International Relations · GS - II

India's engagement with ASEAN-led platforms, the East Asia Summit and the Quad reflects its attempt to balance regional multilateralism with strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. Discuss.

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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Act East Policy, ASEAN centrality, Indo-Pacific, Quad cooperation, East Asia Summit, strategic autonomy, maritime security, regional multilateralism, connectivity, supply-chain resilience

Model Answer

Introduction

India's participation in the ASEAN-India Summit, East Asia Summit (EAS) and Quad reflects a multi-layered approach to Indo-Pacific diplomacy. These platforms help India strengthen regional cooperation while responding to growing geopolitical competition and unilateral tendencies.

Significance of India's Engagement

1. **ASEAN centrality:** ASEAN provides an inclusive regional framework for dialogue, economic integration and cooperation. India's engagement strengthens its Act East Policy.
2. **Strategic dialogue through EAS:** The EAS enables India to engage major regional powers on security, economic and political issues.
3. **Quad cooperation:** India works with Australia, Japan and the US on maritime security, critical technologies, resilient supply chains, infrastructure and disaster response.

4. **Maritime security:** These platforms support freedom of navigation, respect for international law and a stable Indo-Pacific.
5. **Economic integration:** Cooperation can expand trade, connectivity, investment and regional supply-chain diversification.

Challenges

- **Geopolitical rivalry:** US-China competition can complicate regional consensus.
- **Divergent interests:** ASEAN members differ in their strategic and economic approaches towards major powers.
- **Implementation gap:** Regional declarations require sustained institutional cooperation and practical outcomes.
- **Strategic autonomy:** India must balance partnerships without becoming part of rigid geopolitical blocs.

Way Forward

India should reinforce ASEAN centrality, deepen connectivity with Southeast Asia, promote practical Quad initiatives and strengthen cooperation through EAS-led dialogue.

Conclusion

India's Indo-Pacific strategy requires complementary engagement with both inclusive multilateral institutions and issue-based strategic partnerships. Such an approach can protect national interests while contributing to a rules-based and cooperative regional order.

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