International Relations · GS - II

Assess the role of development assistance and disaster reconstruction partnerships in strengthening India's neighbourhood-first policy.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Neighbourhood First Policy, development partnership, disaster diplomacy, regional connectivity, soft power, strategic competition, capacity building, bilateral relations

Model Answer

Development assistance has emerged as an important instrument of India's Neighbourhood First Policy. Support for Nepal's post-flood reconstruction illustrates how humanitarian cooperation can reinforce long-term bilateral relationships.

Strategic value of reconstruction partnerships

1. **Humanitarian solidarity:** Timely assistance following natural disasters demonstrates India's commitment to the welfare and recovery of neighbouring populations.
2. **Development cooperation:** Financial support for roads, bridges, housing and public infrastructure contributes to economic resilience and improves living conditions.
3. **Regional connectivity:** Infrastructure cooperation strengthens cross-border transport, trade and people-to-people exchanges.
4. **Strategic goodwill:** Reliable development partnerships enhance India's diplomatic credibility and provide an alternative to excessive dependence on any single external partner.
5. **Soft power:** Assistance based on local priorities strengthens India's image as a responsive regional partner.

Challenges in implementation

1. **Execution capacity:** Delays in project completion, weak monitoring and administrative constraints can reduce the impact of assistance.
2. **Domestic sensitivities:** Recipient countries may resist arrangements perceived as compromising their sovereignty.
3. **Strategic competition:** Development assistance must remain focused on local needs rather than becoming solely an instrument of geopolitical rivalry.
4. **Financial sustainability:** Reconstruction projects should avoid creating unsustainable debt burdens.

A more effective partnership model

India should prioritise transparent financing, locally identified projects, technology transfer, disaster-resilient infrastructure and regular monitoring. Cooperation through regional mechanisms and joint disaster-response exercises can further strengthen preparedness.

Ultimately, India's neighbourhood policy will derive credibility not merely from financial announcements but from timely delivery, mutual respect and sustainable development outcomes.

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