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Beyond America

Arab states can no longer depend on the U.S. for their security needs

Donald Trump's threat to bomb Oman, a long-standing American ally in the Persian Gulf, reflects both his administration's deepening frustration with the war against Iran and Washington's declining influence in the region. This is the second time that the U.S. leader has threatened to attack Oman, which hosted talks between Washington and Tehran before he launched the war on February 28. When Mr. Trump backed down from a threatened escalation after 13 days of bombing on Iran in July, he said the U.S. and Iran were close to a deal on reopening the Strait of Hormuz, which was closed by Iran after it was attacked. But Iran never said that it had agreed to a deal with the U.S. over the Strait and instead issued several demands, including releasing frozen funds and issuing sanctions relief, as preconditions for any agreement. Ever since, Oman, under U.S. influence, has been talking to Iran seeking a settlement. As Iran, which survived two rounds of U.S. bombings, refused to offer major concessions, the U.S.'s frustration with Oman has deepened. Mr. Trump has repeatedly claimed that the Strait of Hormuz was open, but traffic through the waterway, through which one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil passed before the war, is nowhere near its pre-war levels.

The war has raised questions about America's regional security strategy and its commitment to the security of its allies. Over the years the U.S. had built military bases across the Persian Gulf. However, Tehran has turned these bases into a liability by repeatedly striking them and their host countries. At least 15 American bases, including the Fifth Fleet Headquarters in Bahrain, are either damaged or destroyed, which has substantially reduced the U.S.'s strategic presence. But Mr. Trump does not seem to grasp the seriousness of the situation. Instead of reassuring the allies, he is now threatening to bomb them because they are not able to deliver on his push for a face-saving deal with Iran. From day one of the war, his threats and rhetoric did little to advance America's strategic goals or deter Iran. But Mr. Trump, stuck deep in the Persian sands, appears unable to change tack. Whether he acknowledges America's growing limitations in West Asia or not, countries in the region confront a new strategic reality: the foundations of the old security architecture have been shaken. In their hour of need, American bases have turned out to be a liability. They should also recognise that the decades-old policy of containing Iran has failed. To ensure their own security and regional stability, the Persian Gulf countries need to look beyond the American security umbrella and lay the foundations for a new regional order, shaped by a cold peace between the Arab states and Iran.

US-ISRAELI ATTACKS AND IRAN'S RETALIATIONS

DAMAGED US FACILITIES

Erbil Base

IRAQ

Baghdad

Tehran

IRAN

**Total US
financial losses
\$1.9 billion**

Diplomatic and
intelligence facilities

Military bases

Kuwait
Camp
Buehring

Kuwait
US Embassy

Kuwait
Ali Al Solem
Air Base

Bahrain
US 5th Fleet

Kuwait
Camp Arifjan
6 US soldiers
killed

Persian Gulf

Dubai
US Consulate General

Riyadh
US Embassy

Qatar
Al Udeid Base
AN/FPS-132 early
warning radar

Dubai
Port of Jebel Ali

UAE
Al Ruwais

SAUDI ARABIA

OMAN

Today

turkiyetoday.com

Sources: AA

Context (GS-II: International Relations | GS-III: Energy Security)

The Iran–U.S. conflict has exposed the strain in the traditional U.S.-centred security architecture of West Asia, prompting Gulf States to reconsider dependence on an external security guarantor.

1. Changing Security Architecture of West Asia

- **Strain in the U.S.-centred model:** The traditional model of U.S. military presence + bilateral security guarantees + forward bases has come under pressure as regional conflict has shown the limits of external protection.
- **Limits of Iran containment:** Decades of efforts to contain Iran have failed to produce a durable regional security order.
- **Regional ownership:** The editorial argues that Persian Gulf States need to take greater responsibility for their own security, rather than relying primarily on an external guarantor.
- **Diversification of partnerships:** Gulf States are broadening their security relationships. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan, signed on August 7, 2026, reflects this trend towards diversified and more regionally connected security arrangements.
- **Arab–Iran “cold peace”:** The proposed organising principle is not reconciliation or alliance, but a pragmatic “cold peace” based on coexistence, dialogue and management of differences.

2. Key U.S. Military Facilities Targeted → Country

- **Al Udeid Air Base** → **Qatar:** Forward headquarters of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and a major regional air-operations hub.
- **Naval Support Activity Bahrain / U.S. Fifth Fleet Headquarters** → **Bahrain:** Principal U.S. naval command presence in the Gulf.
- **Al Dhafra Air Base** → **UAE:** Important U.S. air and surveillance facility.
- **Ali Al Salem Air Base** → **Kuwait:** Major U.S. air-support and logistics facility.

Significance: The attacks demonstrate that the forward-deployed U.S. security network can itself become vulnerable during regional conflict, raising questions about the sustainability of the existing model.

BRICS calls EU's carbon tax 'punitive, unilateral'

Ministers say it could undermine efforts of developing countries to address climate change; they urge developed nations to honour financial commitment agreed to at 2025 UN climate conference

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

BRICS countries on Tuesday opposed what they described as “unilateral, punitive, discriminatory and protectionist” climate measures, including the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAMs), while calling for a significant increase in international funding to help developing countries adapt to climate change.

The positions were contained in the joint statement adopted at the 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, held under India's chairship. The Ministers specifically said that carbon border measures such as CBAMs could “undermine developing countries' efforts to address climate change and build resilience”.

The statement comes as the European Union's CBAM entered its definitive phase from January 1 this year. The mechanism re-



Union Minister Bhupender Yadav at the 12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

quires importers of carbon-intensive products, consisting of iron and steel, aluminium, cement, fertilizers, hydrogen and electricity, to account for the carbon emissions associated with their production. The EU says the measure is intended to prevent “carbon leakage” – the shifting of carbon-intensive production outside the bloc because of differences in climate policies.

Significant exposure

India is among the countries with significant exposure to the mechanism,

particularly through its steel exports. A recent analysis found that iron and steel account for about 90% of India's exports to the EU that fall within the CBAM framework. A June 2026 analysis in *Nature Climate Change*, based on shipment-level trade data and facility-level emissions estimates, found that high-emission Indian steel firms had reduced their export quantities and revenues to the EU during the CBAM reporting phase, while lower-emission firms maintained their export levels.

The BRICS position the-

refore comes as the EU and India move to implement a free trade agreement negotiated earlier this year, while Indian exporters face the additional carbon-related compliance requirements in the European market.

Hike adaptation finance

The Ministers also called for an urgent increase in adaptation finance from developed countries. They said support should be “new, additional, predictable, adequate and accessible”, and should be provided through grants and concessional finance without increasing the financial vulnerabilities of developing countries. They urged developed countries to meet the commitment agreed at the 2025 UN climate conference to triple adaptation finance to developing countries by 2035.

Adaptation finance is used to help countries and communities cope with climate impacts, including measures to strengthen water security, agriculture, infrastructure, and so on.



1. Context (GS-II: International Relations | GS-III: Environment, Climate Change & International Trade)

The **12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting**, held in New Delhi under India's 2026 BRICS Chairship, opposed unilateral carbon-border measures, particularly the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

2. BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting

- **India**: BRICS Chair, 2026; host of the 18th BRICS Summit.
- **Focus on** climate action, environmental sustainability, resilience and cooperation.
- **Opposed** carbon-border measures that could become discriminatory/protectionist trade barriers.
- **Emphasised** climate equity, Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), climate finance and technology transfer.

3. European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

- **Meaning**: Carbon cost imposed by the European Union on embedded emissions in specified imported goods.
- **Objective**: Prevent carbon leakage—shifting carbon-intensive production to countries with weaker climate regulations.
- **Timeline**: October 2023 → transitional reporting | January 2026 → definitive regime.
- **Sectors**: Iron & steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen.

4. Why India & BRICS Oppose CBAM

- **Export competitiveness**: Raises the effective cost of carbon-intensive exports to the European Union.
- **Climate equity**: Developing countries have different historical responsibilities, capabilities and development needs.
- **Protectionism**: Risk of environmental measures becoming disguised trade barriers.
- **Capacity constraints**: Developing economies need greater finance, technology and capacity-building for decarbonisation.

5. Way Forward

- **Accelerate** industrial decarbonisation in CBAM-exposed sectors.
- **Strengthen** domestic carbon measurement, reporting and verification.
- **Use** BRICS, World Trade Organization (WTO) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) platforms for equitable implementation.
- **Seek** technology transfer and climate finance for developing economies.

An Alternative to the Collegium

Unmindful of reason, the Collegium has developed a cosy relationship with the executive



SRIRAM PANCHU
SENIOR ADVOCATE

NEARLY eighty years ago, the people of India did something remarkable. They finally came together to throw off oppressive rule, and they did so by peaceful methods. That worked because the idea of Independence galvanised a nation. Today, perhaps it is time to look at our situation again, carefully, and with an eye to see which institutions have failed us, and which even retain a semblance of what they are supposed to do.

The Election Commission of India, of course, will fall into a particular category all of its own, of jockeying to lackey. Most of the established and conventional media houses may rank just a bit better. But the institution we must pay closest attention to is the judiciary. This is not just because it is the ultimate resolver of disputes between people, corporates and other entities. It is because the judiciary is vested with the power to interpret the Constitution. The judiciary is the arbiter, enforcer and protector of the Constitution.

Why does the Constitution matter? It matters because this is what brings us all together as citizens of India. It matters because it embodies the best ideas of India — those ideas which the best of us want to see as embodying India. A free society where the individual matters, and the State exists to serve the individual. A society where the people have the ultimate say. A society which is liberal, inclusive and seeks the best development and fulfilment for all. A society which is sensitive to minorities and to those with handicaps and disabilities. We are a privileged country. We are the world's largest and best



KEY PILLAR : The judiciary is vested with the power to interpret the Constitution. P11

mosaic of cultures and faiths — the most amazing house of diversity. This is an India which is worth fighting for.

It is the Constitution which overarches above us, protects India and gives it its shape and structure, fabric and form. So it is our Constitution around which we must rally. It will provide us succour and safety. There is no better and no more powerful icon than this for modern India at the stage we are in. But only if we protect it.

It is therefore a matter of particular dismay when we see judicial institutions crumbling — not under the weight of external pressure, but because of the weakness of those who inhabit them, who cannot shore up the foundations, present a workable interior and a fair outlook, who cannot make a sparkling judicial mansion of law, justice, equity and service to the people.

In the early years of the 19th century, John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States of America, fashioned the doctrine of judicial review, by which the Court assumed the power to strike down Acts of Parliament which were contrary to the Constitution. This also extended to striking down executive action which went against the chief canons of constitutional values.

The time has come to invent a radically new method for appointing judges to Supreme Court and High Courts.

We embodied judicial review in our Constitution, and in the years before 2000, our Supreme Court extended the doctrine of judicial review in scope and in application to craft a universally admired public interest writ jurisdiction.

The job of protecting the Constitution is the chief business of judges. But in the last twenty years, I cannot remember a significant case of judicial review and assertion, upholding constitutional values, to strike down Acts of the legislature or key inroadings of executive action. There has been no shortage of such Acts, but there has been a significant absence of adequate judicial response. The only Act in living memory to be struck down pertained to the National Judicial Appointments Commission. Not quite by coincidence, it

interfered with the judges' self-granted prerogative of appointing judges to the higher judiciary. Other than that, we find no adequate judicial demonstration of constitutional values.

On the other hand, judicial review in India now seems to have moved to judicial assist. This was manifestly so in the recent SIR (Special Intensive Revision) case, where judicial officers of an entire state were drafted to man the Election Commission machinery and mechanisms, and thereby to try and resuscitate an exercise doomed from the start, which should have received the judicial axe.

Recent aberrational statements made by the Chief Justice of India in regard to youth protests, the Bar Council Chairman's ill-advised venture against NALSAR students and the lackadaisical attitude of the First Bench of the Delhi High Court while hearing cases about atrocities on Jantar Mantar protesters convince us that the quality of those at the highest levels of the judiciary has dropped very, very significantly.

The blame for this must squarely rest on the Collegium which chooses judges. When the judiciary invented this extra-constitutional and "extraterrestrial" sys-

tem in 1993, it would have been aware that its legitimacy rested not on constitutional foundation, but solely on consistent best performance. The latter was on display for some time. But for many years now, it has dipped into becoming a body marked by favouritism and nepotism; opaque, non-transparent, unmindful of reason and criticism; and, of late, has developed a rather cosy relationship with the executive. Indeed, it seems that we are losing sight of the doctrine of separation of powers and the judicial philosophy of being a check on the government to keep the constitutional balance.

The time has come to invent a radically new method of appointment of judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. That initiative is now underway, guided by a group of respected retired judges, leading lawyers and eminent citizens steering a group of talented young lawyers and academics to fashion a document titled "The Alternative" — a replacement for the Collegium system.

This will then be sent across to Bar Associations, judges, law universities and others to compare the existing Collegium system with the alternative based on definite criteria, including transparency, accountability, wide selection choice and efficiency. That result will then be placed before Parliament, which will be asked to pass a law based on a national consensus.

And this time, let us be sure that this will not just be a national consensus among enlightened professionals but will have the power of the youth. A resurgent youth, who have just shaken the highest in the land with their conviction, resilience and strength. They just need the right guidance and support to be fully galvanised. And young lawyers have a lot at stake. For them, it is a choice between an honourable profession and a mercantile activity sans honour.

This is the time to stand up. Because we have our backs to the wall. The advantage of a last-ditch stand is that our energies are redoubled.



1. Context (Syllabus: GS-II — Judiciary & Judicial Appointments)

The debate over judicial appointments concerns how to preserve judicial independence while ensuring transparency, merit and accountability in the selection of judges.

2. Constitutional Basis — Article 124

- **Article 124(2)**: Supreme Court judges are formally appointed by the President after consultation with constitutionally specified judges.
- **The Collegium is not mentioned in the Constitution**; judicial primacy emerged through the Second and Third Judges Cases.

3. Evolution of the Collegium

- **First Judges Case (1981)**: Executive primacy.
- **Second Judges Case (1993)**: Judicial primacy → Collegium evolved.
- **Third Judges Case (1998)**: Collegium's composition and functioning clarified.
- **NJAC Case (2015)**: National Judicial Appointments Commission struck down; Collegium restored to protect judicial independence/basic structure.

4. Why is the Collegium Criticised?

- **Opacity**: The basis for choosing one candidate over another is not always sufficiently explained. Justice Ujjal Bhuyan in 2026 called for greater transparency, noting that withholding reasons can harm deserving candidates.
- **Accountability deficit**: Since judges themselves recommend judges, there is limited independent scrutiny of the selection process.
- **Vacancies & delays**: As of March 2026, 312 of 1,122 sanctioned High Court posts were vacant; 132 appointment proposals were being processed while recommendations for 180 vacancies were still awaited from High Court Collegiums.
- **Diversity**: There is no reservation in higher judicial appointments. As of February 2026, only 1 of 33 working Supreme Court judges was a woman, while High Courts had 116 women judges out of 814.
- **Narrow talent networks**: A largely internal process can make it difficult to systematically identify strong candidates from the wider Bar and legal academia.

5. What Should the Alternative Look Like?

The alternative should retain judicial independence while making appointments more transparent, professional and accountable.

- **Independent search mechanism:** A professional secretariat should identify, screen and assess candidates beyond existing judicial networks.
- **Objective criteria:** Selection should be based on legal competence, integrity, experience, judicial temperament and constitutional values.
- **Wider consultation:** Structured inputs from the judiciary, Bar and legal academia can broaden the talent pool.
- **Reasoned recommendations:** Record the broad basis for selection, while protecting confidential personal information.
- **Balanced participation:** Ensure that neither the Executive nor the judiciary has unchecked control over appointments.

6. Supporting Reforms

- **Time-bound process:** Adopt a fixed vacancy calendar and begin recommendations well before vacancies arise.
- **Diversity with merit:** Systematically widen the pool to include qualified women, regions and under-represented professional backgrounds; only 130 women were appointed to High Courts between 2018–February 2026.
- **Digital transparency:** Build on the Supreme Court's practice of publishing Collegium resolutions by progressively disclosing selection criteria and broad reasons.
- **Conflict-of-interest safeguards:** Require disclosure and recusal where selectors have significant personal or professional links with candidates.

Editorial to Mains Answer | Day 11

10 Marker | 150 Words

What are the main problems with the Collegium system of judicial appointments in India? Suggest suitable reforms.

**भारत में न्यायाधीशों की नियुक्ति की कॉलेजियम प्रणाली की प्रमुख समस्याएँ क्या हैं?
उपयुक्त सुधार सुझाइए।**

India set for record soyoil import on Russia-Ukraine war

Reuters

MUMBAI

India's soyoil imports are set to hit a record high in August as competitive prices prompt refiners to boost purchases for festive demand, while disruptions to sunflower oil shipments due to the Russia-Ukraine war push buyers to switch oils, dealers said.

Soyoil imports in August may rise to 6,20,000 metric tonne, almost 46% above the average monthly import of 4,24,549 tonne so far in the current marketing year which began in November, said four traders involved in trade deals. The traders did not wish to be named in line with company policies.



Women remove weeds from soybean crop in Bhopal, MP.

"Soyoil prices are very competitive. At the same time, there are disruptions to sunflower oil shipments. That is making soyoil even more attractive," said Sandeep Bajoria, CEO, Sunvin Group, a Mumbai-based vegetable oil brokerage.

In recent months, Rus-

sia and Ukraine have increasingly targeted each other's port and maritime infrastructure in and around the Black Sea, disrupting grain and vegetable oil shipments and reducing export capacity.

Sunflower oil to drop

Russia and Ukraine account for most of India's sunflower oil imports, which may fall to 1,80,000 metric tonne in August, the lowest since February and down 28% from July, dealers said. About 1,50,000 tonne of sunflower oil originating from the Black Sea and scheduled for shipment in August and September have been delayed because of the conflict, another dealer said.

Context [GS-III: Agriculture & Food Security | GS-II: International Relations]

Disruption of sunflower-oil supplies from the Russia–Ukraine conflict is driving Indian refiners towards soybean oil, pushing India's soyoil imports to a record level.

1. India's Soybean-Oil Imports Rise

- India's soyoil imports are expected to reach 6.2 lakh tonnes in August 2026, around 46% higher than the current marketing-year monthly average of 4,24,549 tonnes.
- India has already secured around 1.4 million tonnes of soyoil for September–December, indicating continued strong demand.
- The increase is driven by competitive soyoil prices, reduced availability of sunflower oil and higher demand ahead of the festive season.

2. Russia–Ukraine War Disrupts Sunflower Oil

- Russia and Ukraine are major suppliers of sunflower oil to India, but attacks on Black Sea ports and maritime infrastructure have disrupted shipments.
- Around 1.5 lakh tonnes of sunflower oil scheduled for August–September delivery have been delayed.
- As a result, India's sunflower-oil imports are expected to fall to 1.8 lakh tonnes in August, 28% lower than July and the lowest level since February.
- Thus, the article highlights a clear substitution effect: disruption in sunflower oil → increased demand for soybean oil.

3. Global Soybean & Sunflower Oil Position

- **Soybean oil:** China is the largest producer, while India is the largest importer.
- **Sunflower oil:** Russia is the largest producer, while India is the largest importer.
- The development highlights India's dependence on imported edible oils and the vulnerability of its edible-oil supply chain to geopolitical disruptions and global price movements.

80% of India's elderly could face heat stress up to three months at 3°C global warming, says study

Anuradha Mascarenhas
Pune, August 18

OLDER ADULTS across India, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh — or 73% of the world's older population — could face dangerous heat waves day and night for up to 3 months once global warming reaches 3 degrees Celsius (°C) or more, a new study published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* estimates.

India stands out as one of the world's most vulnerable nations. At 3°C of warming, more than half of India's population and over 80% of its older adults could experience at least 180 hours of intolerable heat a year, on average. In Delhi and the greater Indo-Gangetic Plain, older adults are may experience close to or over 1,000 hours of intolerable heat a year at 1.5°C of global warming, expected around 2030. At 3°C, this rises to over 2,000 hours. "Importantly, these hours are not spread evenly



Older adults in New Delhi and the Indo-Gangetic plain could experience more than 2,000 hours of intolerable heat a year at 3°C of global warming, warns study in *The Lancet Planetary Health*. FILE

throughout the year. They are concentrated between May and September," Professor Qinqin Kong, lead author of the study, told *The Indian Express* via email. At over 3°C of warming, older adults could experience intolerable heat repeatedly during both day and night for several consecutive months. Such exposure would put enormous pressure on access to cooling, electric-

ity, health services and heat-response programmes.

Prof Kong said older people face serious health risks from heat at lower temperatures than previously estimated. Previous studies relied heavily on measurements from healthy young adults to determine when temperature and humidity would become challenging for the human body. Older people

are generally less able to regulate body temperature: they sweat less, their blood vessels respond more slowly and their hearts work harder in the heat. As a result, earlier studies may have underestimated the number of people at risk from extreme heat by at least two-fold, she said.

Dr Mahaveer Golechha, prof at IIPH-Gandhinagar and a senior heat action plan expert, said, "Ageing diminishes the body's ability to control heat, and older people are likely to experience greater physiological strain at much lower temperature-humidity levels..." he said.

The study's finding that South Asia is among the most vulnerable regions should be treated as a grave public health warning, Dr Golechha said. Heat-health early warning systems should account for age-related vulnerability, temperature and humidity, duration of exposure, night temperatures and local demographics.

Researchers drew on lab experiments measuring heat tolerance in three age groups: younger adults (15-39), middle-aged adults (40-59) and older adults (60 and above). They then mapped where heat would become dangerous for each group and how many people would be affected. Using a high-resolution heat-stress metric, they modelled scenarios ranging from 1°C-4°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, in 0.5°C increments, alongside population projections.

Young adults would not face a similar level of risk until 4°C of warming, when 17% — about 490 million people — would be affected. The burden is also highly unequal. "India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Niger stand out because they combine large population exposure and high poverty rates, which we use as an indicator of limited capacity to adapt," Prof Kong said.

Context [GS-III: Environment & Ecology | Climate Change, Public Health & Disaster Management]

A **Lancet Planetary Health study** highlights the disproportionate heat vulnerability of the elderly as global warming intensifies, with India's Indo-Gangetic region emerging as a major hotspot.

1. What does the study show?

- The study finds that at 3°C global warming, over 80% of India's elderly population could face at least 180 hours of intolerable heat annually, potentially extending over three months.
- Delhi and the Indo-Gangetic Plain face particularly severe exposure, with elderly people potentially experiencing over 2,000 hours of intolerable heat annually at 3°C warming.
- Even at 1.5°C warming, elderly people in the region could face around 1,000 hours of intolerable heat annually.
- The study indicates that previous assessments may have underestimated heat vulnerability by at least two-fold, as older adults have a lower physiological capacity to cope with heat.

2. What does it mean for India?

- **Public health:** Greater exposure will increase the risk of heat-related illness and mortality among the elderly.
- **Heat Action Plans:** Heat warnings need to become age-sensitive, incorporating humidity, duration of exposure and night-time heat rather than relying only on maximum temperature.
- **Urban adaptation:** High-risk regions such as Delhi and the Indo-Gangetic Plain need stronger cooling infrastructure, heat shelters, water access and healthcare preparedness.
- **Targeted climate adaptation:** The findings highlight the need to treat the elderly as a specific vulnerable group in India's climate and disaster-management planning.