



Mains Practice Question

Q. A basic issue in international relations is how to reconcile one's interests with values one professes. Discuss. (150 words)

05 Dec, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Explain the contradictions between idealism and realism in the conduct of international relations.
- Substantiate with the help of suitable examples, especially in the context of India.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

There are many ethical issues in the conduct of international relations by countries. A problematic issue in international politics is how to reconcile one's interests with values one professes.

Body

Most nations including India claim their commitment to universal values and try their best to conform to them. On many occasions and situations, states find it difficult to conduct their behaviour as per their values and we see emergence of paradoxes. While most countries pledge their commitment to non-interference and peaceful conduct of foreign policy, in reality, their national interests are defined in realist terms that hurls them in the path of power maximisation and pits them against their co-aspirants.

In certain cases, some states are compelled to put aside their values in their quest for survival and dignity. One can see this reconciliation conflict even in Indian foreign policy. India's pursuit of nuclear power in spite of its commitment to non-violence and peace could be cited as an example here. Indian closeness to the USSR during the Non- Aligned movement or India warming-up to the USA in the post-Cold War era while arguing to follow a non-aligned path is another example. India's policy towards Israel provides yet another illustration; its values often favour the Palestinian cause but it finds that its national interests are also served by collaborating with Israel in defence and other sectors.

Conclusion

The balance-of-power politics around the world, born out of mutual distrust and sense of insecurity, often makes it difficult for nations to strictly adhere to the values they profess. There is no easy way out of this conflict and countries often put their national interest and welfare in perspective while deciding a course of action.