Polity & Governance · GS - II

How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Cooperative federalism; competitive federalism; fiscal relations; GST Council; NITI Aayog; inter-state disputes; central-state tensions; pandemic management; constitutional balance

Model Answer

Introduction

Indian federalism combines constitutional division of powers with a strong Union. Its functioning reflects cooperation between governments, competition among states and periodic confrontation over political and constitutional issues.

Three dimensions of Indian federalism

- **Cooperation:** The GST Council provides a platform for the Union and states to coordinate indirect taxation. Joint pandemic responses also demonstrated the need for intergovernmental coordination.
- **Competition:** States compete to attract investment, improve infrastructure and promote industrial development. Rankings and investment summits encourage administrative innovation.
- **Confrontation:** Disputes over Governors' powers, legislation, fiscal transfers and the role of central agencies have periodically strained Union-state relations.
- **Inter-state disputes:** River-water disputes, such as those involving the Cauvery, reveal the difficulties of reconciling competing regional interests.

- **Fiscal tensions:** Disagreements over GST compensation and the distribution of financial resources illustrate the continuing debate over state autonomy.

Assessment

Cooperation enables national coordination, while competition can improve governance. Confrontation may expose genuine constitutional disagreements, but prolonged political conflict can obstruct public services and policy implementation.

Conclusion

Indian federalism is dynamic rather than purely cooperative or confrontational. Strong institutions, regular consultation, impartial dispute resolution and predictable fiscal arrangements are essential to balance national priorities with state autonomy.

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