

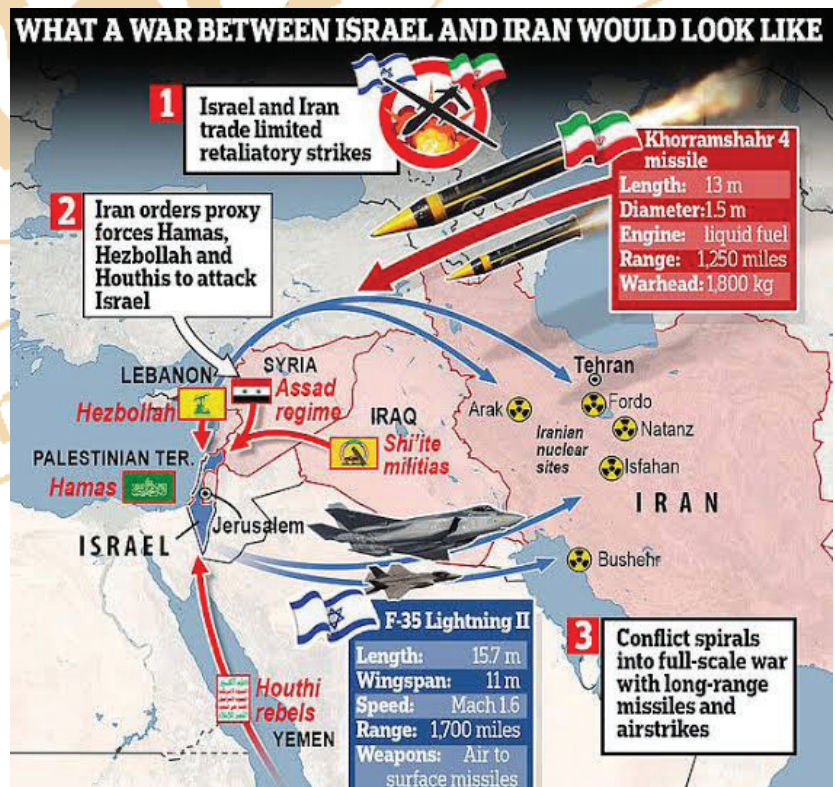
The edge of war: On the West Asia situation

The Hindu

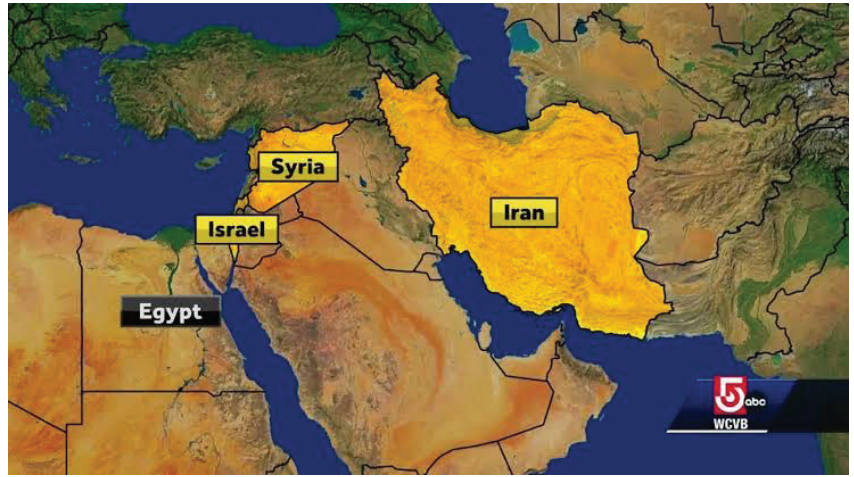
Paper - II
(IR)

The killing of Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hezbollah, was one of the most consequential acts by Israel since the war in West Asia broke out on October 7, 2023. Hezbollah, which, under Nasrallah's three-decade long leadership, emerged as a parallel state in Lebanon, has been seen by the Israelis as their most powerful non-state enemy. Viewed by the U.S. as a terror group, it is also a central constituent in Iran's "axis of resistance", through which Iran projects its influence across the region. By killing Nasrallah, Israel has dealt Hezbollah a heavy blow and dented Iran's influence, but its cross-border attacks have killed and displaced thousands and crossed the brightest of Iran's red lines. The region has never been this close to an open war between Israel and Iran. When Israel launched its retaliatory war on Gaza after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, Nasrallah opened a second front by firing rockets into northern Israel. He wanted to keep some military pressure on the Israeli Defense Forces when the war on Gaza was killing tens of thousands of Palestinians. Israel played along with limited exchange of fire in return for Hezbollah's rockets when its focus was on Gaza. But after destroying much of Gaza, Israel turned its attention towards Lebanon, and then dramatically escalated the conflict, targeting Hezbollah's ground functionaries, its commanders and then Nasrallah.

Israel's declared objective in the north is to enable the over 60,000 people who were displaced by Hezbollah's rockets to return to their homes. Its strikes have weakened Hezbollah but not destroyed its missile capabilities. This means Israel could launch a ground offensive into Lebanon, seeking to push Hezbollah to the north of the Litani river and carve a buffer on the border. A ground offensive would displace and kill tens of thousands of people in Lebanon, which is reeling under deep economic pains. Israel's invasion of Gaza is yet to meet its declared objectives of destroying Hamas and securing the release of hostages. There is no guarantee that Israel would quickly meet its objectives



in Lebanon. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sees the crisis as an opportunity for Israel to degrade its non-state rivals even at the cost of triggering an all-out war with Iran. The U.S. publicly calls for ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon, but these words do not carry any weight as the Biden administration continues to arm Israel. Iran, repeatedly provoked and pushed to the corner, has so far exercised relative restraint while Israel has gone on



a blood-thirsty rampage. Iran might be tempted to respond to the Nasrallah killing with force. But Tehran should not give Mr. Netanyahu what he wants - an excuse to start a wider war in West Asia.

Expected Question for Prelims

Que. Consider the following statements:

1. The Israel-Hamas war started after the attack on Israel on 7 October 2023.
2. Israel recently killed top commanders including Hezbollah chief Nasrallah.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Only 1 | (b) Only 2 |
| (c) Both 1 and 2 | (d) Neither 1 nor 2 |

Answer : C

Mains Expected Question & Format

Que.: "Middle East Asia currently stands at the edge of all-out war between Israel and Iran, which will have adverse effects not only on the region but on the entire world." What steps do Iran, Israel and the superpowers need to take to properly handle this situation?

Answer's Approach:

- ❖ In the first part of the answer, discuss the current situation in Middle East Asia between Israel and Iran.
- ❖ In the second part, discuss the effects of a possible war between the two countries and also discuss the role of Iran, Israel and the superpowers in preventing it.
- ❖ Finally give a way forward.

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.