International Relations · GS - II

Critically examine the strategic and legal implications of limited military strikes against nuclear infrastructure. How can states prevent such operations from escalating into prolonged regional conflicts?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 17/11/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Nuclear non-proliferation, UN Charter, sovereignty, self-defence, escalation risks, deterrence, regional security, diplomatic negotiations, conflict de-escalation.

Model Answer

Introduction

Military strikes against nuclear infrastructure raise complex questions of international law, strategic stability and regional security. While states may justify such actions on national security grounds, their consequences can extend beyond the immediate military objective.

Strategic Implications

1. **Nuclear proliferation risks:** Attacks may encourage targeted states to accelerate nuclear programmes or withdraw from non-proliferation commitments.
2. **Regional instability:** Retaliatory action can expand conflict, threaten neighbouring countries and disrupt maritime trade and energy supplies.

3. **Strategic uncertainty:** Military escalation may undermine deterrence and increase the possibility of miscalculation.
4. **Long-term costs:** Even limited operations can create prolonged military, economic and humanitarian commitments.

International Legal Dimensions

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force, subject to recognised exceptions such as self-defence under Article 51 and Security Council-authorised action under Chapter VII. The legality of preventive strikes based on anticipated threats remains contested. Any military operation must also comply with international humanitarian law, including distinction and proportionality.

Measures to Prevent Escalation

- Strengthen diplomatic negotiations and international monitoring mechanisms.
- Use multilateral institutions to address nuclear disputes.
- Establish communication channels to prevent accidental escalation.
- Promote confidence-building measures and regional security dialogue.
- Ensure parliamentary and institutional oversight of prolonged military engagements.

Conclusion

Military action may produce immediate strategic gains but cannot independently resolve nuclear disputes. Sustainable security requires international law, credible diplomacy and effective multilateral engagement.

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