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Q3

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.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · GS II · 10 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite relevant examples to support your answer
- Honour the official stem. Use GST, **NITI Aayog**, Centrally Sponsored Schemes, and 2019-20 Centre-State clashes
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Cooperation runs through the GST Council, All-India Services and disaster law.

Competition appears in investment races and NITI-style indices after higher tax devolution.

Confrontation shows in CBI consent withdrawals, GST compensation fights and 2020 farm-law resistance.

Delhi's LG-government dispute is executive confrontation inside a Union Territory with a legislature.

Indian federalism is all three at once; no single word captures 2014-20 practice.

Introduction

Indian federalism is not a frozen list of **Articles 245-263**. It is a daily mix of cooperation in shared subjects, competition for investment and rankings, and confrontation when party and fiscal interests collide. All three have shaped the Union of States, especially after coalition decline and GST.

Body

Cooperation

- **The GST Council under Article 279A is cooperative federalism in a fiscal form:** Union and States vote on rates and the compensation bargain.
- All-India Services, the Inter-State Council, and disaster response under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**, force joint working even when governments differ.
- **NITI Aayog** replaced the **Planning Commission's** one-way plan with a think-tank and index culture; the cooperative claim is consultation, though States still contest the Union's agenda-setting.

- **COVID-19 in 2020 showed both:** States ran hospitals and lockdowns; the Union used the **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897**, and the DM Act as national frames.

Competition

- Competitive federalism is visible in ease-of-doing-business tables, health and education indices, and States bidding for electronics and automobile plants.
- The **Fourteenth Finance Commission's** 42 per cent devolution widened untied space in which States could compete on their own priorities.
- Competition is healthy when it raises service delivery; it is hollow when rankings hide the Union's hold on cesses and CSS design.

Confrontation

- GST compensation delay, CBI general-consent withdrawals by Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, and the 2020 farm-law protests (States such as Punjab legislating against the Union package) are confrontation inside the same Constitution.
- **Article 356** is rarer than in the 1970s-80s, but Lieutenant Governor versus elected government in Delhi, and Governor-government friction in several States, keep a confrontational executive federalism alive.
- The Supreme Court's NCT Delhi line on collaborative federalism is itself a judicial attempt to civilise confrontation.

How far they have shaped the federation

- Cooperation built the working machinery; competition changed the language of reform; confrontation decides the political limits of the Centre. India's federation is cooperative in design, competitive in growth politics, and confrontational whenever a strong Union meets Opposition States.

Flow diagram

Cooperation GST disaster AIS -> Indian federation
 Competition indices investment -> Indian federation
 Confrontation CBI farm GST dues -> Indian federation

Conclusion

- **Cooperation, competition and confrontation have jointly shaped Indian federalism:** GST and disaster law as joint work, indices and investment as State rivalry, and consent, compensation and farm laws as conflict. The nature of the federation is therefore a moving bargain, not a single adjective.

Facts & figures

Article 279A

GST Council; the flagship cooperative-federal fiscal forum.

NITI Aayog

2015 replacement of the **Planning Commission**; competitive indices plus a claim of partnership.

14th Finance Commission

42 per cent tax devolution, which widened the field on which States compete.

CBI general consent

Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal withdrawals as a federal police confrontation.

Farm Acts, 2020

Union legislation on agriculture trade that several States treated as an intrusion on a State subject.

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