International Relations · GS - II

A number of outside powers have entrenched themselves in Central Asia, which is a zone of interest to India. Discuss the implications, in this context, of India's joining the Ashgabat Agreement, 2018.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Central Asian connectivity; Ashgabat Agreement; transit access; Chabahar Port; trade diversification; geopolitical competition; energy security; regional cooperation

Model Answer

Introduction

Central Asia is strategically important to India because of its energy resources, markets and security implications. The Ashgabat Agreement provides a framework for facilitating international transport and transit through participating countries in Central Asia and the wider Eurasian region.

Implications for India

1. **Improved connectivity:** Transit arrangements can facilitate movement of goods between India, Iran and Central Asian destinations.
2. **Trade diversification:** Better connectivity can expand Indian exports and access to regional markets.
3. **Strategic access:** Links involving Iran and Central Asian routes can partly offset the limitations imposed by the absence of direct overland access through Pakistan.
4. **Energy cooperation:** Improved transport connectivity may support cooperation in energy and mineral resources.

5. **Geopolitical engagement:** Participation strengthens India’s economic presence amid the influence of China, Russia and other external powers.
6. **Regional integration:** The agreement offers opportunities for cooperation with regional states on transport and logistics.

Challenges

Sanctions-related uncertainty, regional instability, infrastructure gaps, high transport costs and competition from other connectivity initiatives can constrain its benefits.

Way Forward

India should coordinate the agreement with Chabahar Port development, the International North–South Transport Corridor and regional trade facilitation, while managing geopolitical and financial risks.

Conclusion

The Ashgabat Agreement can improve India’s access to Central Asia and diversify its connectivity options. Its strategic value depends on practical infrastructure, reliable transit arrangements and sustained regional diplomacy.

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