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Article For Reading - Inflection point: On the escalation in the multi-party West Asia conflict

West Asia needs the intervention of major world powers for peace

Iran's October 1 ballistic missile attack on Israel marks a serious **escalation** in the multi-party conflict in West Asia. The attack is not surprising as Iran was under pressure, at home and in the region, from its allies, to respond to repeated Israeli provocations. It was Israel that took the war straight to Iran by attacking the Iranian embassy complex in Damascus, Syria, on April 1. Iran responded with its first direct attack on Israel 14 days later, giving Israel and its allies enough time to prepare for it. Israel's response was a symbolic, unclaimed strike at a radar system in Isfahan. In end-July, Israel again escalated the conflict by killing Ismail Haniyeh, the political chief of Hamas, in Tehran. Iran **vowed retaliation** but showed restraint, promising to **hold back fire** if there was a **ceasefire** in Gaza. But Israel not only continued the war on Gaza but also expanded the war in the north with Hezbollah. Late last month, Israel **unleashed** waves of attacks on Lebanon, killing Hezbollah's commanders and its chief, Hassan Nasrallah. Now, with Israel threatening to respond to the October 1 attack, the conflict is set to enter a more dangerous phase.

In the current conflict, no party is deterring its rivals. Israel's greater firepower did not stop Hamas from launching the October 7, 2023 attack. Israel's threats of **retribution** did not stop Hezbollah or the Houthis either from attacking the Jewish state. Nor did Iran's proxy network and its missile might deter Israel from expanding the war by bombing the Iranian embassy complex in Syria. And Israel's nuclear weapons did not stop Iran from launching direct attacks on the country. As deterrence collapsed, the crisis has escalated and widened. What has made the situation worse is the abdication of leadership by U.S. President Joe Biden. He has **given Israel a free hand** in Gaza while focusing his diplomatic resources on preventing a regional war. He has remained unmoved when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to **breach** red line after red line. Today, the war in Gaza remains unfinished, while a regional war, which could draw in even the U.S., could break out any time. There are no clear off-ramps. A full-blown war would be **catastrophic** and could spiral out of control with the involvement of multiple parties. With Israel's threat of retaliation **looming** large, the clock is ticking. Preventing such an outcome should be the immediate priority of the major world powers, including the U.S., which has great leverage over Israel, and China, which has a deep influence in Tehran. West Asia is at an inflection point, and the region needs emphatic diplomatic intervention to break out of its conflict loop and **dial down the heat**.

Summary –

The October 1 ballistic missile attack by Iran on Israel marks a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict in West Asia. This attack was anticipated due to increasing pressures on Iran to respond to Israeli provocations, particularly after Israel targeted Iranian interests in Syria. The situation intensified after Israel killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and escalated attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon. Despite Israel's military superiority, deterrence has failed on both sides, leading to an escalation of hostilities. U.S. President Joe Biden's perceived inaction has further complicated the situation, as he focuses on preventing a regional war while Israel continues its aggressive tactics. The potential for a wider conflict involving multiple parties, including the U.S. and China, underscores the urgent need for diplomatic intervention to de-escalate tensions in the region.

Vocabulary-

1. Escalation (Noun) वृद्धि –

Meaning- The act or process of increasing in intensity, magnitude, or scope.

Synonyms – Increase, Surge, Aggravation.

Antonyms – Reduction, Decrease, Mitigation.

E.g.- The escalation of tension between the two countries is worrying.

2. Retribution (Noun) प्रतिशोध –

Meaning – Punishment that is considered to be morally right, as a form of revenge.

Synonyms – Revenge, Retaliation, Vengeance.

Antonyms – Pardon, Leniency, Mercy.

E.g.- After years of corruption the people demanded retribution against the corrupt officials.

3. Vowed (Verb) संकल्प / शपथ लेना –

Meaning – To make a serious, formal or solemn promise to do something.

Synonyms – Pledged, Swore, Committed.

Antonyms – Denied, Disavowed, Renounced.

E g.- She vowed to always be there for her family.

4. Unleash (Verb) मुक्त करना, छोड़ना

Meaning – To release or set free.

Synonyms – Release, Liberate, Discharge.

Antonyms – Restrain, Control, Confine.

E g.- The storm unleash it's Fury in the coastal towns.

5. Ceasefire (Noun) युद्धविराम –

Meaning – The act or agreement to stop fighting or hostilities.

Synonyms – Truce, Armistice, Concord.

Antonyms – Violence, Hostilities, Skirmish.

E.g.- The two countries agreed to a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians affected by the conflict.

6. Breach (Noun) भंग, उल्लंघन, अतिक्रमण –

Meaning – Act of breaking or violating a law, agreement .

Synonyms – Violation, Rupture, Transgression, Infraction.

Antonyms – Compliance, Accord, Adherence, Closing.

E.g.- The treaty was designed to prevent a breach of peace between the two nations.

7. Catastrophic (Adj) विनाशकारी –

Meaning – Something that is extremely harmful, disastrous, or causing great damage or suffering.

Synonyms – Disastrous, Devastating, Calamitous.

Antonyms – Beneficial, Favourable, Propitious.

E g.- The hurricane caused catastrophic damage to coastal towns.

8. Looming (Verb, Adj) आसन्न –

Meaning – Something that is imminent or impending, often with a sense of threat or importance.

Synonyms – Threatening, Impending, Menacing.

Antonyms- Diminishing, Receding, Retreating.

E.g.- The looming deadline was causing stress.

Idiomatic Expressions-

1. Hold back fire-

Meaning- Generally means to restrain or control anger, aggression, or intense emotions.

2. Dial down the heat-

Meaning – to reduce intensity or pressure in a given situation. It is often used in contexts where tensions are high, emotions are running strong, or things are getting too intense, and someone is asking to calm down, cool off, or ease the situation.

E g – In an argument: “Let’s dial down the heat and talk this through calmly.”

3. Giving a free hand-

Means allowing someone to act freely, make decisions, or take action without restrictions, interference, or needing approval from others.

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