International Relations · GS - II

“Economic sanctions have emerged as an important instrument of foreign policy, but their effectiveness depends on international cooperation and geopolitical circumstances.” Discuss.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 17/10/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Meaning and types of economic sanctions, objectives of sanctions, role of the United Nations Security Council, unilateral versus multilateral sanctions, impact on trade and financial systems, humanitarian consequences, geopolitical competition, international cooperation, diplomatic alternatives.

Model Answer

Introduction

Economic sanctions are restrictive measures imposed by countries or international organisations to influence the behaviour of a state or other entities. They have become an important instrument of foreign policy, particularly in situations involving armed conflict, security threats and violations of international norms.

Main Body

Role and significance of economic sanctions

1. Diplomatic pressure: Sanctions seek to influence a country's policies without direct military intervention.
2. Financial restrictions: Asset freezes, banking restrictions and limits on international transactions can reduce access to global finance.

3. Collective action: Sanctions authorised by the UN Security Council can provide a framework for coordinated international pressure.

Challenges and limitations

1. Uneven effectiveness: Their impact depends on the participation of major economies and the target country's economic resilience.
2. Geopolitical divisions: Rival powers may refuse to cooperate or help the targeted country find alternative markets.
3. Humanitarian costs: Restrictions can indirectly affect ordinary citizens through higher prices, shortages and reduced economic opportunities.
4. Unintended consequences: Sanctions may encourage alternative payment systems and trade networks, reducing their long-term impact.

Conclusion

Economic sanctions can support diplomacy and international security, but they are not a substitute for political dialogue. Their effectiveness requires clear objectives, international coordination, proportionate measures and safeguards against humanitarian harm.

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