PSIR OPTIONAL · UPSC CSE

EDITION 2026

PYQ Vault

560 questions	50 days	10 years of PYQs

DAY 36 **Regionalisation of World Politics** · *11 questions*

Every question carries a Flow Snapshot — and a handwritten model answer on the channel.
No PYQ will be unfamiliar.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2016 · 15 marks

How does the regionalism shape the world politics? Explain with examples.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes R1 regionalism = condition + process → **Inis Claude**: world too wide for world government → region is where the answers lie → since the 1990s, regions "objects → subjects" / R2 new regionalism, post-Cold War second coming → region stops being the arena of world politics, becomes an actor in it → three arenas: power, peace, trade

Body flow pooled sovereignty → bloc weight no single member has → EU (third-largest economy, CETA, Iran deal, 27 members) → ASEAN's ten small states leading EAS + RCEP → collective bargaining → multipolarity → peace function → ECSC makes war "materially impossible" → **Fisher**: "Balkans of Asia" → zone of peace, no war since 1967 → trade function → NAFTA makes North America see itself as a region → trade diversion → **Bhagwati**'s question: building blocks or stumbling blocks?

Counter-view sovereignty backlash → Brexit + US exit from TPP → **Helen Thompson**: "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in" → SAARC stalls, intra-regional trade below 5% → but integration continued despite both exits

Conclusion routes R1 answer **Bhagwati** → building blocks, not stumbling blocks / R2 regionalism does not replace the global order → it supplies the level where competition and regulation are reconciled, in a world not ready for global authority

MODEL ANSWER

Regionalism is a condition of shared affinity and a process that organises it. Inis Claude placed in the region the answers a world too wide for world government cannot give.

Fredrik Soderbaum and Bjorn Hettne states that since the 1990s regions "have changed from objects to subjects". They redistribute power, keep peace and reorganise trade.

Pooled sovereignty gives blocs weight no member holds alone. The EU, third-largest economy, struck CETA with Canada for its 27 members & held a common line on the Iran nuclear deal. ASEAN's 10 states lead the East Asia Summit and RCEP.

The coal & steel community tied French & German industry together, making war "materially impossible"; ASEAN turned what C.A. Fisher called the "Balkans of Asia" into a zone of peace, with no war between members since 1967.

Trade blocs redraw the world economy. NAFTA made North America see itself as a region. But blocks divert trade & J.N. Bhagwati ask whether they are "building blocs" or "stumbling blocs" for WTO-led multilateralism.

Brexit & US exit from the Trans-Pacific Partnership led Helen Thompson to hold that "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in". SAARC, its intra-regional trade below 5%, shows a bloc can stall. But integration continued despite both exits.

Regionalism does not replace the global order; it supplies the level where competition & regulation are reconciled; a building block in a world not ready for global authority.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 15 marks

How has 'BREXIT' affected the regionalisation process initiated by European Union and what could be its likely impacts in the regionalisation process of world politics?

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

R1 EU as deepest integration → **Haas**'s spillover expectation → Britain's 2016 vote moves the other way → cost without refutation; terms of regionalism change / R2 Brexit as the first live test of pooled sovereignty → scale and confidence lost inside Europe → example carried outward

Body flow

loss of a major economy and political player → collective strength weakened → **Moravcsik**: exit precedent → Euroscepticism (National Rally, AfD) → **Hix**: new trade barriers + regulatory divergence complicate integration → turn outward: example matters more than the loss → **Thompson**: "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in"; regionalism as ideological contest, not rational choice → with US pressure on NAFTA → protectionism encouraged → weaker projects exposed (SAARC, RCEP) → **Acharya**: separatist / nationalist movements emboldened → ASEAN, MERCOSUR strained → out of the EU but not NATO → economic regionalism separable from security

Counter-view

limits of supranationalism real, but retreat narrower than predicted → no domino; pro-EU turn in France → EU firmness makes exit costly → sovereignty pooled, never surrendered; members always free to leave → exit illustrates the design as much as it damages it

Conclusion routes

R1 Brexit as a demand for reform → EU deepened after losing a major power / R2 regionalism continues, on more contested terms → sovereignty balanced against collective benefit

The EU is the deepest experiment in regional integration, built on Ernst B. Haas's neofunctionalist claim that cooperation in one sector spills into the next.

Britain's 2016 vote to leave moved the other way. Brexit cost the Union scale & confidence without disproving its logic & changed the terms of regionalism elsewhere.

Andrew Moravcsik calls it as an exit precedent, and it has fed the Euroscepticism of National Rally. Simon Hix shows how new trade barriers & regulatory divergence complicate integration.

For world politics, the example matters more than the loss. Helen Thompson calls it as "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in", treating regionalism as a political project shaped by ideological contest, not mere rational choice. With US pressure on NAFTA, Brexit encourages protectionism & threatens weaker projects like SAARC and RCEP.

Amitav Acharya expects it to embolden separatist & nationalist movements, straining ASEAN & MERCOSUR. Britain left EU but not NATO, separating economic exit from security cooperation.

Brexit exposed the limits of supranationalism, though retreat is narrower than predicted. No domino followed: a pro-EU turn in France checked it, and EU's firmness made exit costly. Sovereignty in the EU was pooled, never surrendered; members stayed free to leave & the exit illustrates that design as much as it damages it.

Brexit is viewed as a demand for reform. The EU deepened after losing a major power & regionalism continues on more contested terms, balancing sovereignty against collective benefit.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2018 · 15 marks

"Since its inception the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has failed to deliver on its promises." What initiatives should be taken to reinvigorate the organization?

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes R1 South Asia a region economically/culturally, never politically or on security → SAARC (Dhaka 1985) built on consensus → revival must begin where politics cannot reach / R2 premise conceded, but the deficit is political, not institutional → so the demand is sequencing the initiatives, not listing them

Body flow institutions exist (Development Fund, University, Food Bank) but unanimity blocks → **Jaishankar** "jammed vehicle" / no summit since 2014 → **Raja Mohan** "camel in the caravan" + "big brother, small brother" fear → therefore start functional: **Mitrany** (habits spill over) → **Sidhu**'s fields (energy, water, climate, terrorism) → **Sharma**: make BBIN work (connectivity, river waters, movement of people) → **Raja Mohan**'s "SAARC minus one", two-speed charter → India's heavier load: **Muni** (dead SAARC dents soft power) → **Gujral** non-reciprocity + implementation scoreboard → SAFTA negative lists, trade below 5% → trade facilitation before tariff cuts

Counter-view intergovernmentalism: developing states guard sovereignty most closely, so functional gains may never reach politics; and working outside SAARC has a limit — BIMSTEC/BBIN cannot supplant it

Conclusion routes R1 no member has left; the 2020 leaders' video conference shows the platform works when the will exists / R2 the sequence itself is the answer: function → sub-region → flexible charter → summit last

South Asia looks like a region economically & culturally, not politically or on security. SAARC, founded at Dhaka in 1985 & bound to consensus, sits on that fault line.

Institutions are not the shortage as development fund, a University & a food bank exist, but unanimity lets one member stop any project. S. Jaishankar calls SAARC a "jammed vehicle", with no summit since 2014. C. Raja Mohan names Pakistan the "camel in the caravan of SAARC", & smaller members fear the "big brother, small brother" syndrome.

David Mitrany held that technical cooperation builds habits that spill into other domains. Sheel Kant Sharma would make BBIN work through connectivity, river waters & freer movement of people. Raja Mohan's "SAARC minus one", a two-speed charter, lets the willing move without waiting for Pakistan.

Flexibility works only if India carries the heavier load. S.D. Muni frames this as self-interest : a dead SAARC dents India's soft power. Non-reciprocal generosity in the Gujral tradition and a published implementation scoreboard would reassure the smaller members. SAFTA's negative lists keep intra-regional trade below 5% ; trade facilitation should precede tariff cuts.

Intergovernmentalists hold that developing states guard sovereignty most closely, so functional gains may never reach politics. BIMSTEC and BBIN cannot supplant SAARC.

No member has left, and the 2020 leaders' video conference showed the platform works when the will exists. The summit should complete the revival, not begin it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 10 marks

Evaluate the role of BIMSTEC in multi-sectoral technical and economic cooperation.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

R1 mandate written into the name → Bangkok Declaration 1997, South + Southeast Asia → verdict staked: works as a technical body, disappoints as an economic one / *R2* BIMSTEC as a functional experiment → sector-by-sector design, each member leading one → judge it against its own promise

Body flow

Mitrany's functional method → technical cooperation breeds habits of collaboration → the gains are real: grid-interconnection MoU → technology-transfer facility → marine and climate research → Kaladan Multimodal → Charter + Bangkok Vision, late by two decades → turn to rules-based regionalism → but the economic half is missing: no FTA → low intra-regional trade → unfunded Development Fund → weak Secretariat

Counter-view

Muni & **Khatri**: the project-based method was built to complement SAARC → defence fair but incomplete → **Haas**: spillover needs political participation → **De**: political will, stronger institutions, steady implementation

Conclusion routes

R1 technical mandate delivered, economic one postponed → a funded Secretariat and a real FTA will decide its worth / *R2* design sound, politics missing → BIMSTEC works as a functional platform, not yet as an economic community

BIMSTEC carries its mandate in its name. Created by Bangkok Declaration of 1997 to link South and Southeast Asia, it has worked as a technical body and disappointed as an economic one.

Its method is functional in David Mitrany's sense: members cooperate sector by sector, each leading one, so that habits of collaboration grow. The technical gains are real like a grid-interconnection MoU, a tech-transfer facility, marine & climate research & the Kaladan Multimodal project. The Charter and the Bangkok Vision, late by two decades, mark a turn to rules-based regionalism.

Economic cooperation has not followed, There is no FTA, intra-regional trade stays low, the development fund is unfunded & the Secretariat weak.

S.D. Muni & Sridhar K. Khatri argue that BIMSTEC's project based method was built to complement SAARC. The defence is fair but incomplete. As Ernst B. Haas argued, spillover from technical work needs political participation and Prabir De asks for political will, stronger institutions, steady implementation.

BIMSTEC has delivered its technical mandate and postponed the economic one. A funded Secretariat and a real FTA will decide its worth.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2020 · 15 marks

Critically analyse the role of ASEAN in the promotion of regional peace and security through economic cooperation and trade.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes R1 **Mitrany**'s "philosophy of peace" = the premise the question tests → ASEAN reverses it → politics settled before economics / R2 Bangkok Declaration 1967 = Cold War security front, not a trade bloc → trade widened a peace norms had already created → could not secure it alone

Body flow ASEAN Way (consensus, non-interference, sovereignty) → ZOPFAN 1971 + TAC 1976 → no inter-member war → **Fisher**: "Balkans of Asia" → zone of peace → **Acharya**: norm localisation + norm subsidiarity → AFTA 1992 → AEC single market & production base → **Keohane**: interdependence raises cost of conflict → big economies outside → trade turned outward: ARF, ASEAN Plus Three, EAS, RCEP → APSC Blueprint 2015

Counter-view no **Haas** spillover → ASEAN stays intergovernmental → non-tariff barriers, low intra-ASEAN trade → consensus stalls on South China Sea and Myanmar after the 2021 coup → wider engagement pulls US–China rivalry in

Conclusion routes R1 **Mahbubani** & **Sng**, *The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace* → potential holds even under power politics → too early to write off the record / R2 trade widened the zone of peace, consultation keeps it → economics is the instrument of ASEAN's security order, norms are its foundation

David Mitrany's "philosophy of peace" made rising trade and technical interdependence a primary cause of regional cooperation. ASEAN reverses that sequence.

Born of the Bangkok Declaration (1967) as a Cold War front against communism, it settled politics before economics. Trade widened a peace that norms created; it could not secure that peace alone.

The ASEAN Way came first: consensus, non-interference & respect for sovereignty, written into ZOPFAN (1971) and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (1976). C.A. Fisher praised ASEAN for defying all scepticism: the "Balkans of Asia" became a zone of peace. Amitav Acharya traces that durability to norm localisation and norm subsidiarity.

Economic cooperation deepened this settlement. Such interdependence in Robert Keohane's neoliberal institutionalism, raises the cost of conflict.

Ernst B. Haas's spillover never followed: ASEAN stayed inter-governmental, non-tariff barriers survive & intra-ASEAN trade stays low. Consensus stalls the group where security matters most: the South China Sea & Myanmar after the 2021 coup. Wider engagement has also drawn US-China rivalry into the region.

Kishore Mahbubani and Jeffery Sng, in the ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace, defend ASEAN's potential against power politics. Trade widened its zone of peace, consultation keeps it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2022 · 15 marks

Russian-Ukraine crisis has cast a dark shadow on the energy needs of the member states of the European Union (EU). Comment.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

R1 EU born from energy → Treaty of Paris 1951, coal + steel, war "materially impossible" → **Mitrany**'s functional interdependence → 2022 flips that founding strength into weakness / *R2* pre-war energy map: ~40% of imported gas, about a third of total energy from Russia → an asymmetric dependence sitting at the centre of EU energy needs → the crisis exposed it

Body flow

founding bond (energy = peace) → dependence (40% gas / one-third energy) → coercion (exports curtailed, Nord Stream 1 offline) → price surge + supply insecurity → why Russia moved: **Mearsheimer** (NATO expansion) vs **Sakwa** (great-power reassertion), same energy bill for Europe → IEA: "first truly global energy crisis" → uneven exposure (Germany, Finland, Latvia, smaller states) → cohesion tested, not only economies → common answer: ~15% gas demand cut → diversification (US LNG scaled up; spare cargoes freed by China's lower LNG imports) → acceleration (renewables, heat pumps, demand reduction)

Counter-view

the shadow is not total → coercion pushed the EU faster than the Green Deal alone had managed → but the cure carries its own cost → return to coal and nuclear against the net-zero 2050 promise

Conclusion routes

R1 interdependence inside the union = peace; asymmetric dependence outside it = leverage → IEA: damage lasting years → shadow real and long → diverse energy mix + strategic energy security / *R2* the shock did what the Green Deal alone could not → the crisis ends a dependence the union should never have carried → energy security, not cheaper gas, is the lasting lesson

The EU began with energy. The treaty of Paris (1951) tied coal & steel together to make war "materially impossible". It gave practical form to David Mitrany's claim that interdependence in technical and trade exchange drives regional cooperation.

The Russia-Ukraine crisis turned that founding strength into EU's sharpest weakness. Before the invasion Russia supplied roughly 40% of the EU's imported gas & about a third of its energy. John Mearsheimer traces the invasion to NATO's eastward expansion, Richard Sakwa to Moscow's drive to reassert great-power status; Europe paid in energy either way. The IEA called it the "first truly global energy crisis".

Germany, Finland, Latvia and smaller states leaned most heavily on Russian gas, so the shock tested the union's cohesion as much as its economies. Solidarity demanded a common answer: a plan to cut gas use by about 15%.

US LNG was scaled up & China's reduced LNG imports freed spare cargoes for Europe. Renewables, heat pumps & demand reduction advanced faster than the Green Deal alone had managed. The relief has a cost: some members returned to coal and nuclear while promising net-zero by 2050.

Inside the union, cooperation in energy produced peace; outside it, dependence became leverage. The IEA expects the damage to last years: the shadow is real and long.

Therefore, Europe's reply must be structural i.e. a diverse energy mix and strategic energy security.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2023 · 15 marks

Account for the rise of European Union as a highly influential regional organisation.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes *R1* EU as "gold standard" → post-war pact grows into supranational entity → rise followed a method / *R2* problem of war answered with economic cooperation → each success carries the union into a new field

Body flow post-war reconstruction forces cooperation → **Mitrany**'s functionalism (technical cooperation → habits of collaboration → spill into other domains) → **Schuman** & **Monnet** apply it → ECSC 1951, war "materially impossible" → community method over balance of power → **Haas**'s spillover → EEC 1957 → success attracts more members → single market, euro, Schengen → Maastricht 1992 (foreign policy, security, justice) → enlargement consolidates post-communist democracy → Erasmus + rights → **Fligstein**'s "European society" → third-largest GDP, climate, CETA, JCPOA → global influence

Counter-view the state never disappeared → **Moravcsik**: national preferences + interstate bargaining set the pace → solidarity (Greece, transfers) keeps members willing → Brexit → exit stayed open

Conclusion routes *R1* pooled sovereignty without dissolving the state → cooperation binding, membership voluntary / *R2* that balance is the achievement → benchmark others adapt but rarely copy

Treated as the "gold standard" of regional integration, the EU grew from a post-war economic pact into a supranational political and economic entity.

It rise followed a method i.e. answered the problem of war with economic cooperation & each success carried the union into a new field.

David Mitrany, in A Working Peace System, held that technical cooperation builds habits of collaboration that spill into other domains & support peace. Robert Schuman & Jean Monnet applied this logic. The ECSC (Treaty of Paris, 1951) interlinked coal & steel to make war "materially impossible", choosing the community method over the balance of power. Ernst B. Haas called the next step spillover: the ECSC widened into the EEC (Treaty of Rome, 1957).

Erasmus and rights protection built a social base, what Neil Fligstein calls a "European society". The 3rd largest GDP, climate leadership, CETA and the JCPOA turned cohesion into global influence.

For Andrew Moravcsik, national preferences and interstate bargaining drive integration, with members holding its pace. Solidarity kept them willing: Greece was not isolated in crisis & transfers helped poorer members catch up. Brexit showed that leaving stayed possible.

The EU rose because it pooled sovereignty without dissolving the state. Cooperation became binding and membership stayed voluntary. That balance made it the benchmark others adapt but rarely copy.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2024 · 15 marks

What were the limitations of NAFTA? How did its replacement by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement counter them? Explain.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes
R1 NAFTA 1994, first pact of two developed states with an emerging-market economy → as trade policy it worked ($290 bn 1993 → $1.1 tn 2016) → limits lay in what it left unregulated → USMCA = rules written into the same market / R2 NAFTA's record was two-sided → trade surged, jobs and wages did not (**Scott**) → the gap was regulatory, not commercial → USMCA rewrote the terms to close it

Body flow
no floor for labour/environment → **Kuttner**, "race to the bottom" → production follows the incentive → factories to lower-wage Mexico → US job losses + wage stagnation (**Rodrik**, **Stiglitz**) → ISDS lets firms sue governments over public-welfare policy → sovereignty eroded (**Stiglitz**) → **Scott**, *The High Price of Free Trade* → verdict: trade rose, jobs/wages did not → USMCA lays the missing floor (Mexican unionisation + wage bargaining; **Scott**: eases the race to the bottom) → environment widened + enforceable → rules of origin 62.5% → 75% + wage-rate rule → production steered to higher-wage plants (**Hufbauer**) → ISDS narrowed, dropped US–Canada → policy space restored

Counter-view
correction real but partial → rewrite driven as much by economic nationalism and China's rise as by fairness → inequality between the three economies untouched

Conclusion routes
R1 USMCA regulates the market NAFTA only opened → deeper regional inequality stays / R2 a regulatory defect needed a regulatory cure → floor + content rules + investor limits deliver it → equity between the three economies still unfinished

MODEL ANSWER

The North American FTA (1994) was the first trade pact between two developed states and emerging-market economy. As trade policy it worked and trade grew from about $290 billion in 1993 to over $1.1 trillion in 2016.

Its limits lay in what it left unregulated and the USMCA countered them by writing rules into that market. NAFTA set no floor for labour and environmental standards and Robert Kuttner argued that it incentivised a "race to the bottom". Factories moved to lower wage Mexico & US manufacturing mainly automotive & textiles, lost jobs and saw wages stagnate, as Dani Rodrik and Joseph Stiglitz stated.

Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) let corporations sue governments over public-welfare policy, which Stiglitz saw as eroding sovereignty. Robert E. Scott's The High Price of FTA: NAFTA's Failure records the result as trade rose, jobs and wages did not.

The USMCA laid the missing floor. Mexico must now protect unionisation and wage bargaining, which Scott calls as easing the race to the bottom; environmental commitments were widened & made enforceable. Rules of origin rose from 62.5% to 75% North American vehicle content, plus a wage-rate rule.

Gary Clyde Hufbauer shows how these reshape production decisions towards higher-wage plants. ISDS was narrowed, and dropped between the US & Canada, restoring policy space to governments.

USMCA regulates the market NAFTA only opened, though the rewrite owes as much to economic nationalism & China's rise as to fairness. Deeper inequality between the three economies remains.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2024 · 15 marks

Do you agree with the view that the EU has thus far proved to be the most successful experiment in the regional integration processes? Account for its successes and also some of the recent challenges that it is faced with.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

R1 EU as the "gold standard" → travelled furthest, from economic pact to supranational order → that depth explains both success and strain / *R2* judge the "experiment" by how far sovereignty was pooled → only the EU crossed from pact into supranational order → the same crossing is where the strain now falls

Body flow

ECSC 1951 / coal + steel / war "materially impossible" → **Schuman** + **Monnet** / community method over balance of power → **Haas** / spillover: gains in one sector push members into the next → common market 1957 → Maastricht 1992 / Union created / foreign policy, security, justice → single market + euro + Schengen + enlargement → sovereignty pooled, not surrendered → Nobel 2012 → strain falls where integration is deepest → Eurozone crisis 2008–09 / monetary union without matching economic integration → **Stiglitz** / imbalances pushed onto weaker economies / Greece → Brexit 2016 / limits of supranationalism / persistence of sovereignty → Euroscepticism / National Rally, AfD, Law and Justice → resurgent Russia / Crimea 2014, Ukraine 2022 / energy shock

Counter-view

intergovernmentalist reply → **Moravcsik** / national preferences + interstate bargaining / member states still in charge → **Thompson** / "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in"

Conclusion routes

R1 Union deepened after a major power left → strategic autonomy as the answer to Russian and American pressure → still the benchmark / *R2* agree, on the question's own qualifier "thus far" → deepest experiment, not a finished one → tested, but not displaced as the benchmark

The EU is called the "gold standard" of regional integration. No other experiment has travelled so far from economic pact to supranational order.

The coal & steel Community (1951) interlinked coal & steel to make war "materially impossible", Robert Schuman & Jean Monnet choosing a supranational community method over the balance of power. Ernst B. Haas explained the mechanism i.e. gains in one sector push members into the next.

That spillover took Europe to the common market of 1957 & Maastricht (1992) created the Union, extending it into foreign policy, security & justice, alongside the single market, the euro, Schengen and enlargement. Sovereignty was pooled, not surrendered. The Nobel Prize of 2012 recognised the peace.

The Eurozone crisis of 2008-09 exposed a monetary union without matching economic integration; Joseph Stiglitz shows how such a union pushes its imbalances onto weaker economies, as Greece found.

Brexit marked the limits of supranationalism & the persistence of sovereignty. A resurgent Russia in Crimea (2014) & Ukraine (2022) brought an energy shock.

For Andrew Moravcsik, integration follows national preferences and interstate bargaining; member states remain in charge. Helen Thompson is blunter i.e. "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in."

But the Union deepened after a major power left and counters Russian and American pressure with strategic autonomy. It remains the benchmark and the most successful experiment.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 15 marks

How successful has the 'ASEAN Plus Three' been in addressing regional problems? Support your answer with specific examples.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

R1 APT = ASEAN 10 + China, Japan, South Korea → born of the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis → record has followed that origin → economic/technical problems addressed, political/strategic ones not / *R2* success must be graded by the type of regional problem → APT was designed as a crisis-response body → strong where the problem is technical, weak where it is strategic

Body flow

financial safety net: CMIM (liquidity) + AMRO (surveillance) → tested and held in the 2008–09 global financial crisis and COVID-19 → **Mitrany**: cooperation begins in technical areas, habits build a working peace → **Haas**'s spillover, but confined to the economic domain → FTAs and RCEP; intra-APT trade above 30% of regional total → food and energy security; renewable-energy investment across Southeast Asia

Counter-view

spillover halts at the political frontier → China–Japan–Korea rivalry + sharpening US-China competition → non-binding, consensus-bound design; liberal intergovernmentalism — members keep pace and direction → **Morgenthau**: such consensus blocs serve the balance of power → structural agenda (manufacturing upgrade, high-skill services, infrastructure gap) still awaits execution

Conclusion routes

R1 successful crisis manager and capable economic integrator → little reach over political disputes → judged by the problem it was built for, it has worked / *R2* success is bounded by design → what consensus can settle, APT has settled; what needs binding commitment lies beyond it

ASEAN Plus Three (APT) joins the 10 ASEAN states with Japan, China and South Korea. It was created in response to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and its record has followed that origin.

The Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization supplies liquidity support, while the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research office runs economic surveillance. Both worked during the global financial crisis of 2008-09 and through the COVID-19 pandemic.

David Mitrany states cooperation begins in technical areas, & the habits formed there build a working peace. Cooperation then travelled outward, but only inside the economic domain. FTAs & RCEP have weakened market integration & intra-APT trade has crossed 30% of the region's total. Food & energy security followed with renewable-energy investment spreading across Southeast Asia.

The spillover stops at the political frontier. Rivalry among China, Japan and Korea & sharpening US-China competition, sit above a non-binding, consensus-bound framework.

For Hans Morgenthau, consensus blocs of this kind serve the balance of power. The structural agenda i.e upgrading manufacturing, moving to high-skill services, closing the infrastructure gap awaits execution.

APT is a successful crisis manager and a capable economic integrator, with little reach over the region's political disputes.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION UPSC 2025 · 15 marks

"Trump's return to the White House is a jolt to push the European Union to invest in its own defence and economic and technological revival." Comment.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — *how the answer moves*

Intro routes

R1 regionalism = condition + process → common sense of threat = the condition; political will = the process → Trump's return supplies the condition, cohesion decides the rest / *R2* 'America First' shakes the transatlantic bedrock → European defence has run through NATO since the Cold War → the autonomy question is forced open; the answer lies in Europe, not Washington

Body flow

America First scepticism towards alliances/multilateralism → NATO burden-sharing pressure + tariffs + Paris withdrawal + disdain for UN/WTO → Europe exposed, resurgent Russia in Ukraine → new regionalism: organisations "from objects to subjects" (**Söderbaum–Hettne**) → Europe must act as a subject → defence: strategic autonomy, European Defence Fund, PESCO → economy: single market → capital markets union + coherent external economic policy → technology: regional public power → regional industrial strategy (**Hettne**, developmental regionalism) → partners: India, Japan, Australia

Counter-view

the jolt does not decide the result → some member governments align with populist, pro-Russia elements → rule of law + common foreign policy weakened → liberal intergovernmentalism (**Moravcsik**): members still set the pace and direction → **Thompson**: "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in" → the project turns on ideological contestation, not rational calculation

Conclusion routes

R1 right about the push, silent on the result → Trump supplies the shared threat; only cohesion supplies the revival / *R2* condition given, process still to be built → autonomy is a political choice inside Europe, not an American gift

Regionalism is both a condition and a process. A common sense of threat creates the condition and political will turns it into a process.

Trump's return has created the condition. The revival will depend on Europe's cohesion, not Washington. "America First" scepticism towards alliances & multilateralism shakes the transatlantic bedrock of European foreign policy. NATO burden sharing pressure, tariffs, the Paris withdrawal and disdain for the UN & WTO leave Europe exposed.

Under new regionalism, as per Fredrik Soderbaum & Bjorn Hettne regional organisations "have changed from objects to subjects". Europe must now behave like one. Strategic autonomy has instruments i.e. the European Defence Fund and PESCO.

Economic revival means scaling the single market into a capital markets union with a coherent external economic policy. Tech needs regional public power behind a regional industrial strategy, which Hettne places under developmental regionalism. Partnerships with India, Japan & Australia widen the base.

Inside the Union, some governments align with populist, pro-Russia elements, weakening the rule of law & common foreign policy. Andrew Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism holds that member states set the pace and direction of integration. Helen Thompson states, "regionalism is out, sovereignty back in". The project turns on ideological contestation and not rational calculation.

The statement is right about the push but silent on the result. Trump can supply the shared threat; only cohesion among members turns it into revival.

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