

**NO MATTER
HOW YOU FEEL.
GET UP, DRESS
UP, SHOW UP
AND NEVER
GIVE UP.**

Important Issues of the Day

- India must draw a red line – Page No.6 , GS 2**
- Model Code of Conduct – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- India's LPG crisis – Page No. 6, GS 3**
- Lunar governance – Page No. 7, GS 3**
- India-Africa Summit – Page No.12 , GS 2**
- Corporate Social Responsibility – Prelims**

Corporate Social Responsibility



- **CSR spending by listed companies rose by 23% in FY25, reaching about ₹22,212 crore, driven by strong profit growth.**

Corporate Social Responsibility refers to:

- **Companies investing in social, environmental, and developmental activities**

Mandated under:

- **Companies Act, 2013 (effective April 2014)**
- **Eligible companies must spend: At least 2% of average net profits (last 3 years)**

Applies to companies with:

- **Net worth \geq ₹500 crore**
- **Turnover \geq ₹1,000 crore**
- **Net profit \geq ₹5 crore**

- **Highest spending: Education**

- **Second: Healthcare**

Low spending:

- **Slum development**
- **Disaster management**
- **Armed forces welfare**

With reference to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) rules in India, consider the following statements:

- 1. CSR rules specify that expenditures that benefit the company directly or its employees will not be considered as CSR activities.**
- 2. CSR rules do not specify minimum spending on CSR activities.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

[A] 1 only [B] 2 only [C] Both 1 and 2 [D] Neither 1 nor 2

India-Africa Summit to focus on development initiatives

The upcoming summit is being held more than a decade after the third IAFS in October 2015; will provide India with an opportunity to take stock of its strategic and diplomatic footprint in Africa

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Development initiatives, education, capacity building, expansion of diplomatic footprint, and defence cooperation are expected to be on the agenda when New Delhi hosts the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) 2026 in May-end, official sources said on Tuesday. Plans for the summit will be presented by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs has announced.

India has been holding consultations with partner countries in Africa as the plans for the IAFS have been under way for some time. In March, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met with Ministers and diplomats of the Africa Group members on the sidelines of the 14th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon where he discussed plans for expanding India's investment agenda in Africa and the upcoming summit in India.

The upcoming summit



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar chairing a consultative committee meeting on India-Africa ties in New Delhi on April 7. ANI

is especially significant as it is being held after more than a decade as the third IAFS was held in October 2015. The fourth IAFS has an additional dimension as it is being organised against the backdrop of supply chain disruption that has gripped the global economy following U.S.-Israel attack on Iran.

Stable supply chain

Analysts are saying that unlike the energy disruption in the Gulf region, Africa does not have a similar supply chain shock potential for India as despite nearly 50 conflicts on the continent, supply chains of

critical items remain stable.

However, India will have to ensure that it matches its commitment to African states with implementation. "As of now, India is able to implement only 40% of what it commits to Africa. This has to improve significantly so that what India commits is fully implemented on the ground in Africa," said Ajay Dubey, Distinguished Fellow at the Chintan Research Foundation (CRF).

Mr. Dubey pointed out that Line of Credit was no longer popular in Africa where countries now expect India to come up with

Foreign Direct Investment. "For that, Indian big business has to step in. But can they avoid the western dominance of African continent while investing in critical areas? That is what we have to see," said Mr. Dubey, arguing that Indian attempts for engaging Africa in "small and medium enterprises" was not attractive to African partners anymore as they were looking for investments from the Global South leaders as well.

The summit will provide India with an opportunity to highlight some of the latest initiatives that the Government of India has undertaken like the opening of the IIT Madras campus in Zanzibar and it will also provide India to take stock of its strategic and diplomatic footprint in the vast continent.

India has already opened 16 new missions in Africa since 2018 which has pushed India's diplomatic presence to 45 countries in the continent and the summit will provide an opportunity to take stock of its diplomatic outreach among the member countries of the African Union.

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- **The India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is a celebration of the close partnership between Africa and India, started in 2008.**
- **It was decided to hold the summits every three years, alternately in India and Africa. New Delhi was the venue in 2008 and Addis Ababa in 2011.**
- **India by consistently holding India- Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in places like New Delhi (2008), Addis Ababa (2011) and New Delhi (2015) has already forged ties with the 54 African states through the African Union (AU).**
- **Political connection during the colonial era was linked through M.K Gandhi who began his political career in South Africa, became the leader of colonized and established Indian Natal Congress in 1894.**
- **After India got independent, it raised voice for African liberation taking their case to all the available international forums. End of racial struggle and decolonization became the rallying point of India–Africa relations.**

Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)

The India-Africa Summit

- 1. held in 2015 was the third such Summit**
- 2. was actually initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2**

Mains Question

“Africa holds the key to India’s aspirations of becoming a global power.”
Examine this statement in the context of geopolitics, economy, and South-South cooperation.

“अफ्रीका, भारत की वैश्विक शक्ति बनने की आकांक्षाओं की कंजी है।” इस कथन का भ-राजनीति, अर्थव्यवस्था तथा दक्षिण-दक्षिण सहयोग के संदर्भ में परीक्षण कीजिए।

India must draw a red line on U.S. unilateral sanctions

Page No.6 , GS 2

The dust – nuclear and otherwise – has yet to settle on how the United States-Israel war against Iran will ultimately end, but its impact on India's growth projections is evident. Already reeling from U.S. tariffs, the Indian economy has seen damage pile up due to the U.S.-Israel initiation of the war, Iran's targeting of Gulf countries, and now the 'double blockade' of the Strait of Hormuz by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and U.S. forces – manifested in rising energy bills, higher shipping and insurance costs, supply chain disruptions, a slump in exports (down 7% in March), and mounting inflation. The rupee's fall has resulted in India slipping from being projected to fourth spot, to sixth in terms of the largest economies rankings, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Break sanction alignment

India is by no means the only country thus affected, but as the world's most populous nation, it is bound to feel the effects more acutely. Given the little attention that the U.S. has paid to India's economic concerns, it is surprising that the Narendra Modi government continues to pay heed to U.S. unilateral sanctions amid the war. This month, as temporary waivers on many of those sanctions come up for renewal, it is time for New Delhi to unequivocally denounce them and declare that it will no longer abide by them.

A cursory list of U.S. sanctions with which India has partially or fully complied is both illustrative and eye-opening. Since May 2019, India has not purchased any Iranian or Venezuelan oil following U.S. President Donald Trump's demand for 'zeroing out'. India faced similar secondary sanctions from the U.S., during 2012-14, when the Barack Obama administration used them as leverage in Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations (the Iran nuclear deal).

While India reduced its imports of Iranian oil from about 18.5 million tonnes in 2010-2011 to 11 million tonnes in 2013-2014, it never agreed to halt them altogether. In 2015, following the signing of the JCPOA, India stepped up its oil imports again and also signed a strategic connectivity trilateral agreement with Iran and Afghanistan to develop the Chabahar port, along with road and rail links connecting it to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Early in his second term in 2025, Mr. Trump pushed India to end all its imports of Russian oil, adding a 25% penalty on top of existing 25% tariffs to enforce his demand. For three months – from November 2025 to February 2026 – India complied, halving its intake of about two million barrels per day (bpd) to one million bpd. As the U.S. has issued temporary sanctions waivers to deal with oil price hikes during the war with Iran, India has increased its intake of both Russian and Iranian oil, but will have to decide what to do once the waivers end.

Since the U.S. kidnapping of Venezuelan



Suhasini Haidar

President Nicolás Maduro in January 2026 and the subsequent easing of sanctions, India's intake of Venezuelan oil has also increased. Meanwhile, the U.S.'s waiver extension on India's use of Chabahar port is set to expire on April 26. Mr. Trump has also said that he intends to impose sanctions on any country conducting trade with Iran or holding Iranian funds, and will sanction all BRICS members if they seek to establish a non-dollar payment mechanism among themselves.

The result of all these on-again, off-again sanctions, waivers, extensions and exemptions is to defeat India's best efforts to diversify and broad-base its energy, food and fertilizer sourcing. India's decision not to protest the US's decision to go to war with Iran in the first place is presumably out of concern that the U.S. may come down even more heavily on the Indian economy.

"The sui generis 'whack-a-mole' nature of these measures only adds to their capriciousness," former Reserve Bank of India Governor Urjit Patel concludes in his book *The Great Sanctions Hack*. According to his research, the U.S. stands out as the world's main sanctioning power, having imposed 365 sanctions in the present century, with the European Union a distant second at about 133. Only 12 counter-sanctions by China, Russia and Iran are active. According to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the U.S. today maintains sanctions on at least 23 countries and has more than a dozen sanction regimes on specific issues (cyber-terror, non-proliferation, and foreign interference). The United Nations Security Council, in comparison, has only about 15 active sanction regimes in all.

Compliance increases coercion

It is therefore necessary to analyse India's experience with U.S. sanctions over the past decade and draw conclusions about the pros and cons of yielding to them. There is little evidence that yielding to unilateral U.S. sanctions curbs its appetite, as India's experience since 2019 shows; it instead leads to additional demands for compliance.

Conversely, when India ignored sanctions such as Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) and purchased Russian S-400 air defence systems in 2018, it faced no U.S. penalties and benefitted from the decision, as during Operation Sindoor (May 2025). The "opportunity costs" of complying must also be calculated – had India continued to buy discounted sweeter Iranian crude or Venezuelan oil from 2019-25, as it did with Russian oil (2022-25), the government could have saved billions, and built strategic energy reserves (as China has) that would have been useful today.

Had India not complied with sanctions against the Chabahar port, built rail and road infrastructure in Iran, and not curtailed its plans for the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) through Iran's Bandar Abbas, it

may have had connectivity in place that could have reduced its dependence on imports coming through the Strait of Hormuz today. Moreover, India's compliance with U.S. international sanctions has further weakened the rules-based international order and the UN's multilateral mandate.

Going forward, if the Indian government decides to turn course and announce a national resolve against unilateral sanctions, it will not only spur its own private sector to seek braver options but also inspire countries in the neighbourhood and the Global South to follow suit, pushing back on other coercive measures employed by big powers such as China as well.

The government has a number of avenues to pursue if it decides to do so – from building payment mechanisms such as the rupee-rial trade system with Iran, to developing national payment systems including intra-BRICS settlement arrangements, to using 'air-gapped' banking and financial institutions insulated from western pressure, as well as exponentially expanding renewable and alternative energy sources.

Unfortunately, by withdrawing its bid to host the United Nations Climate Conference of the Parties (COP33) in 2028, New Delhi may have lost an opportunity to lead discussions on such options in the wake of the war, but it must take advantage of other such forums to do so.

History as policy guide

Lessons from history are worth revisiting. In 1966, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson amended the United States' "Food for Peace" (PL-480) law – formally the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 – under which India, then suffering from famine, received millions of tonnes of wheat. Johnson's amendments, called the "short-tether" policy, limited the U.S.'s grain shipments to monthly or bi-monthly approvals, leading to what was called a "ship to mouth" existence for India.

That the amendments followed closely on the heels of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Moscow – where she had called on Washington to stop bombing Vietnam to make space for peace efforts – was no coincidence, although the U.S. insisted that the changes were intended to spur agricultural reforms in India.

The move, and the subsequent international pressure for a major rupee devaluation, pushed the then neophyte Prime Minister into a corner. In a national address, Mrs Gandhi vowed that India should never again find itself in such a humiliating position, and intensified efforts toward the Green Revolution and agricultural self-sufficiency. A "New Green revolution" and energy independence can only follow if New Delhi draws a red line on U.S. sanctions in the next few weeks. These sanctions do not just harm India's economy. They also seek to bend India's foreign policy to another's will, and are a blow to its proudly-held tenets of strategic autonomy.

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For India to launch a new Green Revolution in energy independence, it must first rebuff U.S. sanctions

- **India is by no means the only country thus affected, but as the world's most populous nation, it is bound to feel the effects more acutely.**
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- **India faced similar secondary sanctions from the U.S., during 2012-14, when the Barack Obama administration used them as leverage in Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations (the Iran nuclear deal).**
- **While India reduced its imports of Iranian oil from about 18.5 million tonnes in 2010-2011 to 11 million tonnes in 2013-2014, it never agreed to halt them altogether.**

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- **former Reserve Bank of India Governor Urjit Patel concludes in his book The Great Sanctions Hack. According to his research, the U.S. stands out as the world's main sanctioning power, having imposed 365 sanctions in the present century, with the European Union a distant second at about 133. Only 12 counter-sanctions by China, Russia and Iran are active.**

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- **Had India not complied with sanctions against the Chabahar port, built rail and road infrastructure in Iran, and not curtailed its plans for the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) through Iran's Bandar Abbas, it may have had connectivity in place that could have reduced its dependence on imports coming through the Strait of Hormuz today.**
- **CAATSA is a law that came into effect in the US in 2017, meant to punish countries having deep engagements with Russia, North Korea, and Iran using economic sanctions.**
- **It said countries having a "significant transaction" with Russian intelligence and military agents will be subject to at least five kinds of sanctions.**



Mains Question

Discuss the implications of potential U.S. sanctions on India under laws such as CAATSA. How do such measures affect India's strategic autonomy?

CAATSA जैसे अमेरिकी कानूनों के तहत भारत पर संभावित प्रतिबंधों के प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए। ऐसे उपाय भारत की सामरिक स्वायत्तता को किस प्रकार प्रभावित करते हैं?

Invidious speech

ECI's inaction on the Prime Minister's violations of model code is troubling

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on April 18 differed from a speech he made at a similar election-eve juncture in 2019, it was nonetheless problematic. In 2019, following a successful anti-satellite missile test, private news channels aired a speech by Mr. Modi extolling the mission and his government's commitment to the country's technological prowess even as the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) was in force ahead of the general election. Late last week, Mr. Modi's transgression was greater as Doordarshan and Sansad TV broadcast his speech even as he accused the Congress, DMK, Trinamool Congress and Samajwadi Party of committing the "sin of foeticide" after they blocked the combined women's reservation and delimitation Bills, and suggested that women voters would punish them electorally in the Tamil Nadu and West Bengal elections on April 23. Thus far, the Opposition in Parliament as well as numerous academics and activists have written to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) urging that the Election Commission of India (ECI) should sanction Mr. Modi for violating the MCC. In a familiar but also increasingly dispiriting turn, the ECI has yet to respond. It is expected to act reasonably quickly, as it has against Opposition parties.

Since the facts are not in dispute in this instance and the ECI's reluctance to sanction the Prime Minister has become well-known, it is hard to believe that the delay is benign. The constitutional body allowed the Prime Minister's monthly radio programme to continue broadcasting during the State polls in 2015 and 2017 and permitted NaMo TV to air in 2019 after prior approval of its contents. In 2024, the ECI issued a notice regarding a controversial speech by Mr. Modi in Rajasthan, but addressed it to the BJP president rather than to him. After the 2019 missile test, critics argued that the ECI's refusal to sanction had created a loophole whereby major announcements could be framed as 'official', thus having an electoral impact while affording the ECI plausible deniability. As the letter to the CEC specified, Mr. Modi's violation is clear if he delivered his address without the ECI's prior approval. If the ECI did approve it, it must explain why it saw fit to grant the Prime Minister this precious privilege, investigate the speech's contents, remove it from official platforms, and sanction Mr. Modi. The ECI's inaction – rendered more pronounced by the two States voting on April 23 – only reinforces its partisan character, and undermines the fairness of polls as well as its own credibility.

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- **The Model Code of Conduct is a comprehensive set of guidelines issued by the ECI to regulate the behavior of political parties, candidates, and the government during the election period.**
- **Objective: To maintain the purity of the electoral process, ensure peace and order during campaigning, and prevent the ruling party from gaining an unfair advantage through state resources.**
- **No Direct Statutory Backing: The MCC itself is not a legally enforceable statute. It is a moral code built on political consensus.**
- **Constitutional Authority: The ECI enforces the MCC under Article 324 of the Constitution, which mandates the superintendence, direction, and control of elections.**
- **Indirect Legal Enforcement: While the MCC is not a law, many of its provisions are enforceable through corresponding sections in existing statutes. For example, bribery, intimidation, and impersonation are punishable under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860 (now Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023), and the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951 (e.g., Section 123 deals with "corrupt practices").**

- **Duration:** The MCC comes into operation the moment the ECI announces the election schedule and remains active until the election results are declared.
- **Evolution:** The concept first originated during the 1960 Kerala Assembly elections as a voluntary consensus among political parties.
- It was first widely circulated during the 1962 simultaneous elections, where parties largely followed it. In 1979, the EC introduced a comprehensive MCC, later refined through consultations with political parties to curb money and muscle power.
- In 1991, the MCC was strictly enforced and institutionalized under the leadership of then-Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan, transforming it into a powerful tool for electoral purity.

- **General Conduct:** Prohibits activities that aggregate existing differences, cause tension among communities, or appeal to caste and communal feelings for securing votes.
- **Places of worship** cannot be used as forums for election propaganda.
- **Meetings and Processions:** Political parties must inform local police authorities in advance about the venue and time of meetings to ensure adequate security and traffic arrangements.
- **Processions by rival parties** must not clash or disrupt each other.

- **Polling Day:** Restricts the entry of unauthorized persons into polling booths. No campaigning is allowed within 100 meters of the polling station, and the serving of liquor or eatables near booths is strictly banned.

- **Observers:** ECI appoints General, Expenditure, and Police Observers to whom candidates can report breaches.

- **Party in Power:** Ministers are prohibited from combining official visits with electioneering. Government transport, machinery, and personnel cannot be used for campaign purposes.

Mains Question

Examine the significance of the Model Code of Conduct in ensuring free and fair elections in India. What are its limitations?

भारत में स्वतंत्र एवं निष्पक्ष चुनाव सुनिश्चित करने में Model Code of Conduct की भूमिका का परीक्षण कीजिए। इसकी सीमाएँ क्या हैं?

India's LPG crisis is the wake-up call it cannot ignore

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India is staring at an energy reality it can no longer ignore. The gas crisis of 2026, marked by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) shortages, volatile liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices, and soaring import bills, is not a temporary disruption. It is a structural warning. For a country aiming to sustain high economic growth and emerge as a global manufacturing hub, energy insecurity is not just an inconvenience; it is a strategic risk. The real question is no longer whether India should act, but how quickly it can pivot toward self-reliance.

Unsustainable energy gap

The numbers tell a troubling story. India's crude oil import dependence has reached a staggering 88.6%, with domestic production unable to keep pace with rising demand. LNG imports are projected to hit 28 million metric tonnes (MMT)-29 MMT this year, even as domestic gas production meets barely half of the requirement. Meanwhile, energy demand is expected to triple by 2047.

This widening gap between demand and domestic supply is not sustainable. Every global price shock, geopolitical disruption, and currency fluctuation directly impacts India's economy – fuelling inflation, straining public finances, and exposing systemic vulnerabilities.

What makes the situation more concerning is that existing systems are clearly failing to keep up. India has invested in LNG infrastructure, with regasification capacity exceeding 50 MMT annually. Yet, utilisation remains stuck at 50%-60% due to pipeline constraints and demand mismatches. LPG supply chains are even more fragile, heavily dependent on imports from West Asia.

The recent disruptions – which led to shortages in cities such as Mumbai and Bengaluru and triggered price spikes of up to five times – highlight just how exposed India remains.



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A push towards Compressed Biogas (CBG) will ensure energy security, environmental sustainability, and rural economic growth

Government interventions have helped manage the crisis in the short term, but they are reactive by design. They do not solve the fundamental problem: India's overdependence on imported fuels.

Decisive steps to take

And yet, the solution lies in plain sight. Compressed Biogas (CBG) offers India a rare combination of energy security, environmental sustainability and rural economic growth. The country has an estimated potential of 62 MMT of CBG annually from agricultural residues, animal waste, and municipal solid waste. But the current output is just 920 tonnes per day from 132 operational plants. This is not a resource constraint – it is an execution failure.

To be fair, the policy intent is strong. Initiatives such as Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) and Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources (GOBAR-DHAN) have laid the groundwork, offering assured offtake, financial incentives, and a clear vision for a bioenergy ecosystem. But progress on the ground has been slow. Feedstock supply remains fragmented and unreliable. Financing is often delayed or inadequate. Regulatory approvals can take months. And the market for digestate – a key by-product – remains underdeveloped. In short, India has built the vision but not yet the system to deliver it at scale.

This is where decisive action is needed.

First, India must establish a national feedstock security framework. Without a reliable and predictable supply of biomass, no CBG project can succeed. This means State-wise mapping of feedstock availability, creation of aggregation models, and long-term contracts that give developers confidence. It also requires aligning feedstock types with suitable technologies to improve efficiency and viability.

Second, the regulatory and financial ecosystem

must be streamlined. Single-window clearance systems are no longer optional; they are essential. Project developers should not spend six to nine months navigating approvals. At the same time, financial support mechanisms need to go beyond traditional subsidies. Viability gap funding, green bonds and carbon credit integration can significantly improve project economics and attract private investment.

Third, India must think beyond waste and actively promote dedicated energy crops. Napier grass, for instance, offers high yields and can serve as a reliable feedstock. Allocating even 2%-3% of agricultural land – particularly in regions with surplus production – can create a stable biomass base without compromising food security. This is not about replacing existing crops, but about strategic diversification.

Meaningful energy reform

If these interventions are implemented with urgency, the impact could be transformative. India can scale CBG production to 20 MMT by 2030. But the benefits go far beyond numbers. A robust CBG ecosystem would reduce stubble burning, improve air quality, create rural jobs and enhance farmer incomes. It would turn waste into wealth and shift India toward a truly circular economy.

The lesson from the current crisis is clear: incremental fixes will not work. India needs a structural shift in how it produces and consumes energy. The success of the ethanol blending programme shows that large-scale transformation is possible when policy clarity meets execution discipline. CBG can – and must – be the next big success story.

India's gas crisis is not just a challenge; it is a test of intent. The country can either continue to rely on volatile global markets or invest in building a resilient, domestic energy system. The choice should be obvious. The time to act is now.

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- **The recent disruptions — which led to shortages in cities such as Mumbai and Bengaluru and triggered price spikes of up to five times — highlight just how exposed India remains.**
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Lunar governance should be multilateral

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The NASA Apollo 8 mission to the moon captured the iconic earthrise image the same year in which U.S. forces were responsible for the My Lai massacre in Vietnam. Similarly, on April 6, as the crew of the NASA Artemis II mission swung around the moon in their spacecraft, they photographed the earth rising above the lunar limb – an earthset – only months after the first casualty of coordinated strikes by the U.S. and Israel against Iran was a girls’ primary school. The Refugees International president called it “likely the largest number of child casualties in a single U.S. military attack” since My Lai.

In Washington, the administration was simultaneously dismantling legal protections for immigrants, imposing tariffs which fall afoul of trade law, and enabling an Israeli military campaign in Gaza that the International Court of Justice has been scrutinising for genocide since January 2024. Thus, the country that asks the world to celebrate humankind’s return to the moon has demonstrated a simultaneous contempt for human rights and international law.

Disregard for law, due process

The International Commission of Jurists and the Red Cross have found that U.S. and Israeli forces have struck multiple sites protected by international humanitarian law. Before the assault, the Pentagon had dismantled the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence and shelved a framework to avoid civilian harm, among other measures. In 2025, a UN commission confirmed that Israel was responsible for the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israel’s prime minister and former defence minister for war crimes. However, the U.S. continued to supply arms to Israel and responded to the warrants with sanctions against officials.

The Trump administration has



Vasudevan Mukunth

The U.S. asks the world to celebrate humankind’s return to the moon. At the same time, it has demonstrated a simultaneous contempt for human rights and international law

also invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act in an unusual way to impose sweeping tariffs. While the World Trade Institute found the move violated the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, there could be no relief as the U.S. has been blocking new appointments to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Appellate Body since 2019. Affected countries could file complaints and the U.S. could appeal, but the appeals would languish with a body that had been hollowed out.

Additionally, the U.S. administration has deported Venezuelan migrants, many with no gang affiliation, to notorious prisons – a process that the U.S. Supreme Court said violated due process rights. Independent estimates indicate that in Mr. Trump’s second term as president, around six lakh people have so far been deported for alleged illegal immigration. Donald Trump has also asked whether due process protections should apply in such cases, as his administration continues to highlight the “success” of his deportation programme.

All these actions are of a nation whose principal policy is unmitigated self-interest, commitments be damned. And given the sustained manner in which the U.S. has applied this policy, it supervenes the universalism NASA invoked when it called its Artemis II mission “humanity’s return to the moon”.

Doesn’t inspire confidence

In 2015, the U.S. passed a law that allows its citizens to possess, use, and sell resources extracted from the moon, and which the Artemis Accords use as a governing norm. Legal expert Christopher Newman has argued that the Accords are thus a mechanism for the U.S. to force other countries to accept its interpretation of resource rights. The lunar south pole contains water ice that can be used to make rocket fuel, enabling missions to Mars and beyond, but it is

available only in finite quantities in a few locations. The Accords also introduce “safety zones” around lunar sites ostensibly to prevent harmful interference. They could in practice create exclusion zones around resource-rich areas, allowing early movers to consolidate control without formally violating the Outer Space Treaty. Thus, as the frameworks for managing these resources remain underdeveloped, the country moving fastest to fill the gap is one whose recent conduct inspires the least confidence.

The way forward

The U.S.’s space governance framework is more transparent than China’s. The Accords also articulate principles of peaceful use and emergency assistance. However, Chinese leadership is not the sole alternative to U.S. leadership. The more important question is whether we should allow either power to set the rules unilaterally for a domain that belongs to all of humankind. Even the Accords sidestep the multilateral process of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in favour of forging bilateral agreements, while still formally acknowledging the Committee’s role. In fact, they risk allowing practices among a subset of states to become the industry’s rules before other states can reach consensus through multilateral negotiations. If the U.S. expects to be a credible leader in space, it must desist from erecting a governance architecture for the moon that, by excluding China, effectively sets up a confrontation. Instead, it must pursue treaty-level rules on lunar resources that give all nations a stake. This requires the U.S. to engage with the 1979 Moon Agreement, which calls for an international regime to govern their exploitation. While the claim that the Agreement deters private investment has merit, that is no reason to foreclose a multilateral framework.

- **on April 6, as the crew of the NASA Artemis II mission swung around the moon in their spacecraft, they photographed the earth rising above the lunar limb — an earthset — only months after the first casualty of coordinated strikes by the U.S. and Israel against Iran was a girls’ primary school.**
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