International Relations · GS - II

Cultural diplomacy can provide avenues for engagement even when bilateral political relations remain strained. Examine its significance and limitations in the context of India-Pakistan relations.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 21/11/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Cultural diplomacy, people-to-people contact, civilisational heritage, SCO, soft power, bilateral tensions, security concerns, confidence-building measures, regional cooperation

Model Answer

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy uses shared heritage, art, tourism and people-to-people exchanges to build mutual understanding between countries. The recent visit of Pakistan's Climate Change Minister Musadik Malik to India for the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum illustrates the potential of such engagement amid bilateral tensions.

Significance of Cultural Diplomacy

1. **Shared heritage:** Historical monuments, Sufi traditions, literature and cultural practices provide common platforms for engagement.
2. **People-to-people relations:** Tourism, academic exchanges and cultural interactions can reduce social mistrust.
3. **Soft power:** Cultural engagement strengthens India's international image and its role as a promoter of civilisational dialogue.
4. **Confidence-building:** Limited cultural interactions may help sustain communication during periods of diplomatic strain.

5. **Multilateral engagement:** Platforms such as the SCO provide opportunities for dialogue beyond strictly bilateral channels.

Limitations

- **Security considerations:** Cross-border terrorism and security assessments can restrict travel and cultural exchanges.
- **Political tensions:** Diplomatic disputes can disrupt initiatives and reduce public trust.
- **Limited institutional continuity:** Cultural engagement may remain symbolic without sustained cooperation.
- **Public sensitivity:** Historical and political disagreements can affect the reception of cultural initiatives.

Way Forward

India and Pakistan should maintain appropriate security safeguards while supporting academic, cultural and humanitarian exchanges wherever conditions permit. Multilateral forums can facilitate dialogue without diluting bilateral concerns.

Conclusion

Cultural diplomacy cannot independently resolve deep-rooted political and security disputes. However, when pursued cautiously and consistently, it can preserve communication channels and create limited opportunities for mutual understanding.

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