International Relations · GS - II

The Quad and ASEAN-led mechanisms represent different but complementary approaches to shaping the Indo-Pacific regional order. Analyse the significance of India's engagement with both frameworks for promoting regional stability and strategic autonomy.

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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

ASEAN centrality, Indo-Pacific vision, Quad cooperation, East Asia Summit, maritime security, resilient supply chains, digital connectivity, strategic autonomy, inclusive regional architecture.

Model Answer

Introduction

India's Indo-Pacific approach combines issue-based strategic partnerships with inclusive, ASEAN-led regional institutions. Its engagement with the Quad and ASEAN-led mechanisms reflects this multi-layered regional diplomacy.

Significance of Dual Engagement

1. **Maritime security:** Quad cooperation strengthens maritime domain awareness, freedom of navigation and regional security cooperation.

2. **ASEAN centrality:** Engagement through the East Asia Summit reinforces ASEAN's role in maintaining an inclusive regional architecture.

3. **Economic resilience:** Cooperation on resilient supply chains, energy security and critical infrastructure reduces vulnerabilities arising from external disruptions.

4. **Digital and technological cooperation:** Protection of undersea cables and collaboration against cybercrime address emerging non-traditional security threats.

5. **Regional public goods:** Tourist mobility, educational exchanges and disaster-resilience initiatives strengthen India's developmental and people-centric engagement.

Challenges

- Strategic competition among major powers can constrain regional consensus.
- Divergent interests among ASEAN members complicate coordinated responses.
- Overlapping institutions may create coordination challenges.
- Excessive securitisation may undermine the inclusive character of Indo-Pacific cooperation.

Way Forward

India should strengthen ASEAN-led forums, deepen practical Quad cooperation, support regional capacity-building and promote transparent, rules-based maritime and digital governance.

Conclusion

India's simultaneous engagement with the Quad and ASEAN-led institutions enables it to pursue strategic partnerships without abandoning regional inclusivity. Their complementarity is central to a stable and cooperative Indo-Pacific.