Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

In international relations, ethical considerations are often subjugated to the strategic interests of nation-states. Discuss this from an ethical perspective.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

National interest, realism, ethics in international relations, human rights, justice, sovereignty, humanitarian intervention, global responsibility

Model Answer

Introduction

International relations involve a persistent tension between national interest and universal ethical values. States are responsible for protecting their citizens, yet their actions affect humanity beyond borders.

1. Strategic Perspective

States may prioritise security, economic interests, geopolitical influence and sovereignty. Realist thinking considers survival and national interest central to state behaviour.

2. Ethical Concerns

An excessive focus on strategic interests can facilitate human-rights violations, civilian suffering, unequal treatment of refugees and indifference to global poverty or environmental damage.

3. Ethical Principles

Justice, human dignity, non-discrimination, peaceful dispute resolution and responsibility towards vulnerable populations should inform foreign policy. International law provides an important normative framework.

4. Practical Balance

National interest should be interpreted broadly to include long-term global stability, sustainable development and international cooperation rather than short-term gains alone.

Conclusion

Ethics need not oppose national interest. A responsible state can pursue legitimate strategic interests while respecting human dignity, international law and global responsibilities.