

2. West Asia Conflict – International Relations

The recent missile strikes on Iran triggered a war involving the United States, Israel, and Iran. The conflict has destabilised the already fragile West Asia security order and created global economic uncertainty.

1. Global Implications of the West Asia Conflict – Expanded Analysis

Violation of International Law and Norms

1. International law permits the use of force only under two specific conditions –
 1. Self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter
 2. Authorisation by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
2. In the present conflict scenario, neither a clear act of self-defence nor UNSC authorisation appears to justify the escalation of hostilities.
3. Such actions weaken the rules-based international order, which depends on adherence to established norms and legal procedures.
4. If powerful states bypass these rules, it may set a precedent for unilateral military actions, encouraging other countries to adopt similar behaviour.
5. This could gradually erode institutions of collective security, leading to a more unstable and anarchic global system.
6. Over time, weakening international norms may reduce the credibility of global institutions like the United Nations, thereby undermining multilateral governance.

Undermining Diplomacy as a Tool for Conflict Resolution

1. Prior to the escalation, negotiations reportedly focused on freezing Iran's uranium enrichment programme, maintaining zero stockpiles of weapons-grade uranium, and allowing international inspections.
2. In exchange, Iran expected phased sanctions relief and economic reintegration.
3. Military escalation during sensitive negotiations risks undermining confidence in diplomacy as a conflict-resolution mechanism.
4. Countries may conclude that security guarantees obtained through negotiations are unreliable, pushing them toward military deterrence instead.
5. Such developments could weaken global non-proliferation regimes, including the diplomatic framework around nuclear monitoring and arms control.
6. It also complicates future negotiations involving nuclear issues, particularly in regions with high geopolitical tensions.

Risk of Regional Escalation and Wider Conflict

1. West Asia already contains multiple overlapping conflicts, including sectarian tensions and geopolitical rivalries.
2. Escalation could draw in regional and transnational actors, including proxy militias and allied armed groups.
3. Countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen host armed groups aligned with different regional powers.
4. The conflict may therefore evolve into a multi-front confrontation, prolonging instability.
5. Prolonged conflicts create fertile ground for extremist organisations and terrorist groups to exploit power vacuums.
6. Increased retaliatory attacks could destabilise key regional infrastructure, ports, and energy facilities.

Disruption of Global Energy Markets

1. West Asia is a critical hub of global oil and gas production, making stability in the region essential for global energy security.

2. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of global oil shipments pass, is particularly vulnerable to disruption.
3. Any closure or blockade of the strait could severely affect global oil supply chains.
4. Suspension of gas shipments by major producers such as Qatar would also impact industries reliant on liquefied natural gas (LNG).
5. Disruptions can lead to sharp increases in global energy prices, affecting manufacturing, transport, and food production worldwide.
6. The uncertainty in energy markets may slow global economic growth and increase inflationary pressures.

Humanitarian and Civilian Security Concerns

1. In situations where governments perceive existential threats, the distinction between military and civilian targets often becomes blurred.
2. Escalating hostilities may lead to large-scale civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure.
3. Conflict zones typically experience disruptions in food supply, healthcare services, and basic utilities.
4. Refugee flows could increase pressure on neighbouring countries already dealing with economic and political challenges.
5. Long-term instability can also lead to social fragmentation, radicalisation, and prolonged humanitarian crises.

2. Implications for India

India's Energy Security

1. India imports over 80% of its crude oil requirements, with a significant share coming from the Gulf region.
2. Any disruption in supply routes or production could directly impact India's energy availability and price stability.
3. Rising global oil prices increase India's import bill, worsening the current account deficit (CAD).
4. Higher fuel prices also contribute to domestic inflation, affecting transportation, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors.
5. Energy insecurity may therefore slow economic growth and fiscal stability.

Safety of the Indian Diaspora

1. Nearly 9 million Indians live and work in the Gulf region, making it one of the largest overseas Indian populations.
2. These workers are concentrated in sectors such as construction, healthcare, hospitality, and services.
3. In the event of conflict escalation, their safety, evacuation, and employment security become major concerns for the Indian government.
4. India has previously conducted large-scale evacuation missions such as Operation Rahat (Yemen), demonstrating the logistical challenges involved.

Impact on Remittances

1. Remittances from the Gulf region form a significant component of India's foreign exchange inflows.
2. India receives the largest remittance inflows globally, with Gulf countries contributing a major share.
3. Economic slowdown or job losses in conflict-affected regions may reduce income flows to Indian households.
4. A decline in remittances could impact consumption patterns, real estate investment, and financial markets in India.

Impact on Investments and Business Ecosystem

1. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have become important destinations for Indian entrepreneurs and investors.
2. The Golden Visa programme has attracted Indian technology entrepreneurs, start-up founders, and high-net-worth individuals.
3. Regional instability could affect investment flows, cross-border trade, and start-up ecosystems linked to the Gulf region.
4. A prolonged conflict could also disrupt logistics, aviation routes, and financial networks connecting India and West Asia.

3. Way Forward

1. **Energy Diversification** – India should diversify its energy sources by increasing imports from alternative suppliers and investing in renewable energy and green hydrogen.
2. **Strategic Petroleum Reserves** – Expanding strategic reserves would provide a buffer against supply shocks and price volatility.
3. **Active Diplomacy** – India should engage in balanced diplomacy, maintaining relations with all major actors in West Asia.
4. **Diaspora Protection Mechanisms** – Strengthening evacuation plans and diplomatic coordination will ensure the safety of Indian citizens abroad.
5. **Multilateral Engagement** – Supporting international initiatives for conflict de-escalation and peacebuilding can help restore regional stability.

Conclusion

The West Asia conflict has far-reaching consequences beyond the region, affecting international law, global energy markets, and geopolitical stability. For India, the crisis poses significant challenges related to energy security, diaspora safety, and economic interests. A balanced diplomatic approach combined with energy diversification and strategic preparedness will be essential for mitigating these risks.

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