INTRODUCTION
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Federalism, for a student of modern politics, offers a wide field of study, complex and fascinating at the same time. The USSR is a country of continental dimensions. The region and its people present a picture of what is called a large "ethnological museum". It is a union of 53 ethno-based national formation, of which 15 are union republics, 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous regions and 10 autonomous areas. The most exigent task for the Soviet leaders after the Socialist Revolution of 1917 was to evolve a political state system which could voluntarily unite this multinational society by conceding them the right to self-determination. In this specific Russian situation the avowed object of the constitution was to provide a federal structure for a multinational society.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to analyse the origin of Soviet federalism and the specific mode of its evolution in respect of the nationalities of Soviet Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan). The study brings out the contribution of Soviet power to the development of national statehood for the main nationalities
inhabiting the region of Central Asia. It delineates the various stages in the evolution of national state formation in Central Asia, beginning with the establishment of the Soviet power in the wake of the socialist revolution of 1917 to the stage of socialism. It also critically assesses the constitutional perspective on federal principle and the working of the principle of Soviet federalism in Central Asian conditions for an overall appraisal of their contribution to solution of the national question in Central Asia.

The attempt by the Soviet Union in establishing a federal system of government based on nationalities was a novel one. But in perspective, it can be said that the Soviet constitution is misconstrued. It is the aim of the present study to dispel some of the misunderstandings:

Firstly, it may be emphasized here that Soviet Federalism is a subject of considerable controversy among various scholars particularly among Western scholars. They contend that Soviet multinational state is not in fact a free union of voluntary nations and federalism in Soviet Union is a sham. It is rather a unitary centralised
totalitarian state. Thus, it is an imperative need to have a clear perspective of the Soviet concept of federalism and its evolution within the framework of the Soviet system.

Secondly, the literature on Soviet Central Asia especially on institutional set up which determined the course of evolution of federalism is very scanty. Most of the available literature ignores this important aspect of the evolution of federalism. Scholars and specialists dealing with the subject have only marginally focussed on this aspect as most of the studies dealing specifically with Central Asia concentrate either on the problems of nationality or on the aspects related to ethnic cultural and religions variations. Most of these aspects are difficult to be appreciated without knowing the various dimensions of the socio-economic formations at the different stages that have had a bearing on evolution of federalism in the region. It was, therefore, necessary to undertake the study of this neglected area of research in Soviet politics, with the objective of filling in the gap.

The study does seek to answer certain issues on
the basis of empirical evidences available, but by no means does it purport to be the final answer to the pertinent questions relating to the nature of the specific features of the "socialist federalism" and its distinguishing characteristics when compared to the western concept of federalism; the influence of the Marxist-Leninist ideology on the framework of the Soviet federal theory; the methods of quantifying the elaborate mechanism of constitutions in the USSR in terms of either federation or unitary.

Besides, the present study also seeks to examine the question of the constitutional measures and provisions of federalism which satisfy the needs and demands of the multi-national state in the present constitutional framework; the specific parameters of federalism in Soviet Central Asia and finally the socio-cultural and institutional features of Central Asian society and the extent of their influence on the evolution of federalism in the region.

In an attempt to answer the above pertinent issues raised in this work, the thesis has been divided into five chapters and a conclusion. The introductory maiden chapter analyses specifically the origins, salient
features and conceptual basis of the Soviet federalism. The second chapter deals extensively with the Marxist-Leninist concept of autonomy and their impact on the Soviet concept of autonomy. It also seeks to examine the application of this autonomy as a first step towards a federative set up in Central Asia. The first two chapters provide the ideological and theoretical background of the study.

The third chapter traces the historical stages of the national state delimitation of 1924 which created the requisite preconditions for the development of national statehood of the Central Asian Nationalities. The penultimate chapter critically examines the various constitutional measures and provisions of Federalism to present a complete view of the place of the Union republics in the Soviet federation.

The fifth chapter deals with Soviet Central Asian experience of the working of the principle of Soviet federalism under condition of socialist construction.

In the final chapter, a summary of the above analysis has been presented.
However, this study has its own limitation, as the availability of data has been a major problem in undertaking this study. In the absence of a field trip, whatever data could be available has been made use of.