR ALL GUIDANCE AND NOT JUST PSIR"



"ONLY ONE DECISION THAT I WILL ALWAYS BE PROUD ABOUT IS CHOOSING RAHUL SIR FOR PSIR"



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"DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE YOU HAVE TAUGHT SO MUCH IN 150 CLASSES"

