International Relations · GS - II

The growing securitisation of digital infrastructure is transforming international trade and technology relations. Examine how national security concerns surrounding telecommunications networks are creating new challenges for global technological cooperation.

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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~ 250 words

Answer Hint

Digital sovereignty, telecom infrastructure, cybersecurity, national security, cross-border data flows, technological decoupling, supply-chain dependence, regulatory restrictions, WTO principles, international cooperation.

Model Answer

Introduction

Telecommunications networks are critical infrastructure supporting financial transactions, governance, commerce and international connectivity. Increasing concerns over cyber espionage and data security have encouraged countries to impose restrictions on foreign technology providers.

Emerging Challenges

1. **National security versus market access:** Restrictions on foreign telecom operators may protect sensitive infrastructure but can also create barriers to international trade.

2. **Technological fragmentation:** Divergent national regulations can create separate technology ecosystems, increasing costs and reducing interoperability.

3. **Cybersecurity concerns:** Foreign access to communication networks may raise concerns about unauthorised surveillance, data breaches and network disruption.

4. **Strategic competition:** Telecommunications has become an arena of geopolitical competition, particularly in areas such as 5G, cloud infrastructure and digital platforms.

5. **Regulatory disagreements:** Countries may interpret security risks differently, resulting in disputes over non-discrimination, fair competition and legitimate restrictions.

India's Strategic Priorities

- Strengthen domestic telecom manufacturing and research.
- Develop trusted and secure digital infrastructure.
- Enhance cybersecurity audits and supply-chain transparency.
- Protect critical communication networks through institutional coordination.
- Participate in international standard-setting and promote interoperable technologies.

Conclusion

National security and technological cooperation need not be mutually exclusive. Transparent, evidence-based regulation, international coordination and resilient domestic capabilities can help countries secure telecommunications infrastructure while preserving global connectivity.