International Relations · GS - II

In India's neighbourhood policy, engagement through multilateral institutions often coexists with bilateral security concerns. Examine how India can balance participation in regional forums with its concerns over cross-border terrorism and water security.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Neighbourhood First, SCO, multilateral diplomacy, cross-border terrorism, Indus Waters Treaty, national security, strategic communication, regional cooperation, diplomatic leverage, confidence-building measures.

Model Answer

Introduction

India's neighbourhood policy requires balancing regional cooperation with sovereignty and national security. Multilateral platforms provide opportunities for dialogue, but participation does not remove bilateral concerns or security considerations.

Importance of Multilateral Engagement

1. **Regional diplomacy:** Forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) provide channels for engagement on regional security and economic issues.
2. **Strategic influence:** Participation enables India to communicate its positions and shape regional discussions.
3. **Functional cooperation:** Climate change, connectivity and economic issues may require cooperation even amid political disagreements.

Managing Bilateral Concerns

- **Cross-border terrorism:** India must maintain clear diplomatic positions and pursue international cooperation against terrorism.
- **Water security:** The Indus Waters Treaty illustrates the importance of institutional arrangements in managing shared river resources.
- **Strategic consistency:** Diplomatic engagement should be accompanied by transparent communication of India's security concerns.
- **National interest:** Multilateral participation should not dilute India's sovereign rights or security priorities.

Way Forward

India should adopt issue-based engagement, strengthen regional counter-terrorism cooperation and use diplomatic channels to communicate concerns. Treaty-related disputes require careful legal and diplomatic assessment, while broader regional dialogue should remain open where it serves India's interests.

Conclusion

Multilateral diplomacy and national security are not mutually exclusive. A calibrated approach combining strategic engagement, institutional dialogue and firm security safeguards can strengthen India's regional position.

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