

Q. No. 2

What will be the strategic and political implications of the US withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty, and how is it impacting arms control arrangements between the great powers?

1. Introduction

- The Open Skies Treaty (1992) allowed participating states to conduct unarmed observation flights over each other's territories.
- US withdrawal in **November 2020** weakened one of the mechanisms designed to promote transparency and confidence among major powers.

2. US withdrawal has weakened strategic transparency between the major powers

- 2.1 The treaty enabled states to monitor military activities and reduce uncertainty about strategic intentions.
- 2.2 US withdrawal reduced opportunities for Russia and the West to verify military developments through cooperative mechanisms.
- 2.3 The decision reflected the broader deterioration of US-Russia strategic trust.
- 2.4 Allies also became concerned about the erosion of collective arms-control arrangements.

3. The withdrawal contributes to the broader erosion of the post-Cold War arms-control architecture

- 3.1 The collapse of the **INF Treaty in 2019** had already removed a major constraint on intermediate-range nuclear weapons.
- 3.2 The uncertainty surrounding New START has further complicated strategic stability.
- 3.3 The Ukraine War has sharply intensified confrontation between Russia and the West.
- 3.4 The weakening of treaties increases the risk of arms-race dynamics and miscalculation.

4. Great-power rivalry is shifting arms control from cooperation towards strategic competition

- 4.1 US-Russia relations increasingly combine nuclear deterrence with cyber, space and advanced conventional capabilities.
- 4.2 China's growing military and nuclear capabilities complicate the traditional bilateral US-Russia arms-control framework.
- 4.3 New technologies are creating capabilities that existing treaties were not designed to regulate.
- 4.4 The absence of effective verification mechanisms increases strategic uncertainty.

5. Reviving arms control requires broader and technologically updated arrangements

- 5.1 Future agreements should restore transparency and verification mechanisms.
- 5.2 US-Russia dialogue on strategic stability should continue despite political confrontation.
- 5.3 China should eventually be incorporated into multilateral strategic arms-control discussions.
- 5.4 Emerging domains such as cyber warfare, AI and space weapons require new confidence-building measures.

6. Conclusion

The Open Skies withdrawal is both a **symptom and a contributor to the erosion of great-power arms control**; restoring strategic stability requires renewed diplomacy, transparency and inclusive arms-control mechanisms.

Q. No. 3

What are the similarities and differences between Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir conflicts?

1. Introduction

Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir are prolonged territorial conflicts rooted in competing claims of sovereignty, identity and self-determination. However, their **historical origins, legal frameworks and geopolitical contexts differ significantly**.

2. Both conflicts involve contested territory, competing identities and competing claims to self-determination

- 2.1 Both regions have experienced prolonged disputes between states claiming territorial sovereignty.
- 2.2 Ethnic and national identities have played a major role in mobilising populations.
- 2.3 Both conflicts have produced displacement, violence and humanitarian consequences.
- 2.4 External powers and regional geopolitics have influenced the trajectory of both disputes.
- 2.5 International mediation has repeatedly failed to produce a durable settlement.

3. The historical and legal origins of the two conflicts are substantially different

- 3.1 **Nagorno-Karabakh** was an Armenian-majority autonomous oblast within Soviet Azerbaijan whose status became contested during the Soviet collapse.
- 3.2 The First Nagorno-Karabakh War produced Armenian control over the territory and surrounding areas before Azerbaijan regained control in later military campaigns.

****3.3** Kashmir's dispute originates primarily in the **1947 partition and accession of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir**, followed by war between India and Pakistan.
3.4 Kashmir has remained divided between India, Pakistan and, in a separate sector, China.

4. The international legal and diplomatic frameworks surrounding the conflicts differ

4.1 The Kashmir dispute has been addressed through multiple **UN Security Council resolutions**, including Resolution 47 of 1948.

4.2 The Nagorno-Karabakh dispute was largely addressed through the OSCE Minsk Process and later bilateral/regional diplomacy.

4.3 Azerbaijan emphasised territorial integrity, while Armenian actors historically emphasised self-determination.

4.4 Kashmir simultaneously involves competing claims of territorial integrity, self-determination and bilateral agreements.

5. Recent developments have produced different outcomes

5.1 Azerbaijan's military operations in **2020** and **2023** fundamentally altered control over Nagorno-Karabakh.

5.2 The Armenian population largely fled the region following Azerbaijan's 2023 offensive.

5.3 Kashmir remains an unresolved international dispute with continuing India-Pakistan tensions.

5.4 India's 2019 constitutional changes concerning Jammu and Kashmir further transformed the dispute.

6. Conclusion

Both conflicts demonstrate the dangers of unresolved territorial and identity disputes, but **Nagorno-Karabakh and Kashmir cannot be treated as legally or historically identical cases.**

Q. No. 4

Last two decades have seen the rise of the right as a potent challenge to liberal democracies. What are the causes of this rise and how can states attend to this challenge?

1. Introduction

The rise of right-wing populist and nationalist movements reflects dissatisfaction with political establishments, economic insecurity, migration, cultural change and declining trust in liberal institutions.

2. Economic and social insecurity has created fertile ground for right-wing politics

- 2.1 Globalisation and deindustrialisation have produced economic insecurity among sections of the working and middle classes.
- 2.2 Rising inequality has weakened confidence in traditional political parties.
- 2.3 Youth unemployment and declining social mobility have increased political frustration.
- 2.4 Migration has intensified debates over jobs, identity and public services.

3. Cultural anxiety and identity politics have strengthened right-wing mobilisation

- 3.1 Rapid demographic and cultural changes have generated fears about national identity.
- 3.2 Nationalism provides a simple political narrative in increasingly complex societies.
- 3.3 Concerns over immigration and multiculturalism have been politically exploited.
- 3.4 Terrorism and security concerns have strengthened demands for restrictive policies.

4. Digital platforms have accelerated polarisation and populist mobilisation

- 4.1 Social media allows populist leaders to communicate directly with voters.
- 4.2 Algorithmic amplification can strengthen political echo chambers.
- 4.3 Disinformation and conspiracy theories can undermine institutional trust.
- 4.4 Political movements can mobilise rapidly without traditional party structures.

5. Liberal democracies should address the underlying grievances without abandoning democratic principles

- 5.1 Governments should pursue inclusive economic growth and reduce regional and class inequalities.
- 5.2 Democratic institutions must become more responsive and transparent.
- 5.3 States should manage migration through lawful, coherent and humane policies.
- 5.4 Civic education and media literacy can reduce susceptibility to disinformation.
- 5.5 Political parties must rebuild public trust through competent governance rather than polarisation.

6. Conclusion

The rise of the right cannot be addressed simply by suppressing right-wing movements; liberal democracies must **resolve legitimate economic and social grievances while defending pluralism, constitutionalism and democratic rights.**

Q. No. 5

Should new provinces be created in Pakistan? Elaborate with references from the new provinces debate.

1. Introduction

The debate over new provinces reflects Pakistan's challenges of **administrative centralisation, unequal development, representation and federal resource distribution.**

2. New provinces can improve administrative efficiency and political representation

- 2.1 Smaller administrative units can bring government institutions closer to citizens.
- 2.2 Large provinces can suffer from excessive concentration of political and administrative power.
- 2.3 Underdeveloped regions can receive greater political representation and policy attention.
- 2.4 South Punjab, Hazara and other movements illustrate demands for greater regional representation.
- 2.5 Smaller units can facilitate more geographically targeted development planning.

3. The new-provinces debate also raises serious political and economic complications

- 3.1 Provincial demands can acquire ethnic and linguistic dimensions.
- 3.2 Division of assets, employees, water resources and administrative institutions can generate disputes.
- 3.3 Establishing new provincial capitals and bureaucratic structures would involve significant costs.
- 3.4 New provinces could become instruments of political patronage rather than genuine administrative reform.
- 3.5 Smaller provinces alone cannot guarantee good governance.

4. Pakistan's constitutional framework makes provincial restructuring a matter of broad political consensus

- 4.1 Article 239 requires constitutional procedures for altering provincial boundaries.
- 4.2 A constitutional amendment affecting provincial boundaries requires approval by the concerned Provincial Assembly.
- 4.3 The **South Punjab province movement** demonstrates both popular demand and political disagreement over implementation.
- 4.4 Any new province must have a clear formula for representation, revenue, assets and institutional transition.

5. New provinces should be created only after objective administrative and economic feasibility assessments

- 5.1 An independent commission should evaluate population, geography, revenue and administrative capacity.
- 5.2 The NFC and distribution of federal resources must be recalibrated fairly.
- 5.3 Local governments should simultaneously be strengthened to decentralise power within provinces.
- 5.4 Provincial creation should emerge from constitutional consensus rather than electoral expediency.

6. Conclusion

Pakistan should remain **open to creating new provinces where genuine administrative and representational needs exist**, but provincial restructuring must be evidence-based, constitutionally legitimate and politically consensual.

Q. No. 6

Some scholars term Afghan Peace Deal as the US Withdrawal Deal. Do you agree? Discuss the contours of the Afghan peace process.

1. Introduction

The **US-Taliban Agreement signed in Doha on 29 February 2020** was presented as a pathway towards peace, but its central practical outcome was the withdrawal of US and allied forces from Afghanistan.

2. The Doha Agreement was heavily focused on securing the US military exit

- 2.1 The agreement established a timetable for withdrawal of US and allied forces.
- 2.2 The Taliban committed to preventing Afghan territory from being used against the US and its allies.
- 2.3 It provided for prisoner releases and movement towards intra-Afghan negotiations.
- 2.4 US-Taliban negotiations largely excluded the Afghan government from the initial bargaining process.
- 2.5 This strengthened the argument that the agreement prioritised withdrawal over a comprehensive peace settlement.

3. The intra-Afghan peace process was intended to convert the withdrawal agreement into a political settlement

- 3.1 Intra-Afghan negotiations formally began in Doha in **September 2020**.
- 3.2 The major issues included power-sharing, a political system, ceasefire arrangements and women's rights.

3.3 Deep differences between the Taliban and Afghan government prevented a final political settlement.

3.4 Taliban military advances continued while negotiations remained inconclusive.

4. The collapse of the Afghan government exposed the weaknesses of the peace process

4.1 US President Joe Biden announced the final withdrawal in 2021.

4.2 Taliban forces rapidly captured territory as foreign forces withdrew.

4.3 Kabul fell on **15 August 2021**, while the US completed its military withdrawal by the end of August.

4.4 The negotiated political transition envisaged by many peace-process participants did not materialise.

5. A genuine Afghan peace process requires more than foreign troop withdrawal

5.1 Afghanistan requires an inclusive political framework representing its diverse social and ethnic groups.

5.2 Counterterrorism commitments must be credible and verifiable.

5.3 Humanitarian and economic engagement is essential to prevent state collapse.

5.4 Women's rights and access to education must remain central to international engagement.

5.5 Pakistan and other regional states should support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process.

6. Conclusion

The Doha Agreement can reasonably be described as a **US withdrawal deal with peace provisions**, because withdrawal was its most concrete outcome, while the broader objective of achieving a negotiated and inclusive Afghan peace remained incomplete.

Q. No. 7

How is militarization of Artificial Intelligence and the Computing Revolutionizing Military Affairs?

1. Introduction

The convergence of **AI, high-performance computing, big data, autonomous systems and advanced sensors** is transforming warfare from manpower-intensive operations towards increasingly data-driven and autonomous military systems.

2. AI is transforming military decision-making and intelligence

- 2.1 AI can process enormous quantities of satellite, drone and battlefield data rapidly.
- 2.2 Machine-learning systems can identify patterns and potential targets.
- 2.3 AI-supported decision systems can accelerate the observe-orient-decide-act cycle.
- 2.4 Predictive analytics can improve logistics, maintenance and battlefield planning.

3. Autonomous weapons and robotics are changing the nature of combat

- 3.1 AI-enabled drones can perform surveillance, targeting and strike missions.
- 3.2 Autonomous ground and maritime systems can undertake dangerous reconnaissance missions.
- 3.3 Swarm technologies can allow large numbers of relatively inexpensive systems to coordinate.
- 3.4 Human-machine teaming can expand military capabilities while reducing risks to personnel.

4. Computing power is transforming cyber, space and electronic warfare

- 4.1 Advanced computing strengthens cyber-attack and cyber-defence capabilities.
- 4.2 AI can identify vulnerabilities and detect hostile cyber activity more rapidly.
- 4.3 Space-based sensors and satellite networks increasingly depend on advanced computing.
- 4.4 Electronic warfare is becoming more adaptive through machine-learning systems.

5. Militarised AI also creates serious strategic and ethical risks

- 5.1 Autonomous targeting raises questions about human control over lethal force.
- 5.2 Algorithmic errors can produce unintended escalation.
- 5.3 AI can lower the threshold for conflict by making military action faster and less costly.
- 5.4 Unequal access to advanced computing may widen the military gap between major and weaker powers.
- 5.5 International rules are therefore needed for responsible military AI.

6. Conclusion

AI and computing are revolutionising military affairs by making warfare **faster, more autonomous, networked and data-centric**, but strategic stability increasingly depends on maintaining meaningful human control and developing international norms.

Q. No. 8

Delineate the ways in which Covid-19 has affected the contours of the contemporary world order.

1. Introduction

COVID-19 was not merely a health crisis; it disrupted **globalisation, geopolitics, economies, supply chains, governance and international cooperation**, accelerating changes already underway in the world order.

2. The pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the existing global economic order

- 2.1 Lockdowns disrupted global supply chains and international trade.
- 2.2 Governments became more concerned with domestic production of strategic goods.
- 2.3 Global inflationary pressures and debt vulnerabilities increased after the pandemic.
- 2.4 Developing states faced disproportionate fiscal and developmental pressures.

3. COVID-19 intensified great-power competition

- 3.1 The US-China rivalry intensified over the pandemic's origins, trade and technology.
- 3.2 Vaccine diplomacy became an instrument of geopolitical influence.
- 3.3 Strategic competition over medical supplies, semiconductors and supply chains increased.
- 3.4 The pandemic accelerated the broader transition from unrestricted globalisation towards strategic economic security.

4. The crisis exposed weaknesses in multilateral governance

- 4.1 The WHO faced political pressure and criticism over the international response.
- 4.2 Unequal access to vaccines highlighted inequalities within the global health system.
- 4.3 National responses often took precedence over coordinated international action.
- 4.4 The crisis demonstrated the need for stronger global mechanisms for future pandemics.

5. COVID-19 accelerated digital transformation and altered the role of the state

- 5.1 Remote work, online education and digital commerce expanded rapidly.
- 5.2 Governments increased their use of digital surveillance and public-health technologies.
- 5.3 Digital inequality became a major development challenge.
- 5.4 States increasingly prioritised resilience, public health and strategic self-reliance alongside economic growth.

6. Conclusion

COVID-19 contributed to a world order characterised by **greater geopolitical competition, strategic economic resilience, accelerated digitalisation and renewed emphasis on state capacity**, while simultaneously demonstrating the indispensable need for multilateral cooperation.