

## Evaluation of a US-Iran War Event

### What is the issue?

- Tensions are escalating between the U.S. and Iran over the nuclear deal and oil import sanctions. Click [here](#) to know more
- With U.S. on the brink of another major war in West Asia, with Iran, it is essential to assess the rationale and implications of such an event.

### What are the recent happenings?

- It is Israel that provided the intelligence inputs that set off the latest clash.
- With this input, the U.S. claims that Iran could target its interests or the interests of its allies in the region.
- So it has already sent an aircraft carrier group and a bomber squadron to the Gulf.
- U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton is currently driving the Iran policy, and he has repeatedly called for regime change in Tehran.
- Alongside, in West Asia, there was a mysterious attack on four oil tankers off the UAE coast.
- Also, a drone attack on a Saudi pipeline allegedly by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen worsened the crisis in Yemen.
- The situation in the Gulf is so dangerous now that a mere spark could trigger a full-blown conflict.

### Why is a war with Iran irrelevant now?

- **West Asia** is still struggling to recover from its past US interventions.
- If the U.S. goes to another war in the region, it will be morally calamitous and strategically baseless.
- **Iran does not deserve** this treatment as it has largely complied with the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal.
- It was US (Mr. Trump) that violated the deal first by pulling out of it and reimposing sanctions on Iran.
- In a better world, Iran's adherence to the agreement would have been appreciated and the country allowed to reap the promised benefits.
- **A unilateral military action** by the U.S. will not get the approval of the UN Security Council as Russia and China remain firmly opposed to it.
- Even the U.S.'s European allies, including the U.K. which supported the Iraq

war, remain committed to the nuclear deal.

- The U.S. might get the support of Saudi Arabia and Israel, but it is not certain whether even these would like to get dragged into a full-blown war.
- A unilateral military action would also weaken international institutions and create more fissures in the Atlantic alliance.

### **What are the dangers of it?**

- **Iran is not Iraq; nor is it Libya** is something which U.S. has to take note of.
- The U.S. went to war with Iraq after a decade of crippling sanctions that it imposed affected Iraq's economy and military.
- Moreover, Iraq was totally isolated.
- Arab countries had turned against Iraq after the first Gulf war, Iran was its enemy, and Russia was still in retreat mode.
- So the U.S., the U.K. and their allies marched to Iraq and easily toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in just a few weeks.
- Iran, on the other hand, is a country that lives in a state of permanent insecurity, and it has always been battle-ready.
- While Iran is not a strong conventional military force and is crippled by sanctions as well, Iranian policymakers were aware of these challenges.
- That is why they adopted a 'forward defence' doctrine of expanding Iranian influence across West Asia through non-state militia groups.
- Iran has Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shia militias in Iraq and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Islamic Jihad in Gaza.
- So in the event of a war, Iran could activate these groups, triggering multiple conflicts, drawing in several other countries.
- This possibility makes even "a limited strike" on Iran dangerous.
- Besides, Iran could block the Strait of Hormuz, which lies between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.
- Almost one-third of the world's LNG and 20% of total oil productions flow through this route, blocking which could have wider economic ramifications.

### **How has U.S.'s war record been?**

- The U.S.'s war record is not as great as is often presented to be.
- It is the world's pre-eminent military power not because of the results of the wars it has fought but because of its military might.
- It is ironic that the U.S. is escalating tensions in the Gulf at a time when it is negotiating with the Taliban to find an exit from Afghanistan.
- When the War on Terror began, the U.S. promised to go after every terrorist in the world.

- But 17 years later, al-Qaeda is still alive, the Islamic State and other terror organisations are operating across the world, and the Taliban controls almost half the territory in Afghanistan.
- In Iraq too, the U.S. failed to suppress the post-Saddam unrest and the country slipped into a sectarian civil war.
- In Libya, the promise was liberation from Muammar Gaddafi's dictatorship when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization intervened in 2011.
- Gaddafi was killed, but eventually the country sank into chaos and is still to recover from it.
- In Syria, the U.S. made an indirect intervention and demanded President Bashar al-Assad's ouster until it was outwitted by the Russians.
- Evidently, the U.S. had failed to get the desired outcome in all these countries.

### **What could the U.S. do?**

- As U.S. President, Barack Obama seemed to have realised the challenges in Iran.
- This is primarily why he attempted to curtail Iran's nuclear programme through diplomatic means, and it was a notable success.
- President Trump says he wants talks with the Iranians; but there is no realistic programme for the same from him.
- If talks were his primary objective, the U.S. should not have withdrawn from the nuclear deal.
- Mr. Trump should have used the bonhomie created by the deal to expand ties and address concerns such as Iran's regional activism.
- If he truly wants to change the course, he should start with de-escalation of current tensions.

**Source: The Hindu**