International Relations · GS - II

Diplomatic engagement through multilateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation can provide opportunities for dialogue even amid bilateral tensions. Examine the significance and limitations of such platforms in managing India-Pakistan relations.

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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

SCO, multilateral diplomacy, India-Pakistan relations, regional cooperation, Indus Waters Treaty, terrorism, confidence-building measures, strategic dialogue, regional stability.

Model Answer

Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) provides a multilateral platform for regional cooperation among Eurasian countries. The participation of Pakistan's Climate Change Minister in its Civilisations Dialogue Forum in New Delhi illustrates the possibility of diplomatic engagement despite strained bilateral relations.

Significance of Multilateral Platforms

1. **Diplomatic communication:** Such forums provide opportunities for official interaction when bilateral engagement is limited.
2. **Regional cooperation:** They facilitate dialogue on connectivity, security, trade, climate change and cultural exchanges.

3. **Confidence-building:** Ministerial participation can maintain institutional communication and prevent complete diplomatic isolation.
4. **Climate diplomacy:** Shared concerns regarding floods, water stress and environmental degradation create opportunities for functional cooperation.
5. **Regional stability:** Multilateral engagement can encourage dialogue and peaceful management of disagreements.

Limitations

- Persistent mistrust and cross-border terrorism undermine bilateral confidence.
- Multilateral forums cannot independently resolve bilateral disputes.
- Divergent strategic interests among member states can restrict collective action.
- Disagreements over the Indus Waters Treaty complicate water-related cooperation.
- Consensus-based decision-making may limit the ability to address contentious issues.

Way Forward

India should utilise multilateral platforms for constructive regional engagement while maintaining clear positions on terrorism, sovereignty and treaty obligations. Cooperation on climate resilience, disaster management and public health can be encouraged where common interests exist.

Conclusion

Multilateral diplomacy cannot substitute for sustained bilateral engagement, but it can preserve communication and create limited areas of cooperation. Its effectiveness depends on political willingness and mutual respect for international commitments.

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