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## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### THE HINDU PAGE : 1

# Iran denies attacking cargo ship as U.S. President warns of renewed bombing

**Agence France-Presse**

WASHINGTON

Iran denied on Thursday attacking a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz this week, as U.S. President Donald Trump said a deal to end the war was “very possible” but warned Washington would resume bombing if talks failed.

Tehran’s embassy in Seoul said it “firmly rejects and categorically denies” allegations that its armed forces were behind a blast aboard the Panama-flagged *HMM Namu*, which caught fire on Monday while transiting the strategic waterway with 24 crew



Tehran’s embassy said it denies allegations that its armed forces were behind a blast aboard the *HMM Namu*. FILE PHOTO

members on board.

Mr. Trump later claimed Iran had “taken some shots” at the vessel and urged South Korea to join U.S.-led efforts to restore

shipping through the strait. The war, launched by the U.S. and Israel in late February, saw Iran respond with attacks across the West Asia and impose a

chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, rattling global energy markets.

Despite Mr. Trump’s optimism, Iran has yet to respond to a new U.S. proposal, with its chief negotiator warning that Washington was seeking to force the Islamic republic’s “surrender”.

Meanwhile, a shipping data company reported on Thursday that Iran has created a government agency to vet and tax vessels seeking passage through the crucial Strait of Hormuz as Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said that the U.S.’ proposal remained “under review”.

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### THE HINDU PAGE : 8

#### Unwinnable war

The U.S. should pursue a deal with Iran, and not take a maximalist stand

When Donald Trump announced 'Operation Project Freedom', aimed at "guiding" stranded merchant vessels out of the Strait of Hormuz, he warned that any interference from Iran would be dealt with "forcefully". Over the previous weeks, Mr. Trump had issued several ultimatums to Tehran to reopen the waterway, which it closed after the U.S. and Israel launched the war on February 28. As Iran refused to budge, Mr. Trump launched the operation to militarily reopen the strait. But it lasted barely 50 hours. Iran responded by firing at two American destroyers in the strait and attacking a UAE tanker off Oman's coast. The UAE, a close strategic partner of both the U.S. and Israel, also said it was attacked twice. With the ceasefire coming under strain amid hostilities, Mr. Trump, on Wednesday, said he was pausing the operation "at the request of Pakistan". While Mr. Trump continues to make sweeping claims about winning the war, the fact that the Strait of Hormuz remains closed – and that the operation to reopen it did not last even three days – points to a very different reality on the ground. The U.S. not only failed to achieve any of its declared objectives during the 40 days of war, but is now grappling with a crisis created by the war itself – the closure of the strait.

Unlike Mr. Trump, who has made several self-contradictory statements since the war began, Iran has remained consistent in its demands. Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said last week that Iran would "protect" its missile and nuclear capabilities and continue to exercise control over the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran appears convinced that the war has strengthened its hand and that time is on its side. Mr. Trump has made a series of miscalculations. In the first week of the war, he said he would accept nothing short of Iran's "unconditional surrender". But as the conflict dragged on, he started demanding a deal. Both sides agreed to a ceasefire on April 8, but the U.S., which imposed a blockade on Iranian ports on April 12, failed to exact any meaningful concession from Iran. Contrary to his rhetoric, he holds few strong cards in this war of attrition. If the crisis persists, it will inflict lasting damage on the U.S. and the global economy, potentially endangering Mr. Trump's presidency. If he resumes the war, Tehran will retaliate by targeting Gulf kingdoms, which would be catastrophic for the global economy. America is not winning this war. No amount of social media threats or military posturing is going to alter that reality. Washington should recognise this and pursue a deal with Iran based on accommodating mutual demands and reciprocal concessions if it wants to avoid pushing the world economy towards the precipice.

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### THE HINDU PAGE : 8

# Openness, not isolation, is the bedrock of the West

Recent statements from Washington show how global politics is being increasingly framed along civilisational terms. The U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has referred to the idea of a shared “Western civilisation,” describing the U.S. and Europe as bound by common history, cultural heritage, and institutional traditions. At the same time, U.S. President Donald Trump has amplified comments about countries such as India, China, and Iran in the context of migration and geopolitical competition that reinforce a tendency to interpret global politics in civilisational terms. Taken together, these statements point to a broader shift: global affairs are being interpreted not only through the language of power and interest, but also through civilisational identities.

The appeal of such framing is understandable. It offers a sense of clarity in an era of rapid technological disruption, demographic change, and geopolitical uncertainty. But apparent clarity is not the same as analytical accuracy. Moreover, it is not an entirely new framing either. As early as the 1990s, political scientist Samuel Huntington had argued that global politics would evolve into a “clash of civilisations,” where cultural and religious identities would become the principal fault lines of international relations.

Civilisational explanations can obscure more than they reveal, particularly when they imply that cultural cohesion, rather than institutional adaptability, is the primary source of national strength. A historical record of the modern West suggests otherwise.

#### A look at history

Much of the West’s post-Cold War dynamism has rested not on homogeneity, but on openness – to talent, ideas, capital, and global competitive pressures. Its advantage has been institutional:



**Milinda Moragoda**

Former Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister, diplomat and the Founder of the Pathfinder Foundation, a strategic affairs think tank

The West’s advantage lies not only in military alliances or economic scale, but in institutional resilience and its capacity to attract, integrate, and retain talent

the capacity to absorb diversity and convert it into innovation within rules-based systems.

Nowhere is this more evident than in today’s innovation economy. AI, in particular, has become the defining frontier of global competition, shaped by deeply international talent flows and research ecosystems. Companies such as Microsoft, OpenAI, and NVIDIA exemplify systems in which breakthroughs depend on globally sourced expertise, cross-border collaboration, and the ability to attract the most capable minds regardless of origin.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored this complementary reality: innovation now operates through globally distributed production systems. Rapid vaccine development and distribution, by firms such as Moderna and AstraZeneca, depended on international research networks and global manufacturing ecosystems. In the case of AstraZeneca, large-scale production through partnerships such as that with the Serum Institute of India illustrated how innovation and industrial capacity now operate across borders.

This is not an argument against immigration control. Immigration must be governed effectively, and civic norms must be upheld. But managing diversity is fundamentally different from retreating from it.

In an era of intensifying geopolitical competition, openness remains a critical strategic asset. The West’s advantage lies not only in military alliances or economic scale, but in institutional resilience and its capacity to attract, integrate, and retain talent. Civilisational framing, by contrast, risks misdiagnosing this advantage – privileging identity over capability and boundaries over performance. Demographic realities reinforce this point. Many advanced economies face ageing populations. In this context, immigration is not simply a cultural or political issue, but an economic necessity.

Without sustained inflows of skilled labour and human capital, growth slows, fiscal pressures increase, and innovation ecosystems weaken.

#### Openness as an advantage

The defining challenges of the 21st century – including AI governance and climate change – further highlight the limits of civilisational thinking. These are problems that cannot be addressed within cultural silos. Against this backdrop, framing global politics in terms of civilisational hierarchy carries risks. It encourages a narrowing of identity at precisely the moment when cooperation and adaptability are essential.

The question, therefore, is not whether identity matters. It clearly does. Societies require shared norms, institutional trust, and continuity. The more important question is whether democracies can manage change without losing confidence in the openness that has sustained their development. The strength of the West has historically rested on its ability to combine stability with adaptation – to absorb new influences while preserving core principles such as the rule of law, individual liberty, and accountable governance.

Therefore, the policy challenge ahead is not to retreat into notions of cultural purity, but to govern openness with clarity and purpose. This requires strengthening integration frameworks and reinforcing institutional trust. It also requires recognising that engagement with other civilisational spaces is not a concession, but a necessity in a globally interconnected world.

In a world of intensifying geopolitical rivalry, it may be tempting to define strength in narrower terms. But doing so risks undermining one of the West’s most important strategic assets. Openness – disciplined, governed, and anchored in strong institutions – is not a vulnerability. It is a source of sustained advantage.

# GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 15

• OPERATION SINDOOR

### Some diplomatic wins, and some hard lessons



SHUBHAJIT ROY

IT HAS been a year since a clash between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan alarmed the world. In the months since, while India has laid down a 'new normal' for Pakistan, it has also learnt some hard foreign policy lessons.

The punitive strikes that began on May 7 and ended on May 10 were followed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on May 12, where he said that after the surgical strike of 2016 and the air strike of 2019, now, "Operation Sindoor is India's policy against terrorism".

The three pillars of the 'new normal' have been spelt out — guaranteed response to future terrorist attacks; no differentiation between state or non-state actors behind terrorist attacks; and nuclear blackmail not to be treated as a hurdle in targeting terrorist infrastructure.

#### Outreach for perception

Immediately after Operation Sindoor, in a bid to shape public opinion in India's favour, seven all-party delegations travelled to a total of 33 countries to convey India's "strong national consensus and resolute approach to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". They met interlocutors in the executive and legislative branches, the media, in think-tanks and with the Indian community in these countries.

The diplomatic effort saw some success. The terrorist group The Resistance Front (TRF), responsible for the Pahalgalam terror attack, has been mentioned in the latest report of the Monitoring Team of the UN Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee, published on July 29, 2025. And, on July 18, 2025, the TRF was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the US.

#### Trump troubles

However, there has also been a view in some sections that India could have received more support internationally after Operation Sindoor. Almost the entire inter-



Pakistan Field Marshal Asim Munir, with PM Shehbaz Sharif, shows Rare Earths to US President Donald Trump in 2025.

national community had condemned the April 22 Pulwama terror attack and expressed solidarity with India.

But after the government started the military strikes under Operation Sindoor, the international community did not come out in whole-hearted support of Indian actions, with Pakistan portraying itself as a victim of Indian "aggression".

Most European countries and the US counselled restraint. US President Donald Trump said, "They've gone for tit-for-tat, so hopefully they can stop now".

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that the UK is engaging "urgently with both countries, as well as other international partners, encouraging dialogue, de-escalation and the protection of civilians".

More so, Trump announced a "full and immediate ceasefire" before Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced the "pause" in Operation Sindoor. Trump also said he would like to work with India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute — anathema to the Indian establishment that has always maintained that this is a bilateral issue.

Later, he claimed he had made India and Pakistan agree to a "ceasefire" by threatening to suspend trade with both of them. New

#### Trump outreach

Pakistan played the Trump administration, knowing that most western countries take their cue from Washington.

India, in contrast, neither lined up to sign business deals with Trump nor nominated him for the peace Nobel.

Pakistan's messaging was made at a higher level than India's, with its PM leading the charge. Its wooing of Trump brought it more benefits

Pakistan also played the US administration under Trump, knowing well that most Western countries take their cue from Washington. PM Shehbaz Sharif and Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir immediately thanked Trump for brokering the ceasefire and engaged with him continuously. They appealed to all of Trump's interests, from signing a crypto deal with US companies with ties to Trump's family to offering a critical minerals deal in Pakistan, to recommending the US President for the Nobel peace prize.

India, in contrast, neither lined up to sign business deals with Trump nor nominated him for the peace Nobel.

The needie thus shifted in Pakistan's favour, and as of now, the White House has hosted Munir several times. India was punished with a 50% tariff, which was later withdrawn after a trade deal took shape. Today, Pakistan enjoys a rare moment of diplomatic sunshine as a key mediator in the Iran war, and India has learnt some lessons.

#### Hard realisations

Broadly, there are some hard realisations from Delhi's perspective.

First, India needed to be better in its strategic communication and in amplifying its voice — from the profile of the spokespersons to the perceived "transparency" needed to be more credible in front of the international community.

Second, Pakistan has not been isolated diplomatically since Trump has been unusually generous towards its leadership, including the military leadership. New Delhi did not anticipate this development. In this context, Field Marshal Munir has played his hand well in wooing the American President and the US establishment.

Third, India's major concern remains that if another terrorist attack takes place now, Delhi will be in a diplomatic tight spot. Since it has claimed that Operation Sindoor has only been "paused" and has declared the "new normal", it will be bound to respond through kinetic action. But given the external environment, if that happens, the international community and the US under Trump may not be favourable towards India.

With these factors in mind, the Indian establishment has to build its relationships with the US and the world, and communicate more effectively in the future.

Delhi rejected these claims, and PM Modi spelt out the Indian position in a tense phone call with Trump in June last year.

#### Disinformation war

Islamabad framed Operation Sindoor as India targeting civilians, including women and children, without having any proof of Pakistan's involvement in the Pahalgalam attack. This argument seems to have found some takers among Western countries. Also, Pakistan started claiming it had downed Indian aircraft early on, and there was a perception internationally that India was not being fully transparent about its operations and losses.

Crucially, Pakistan's messaging was made at a higher level than India's — the Pakistan PM, Deputy PM, Foreign minister and the Army spokesperson all routinely spoke up to counter India's statements and claim their own exaggerated victories.

On the Indian side, Foreign Secretary Misri was the senior-most official to brief the media, apart from military personnel. While Delhi produced some visual proof of its successes, Western countries were flooded with misinformation and disinformation from the Pakistani side.

# GS 3: ENVIRONMENT

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 15

• CLIMATE

### In potential collapse of a key ocean current, consequences for world and India



**EXPERT EXPLAINS**  
**ZERIN OSHO**

INDIA PROGRAM DIRECTOR AT INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**SCIENTISTS ARE increasingly alarmed** about the stability of a vast system of ocean currents in the Atlantic, after new research suggested it could weaken far more severely than previously thought.

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), which regulates climate across much of the globe, may slow by up to 59% by 2100, with potentially devastating consequences for weather systems as far away as the Indian subcontinent. The findings have particular significance for India, where hundreds of millions of people depend on the summer monsoon for their

agricultural livelihoods and water supplies.

**Global conveyor belts**

Think of the Earth's oceans as having a massive, invisible conveyor belt. In the Atlantic Ocean, this system is scientifically known as the AMOC.

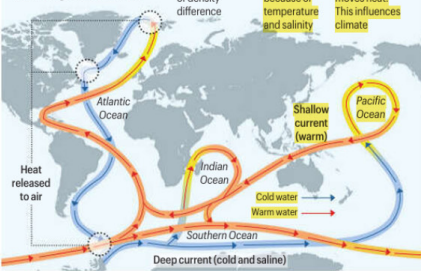
Warm, salty surface water from the tropics flows north towards Greenland. As it reaches the freezing Arctic, the water cools, becomes denser, and sinks several kilometres into the deep ocean. It then drifts back south as a cold deep-water current before eventually rising to the surface to warm up and restart the loop.

This slow machinery moves vast amounts of heat across the globe. To put its pace in perspective, a single cubic metre of water takes about 1,000 years to complete the journey. It is the reason Europe has a mild climate, and it heavily influences rainfall in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

**Tipping point**

The conveyor belt relies on a delicate balance of ocean temperature and salt levels. However, human-induced climate change is melting Arctic ice at an alarming

**• How ocean currents warm up, cool down**



rate, dumping massive amounts of fresh water into the North Atlantic. Because fresh water is lighter and less salty, it does

not sink easily. This is acting like a brake on the entire AMOC system. While past studies estimated a 15% slow-

down over the last 50 years, new research using real-time measurements projects a much sharper decline, potentially weakening the currents by up to 59% by 2100.

This matters because the AMOC is a "climate tipping point". Just like a chair tilted past its balancing point, once the AMOC crosses a certain threshold, it could irreversibly collapse into a new, sluggish state. Scientists debate the exact timeline, though some warn it could happen as early as this century. If it does, the consequences would be catastrophic, triggering extreme sea-level rise in North America and severe weather disruptions globally.

**El Niño connection**

Though the AMOC is in the Atlantic, its breakdown would trigger chaos in the Pacific. El Niño is a periodic warming of the Pacific Ocean that disrupts global weather. Because global ocean currents and wind patterns are deeply interconnected, a sluggish AMOC traps heat in the southern hemisphere and leaves the North Pacific cooling.

This throws off the delicate temperature balance that drives El Niño. Studies suggest a weaker AMOC will make El Niño

events more unpredictable and extreme. For context, recent powerful El Niños (like those in 2015-16 and 2023-24) caused massive worldwide disruptions, triggering droughts in the Americas and suppressing rainfall over South Asia.

**Effect on India**

For India, an AMOC collapse is more than a distant oceanic event, as it is a direct threat to food security. The Indian summer monsoon, which is the backbone of the country's agriculture and economy, relies on specific global heat distributions. When the Atlantic conveyor slows down, less heat travels north. This shift pulls the planet's tropical rain belt southward, away from the Indian subcontinent.

Research indicates this would severely weaken the wind systems that carry moisture from the Arabian Sea into India. The result would be shorter wet seasons, longer dry spells, and an overall drying trend. Furthermore, an unpredictable El Niño, worsened by the AMOC's decline, would compound these climate risks, trapping Indian farmers between extreme droughts and erratic, destructive floods.

## GS 3: ECONOMY ( ENERGY )

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 17

# Why India's widening night-time power gap concerns grid managers

Pratyush Deep & Anil Sasi  
New Delhi, May 7

AS INDIA enters peak summer, the growing divergence between daytime solar generation and night-time shortages is becoming a key challenge for the power system.

Since temperatures surged sharply mid-April, daily peak power demand was recorded during daytime on at least 10 of the 15 days, as per the Grid Controller of India (Grid India).

However, night-time shortages were reported on 13 of those 15 days, highlighting the strain after sunset. In April, it climbed as high as 5.4 gigawatts (GW), enough to serve 2.7 million rural homes, underscoring the strain after sunset.

One stabilising factor has been that a big share of air-conditioning load is met during the daytime, aligning with peak solar power generation, people aware of the matter told *The Indian Express*. However, they point out that other sources of load like EV charging and electric cooking rise post sunset, after the solar load has crashed.

Outages at thermal power plants, which anchor India's night-time electricity supply, also worsened the shortfall. On April 24, as the night-time deficit hit 5.4 GW, about 23.8 GW of coal- and nuclear-based capacity was under forced outage, data from the Central Electricity Authority showed.

Forced outages refer to unplanned disruptions due to technical faults, equipment failures, or fuel constraints.

Experts maintained that this underscores the need to expand

### ● HEAT, GRID STRAIN

● A warmer-than-usual April had pushed electricity demand to unprecedented levels, touching a record high of 256 GW

● Sustained heat means round-the-clock demand for power to run appliances. The strain on the electricity grid could intensify in May, a month seen as the peak of pre-monsoon summer

firm baseload generation alongside large-scale energy storage systems as renewable energy capacity rises rapidly. Yet additions to baseload capacity have lagged far behind the pace of renewable energy deployment. Around 43 GW of renewable energy capacity was added between April 2025 and January 2026 compared with just 16.5 GW thermal capacity additions between April 2023 and November 2025.

Battery storage deployment also remains nascent, with installed battery energy storage capacity at a mere 0.27 GW. The nuclear power fleet remains limited at 8.8 gigawatt electrical (GWe), unlikely to see major expansion over the next five to six years, limiting options for firm low-carbon baseload supply.

### Sustained heat condition

A warmer-than-usual April pushed up electricity demand to unprecedented levels, touching a record high of 256 GW.

Earlier this week, digital air-quality monitoring platform AQI said in a report that April this year is not a "normal" April.

It was found that each of the 50 hottest cities in the world were in India. The rankings are based on sustained temperatures through 24 hours of the day on April 27. A city can report a scorching afternoon maximum, but could rank lower if it cools off in the night, it said, explaining the methodology. "Across all 50 cities, the average peak temperature on April 27 was 44.7°C. The coolest maximum on the entire list — Solapur at 41.9°C — would be considered a public health emergency anywhere in Europe," the report read.

This sustained heat means round-the-clock demand for power to run appliances like air conditioners. While the rapid addition of renewable energy capacity over the past few years have helped meet the daytime demand, grid stress is becoming more pronounced at night, posing challenges for operators.

### Strain on grid stability

This strain could intensify with May still ahead — a month considered as the peak of pre-monsoon summer before the rain arrives in June. Western states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, along with the east coast states and parts of the Himalayan foothills, are likely to see more days of unusually high temperatures in the coming weeks, the weather forecaster said in its May forecast. Alekhya Datta, Fellow and Director, Electricity and Renewables division at TERI, said anticipated evening supply shortfall during peak summer underscores structural challenges in balancing high-renewable penetration with limited dispatchable capacity.

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