US-Iran tensions

Why in News?

The Iraqi parliamentarians recently voted in favour of a resolution seeking to expel American troops from Iraq.

What is the story behind?

- This was the first blowback the US faced after it assassinated Iranian General Qassem Soleimani inside Iraq.
- The outcome of the vote was expected as the lawmakers were under pressure from both the public and militias to act against the US.
- The U.S. troops are in Iraq on an invitation from the Iraqi government to fight the Islamic State.
- But, they have carried out air strikes against Iraqi militias recently, without even the approval of the Baghdad government.

What were the Iraqi reactions?

- This triggered public protests and led to the siege of the American Embassy.
- In an already explosive situation, the killing of Soleimani acted as a catalyst.
- The anger among Iraqi lawmakers towards U.S. actions was on full display inside the Parliament hall before the voting.
- Parliament itself doesn't have the authority to expel foreign troops. But a resolution passed in Parliament is a call to the executive branch to act.
- Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, who condemned the killing of Soleimani, has stated clearly that it is time for the Americans to go home.
- Government officials have already started working on a memorandum on the legal and procedural formalities to expel U.S. troops.

What were the US's reactions?

- Iraq is a crucial ally for the U.S. in the war against terrorism in West Asia, and the Trump administration has itself to blame for the setback.
- It pushed the Iraqis to a point where they had to choose between Tehran and Washington. They picked their powerful neighbour.
- But US President Donald Trump still doesn't seem to listen.
- He has threatened Iraq with sanctions and a bill for billions of dollars if the US troops are forced to pull back.

- This approach not only violates Iraq's sovereignty, it also escalates the situation to a three-cornered crisis involving the US, Iraq and Iran.

What triggered such a crisis?

- **Mr. Trump** is primarily responsible for today's situation.
- His decision to pull the U.S. out of a functioning **Iran nuclear deal** was the trigger.
- When the **U.S. re-imposed sanctions on Iran**, it was up to the other signatories of the deal - European countries, Russia and China - to save the agreement.
- Iran waited for a year before taking countermeasures. But they did nothing, barring issuing occasional statements in the agreement's favour.

What could be done?

- Europe, which has good ties with both the U.S. and Iran, should wake up at least now.
- It should use its diplomatic channels to rein in Trump and pacify Iran to prevent a war.
- As a first step of de-escalation, Trump could order his soldiers to pack their bags and leave Iraq.

Source: The Hindu

Quick Facts

Iran Nuclear Deal

- The deal is officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear programme.
- It was signed between Iran and the P5 + Germany and the EU in 2015.
- P5 - 5 UNSC permanent members (US, China, France, Russia, and UK).
- It is implemented by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- Under the deal,
    1. Most of Iran's enriched uranium was shipped out of the country,
    2. A heavy water facility was rendered inoperable,
    3. Operational nuclear facilities were brought under international inspection.
- In return, the deal involved lifting of international sanctions on Iran.
- The U.S. decided to withdraw from the deal in May, 2018.



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