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TOPIC-WISE REVISION NOTES FOR UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS

MODULE 1: POLITY, GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL JUSTICE (GS PAPER 2 & 3)

1. EPFO Wage Ceiling Revision & Social Security Framework

- Union Cabinet Approval: The Cabinet has approved raising the mandatory monthly wage ceiling for subscribers of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per month . The last wage ceiling revision took place in September 2014 (when it was raised from ₹6,500 to ₹15,000) .
- Statutory Scope & Definition:
 - The wage ceiling applies strictly to basic salary, dearness allowance (DA), and retaining allowance .
 - The EPFO functions under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 (administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment) .
 - The Act applies to notified commercial and industrial establishments employing 20 or more persons .
- Contribution Breakdown:
 - Employee Share: 12% of the wage base, credited entirely to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) .
 - Employer Share: 12% of the wage base, split into 3.67% for the EPF and 8.33% for the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) .
 - Pension Capping: Monthly EPS contribution cap is increased from ₹1,250 to ₹2,080 . The Central Government contributes 1.16% towards the pension up to the wage ceiling .
 - Overall Impact: Expands statutory social security coverage to approximately 51 lakh additional workers , raising the total average monthly EPF contribution by about ₹600 per worker .
- Labour Market Realignment: At least seven major States/UTs (including Delhi at ₹17,800 and Maharashtra at ₹17,000) had already fixed minimum wages for unskilled workers above the old ₹15,000 threshold, necessitating a statutory update .

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- Governance: The EPFO is steered by the tripartite Central Board of Trustees (CBT), which comprises representatives of the Central Government, State Governments, employers, and employees .
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MODULE 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY (GS PAPER 2)

2. BRICS New Delhi Summit 2026 & Multipolarity

- New Delhi Declaration Highlights: Supported local currency payment mechanisms, criticized unilateral Western sanctions, called for UN Security Council reform, and reiterated support for UN Security Council Resolution 2803 regarding West Asia .
- Strategic Autonomy & Foreign Policy: Reflects continuity in India's doctrine of strategic autonomy and multi-vector engagement (invoking the Bandung Spirit of 1955) rather than Cold War-style non-alignment .
- Ukraine Omission: Marked the first BRICS declaration since 2022 to carry no reference to Ukraine, attributed to a Russian veto to maintain consensus .
- Institutional Architecture & Expansion:
 - Founded as BRIC in 2006/2009; South Africa joined in 2010 . Expanded in 2024 (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE) and 2025 (Indonesia) .
 - Runs the New Development Bank (NDB) (agreed at the 2014 Fortaleza Summit, headquartered in Shanghai) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) .
 - Asymmetric Weight: China accounts for roughly three-fifths (60%) of total BRICS GDP .

3. India–Pakistan Maritime Incident & Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

- Maritime Collision: A Pakistani naval ship collided with an Indian vessel in international waters, violating Article 10 of the 1991 Agreement on Advance Notice on Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troop Movements .
- Article 10 Rule: Prohibits naval vessels and submarines of India and Pakistan from closing within three nautical miles (~5.55 km) of each other in international waters .

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- Exercise Thresholds: Signed in April 1991 following military escalation during Exercise Brass Tacks IV (January 1987) . Major naval exercises requiring advance notice are defined as those involving 6 or more frigate/destroyer-sized ships crossing into the 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) .
- Associated Bilateral CBM Framework:
 - 1983 Joint Commission .
 - 1988 Agreement on Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities (unbroken annual exchange of lists every January 1 since 1992) .
 - 1991 Agreement on Prevention of Air Space Violations .

4. Weaponised Interdependence, Sanctions & Chokepoint Risks

- Secondary Sanctions: Pressure third-country entities by threatening loss of access to US banking clearing systems . Administered under statutes like the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 1977 through the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) .
- US Energy Legislation: The proposed Lindsey O. Graham Sanctions Act authorises tariffs of up to 100% on top buyers of Russian crude oil and natural gas .
- Energy Sourcing: India imports over 88% of its crude oil, with Russian crude accounting for a substantial share (up to 45% in recent tracking) .
- Maritime Chokepoints: Dual operational vulnerabilities across the Strait of Hormuz (actions by Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority) and Bab el-Mandeb (Houthi control of Red Sea traffic via Perim Island) .

5. China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement (1963) & Shaksgam Valley

- 1963 Agreement: Pakistan illegally ceded ~5,180 sq km of the Shaksgam Valley (Trans-Karakoram Tract) in Occupied Kashmir to China .
- Provisional Clause: Article 6 of the agreement explicitly acknowledges that the demarcation is provisional pending final settlement of the Kashmir dispute .
- India's Stance: Rejects any joint Pakistan-China boundary commission, asserting that Pakistan has no legal sovereignty over the region and no capacity to transfer territory .

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6. World Trade Organization (WTO) & Plurilateral Agreements

- Plurilateral Deals: Agreements negotiated by a subset of WTO members that bind only signatories (e.g., Investment Facilitation for Development - IFD) .
- Consensus Rule: Incorporation into Annex 4 of the WTO legal framework requires full consensus of all member states .
- India's Stance: Opposed IFD incorporation at the MC14 conference in Cameroon, demanding generic legal guardrails for plurilateral agreements to protect multilateral principles .

MODULE 3: INDIAN ECONOMY & INTERNATIONAL TRADE (GS PAPER 3)

7. Local Currency Trade Settlement (LCTS) vs. Common Currency

- LCTS Mechanism: Cross-border trade invoiced and settled in national currencies using Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA), operationalised by the RBI in July 2022 .
- Current Footprint: Within BRICS, India's rupee trade operates primarily with the UAE and Russia .
- Key Bottlenecks:
 - Structural Deficits & Vostro Balances: Accumulation of unspendable rupee balances by surplus-holding partners (e.g., Russia) due to trade imbalances .
 - Capital Account Non-Convertibility: Restricts foreign surplus holders from deploying rupee balances into yield-bearing assets (prompting proposals to open G-Secs and corporate debt) .
 - Opposing Trade Interests: Exporters prefer receiving USD (benefiting from rupee depreciation), while importers prefer paying in local currencies .
- BRICS Currency Opposition: India supports bilateral LCTS but firmly rejects a common BRICS currency, as China's ~60% share of BRICS exports would lead to Yuan dominance .

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MODULE 4: ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY (GS PAPER 3)

8. Pygmy Hog Conservation & Grassland Ecosystems

- Taxonomy & Status: Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*) is the sole surviving species of the genus *Porcula* and the world's smallest wild suid .
- Distribution & Ecological Role: Endemic to the alluvial floodplain grasslands of Assam . Serves as an indicator species for grassland health and an umbrella species for the Bengal florican, hispid hare, hog deer, and greater one-horned rhino .
- Threats: Unscientific dry-season grassland burning, woody encroachment, invasive plant species, genetic bottlenecks in captive stock, and African Swine Fever .
- Conservation Goal: Assam aims to increase the wild population to 300 by 2040 .
- Manas National Park: Key habitat holding the last natural population .
Designations: UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tiger Reserve, Elephant Reserve, and Biosphere Reserve, forming a transboundary landscape with Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan .

MODULE 5: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY / ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GS PAPER 3)

9. Open-Weight AI Models & IndiaAI Mission

- AI Model Adoption: Indian startups are deploying Chinese open-weight foundation models (e.g., Qwen, DeepSeek, Kimi) to reduce compute costs by an order of magnitude .
- IndiaAI Mission Architecture: A ₹10,371 crore national initiative implemented by MeitY . Core pillars include:
 - IndiaAI Compute Grid: National compute grid with 38,000+ GPUs .
 - AIKosh: Public repository of non-personal datasets and models across key sectors .
 - IndiaAI Safety Institute: Trust and governance framework focusing on privacy and bias mitigation .

MCQs

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Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the recent decision on the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO):

1. The Union Cabinet approved raising the mandatory monthly wage ceiling for provident fund subscribers from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000.
2. The statutory wage ceiling applies to basic salary, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance.
3. In the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), the employer's entire 12% contribution is credited directly to the pension pool.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. With reference to the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body functioning under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
2. The Act automatically applies to all commercial establishments employing 5 or more persons.
3. The EPFO is governed by the Central Board of Trustees, which is a tripartite body comprising representatives of the Central Government, State Governments, employers, and employees.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q3. With reference to the Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*), consider the following statements:

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1. It is the sole surviving species of the genus *Porcula* and the smallest wild suid in the world.
2. Its surviving distribution in the wild is confined exclusively to alluvial floodplain grasslands of Assam.
3. It acts as an indicator species for the ecological health of alluvial grassland ecosystems.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Manas National Park:

1. It is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a Tiger Reserve, an Elephant Reserve, and a Biosphere Reserve.
2. It forms a transboundary conservation landscape contiguous with the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.
3. It holds the last natural wild population of the pygmy hog.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q5. With reference to the 1991 Agreement between India and Pakistan on Advance Notice on Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troop Movements, consider the following statements:

1. Article 10 of the treaty prohibits naval ships and submarines of both countries from closing within three nautical miles of each other in international waters.
2. A major naval exercise requiring advance notification is defined as one involving 6 or more frigate/destroyer-sized ships crossing into the other country's Exclusive Economic Zone.
3. The agreement was negotiated in the immediate aftermath of the 1999 Kargil Conflict.

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Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q6. Which of the following confidence-building mechanisms or bilateral agreements were established between India and Pakistan during the late 1980s and early 1990s

- 1. Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities
- 2. Agreement on Prevention of Air Space Violations
- 3. Incidents at Sea Agreement establishing a joint maritime verification tribunal
- 4. Cultural Cooperation Agreement

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q7. With reference to Local Currency Trade Settlement (LCTS) and Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA), consider the following statements:

- 1. Local currency trade settlement creates a shared central bank and a common settlement unit among participating countries.
- 2. Special Rupee Vostro Accounts were operationalised by the Reserve Bank of India in July 2022 to settle cross-border trade in Rupees.
- 3. Unspendable Rupee balances accumulated in SRVA by surplus-holding trading partners present a major challenge to local currency trade.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

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Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the BRICS grouping and the New Delhi Declaration 2026:

1. The New Delhi Declaration 2026 supported local currency trade settlement while explicitly opposing a common BRICS currency.
2. Indonesia was admitted as a member state of BRICS in 2025.
3. The New Development Bank (NDB) was agreed upon at the 2014 Fortaleza Summit and is headquartered in New Delhi.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q9. With reference to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Bandung Conference, consider the following statements:

1. The Bandung Conference of 1955 set out fundamental principles of state sovereignty, non-interference, and peaceful coexistence.
2. The Non-Aligned Movement was formally established at the Belgrade Conference of 1961.
3. India hosted the Seventh NAM Summit in New Delhi in 1983.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q10. With reference to US economic sanctions and legislative enforcement, consider the following statements:

1. Secondary sanctions target foreign businesses by threatening loss of access to the US financial system, operating outside US territorial jurisdiction.
2. Most US sanctions programs are administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 1977.
3. The Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026 mandates a blanket 500 percent tariff on all global crude oil imports.

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Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q11. With reference to the 1963 China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. Under the agreement, Pakistan ceded the Shaksgam Valley in Occupied Kashmir to China.
2. The agreement contains a provisional clause stating that the boundary is subject to renegotiation following the settlement of the Kashmir dispute.
3. India officially recognizes the validity of the 1963 agreement as part of bilateral boundary resolution.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q12. Consider the following statements regarding strategic maritime chokepoints in West Asia:

1. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
2. Perim Island sits inside the Bab el-Mandeb strait, dividing it into two navigational channels.
3. Bab el-Mandeb is the sole maritime waterway connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q13. With reference to plurilateral agreements in the World Trade Organization (WTO), consider the following statements:

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1. Obligations under a plurilateral agreement apply only to the WTO members that choose to sign it.
2. A plurilateral agreement can enter the WTO framework exclusively through the consensus of the full membership.
3. The Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) agreement is an existing Annex 4 treaty signed by all WTO members.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q14. With reference to the IndiaAI Mission, consider the following initiatives:

1. IndiaAI Compute - A national compute grid offering GPU access at subsidized rates to eligible users.
2. AIKosh - A national repository of non-personal datasets and models across multiple sectors.
3. IndiaAI Safety Institute - A trust framework covering privacy, bias mitigation, and AI governance.

Which of the initiatives given above are part of the IndiaAI Mission? (a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q15. With reference to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions versus unilateral sanctions, consider the following statements:

1. Security Council sanctions are imposed under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
2. UN Member States are legally bound to carry out Security Council decisions under Article 25 of the UN Charter.
3. Unilateral autonomous sanctions imposed by individual sovereign states carry the same legally binding force on all UN members as Security Council resolutions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only

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- (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
-

ANSWER KEY

Question	Correct Option
Q1	(a)
Q2	(b)
Q3	(d)
Q4	(d)
Q5	(b)
Q6	(b)
Q7	(b)
Q8	(a)

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Q9 (d)

Q10 (a)

Q11 (a)

Q12 (d)

Q13 (a)

Q14 (d)

Q15 (a)

EXPLANATIONS

- Q1. Correct Option: (a)
 - Statement 1 is correct: The Union Cabinet approved raising the EPFO wage ceiling from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per month .
 - Statement 2 is correct: The statutory ceiling applies specifically to basic salary, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance .
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: Of the employer's 12% contribution, 3.67% goes to the EPF and 8.33% goes to the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) . The entire 12% does not go to the pension pool .
- Q2. Correct Option: (b)
 - Statement 1 is correct: EPFO functions under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 .
 - Statement 2 is incorrect: The Act applies to notified establishments employing 20 or more persons, not 5 .
 - Statement 3 is correct: EPFO is governed by the tripartite Central Board of Trustees (CBT) representing the Centre, States, employers, and employees .
- Q3. Correct Option: (d)

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- Statement 1 is correct: The pygmy hog (*Porcula salvania*) is the sole surviving species of the genus *Porcula* and the world's smallest wild suid .
- Statement 2 is correct: Its surviving wild distribution is confined exclusively to the alluvial floodplain grasslands of Assam .
- Statement 3 is correct: It acts as an indicator species whose decline directly reflects habitat degradation in grassland floodplains .
- Q4. Correct Option: (d)
 - Statement 1 is correct: Manas National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tiger Reserve, Elephant Reserve, and Biosphere Reserve .
 - Statement 2 is correct: It adjoins Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan, creating a transboundary conservation landscape .
 - Statement 3 is correct: It holds the last natural wild population of the pygmy hog .
- Q5. Correct Option: (b)
 - Statement 1 is correct: Article 10 bars naval ships and submarines from closing within three nautical miles of each other in international waters .
 - Statement 2 is correct: A major naval exercise is defined as one involving 6 or more frigate/destroyer-sized ships crossing into the EEZ .
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: The agreement was signed in April 1991 following tensions caused by Exercise Brass Tacks IV in January 1987, not the 1999 Kargil Conflict .
- Q6. Correct Option: (b)
 - Statements 1, 2, and 4 are correct: Signed during this period — Nuclear Installations Agreement (1988) , Air Space Violations Agreement (1991) , and Cultural Cooperation Agreement (1988) .
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: India and Pakistan do not have an Incidents at Sea Agreement or a joint maritime verification tribunal .
- Q7. Correct Option: (b)
 - Statement 1 is incorrect: Local currency trade settlement changes the unit of account but creates no new common currency and no shared central bank .
 - Statement 2 is correct: RBI operationalised Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA) in July 2022 .
 - Statement 3 is correct: Surplus holders (e.g., Russia) accumulating unspendable rupees in SRVA creates a major bottleneck due to capital account non-convertibility .
- Q8. Correct Option: (a)

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- Statement 1 is correct: The New Delhi Declaration supports local currency settlement while opposing a common BRICS currency .
- Statement 2 is correct: Indonesia joined BRICS as a member in 2025 .
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The New Development Bank (NDB) is headquartered in Shanghai, China, not New Delhi .
- Q9. Correct Option: (d)
 - Statement 1 is correct: The 1955 Bandung Conference established core non-alignment principles .
 - Statement 2 is correct: NAM was formally founded at the 1961 Belgrade Conference .
 - Statement 3 is correct: India hosted the Seventh NAM Summit in New Delhi in 1983 .
- Q10. Correct Option: (a)
 - Statement 1 is correct: Secondary sanctions instruct foreign businesses to avoid targeted transactions under threat of losing US financial clearing access .
 - Statement 2 is correct: Most US sanctions programs are operated by Treasury's OFAC under IEEPA 1977 .
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: The proposed legislation authorises tariffs of up to 100 percent on top buyers of Russian energy, not a blanket 500 percent tariff .
- Q11. Correct Option: (a)
 - ★ ○ Statement 1 is correct: Pakistan ceded ~5,180 sq km of the Shaksgam Valley to China under the 1963 agreement .
 - ★ ○ Statement 2 is correct: Article 6 of the 1963 agreement explicitly contains a provisional clause pending settlement of the Kashmir dispute .
 - ★ ○ Statement 3 is incorrect: India resolutely rejects the 1963 agreement, holding that Pakistan has no sovereignty over Occupied Kashmir and no capacity to transfer territory .
- Q12. Correct Option: (d)
 - Statement 1 is correct: Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea .
 - Statement 2 is correct: Perim Island sits inside Bab el-Mandeb, dividing it into two channels .
 - Statement 3 is correct: Bab el-Mandeb is the sole channel connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden .
- Q13. Correct Option: (a)

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- Statement 1 is correct: Plurilateral obligations bind only the member states that sign them .
- Statement 2 is correct: Plurilateral agreements enter the WTO system exclusively by full consensus .
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The IFD is not yet a WTO agreement; incorporation was blocked by India at MC14 .
- Q14. Correct Option: (d)
 - Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct: All three pillars — IndiaAI Compute (grid of 38,000+ GPUs) , AIKosh (dataset repository) , and IndiaAI Safety Institute (trust framework) — are core components of the ₹10,371 crore IndiaAI Mission.
- Q15. Correct Option: (a)
 - Statement 1 is correct: Security Council sanctions are imposed under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter .
 - Statement 2 is correct: Member States are legally bound to carry out UNSC decisions under Article 25 .
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: Unilateral autonomous sanctions place no legal obligation on any other sovereign state

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