International Relations · GS - II

“The persistence of cross-border terrorism remains a major impediment to normalisation of India-Pakistan relations.” Examine the challenges in sustaining bilateral dialogue while safeguarding India's national security interests.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Cross-border terrorism, Simla Agreement, Lahore Declaration, bilateral engagement, national security, diplomatic pressure, regional stability, strategic options.

Model Answer

Introduction

India-Pakistan relations have remained strained due to unresolved disputes, cross-border terrorism and recurring security concerns. The conditionality of dialogue, as articulated by political leaders, reflects the challenge of reconciling diplomatic engagement with national security.

Challenges to Bilateral Dialogue

1. **Cross-border terrorism:** Terror attacks undermine public trust and create domestic pressure against diplomatic engagement.
2. **Historical mistrust:** Wars, territorial disputes and repeated breakdowns of dialogue have weakened confidence-building efforts.
3. **Domestic political constraints:** Political sensitivities in both countries limit the flexibility required for sustained negotiations.

4. **Regional security:** Instability between two nuclear-armed neighbours has implications for South Asian peace and security.
5. **Limited institutional mechanisms:** Existing bilateral arrangements have struggled to maintain continuity during periods of heightened tensions.

Balancing Dialogue and Security

- **Firm security response:** Strengthen intelligence coordination, border management and counter-terrorism capabilities.
- **Diplomatic accountability:** Use bilateral and multilateral platforms to press for credible action against terrorist networks.
- **Conditional engagement:** Calibrate dialogue according to verifiable progress on security concerns without abandoning diplomatic channels.
- **Confidence-building measures:** Preserve communication mechanisms, military hotlines and humanitarian cooperation to prevent escalation.
- **Regional cooperation:** Encourage practical cooperation on trade, climate risks and public health wherever conditions permit.

Conclusion

India's approach requires a balance between zero tolerance towards terrorism and the continued availability of diplomatic engagement. Sustainable peace depends on credible security assurances, mutual trust and respect for established bilateral commitments.

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