



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the strategic importance of Golan heights, and reasons for dispute in the region. Also discuss how change of US's stance on the issue will impact the region and world at large. (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce briefly by highlighting the dispute.
- Bring out the strategic importance of Golan Heights.
- Describe impact of US's changed stance.

Answer

Introduction

- The Golan Heights are a fertile plateau of around 1,300 sq km area lying to the north and east of the **Sea of Galilee**, which Israel seized from Syria during the **Six-Day War of 1967**, and has occupied ever since.

Body

Strategic Importance of Golan Heights

- The Golan overlooks both Israel and Syria, and offers a **commanding military vantage**. Israel argues that Golan is a security buffer against the war in Syria. Syrian artillery regularly shelled the whole of northern Israel from 1948 to 1967 when Syria controlled the Heights.
- The topography provides a **natural buffer** against any military thrust from Syria.
- The area is also a **key source of water** for an arid region. Rainwater from the Golan's catchment feeds into the **Jordan River**. The area provides a third of Israel's water supply.
- The land is **fertile**, and the volcanic soil is used to cultivate vineyards and orchards and raise cattle. The Golan is also home to Israel's only ski resort.

Impact of US's changed stance in the region and wider world

- USA's recognition marked a reversal of decades of US policy, which has refused to condone the Israeli occupation of Golan, and urged that the dispute must be resolved diplomatically.
- US recognition now legitimized the occupation of territory through force; such recognition can lead to countries involved in territorial disputes using aggression to settle their claims thus endangering peace at regional as well as global level.
- It runs counter to international law, which does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over territories occupied during the 1967 War.
- Even though US move is symbolic, rather than legal, but given the US's global influence,

recognition could lend some legitimacy to Israel's controversial annexation policy.

- Arab countries described the declaration as a clear violation of the U.N. Charter and of international law. US action is blow to peace process in the region.
- There are chances of increasing conflict between Iran and US due to this recognition by US. Thus destabilizing entire Arab region which may have impact on Oil production in region causing Oil prices to high negatively impacting oil importers like India.

Conclusion

- US current approach to contentious issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict will further undermine the US government's claim to be an honest broker. US has significant global influence by condoning aggression, the current administration has undermined the process of peace in Middle east.
- The outstanding disputes for regions and wider Israel- Palestine dispute should be dealt with in realm of international laws and through peaceful negotiations.

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