

EDITORIALS – 24TH JUL 2026

1. WARNING SIGNALS FOR INDIA FROM NATO'S ANKARA SUMMIT

(GS Paper III Economy)

This editorial 'Warning signals for India from NATO's Ankara summit' was published in The Hindu on 24th Jul 2026, highlights how NATO's rearmament may strain global arms supplies and reinforce India's need for defence self-reliance.

Ankara Commitments and NATO's Strategic Transformation

- The Ankara Summit brought 32 NATO members together to review Hague commitments and establish an implementation roadmap.
- Allies reaffirmed Article 5, endorsed 5% of GDP defence spending by 2035, backed Ukraine and prioritised Europe's defence-industrial base.
- NATO shifted from political commitments towards military capability through sustained investment, industrial capacity and technological innovation.
- Russia views NATO expansion as encirclement, but its Ukraine invasion pushed Finland and Sweden from non-alignment into NATO.
- NATO evolved from Balkan operations and the Global War on Terror towards countering emerging Russia-China alignment.

European Defence-Industrial Constraints

- Europe prioritised its defence-industrial base, while MBDA and Rheinmetall warned that ammunition production remained inadequate even before higher spending commitments.
- The Ukraine war exposed critical shortages in air defence, precision munitions and artillery rockets; licensed Patriot production offers only partial relief.
- Operation Epic Fury consumed over 850 Tomahawk missiles against Iran; replacing them at 85 annually would require a decade.
- Uncoordinated national industries create strategic mismatches, while simultaneous Asian and European demands intensify pressure on U.S. supplies.
- Europe sourced half its 2022–24 defence spending from the United States, while Foreign Military Sales notifications quadrupled since 2008 to \$76 billion in 2024.

Implications for India

- Rising European demand is shifting international arms trade from a buyers' market towards a sellers' market, disadvantaging major importers such as India.
- GE Aerospace's delayed F-404 engine deliveries for the Tejas programme demonstrate India's vulnerability to overstretched foreign suppliers.

- India's growing reliance on new-age technologies, including drones, AI, cyber and electronic warfare, makes defence self-reliance strategically critical.

Beyond Editorial

Economic Consequences of Global Rearmament

- Fiscal pressure: NATO's 5% GDP commitment may expand public debt or divert expenditure from healthcare, education and climate adaptation.
- Procurement pressure: European arms imports increased 155% between 2015–19 and 2020–24, intensifying global competition for limited production capacity.
- Supply-chain stress: China provides the EU's entire heavy rare-earth supply, illustrating defence manufacturing's vulnerability to concentrated critical-mineral sources.
- External vulnerability: India remained the world's second-largest arms importer during 2021–25, exposing procurement costs to currency fluctuations and foreign delivery delays.
- Export opportunity: India's defence exports reached ₹38,424 crore in 2025–26, showing how global demand can support domestic production and market diversification.
- Innovation gains: By March 2026, iDEX had engaged 676 start-ups and innovators and signed 551 defence-technology development contracts.
- Development trade-off: Global military expenditure reached \$2.718 trillion in 2024, potentially reducing resources available for sustainable development and climate action.

2. DO THE PROTESTS AT JANTAR MANTAR FRAME WIDER YOUTH DISCONTENTS? ARE THEY BEING HIJACKED?

(GS Paper II Polity and Governance)

This editorial 'Do the protests at Jantar Mantar frame wider youth discontents? Are they being hijacked?' was published in The Indian Express on 24th Jul 2026, highlights competing interpretations of youth protests as expressions of systemic discontent or instruments of political appropriation.

Sources of Youth Discontent

- Examination leaks destroy years of preparation, family savings and aspirations, making fairness, transparency and institutional accountability legitimate student demands.

- ILO estimates placed youth unemployment at 17.2% in 2025, while unemployment among women with advanced education reached 21% in 2024.
- Repeated centralised examinations lack broad educational consultation, while weak learning quality and limited education-employment linkages deepen youth frustration.
- Following the compromised paper, authorities cancelled the examination, conducted a fresh NEET-UG, initiated a CBI investigation and proposed fast-track courts for leak-related offences.

Political Appropriation and State Response

- One perspective recognises legitimate grievances but warns that escalating demands for ministerial resignations and regime change enable political appropriation of student anger.
- Rahul Gandhi's protest outside the Prime Minister's residence, despite an offer of parliamentary discussion, was presented as prioritising political spectacle over dialogue.
- The opposing perspective cites prolonged government stonewalling and an inconclusive meeting with J.P. Nadda as evidence of inadequate institutional engagement.
- Alleged use of shock batons, tear gas and pellet guns during the July 20 protest raised serious concerns about disproportionate police force against students.
- Instead of investigating alleged excesses, accusations of Opposition fronts and Pakistani involvement were used to question the protesters' political legitimacy.

Democratic Balance and Institutional Reform

- Recurring police excesses, including against farmers in 2024 and anti-CAA protesters in 2019, underline the neglect of reform commission recommendations issued between 1978 and 2006.
- Democratic dissent requires protection from repression and political exploitation, while substantive disputes should ultimately be addressed through constitutional institutions.
- The proposed response combines bipartisan consultation, educational and employment reforms, continuous governmental scrutiny and police autonomy from political direction.

Beyond Editorial

Constitutional Framework for Peaceful Protest

- Fundamental protection: Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(b) protect freedom of expression and peaceful assembly without arms.

- Reasonable restrictions: Articles 19(2) and 19(3) permit proportionate restrictions concerning sovereignty, national integrity and public order.
- Regulatory authority: In *Himat Lal K. Shah* (1973), the Supreme Court permitted regulation of protest venues but rejected arbitrary exclusion from public spaces.
- Balancing principle: In *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan* (2018), the Court balanced peaceful protest against residents' rights, traffic and environmental concerns.
- Public-way limits: In *Amit Sahni* (2020), the Supreme Court held that public roads cannot be occupied indefinitely for demonstrations.
- Police accountability: In the *Ramlila Maidan Incident* (2012), the Court condemned excessive police action against sleeping protesters and emphasised state restraint.
- Procedural safeguards: Section 163 of the BNSS permits urgent preventive orders, but their use remains subject to legality, necessity and judicial review.

3. US–SAUDI DEAL & A NEW NUCLEAR MODEL FOR WEST ASIA (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'US–Saudi deal & a new nuclear model for West Asia' was published in The Indian Express on 24th Jul 2026, highlights how the U.S.–Saudi civil nuclear pact combines monitored enrichment, commercial interests and shifting regional security calculations.

Agreement and Safeguards Framework

- On July 22, both countries signed a peaceful 123 Agreement and accompanying bilateral safeguards agreement for civil nuclear cooperation.
- The pact establishes a multi-billion-dollar partnership supporting nuclear safety, regional security and strong non-proliferation standards.
- It does not directly enable Saudi nuclear weapons, but reportedly creates a U.S.–controlled enrichment model for Arab states and potentially Iran.

Saudi Nuclear Ambitions and Strategic Context

- Despite MbS's conditional weapons warning, Saudi Arabia launched its National Project for Atomic Energy in 2017 and remains under limited IAEA safeguards.
- Saudi Arabia has been an NPT signatory since 1988 but has pursued large and small reactors alongside wider security partnerships.
- Its September 2025 defence agreement with Pakistan preceded the November 2025 declaration completing negotiations on U.S.–Saudi civil nuclear cooperation.
- Strengthening China–Saudi relations and Beijing's 2023 mediation of the Saudi–Iran rapprochement may have accelerated Washington's agreement.

Regional and Commercial Implications

- The continuing U.S.–Iran conflict and confrontation over the Strait of Hormuz leave negotiations on Iran’s nuclear programme unresolved.
- The model advances American nuclear exports, employment and energy security while addressing concerns of both non-proliferation advocates and security hawks.
- After Congressional approval, the model could be offered to Iran, although Tehran treats domestic enrichment as a non-negotiable sovereign right.
- The agreement suggests that a wider U.S. security umbrella supporting an Israel–Arab alignment against Iran is no longer the preferred regional framework.

Beyond Editorial

India’s Stakes in West Asia’s Nuclear Transition

- Energy exposure: India is among the leading destinations for LNG passing through Hormuz, making regional stability crucial for domestic energy prices.
- Maritime vulnerability: Hormuz carried about 20 million barrels of oil daily in 2024, so disruption could raise freight, insurance and import costs.
- Diaspora protection: Saudi Arabia and the UAE hosted nearly 7.1 million overseas Indians in January 2026, requiring credible evacuation and consular plans.
- Strategic autonomy: India’s participation in I2U2 alongside continued engagement with Iran illustrates its effort to avoid rigid regional alignments.
- Connectivity interests: The Saudi-linked IMEC and India’s ten-year Chabahar contract with Iran require stable relations across competing regional blocs.
- Safeguards credibility: Saudi Arabia’s rescission of its Small Quantities Protocol strengthened IAEA verification, providing a basis for monitored civilian nuclear expansion.
- Pakistan factor: Saudi–Pakistan defence ties require monitoring because nuclear-armed Pakistan remains outside the NPT, although the Saudi civilian pact does not permit weaponisation.