

Q No: 2

Introduction:-

The prospects for successful US - Russia negotiations to end the Ukraine war are real but narrow: negotiations can succeed only if three things align - a credible pause in fighting, a mutually acceptable set of security guarantees, and enforceable verification with third-party backing. At present (summer - autumn 2025) there are ongoing low-level talks and humanitarian confidence-building moves (prisoner swaps, envoys meeting), but major gaps remain over territory, NATO membership, and verification. Any realistic assessment must therefore weigh both tactical openings and structural hurdles.

Evaluate The Hurdles And Practical Recommendations To End The Dangerous War:-

1. Current Diplomatic Posture (Short-term Window):-

Evaluation/Hurdles: The U.S. has been actively mediating contacts and special envoys are meeting Ukrainian and Russian interlocutors, but talks are fragmented (humanitarian track vs. political/territorial tracks). Russia and Ukraine have agreed to limited humanitarian measures (prisoner swaps) but remain far apart on ceasefire terms. This fragmentation makes momentum fragile.

Recommendation:- Use a phased, track-based framework: consolidate humanitarian and prisoner exchanges first, then lock a time-limited ceasefire before tackling territorial and security arrangements.

2. Divergent Strategic Objectives:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: Russia seeks security guarantees and de facto control over parts of eastern/southern Ukraine; Ukraine

seeks full territorial integrity and security guarantees from the West. The U.S. wants a stable settlement that avoids direct clash with Russia but also preserves NATO credibility. These objectives are currently incompatible in a single stroke.

Recommendation: Translate zero-sum demands into tradeable packages (e.g., phased territorial arrangements tied to robust security guarantees and large-scale reconstruction aid) with explicit timelines for implementation.

3. Military Balance And The Battlefield Dynamic:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: Russia's ability to apply offensive pressure affects its bargaining position; Ukraine's capacity (with Western aid) to deny decisive Russian gains strengthens its hand. Battlefield advances or setbacks will determine the urgency and flexibility

of negotiators.

Recommendation: Negotiate a monitored temporary ceasefire during a lull in large operations; freeze frontlines under international observation to prevent battlefield shocks from collapsing diplomacy.

4. Sanctions, Economic Leverage And Incentives :-

Evaluation | Hurdles: Sanctions are a major lever but also a bargaining chip; Russia's economy is stressed but sanction's effects are uneven and partially evaded. Russia may demand sanctions relief as part of any deal, but unilateral relief risks political blowback in the West.

Recommendation: Design conditional, reversible sanction relief tied to verifiable steps (ceasefire milestones, withdrawal, demobilisation), with multilateral triggers and snapback clauses

to preserve leverage.

5. Domestic Politics In The U.S., Russia And Ukraine:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: Leader's domestic constraints shape flexibility: political incentives in Moscow (regime image), Kyiv (territorial non-recognition), and Washington (Congress/public opinion) limit concessions. Changes in U.S. policy or ambivalence among European partners increase unpredictability.

Recommendation: Build domestic constituencies for a deal: pre-negotiate domestic messaging, legislative backstops (e.g., guaranteed security assistance for Ukraine during implementation), and political buy-ins in Russia and Ukraine through phased domestic legal steps.

6. Trust Deficit And Credibility Of Guarantees:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: Past failures (Minsk I/II) left deep skepticism. Russia and Ukraine distrust each other's commitments; third-party guarantees have been seen as insufficient. Without credible enforcement, any deal risks collapse.

Recommendation: Create robust multi-lateral verification: NATO/EU plus neutral peacekeepers (UN/Turkey/OSCE) to monitor, with clear consequences for breaches (automatic sanctions snapback/international arbitration).

7. Territorial Issues And Legal/International Norms:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: Russia's annexations and claims over Crimea/parts of Donbas are red lines for Kyiv and many western states; any legal recognition would have long-term implications for international law. This is the principal non-negotiable

for Ukraine.

Recommendation: Avoid forced legal recognition as a first step. Consider interim political arrangements (special status, long-term autonomy frameworks) while leaving final status to a later, internationally supervised referendum or arbitration - but only if conducted under international guarantees and after de-occupation.

8. NATO Enlargement And Security Guarantees:-

Evaluation	Hurdles: Russia demands guarantees against NATO expansion; Ukraine demands security guarantees. The West is reluctant to trade NATO enlargement in exchange for frozen conflict, but security architectures can be engineered to meet both sides minimum needs without changing Alliance membership.
Recommendation: Offer creative security	

guarantees short of NATO Article-5 membership: a multilateral security compact including the U.S., EU, UK, Turkey, and other guarantors providing military assistance, rapid response frameworks, and phased integration options for Ukraine contingent on legal and democratic reforms.

9. Third-Party Mediators (Turkey, UN, China, U.S.) :-

Evaluation Hurdles: Third partyies can facilitate but have their own priorities; mediation credibility requires perceived neutrality. Turkey and Switzerland / UN have played useful roles; China's involvement is welcomed by Moscow but suspect to Kyiv and NATO.

Recommendation: Use a "Core + Wider" format: a core negotiation table (Russia, Ukraine, key guarantors: U.S., EU, Turkey) for decisions, with a wider

group (UN, China, G20) endorsing and assisting implementation and reconstruction financing.

10. Information Warfare, Domestic Narratives And Legitimacy:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: Intense propaganda and information operations harden public opinion on all sides and make political compromise costly. Mis/disinformation can collapse fragile agreements.

Recommendation: Pair any agreement with a joint public communication plan and independent fact-checking verification cell; involve civil society and diaspora voices to broaden legitimacy and reduce the potency of hostile narratives.

11. Humanitarian Relief And Reconstruction As Peace Inducements:-

Evaluation/Hurdles: The end goals

reconstruction needs in Ukraine (energy / urban rebuilding) can be a powerful inducement - but require massive funding and assurances it won't be diverted. Russia may demand post-war reconstruction guarantees too.

Recommendation: Establish an international reconstruction fund (multilateral donors + frozen Russian assets in escrow) disbursed only after verified demobilisation and rule-of-law benchmarks; tie reconstruction to anti-corruption oversight and local reconciliation programs.

12. Verification, Sequencing And Enforcement Mechanisms:-

Evaluation / Hurdles: Weak verification was the Achilles' heel of prior agreements. Without clear sequencing (ceasefire first? withdrawal first?) and robust enforcement, commitments unravel.

Recommendation: Adopt detailed sequencing: (1) immediate humanitarian ceasefire; (2) exchange / prisoner releases; (3) phased withdrawal of heavy weapons; (4) deployment of neutral monitors / peacekeepers; (5) formal political negotiations on status / security; each step automatically linked to concrete, multilateral enforcement measures.

Conclusion:-

Chances of success are mixed but not negligible: the diplomatic window exists because of mutual weariness, battlefield stalemate and international pressure, and because limited confidence-building measures are already happening (prisoner swaps, envoys). However, the biggest hurdles are incompatible end-goals (territory vs. sovereignty), massive trust deficits, domestic political constraints, and weak verification - all of which have sunk previous accords.

For a realistic settlement, negotiators must adopt a phased, enforceable, multilateral approach that (a) secures an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and verified freeze of frontlines, (b) ties conditional sanctions relief to verifiable milestones, (c) creates a multilateral security compact for Ukraine (short of immediate NATO accession), (d) embeds robust peacekeeping/monitoring and snapback enforcement, and (e) funds reconstruction through a transparent international mechanism.

If these elements are credibly combined, negotiations mediated by the U.S. and third parties can produce a durable ceasefire and an agreed roadmap toward a final settlement - but only if political leaders in Moscow, Kyiv and Washington accept compromise and commit to international verification.

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Q No: 3

Introduction:-

The June 2025 U.S. - Israel strikes on Iranian nuclear sites (Operation "Midnight Hammer" and related Israeli attacks) changed the security calculus in the Middle East: they set a precedent for direct strikes on safeguard facilities, demonstrated that military options remain feasible, and increased incentives - political and technical - for regional actors to rethink nuclear and security strategies.

The Future Of Nuclear Politics

In The Middle East After US & Israel Attack On Iranian Nuclear Sites:-

Below are 12 focused, example-backed points on how Middle East nuclear politics are likely

to evolve.

1. Immediate Legitimization Of Preventive Strikes As Policy :-

The coordinated

U.S. - Israeli action has normalized the idea that major powers may use conventional force to delay or degrade perceived nuclear threats - a precedent comparable to Israel's 1981 Osirak strike but on a larger, jointly executed scale. This lowers the taboo against pre-emptive attacks in the region and raises the probability that states will plan for either to strike or be struck.

2. Acceleration Of Covert Dispersal & Hardening By Proliferators :-

States

fearing attack will respond by decentralising facilities, dispersing sensitive work to smaller sites, and increasing underground/hardened infrastructure and mobile enrichment

capabilities - a predictable technical reaction that reduces the efficacy of future precision strikes. Intelligence and open reporting already suggested Iran moved key components before the June strikes, illustrating this dynamic.

3. Short-Term Regional Escalation And Missile / Air Campaign Cycles:-

The strikes triggered immediate Iranian missile and drone reprisals and reciprocal Israeli operations; such cycles can escalate into larger air / missile campaigns that complicate de-escalation and raise the nuclear threshold by creating contingency plans tied to national survival. The June attacks and subsequent launches underline how kinetic escalation can ripple across the region.

4. Erosion Of International Safeguards Credibility (IAEA & NPT Politics):-

When

military strikes target facilities that were under safeguards or subject to inspection regimes, the IAEA's perceived neutrality and utility are weakened - Tehran and sympathetic states will claim the safeguards failed to prevent attacks, undermining non-proliferation norms and complicating future inspections and cooperative verification. Analyses after June warned of lasting damage to watchdog credibility.

5. Reinvigoration Of Covert Weaponization Pathways:-

Because direct attacks cannot reliably remove knowledge or human capital, affected states may deem clandestine weaponization (dispersed labs, dual-use civilian cores) the safest way to preserve a breakout option - increasing capacity and making detection much harder for monitors and foreign intelligence. Post-strike assessments said the attacks set

the program back only months, not eliminated it.

6. Regional Domino Effects - New Incentives To Obtain Deterrents:-

Gulf states and other regional actors will reassess their deterrence portfolios. Financially and technically capable states (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt) may accelerate latent nuclear options (civil programs that can be militarised) or pursue advanced conventional/strategic deterrents to avoid vulnerability to strikes. The strikes therefore increase latent proliferation risk even absent formal weapon programmes.

7. Arms Racing In Delivery Systems And Missile Defences:-

Expect intensified procurement of long-range strike capabilities, precision munitions, and layered air/missile defenses (e.g.,

more SAMs, ballistic missile interceptors). If strikes remain a credible policy tool, states will focus on preventing strikes (air defenses) and complicating attribution. This shifts budgets toward military hardening and away from social/economic priorities.

8. Politics Of Alliance Dependence & Hedging :-

Smaller states will hedge between great powers: some will deepen security ties with the U.S. / Israel for protection; others will move closer to Russia / China to obtain anti-strike technologies or political cover. The strikes showed that alliance commitments can be decisive - and that reliance on external patrons may shape proliferation choices.

9. Sanctions & Legal Counters As Strategic Instruments :-

The attacks

intensify debates over sanction relief, asset freeze/unfreeze, and "snapback" mechanisms - states may prefer political / financial instruments over military responses but will also use sanctions as bargaining chips in negotiating limits on nuclear activity. International politics (e.g., efforts to delay or trigger snapback) will therefore be central to future non-proliferation bargaining.

10. Underground / Dual-Use Science And The Brain-Drain Problem:-

Targeted strikes that kill or remove technical personnel push states to hide expertise inside military institutions or export it to partner states - increasing networks for clandestine knowledge transfer and making technical control harder. History shows human capital is portable and therefore resilient to strikes.

11. Legal & Normative Backlash - Calls For Arms Control Alternatives:-

Confronted with the risks of kinetic options, some states and international actors will push renewed arms-control frameworks (regional nuclear-free zones, extended verification agreements) as prophylaxis against future strikes. But post-strike mistrust will complicate negotiations: the very action meant to reduce a threat can harden positions against cooperative control.

12. Long-Term Strategic Equilibrium: Higher Capacity, Lower Stability

The net effect is likely to be an equilibrium with greater technical capacity (dispersed and covert nuclear work), stronger defensive/offensive conventional postures, weakened multilateral verification credibility, and more frequent

crisis episodes - a less stable but deterrence - saturated region where nuclear brinkmanship remains a latent danger. The June 2025 strikes, followed by limited strategic setbacks rather than program elimination, exemplify how military action shifts dynamics without resolving the underlying insecurity drivers.

Conclusion:-

The U.S. - Israeli strikes have reduced short-term certainty about Iran's nuclear timetable but increased long-term proliferation risks across the Middle East by incentivising dispersal, covert programs, stronger delivery/defence systems, and political hedging - while simultaneously eroding confidence in multilateral safeguards. Policy priorities to reduce danger must therefore combine (a) urgent reinforcement of credible, independent verification, (b) regional security architectures that

reduce reliance on preventive strikes, and (c) targeted measures to limit knowledge diffusion (export controls, personnel safeguards) — otherwise the region moves toward greater capacity and instability.

QNo: 4

Introduction:-

South Asia's water politics has entered a turbulent phase after India's move to unilaterally exit the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT, 1960) and China's plan to construct the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet. These decisions intensify regional hydro-politics by raising fears of unilateral water control, ecological disasters, and potential conflict. Both moves challenge cooperative frameworks and threaten regional peace, security, and food water-energy nexus.

1. Breakdown Of Cooperative Frameworks:-

India's withdrawal from IWT dismantles one of the world's most enduring water treaties, in place since 1960, supervised by the World Bank. Its demise removes a conflict-prevention mechanism between India and Pakistan, raising fears of zero-sum politics in transboundary water management.

2. Weaponization Of Water As A Strategic Tool:-

India gains greater leverage over the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab), previously guaranteed to Pakistan. Unregulated control could be used as a coercive tool in times of political or military crises, intensifying mistrust between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.

3. Security Dilemma For Pakistan:-

Pakistan,

heavily dependent on the Indus Basin for irrigation (80% of agriculture relies on it), faces existential threats to food and water security. A water-insecure Pakistan may respond by seeking Chinese, Turkish, or Gulf support, potentially militarizing water disputes further.

4. Ecological & Livelihood Concerns In Kashmir:-

Upstream damming and diversions by India could alter natural flows, affecting ecology, fisheries, and agriculture in Jammu and Kashmir and downstream Pakistan. Local communities will experience intensified livelihood stress, fueling resentment in already conflict-prone areas.

5. China's Brahmaputra Mega Dam - Geopolitical Ripples:-

China's plan to construct a 60 CM dam in Medog Country, Tibet on the Brahmaputra

heightens concerns in India and Bangladesh. Both countries rely on downstream flows for agriculture and energy. A unilateral Chinese decision could shift the balance of water security in South Asia.

6. Impact On Bangladesh's Delta Economy:-

Bangladesh, as the lowest riparian, fears reduced Brahmaputra flows, salinity intrusion, and ecological degradation in the Sundarbans. Any alteration in river dynamics could imperil its agrarian economy and worsen climate-induced vulnerabilities.

7. Strategic Convergence Between China & India:-

Ironically, India's aggressive water politics toward Pakistan and China's similar stance on Brahmaputra expose both to accusations

of double standards. This convergence of hydro-hegemonic practices risks institutionalizing unilateralism in South Asian water management.

8. Risk Of Regional Arms & Infrastructure Race:-

Water insecurity may trigger infrastructure races: more dams, canals, and barrages. India, China, and Pakistan could prioritize strategic water projects over cooperation, further deepening mistrust. Militarization of dam sites is a potential scenario.

9. Weakening Of SAARC & Regional Cooperation:-

These unilateral moves undermine prospects of reviving SAARC-led regional cooperation. Water disputes will erode trust in other collaborative domains such as trade and connectivity, limiting South Asia's collective growth.

10. Internationalization Of Water Conflicts:-

Pakistan may approach the UN, World Bank, or ICJ against India's Treaty exit, while India and Bangladesh may raise Brahmaputra concerns at international climate forums. This externalization risks bringing extra-regional powers (U.S., EU, Gulf states) into South Asian disputes.

11. Human Security & Migration Pressures:-

Reduced river flows will exacerbate water scarcity, agricultural decline, and energy shortages. This can lead to internal displacement, climate migration, and rising poverty, especially in Pakistan and Bangladesh - turning water scarcity into a human security crisis.

12. Need For A New Hydro-Diplomatic Framework:-

The crisis also creates an opportunity: a South Asian Water Compact involving India, Pakistan, China, Nepal, and Bangladesh, supported by international mediators, could address river basin management, flood control, and equitable distribution. Without such a framework, instability will escalate.

Conclusion:-

The future of water politics in South Asia looks increasingly conflict-prone after India's unilateral exit from the Indus Water Treaty and China's Brahmaputra mega dam project. Both decisions undermine cooperative regimes and risk turning rivers into strategic weapons, amplifying regional insecurity. However, water can also serve as a basis for cooperation if multilateral hydro-diplomacy, third-

- party mediation, and equitable basin management are pursued. Without urgent action, water disputes could become the new "nuclear flashpoint" of South Asia. x

Q No: 5

Pakistan's Flood Vulnerability: Causes & Policy Options:-

Introduction:-

Pakistan faces devastating floods almost every year, with the 2010 and 2022 floods displacing millions. The reasons are both natural and man-made: climate extremes, glacier melt, poor planning, and weak governance. Unless urgent reforms are made, Pakistan will remain trapped in a cycle of disaster and recovery.

1. Climate Change And Extreme Rainfall:-

Changing monsoon patterns bring heavier, concentrated rains.

Policy:- Integrate climate data into planning and flood forecasts.

2. Glacier Melt And Glaciers:-

Retreating northern glaciers trigger sudden outbursts.

Policy: Map vulnerable lakes and install early - warning sensors.

3. Poor Urban Drainage:-

Blocked nullahs in cities like Karachi worsen urban flooding.

Policy:- Clear drains, enforce building codes, and adopt green infrastructure.

4. Deforestation And Watershed Degradation:-

Loss of forests increases run off and erosion.

Policy:- Expand afforestation and community - led watershed projects.

5. Weak Infrastructure:-

Aging embankments and silted reservoirs fail during peak floods.

Policy:- Rehabilitate dams, levees, and canals under the NFPP.

6. Encroachment Of Floodplains:-

Settlements in riverbeds multiply losses.

Policy:- Enforce zoning laws and relocate vulnerable populations.

7. Weak Early-Warning Systems:-

Forecasts often fail to reach local communities.

Policy:- Expand river gauges, mobile alerts, and community drills.

8. Fragmented Governance:-

Overlapping mandates hinder coordinated action.

Policy:- Establish a unified River Basin

Authority.

9. Lack Of Finance & Insurance:-

Recovery is slow as farmers lack risk protection.

Policy:- Create disaster insurance schemes and pre-arranged contingency funds.

10. River Siltation & Morphology Change:-

Sediment reduces channel capacity, worsening floods.

Policy:- Implement basin-wide sediment management.

11. Agricultural Vulnerability:-

Flood-sensitive crops intensify rural poverty.

Policy:- Promote flood-tolerant seeds and diversify livelihoods.

12. Weak International Support And Transparency:-

Huge reconstruction needs face misuse risks.

Policy:- Secure climate "Loss & damage" funds with independent oversight.

Conclusion:-

Pakistan's flood disasters stem from climate extremes compounded by governance failures, poor infrastructure, and ecological neglect. The way forward lies in a holistic flood strategy: resilient infrastructure, early warning, watershed restoration, zoning enforcement, and innovative financing with international support. Only then can Pakistan shift from reactive relief to long-term resilience.

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