



Sanskriti IAS



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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

22nd April 2026

TOPICS:-

- 1. India must draw a red line on U.S. unilateral sanctions**
(GS Paper III Economy)
- 2. Lustre or bluster?**
(GS Paper III Economy)
- 3. Lunar governance should be multilateral**
(GS Paper III Science and Technology)

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1. INDIA MUST DRAW A RED LINE ON U.S. UNILATERAL SANCTIONS

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial '**India must draw a red line on U.S. unilateral sanctions**' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Apr 2026, highlights India's need to resist **U.S. sanctions** that undermine its **strategic autonomy** and economic interests.

Economic costs of compliance

- The **U.S.-Israel** war, Gulf targeting and the **Strait of Hormuz** disruption have already raised India's energy, shipping and insurance costs, disrupted supply chains, cut exports, lifted inflation and weakened growth projections.
- The editorial notes a 7% fall in March **exports** and a weaker **rupee**, adding that India slipped from a projected fourth to sixth place among the largest economies in International Monetary Fund rankings.
- India has felt these shocks more acutely because, despite being a large economy, it continues to align with **U.S. sanctions** even when they directly hurt **domestic interests**.

India's pattern of sanction alignment

- Since May 2019, India has stopped buying **Iranian oil** and Venezuelan oil under **U.S. pressure**, showing continued compliance with unilateral sanctions outside a UN mandate.
- During **2012-14**, India reduced **Iranian imports** from about 18.5 million tonnes to 11 million tonnes, yet it did not fully halt purchases even under earlier American pressure linked to JCPOA negotiations.
- After the 2015 **JCPOA**, India resumed oil imports and advanced the **Chabahar** port and connectivity project with Iran and Afghanistan to reach Central Asia.
- In late 2025 and early 2026, **Trump** pushed India to cut **Russian oil** imports through tariff-linked pressure, and India reduced intake from about two million barrels per day to one million barrels per day.

After sanctions on Nicolás Maduro in January 2026, India's intake of Venezuelan oil also rose uncertainly, while the U.S. waiver on Chabahar was nearing expiry and fresh threats were issued against trade with Iran.

Why yielding worsens coercion

- The editorial argues that repeated **waivers**, extensions and exemptions have undermined India's effort to diversify **energy, food and fertilizer** sourcing and may now impose even heavier economic costs.
- Citing **Urjit Patel** and his book **Great State Hack**, it describes sanctions as capricious “whack-a-mole” tools whose very acceptance expands the sanctioning power's future demands.
- Patel's research is used to show the scale of **U.S. sanctions**, with 365 imposed this century, compared with about 133 by the European Union and only 12 counter-sanctions by China, Russia and Iran combined.
- According to **OFAC**, the U.S. currently sanctions at least 23 countries and has over a dozen issue-based regimes, while the **UN Security Council** has only about 15 active sanction regimes in total.
- The editorial's central inference is that Indian **compliance** since 2019 has not moderated **U.S. appetite**, but instead encouraged fresh coercive demands.

Costs of not pursuing alternatives

- The piece argues that when India ignored **CAATSA** and bought **S-400** systems in 2018, it faced no penalties and later benefited from that decision during Operation Sindoor in May 2025.
- Had India continued buying discounted **Iranian crude** and **Venezuelan oil** during 2019-25, as it did with Russian oil in 2022-25, it could have saved billions and built larger strategic reserves.
- Had India not curtailed the **Chabahar** project and related rail-road plans in Iran, or its **INSTC** ambitions through Bandar Abbas, it may have reduced present dependence on Strait of Hormuz flows.
- The editorial also argues that India's compliance with non-UN **international sanctions** has weakened the **rules-based order** and the legitimacy of multi-lateral mandates themselves.

Historical lesson and policy direction

- The editorial recalls the 1966 **PL-480** amendments and the “**ship to mouth**” phase, when U.S. grain supplies to famine-hit India were tightly controlled through monthly approvals after Indira Gandhi's Moscow visit.

- That episode, followed by pressure for **rupee devaluation**, is presented as a humiliation that pushed India toward the **Green Revolution** and agricultural self-sufficiency.
- The piece argues that India now similarly needs a new **Green Revolution** in **energy independence**, beginning with an explicit refusal to abide by unilateral U.S. sanctions.
- Such a move, it says, would not only help Indian private actors seek alternatives but also encourage neighbours and the **Global South** to resist other **coercive measures** by major powers.
- The editorial lists possible pathways such as **rupee-rial** trade, national payment systems, **BRICS** settlement arrangements, insulated banking channels and a faster expansion of renewable and alternative energy.

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Need for strategic economic statecraft

- **Energy diversification:** India must reduce overdependence on vulnerable suppliers and chokepoints by combining crude sourcing diversity, as with **Russian oil**, strategic reserves, and faster renewable expansion.
- **Payment sovereignty:** Building alternative settlement systems through local-currency trade, as seen in **rupee-ruble** efforts, can reduce exposure to unilateral sanctions and dollar-based financial pressure.
- **Connectivity leverage:** Projects such as **Chabahar** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor** gain strategic value when treated not only as trade routes but as tools of geopolitical flexibility.
- **Trade-risk management:** India needs stronger capacity to assess sanctions exposure across sectors like **fertilizers**, shipping, insurance, and exports before crises like the **Red Sea** disruption raise domestic risks.
- **Coalition building:** Strategic economic statecraft also requires working with **BRICS**, the **Global South**, and forums like the **SCO** to widen policy space against coercive trade measures.
- **Autonomy with pragmatism:** The aim is not confrontation for its own sake, but preserving sovereign economic choices, as seen in India's **S-400** purchase despite **CAATSA** pressure.

2. LUSTRE OR BLUSTER?

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial ‘Lustre or bluster?’ was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Apr 2026, highlights India’s **economic slowdown** under external shocks and the growing fragility of its **growth narrative**.

Immediate signs of slowdown

- March **core industries** output contracted by **0.4%**, the worst reading in 19 months, reflecting the first clear economic hit from the West Asia crisis.
- The **Manufacturing PMI** also slowed, with fewer **fresh orders**, showing that weakness is spreading beyond one-off supply disruptions into industrial sentiment.
- Of the eight sectors, four **contracted** and two sharply **slowed**, showing broad-based stress rather than an isolated sectoral decline.
- The sharpest blow came from **fertilizer** output, which fell 24.6% in March 2026 despite 6.4% growth in domestic **natural gas** production.

Why the shock could deepen

- A weak **fertilizer** outlook is especially serious because an **El Niño**-affected below-normal monsoon could worsen farm output and rural demand.
- Slowdowns in **steel** and **cement** suggest construction is losing momentum as firms pause fresh investment amid uncertainty.
- Weakness in **coal** and **electricity**, along with crude oil and petroleum products, dragged the overall index to its weakest full-year growth since the **COVID-19** disruption.
- Though the present drag is largely **external**, the editorial warns that persistent shocks could turn India’s recent **tailwinds** into durable headwinds.

Limits of the India story

- The government’s first term benefited from low **inflation** and high **foreign investment**, which softened the political and economic effects of policy missteps like demonetisation.
- The **pandemic** and the global shift away from **China** also temporarily helped India’s foreign investment prospects, while low oil prices initially kept inflation contained.

- But investor unease over India's trade frictions with **Trump** had already begun cooling the **India story** even before the Iran war.
- With **inflation** rising again and **real incomes** stagnant, the government will find it much harder to restore India's image as an economic bright spot.

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Structural reforms for durable economic resilience

- **Demand strengthening:** External shocks hurt more when domestic consumption is weak, so durable resilience requires stronger rural demand through support such as **MGNREGA**, income transfers, and employment-intensive growth.
- **Industrial depth:** India's manufacturing story remains vulnerable if core sectors slow sharply, making it necessary to deepen domestic value chains through schemes like **PLI** rather than rely on headline production trends alone.
- **Agricultural cushioning:** Weather-linked risks such as poor monsoons become more damaging when fertilizer, irrigation, and farm input systems are already under stress, as seen during **El Niño** years.
- **Investment confidence:** Private investment revives sustainably only when policy predictability, macroeconomic stability, and easier business conditions reduce uncertainty during periods of global turbulence, as seen after the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**.
- **Import dependence reduction:** Long-term resilience needs lower dependence on imported energy, fertilizers, components, and critical intermediates, as seen in India's reliance on **crude oil** and electronic inputs.
- **Shock absorption capacity:** A truly strong economy is defined not only by high growth periods, but by its ability to absorb disruptions without sharp declines in output, jobs, and confidence, as during **COVID-19**.

3. LUNAR GOVERNANCE SHOULD BE MULTI-LATERAL

(GS Paper III Science and Technology)

This editorial '**Lunar governance should be multilateral**' was published in **The Hindu** on 22nd Apr 2026, highlights the risk of **U.S.-led lunar rule-making** displacing a genuinely **multilateral** framework.

U.S. credibility deficit

- The editorial contrasts the universal imagery of **Artemis II** with recent **U.S. conduct** in Gaza, trade and migration, arguing that a state accused of disregarding human rights and international law cannot credibly shape rules for a domain meant for all humankind.
- It cites findings by the **International Commission of Jurists** and the **Red Cross**, recalls the dismantling of the Pentagon's **Civilian Protection Center of Excellence**, and notes that even after a 2025 **UN commission** and **ICC** warrants, Washington continued backing Israel.
- The Trump administration's tariff use under the **International Emergency Economic Powers Act**, said to violate **GATT**, and deportations of Venezuelan migrants despite a **U.S. Supreme Court** ruling are presented as further evidence of self-interest overriding legal norms.

Artemis Accords and resource capture risks

- The editorial argues that the **Artemis Accords** sidestep **UN multilateralism** by privileging bilateral agreements while only formally acknowledging the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
- It links the Accords to the 2015 **U.S. law on space resources**, citing Christopher Newman's view that they push other states to accept the American interpretation of extraction rights.
- This matters because the **lunar south pole** contains scarce **water ice** usable for rocket fuel, making a few locations strategically and commercially critical.
- The proposed **safety zones** could, in practice, become **exclusion zones**, enabling early movers to consolidate control over resource-rich areas without formally breaching the Outer Space Treaty.

Why multilateral rules are necessary

- The editorial concedes the **U.S. framework** is more transparent than **China's** and includes useful principles, but says the real question is whether either power should set rules unilaterally in a commons domain.
- By letting a subset of states normalise practices first, the **Accords** risk turning **precedent** into governance before wider global consensus emerges.
- It therefore calls for **treaty-level** regulation of **lunar resources** that gives all nations a stake and specifically urges engagement with the **1979 Moon Agreement**, despite concerns that it may deter private investment.

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Outer space as a global commons

- **Common heritage principle:** The moon should be treated as part of humanity's shared domain, as recognised in the **Moon Agreement**, where access and benefits cannot depend only on first-mover power.
- **Equitable access:** If a few countries secure scarce lunar locations early, late entrants may face exclusion from future opportunities, much like concerns around the **lunar south pole** today.
- **Norm-setting fairness:** Rules framed by limited coalitions, as with the **Artemis Accords**, can privilege major space powers while others remain bound by norms they did not shape.
- **Resource justice:** Questions around lunar water ice and mineral extraction are not merely technical, because they concern who can use finite resources such as **polar ice deposits** and on what terms.
- **Multilateral legitimacy:** Governance of shared frontiers is more stable when rules emerge through universal negotiation, as seen in frameworks like the **Outer Space Treaty** and the **Law of the Sea**.
- **Future precedent:** The principles adopted for the moon will influence other emerging domains, much as debates in **Antarctica** and the **deep seabed** shaped wider commons governance.