International Relations · GS - II

The invocation of Article 51 of the UN Charter amid tensions over naval blockades and maritime restrictions raises complex questions concerning self-defence, freedom of navigation and international security. Critically examine the legal and strategic implications of such developments for the Strait of Hormuz and India's interests.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

UN Charter Article 51, self-defence, naval blockade, freedom of navigation, UNCLOS, Strait of Hormuz, energy security, maritime diplomacy

Model Answer

Introduction

The reported Iranian warning to use all available means against US naval and economic restrictions highlights the intersection of international law, maritime security and geopolitical competition. The Strait of Hormuz is particularly significant because of its role in global energy transportation.

Legal and Strategic Dimensions

1. **Right of self-defence:** Article 51 of the UN Charter recognises individual and collective self-defence following an armed attack. Any invocation must satisfy applicable requirements of necessity and proportionality under

international law.

2. **Legality of naval blockades:** A naval blockade is traditionally associated with armed conflict and is governed by international humanitarian law. Its legality depends on the applicable legal framework and circumstances. Economic sanctions alone do not automatically constitute an armed attack.

3. **Freedom of navigation:** Restrictions affecting international shipping raise concerns under the law of the sea. Transit passage through international straits is protected under Part III of UNCLOS, subject to its provisions and applicability.

4. **Risk of escalation:** Reciprocal maritime restrictions, military deployments and threats can disrupt commercial shipping and increase the possibility of regional confrontation.

Implications for India

1. **Energy security:** Disruption in the Strait of Hormuz can increase crude oil and gas prices and affect India's import-dependent energy sector.

2. **Trade and shipping:** Higher insurance premiums, freight costs and rerouting can affect India's trade balance and supply chains.

3. **Indian nationals:** Escalation can endanger Indian seafarers and expatriates in the Gulf region.

4. **Strategic autonomy:** India must maintain diplomatic engagement with regional and global powers while protecting its economic interests.

Way Forward

1. Promote diplomatic de-escalation and dialogue through regional and multilateral platforms.
2. Strengthen maritime surveillance and contingency planning.
3. Diversify energy sources and strategic petroleum reserves.
4. Protect Indian shipping and seafarers through international coordination.

Conclusion

The Strait of Hormuz is both a strategic energy corridor and a sensitive geopolitical chokepoint. India's approach should combine international-law-based diplomacy, energy diversification and maritime preparedness to protect national interests.

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