CHAPTER - I

ORIGINS, SALIENT FEATURES AND CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF THE SOVIET FEDERATION
In political theory, the term 'Federation' has been widely discussed. The term 'Federation' is derived from the Latin word "Foedus" (covenant, contract, treaty) and describes a voluntary association of sovereign states for some common purpose with limited delegation of power to a central authority. Essentially, the main characteristics of a federal state are:

(1) the supremacy of the constitution defining rules of the federative relationship and providing legal guarantees for all parties involved;

(2) the clear demarcation of powers between the federal government and the member states guaranteeing a certain degree of sovereignty for the constituent states (principle of non-centralisation);

(3) bargaining and arbitration mechanisms for resolving constitutional conflicts; and

(4) a bicameral parliamentary system ensuring direct representation of the constituent states at the
federal level.¹

Though there is some consensus on its broad features among Soviet and Western scholars such as division of power between the centre and the units, a written constitution and a supreme court to act as guardian, yet, at the same time, the class aims behind the concept of federalism as perceived in the West and in the Soviet Union are widely divergent. The Soviet concept of federalism is carved out from the ideological basis of right of nations to self-determination which provide for every nationality to determine its State Political form and unite with other nations. Federalism in the Western democracy is based on largely administrative consideration, which is not the case with the Soviet Union where national territorial principle and functional interdependence has been the strategic factor in working out the form of state construction.

Federalism in the West:

The classical writers on federalism particularly Dicey, Bryce, Robert Garren and K.C. Wheare were primarily seeking to evolve suitable definitions of 'federalism'. In the words of Dicey, "A federal state is a political contrivance intended to reconcile national unity and power with the maintenance of state rights".\(^2\) Prof. Dicey goes on to explain that from the division of powers under a common constitution between the federal and the constituent states there flow the three leading characteristics of federalism:

1. the supremacy of the constitution,

2. the distribution among bodies with limited and co-ordinate authority of the different powers of government,

3. the authority of the courts to act as interpreters of the constitution.\(^3\)

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3. Ibid., p. 144.
At the end of the 19th century, Lord Bryce, in his book 'American Commonwealth' described the Federal and State Governments as "distinct and separate in their action". The system, he said, was "like a great factory wherein two sets of machinery are at work; their revolving wheels apparently intermixed, their bands crossing one another, yet each set doing its own without touching or hampering the other". Robert Garran, an eminent Australian scholar, defined federalism as:

"A form of Government in which sovereignty or political power is divided between the central and local Governments, so that each of them within its own sphere is independent of the other".

A similar view was reinforced by K.C. Wheare. In order to assess whether a constitution is federal or not, Wheare applied the test as follows:

"The test which I apply for Federal Government is then simply this. Does a system of Government embody predominantly a division of power between general and regional authorities, each of which


in its own sphere, is coordinate with the other and independent of them? If so, the government is federal". 6

This legal-institutional approach has been criticised as suffering from the "formalistic fallacy". N.G.S. Kini has stated:

"Formalistic fallacy consists in the belief that political behaviour and factual operations of groups and levels within a policy can be adequately understood and explained in terms of formal provisions of law and constitutions (Political and legal myths) of a political organisation. The conventional model did not go beyond a bare legal description of the formal properties of a federation." 7 Riker is also critical of "the excessive legalism of conventional definitions" while not throwing away the juristic element entirely. He rejects the traditional definitions which emphasized not only independence of constituent and central governments but more or less precise division of functions. 8 This classical theory of federalism is also rejected by M.J.C. Vile and D.J. Elazar. 9


Vile argued that the interdependence, constitutional and political, of the two levels was as important as their independence, and that more important than the coordinate status of the two levels was the requirement that neither level should be subordinated to the other — a rather different emphasis. Daniel J. Elazar has written that the traditional conception of federalism as evolving a sharp demarcation of responsibilities between two independent sets of sovereignties has never worked in practice in the United States. According to him, "at any given time in American political history the great majority of government activities was shared by all levels of government, and that cooperative federalism was the rule in the nineteenth century as well as in the twentieth".  

The classical approach is too much juristic to take into account the convention and usages of extra-constitutional character which shape and influence the governmental process in a federal system. An adequate

understanding of the legal structure calls for the exploration of various social forces which produce federalism. As William S. Livingstone observes the essence of federalism lie not in the institutional or constitutional structure but in the society itself. Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected.12

**Soviet Approach to Federalism:**

Now, let us take a searching look at the Soviet perception of federalism. The Soviet political dictionary defines federalism as:

"A Union of states, forming a new union state with a single citizenship. Entering into a federation the union states retain their legal and administrative organs, the activities of which are limited to specific groups of question. Side by side with the organs of power of the different states belonging to the federation, there are established union (federal) legal, administrative and judicial organs, the acts of which are operative throughout the entire territory of the federal states". 13

This appears to be a kind of a formalistic perception of federalism. Judged by the formal definition given in the Soviet political dictionary, the concept of federalism in both the Soviet Union and West appears to be somewhat identical but in reality there exist sharp differences over the nature of these features and their interrelationship among Western and Soviet scholars. To Western scholars the institutional aspect is more important, whereas to the Soviet scientist the class nature of federalism is more important. The well known Soviet Jurist A.Y. Vyshinsky in his book "The Law of the Soviet State" has aptly differentiated the Western and Soviet concept of federalism. He wrote: "Its distinguishing feature is the elasticity of its form, as applied:

(a) to concrete problems of the socialist state in raising the economic-cultural level of each person, and

(b) the conditions of class struggle to each historical phase. The form of federation bonds existing in bourgeois federation are alien to it".14

To determine the nature of federation from whatever point, Socialist or Western, it is worthwhile to go through its background. Generally, two types of forces bring about a federation namely, centrifugal and centripetal. In the first case, unitary state is broken up into a number of units for some administrative purposes. In the second case, the hitherto independent and sovereign states which unite to protect their national, economic and other interest by delegating some of its powers to a Central Government. Since the forces working behind the formation of a federation have decisive impact on the nature of federation, it is more appropriate to know the theoretical and practical roots from which sprang the Soviet Union i.e., a federal, multinational state. A brief survey of the development of the concept of federalism in the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin brings out the genesis and growth of Soviet thinking on state structure in its proper perspective.

Marx and Engels on State Structure

Marx and Engels closely studied the unitary and federal forms of state structure and described their positive features and inadequacies under different
historical conditions. Discussing the question of forms and organisation of a democratic state, Marx and Engels favoured the centralized unitary form of state, because during their lifetime Europe had seen the completion of the transition from feudal disunity to centralism i.e., creation of centralized bourgeois states. For that period it was a progressive phenomena since the centralisation of bourgeois state objectively helped to develop society's productive forces. They preferred the centralized unitary state against politically disunited states which did not accord with the interests of the proletariat and its task to unite their struggle for socialism. A unitary centralized bourgeois state helped in the then existing conditions, the economic and political cohesion of the working class and the growth of its class consciousness. Marx and Engels observed in the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' that "the bourgeoisie keeps, more and more, doing away with the scattered state of the population of the means of production and property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation. Independent or but loosely connected provinces with separate interests, laws, governments
and system of taxation became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interests, one frontier and one customs tariff.\textsuperscript{15}

Engels orchestrated the same idea in 'The civil war in Switzerland'. He wrote, "Through its industry, commerce and political institutions, the bourgeoisie is already working everywhere to drag the small, self-contained localities which only live for themselves out of their isolation, to bring them into contact with one another, to merge their interests, to expand their local horizons, to destroy their local habits, strivings and ways of thinking, and to build up a great nation with common interests, customs and ideas out of many hitherto mutually independent localities and provinces. The bourgeoisie is already carrying out considerable centralisation. The proletariat, far from suffering any disadvantage from this, will as a result rather be in a position to unite, to feel itself a class to acquire a political point of view

within the democracy and finally to conquer the bourgeoisie". 16

He considered the centralised unity of Germany as a progressive phenomena which could help to sweep away "all the historically inherited small state junk", which was blocking the free development of trade and industry. 17

However, Marx and Engels lent their support to federal state structure in such countries where it could historically became the transitional political form, from scatteredness to unity of state power, uniting the small states into one centralised state. For example, Engels supported the struggle of progressive forces of Switzerland against the Sonderbund for the creation of a federation as a centralised, strong state. His support to the Swiss federation was aimed at liquidating the feudal disunity through the creation of


a centralised federal state. This idea is more clearly reflected in his work, "The movement of 1847". He stated that "for the first time in its history this country has played a definite part in the European system of States, for the first time it has dared to act decisively and has had the courage to enter into the arena as a federal republic instead of as heretofore an agglomeration 22 antagonistic cautions, utter strangers to one another..... it has assured the supremacy of the central power - in a word, has become centralised.

The de facto centralisation will have to be legalised through the impending reform of the Federal Pact".18

At the same time, he expressed his strong opposition to the German federation. He remarked that in Germany "federalisation on the Swiss model would be an enormous step backward". In Germany, "The Union state is the transition to the completely unified state, and the "revolution from above" of 1866 and 1870 must not be reversed but supplemented by a "movement from below".19


Thus, Engels tried to analyse the transitional forms with the utmost thoroughness, bearing in mind the concrete, historical, specific features of each separate state, "from what and into what the given transitional form is passing". 20

Approaching the matter from the point of view of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels, like Marx, upheld democratic centralism, the republic - one and indivisible. He regarded the federal republic either as an exception and a hindrance to development; or as a transitional form from a monarchy to a centralised republic, as a "step forward" under certain special conditions. (Emphasis added)

And among these, national question comes to the front. 21

Marx and Engels formulated for the first time the important proposition that there exists a relationship between the federal form of the organisation of the state and the solution of the national question. This thesis was further developed by Lenin. Marx and Engels arrived at the conclusion that international alliance

20. Ibid., p. 123.

21. Ibid.
between the English and the Irish proletarian could lead to the victory of the working class under the specific conditions prevailing in Britain at that time. They suggested that the international alliance of the working class and their own social emancipation was impossible without abolishing the wall of enmity and isolation between nations which had been created by bourgeoisie. "Any nation that oppressed another forges its own chains".22

In a letter to Engels, dated November 2, 1867, Marx stated, "I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although after the separation, there may come federation". 23

Again Marx explained that he had been convinced that the English working class could "never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland in the most definite way from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only


makes common cause with the Irish, but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship."  

In a letter entitled 'The General Council to the Federal Council of Romania, Switzerland', Marx wrote that 'It is a preliminary condition of the emancipation of the English working class to transform the present forced union into an equal and free confederation if possible, or into complete separation if necessary'.  

Quoting Marx on the question of Ireland Lenin, in his work "The Right of Nations to Self-determination", wrote: "Though in principle an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federalism". Engels also went on to emphasize the same position "federation would be a step forward in England where the


two islands are peopled by four nations...". 27 Quoting Engels, Lenin stressed that the recognition of federation by him was a "plain fact that the national question was not yet a thing of the past, and recognised in consequence that the establishment of a federal republic would be a step forward". 28

Lenin, however, did not think that it meant Engels abandoned the "criticism of shortcomings of a federal republic and abandoning the most determined propaganda and struggle for a unified and centralised democratic republic". 29

Marx and Engels held the view that bourgeois federations were nothing but forcible union of states. They found it a harmful form of state construction for the proletarian state. Marx in his work, Civil War in France, analysing the experience of Paris Commune of 1871, hailed its centralism and remarked that being in essence the state of proletarian dictatorship, Paris

27. Lenin, State and Revolution, no. 19, p. 122.
commune set itself the goal of creating a centralised unitary state and not of substituting it with federal union of small provincial communes.

He remarked that "the communal constitution has been mistaken for an attempt to break up into a federation of small states, as dreamt up by Montesquieu and the Girondins, that unity of great nations, which, if originally brought about by political force, has now become a powerful co-efficient of social production".30

In 1901, Edward Bernstein asserted that Marx's views on federation were identical with those of Proudhon. Bernstein tried to represent Marx's criticism of the military, bureaucratic, bourgeois state machine as a departure from the principle of centralism in general, as giving preference to the federal organisation of the proletarian state.31

In fact Marx in his work especially on the commune, clearly opposed the "conscious, democratic,

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proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military bureaucratic centralism.\textsuperscript{32}

In the same context, Lenin wrote in his work "The State and Revolution": "There is not a trace of federalism in Marx's above quoted observations on the experience of the commune. Marx agreed with Proudhon on the very point that opportunist Bernstein failed to see. Marx disagreed both with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein found a similarity between them."

Further, "Marx disagreed both with Proudhon and with Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from the petty bourgeois view of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure whatever from centralism in his observation just quoted. Only those who are imbued with the Philistine "Superstitious belief" in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the destruction of centralism".\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} Lenin, \textit{State and Revolution}, no. 19, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp. 90-91.
In retrospection, it is important to conclude that Marx and Engels favoured federalism either as an exception, or as a transitional form of state construction from feudal scatteredness to centralised strong union state under certain specific historical conditions, and among such special conditions the national question was also included. They approached the national question as part of the general question of the triumph of the proletarian dictatorship. Marx and Engels considered federal form of state construction justified in cases where it helped the free development of nations and improved the condition of the oppressed nations in a system of multinational bourgeois state.

Lenin's View on Federalism

Lenin's view on federalism were formed during the conditions of sharp struggle with views opposed to Marxism on the national question and on the state legal form of its solution and their role in the struggle for socialism and socialist revolution. It is well known that in the "epoch of imperialism" and "Proletarian revolution" the national question became inseparable from the question of socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin carefully studied the ideas of Marx and Engels on the said
question and stressed that this stand should become a model for proletarian policy fully retaining its enormous practical importance. Hence analysing the different forms of political construction of socialist Russia, Lenin started from the need for a democratic solution of the national question as a component of the general question of Socialist revolution.

Developing this idea further Lenin advanced the idea of right of nations to self-determination, including secession and formation of an independent state. Since then, this programmatic point on the national question has been repeatedly included in all the important documents of the party congresses; Lenin nevertheless did not at any time totally and unconditionally rejected federation. He took account of (a) the stage of social development the nation seeking political separation has reached, and (b) which of its


However, in principle Lenin opposed a federal state system. He opposed the idea of establishing a federation in Russia but supported the establishment of the federal Balkan republic in 1912-1914.37

In 1903, he foresaw a situation in which federation would be a step forward and wrote, "We must always and unreservedly work for the very closest unity of the proletariat of all nationalities, and it is only in isolated and exceptional cases that we can advance and actively support demands conducive to the establishment of new class state or to the substitution of a looser federal unity etc., for the complete unity of a state".38

Lenin's later work written in 1916 "The discussion of Self-determination summed up" paid special attention to the criticism of the "errors" of Rosa Luxemburg on the national question. Rosa had


38. V.I. Lenin, "The National Question in our Programme", in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), vol. 6, p. 454.
opposed the right to self-determination. The Polish Social Democrats went a step further, they did not recognize the right of nations to self-determination even in the socialist condition. Lenin also favoured the "Great Centralised State" which was "tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the further socialist unity of the whole world". And he further noted that "via such a state (inseparably connected with capitalism) can there be any road to socialism".39 This means that, firstly, Marxists always admit situations in which it is possible and necessary to support federalism. Secondly, it is the presence or absence of a nationalities problem which plays an important role in determining the most progressive state structure".40

So far as Russia was concerned Lenin and the Bolsheviks considered non-federal centralised state most expedient. Approaching the problems from the standpoint of concrete historical conditions then


40. Zemushkina, no. 35, p. 196.
prevailing in the Russian empire, Lenin came out decisively against the substitution of the already emerging Russian centralised unitary state by a federation. The first opinion against the federal form of state construction in Russia was reflected in his work, *On the Manifesto of the Armenian Social Democratic* (Published in 1903). Here Lenin noted that federalism is a two fold agreement. Hence without the existence of political autonomy federalism would in fact be a fiction. He further wrote that "The league should delete the demand for a federative republic from its programme, confining itself to the demand for a democratic republic in general."41 The objection to constitutional federalism was most distinctly expressed in his work "Critical Remark on the National Question". He wrote: "Marxist are of course opposed to federation and decentralisation, for the simple reason that capitalism requires for its development the largest and most centralised possible states".42 How firmly he held this principle is evident from his letter to Shaumyan in 1913.


42. Lenin, no. 33 , p. 45.
"We are opposed to federation in principle, it loosens economic ties, and is unsuitable for a single state. You want to secede? All right, go to the devil, if you can break economic bonds, or rather, if the oppression and friction of "Co-existence" disrupt and ruin economic bonds. You do not want to secede? In that case, excuse me, but do not decide for me, do not think that you have a "right to federation". 43

It should be noted that in the resolution on the National Question adopted by the April Conference of the Party in 1917, the question of federal structure was not even mentioned and the resolution spoke of the nation's right to secession, of autonomy for national regions within the framework of the integral (unitary) state, and lastly of the enactment of a fundamental law prohibiting all national privileges whatsoever, but not a word was said about the permissibility of a federal structure of the states. 44

Thus, Lenin and Engels supported the strong centralised, unitary democratic state and expressed opposition on principle to federal form of state construction and regarded federalism only as a transitional form.


It is thus evident that Lenin did not put forth the task of formation of a federation before the Party until the October Revolution. Neither the First Party Programme nor the Poronin Resolution on the national question contained the demand for the establishment of a federalism. In his work, "National Question in our programme", Lenin opposed the demand of social revolutionaries for creation of federation in Russia. Lenin also rejected federalism in Party construction, as suggested by the Bund and other parties. He gave the importance to democratic organisation of a unitary state and advanced the plan for "National Territorial Autonomy" of those nations which by their own free will choose to remain in the system of a unitary democratic republic. He favoured wide autonomy inside the state and wrote, "We are in favour of autonomy for all parts; we are in favour of the right to secession (and not in favour of everyone's seceding). Autonomy is our plan for organising a democratic state".45

Recognition of Federation by Lenin as a form of Socialist Construction:

There is no unanimity of views among Soviet scholars regarding the question as to when Lenin recognised federation as a historical necessity form of state construction in Russia. A.E. Kaikhanidi, G.V. Aliksandreko and A. Spasov assert unconvincingly that Lenin always preferred the state federation as one of the means of a democratic solution to the nationality problem. 46

According to other views, Lenin began to accept the "Permissibility of federalism only in August 1917, and merely as a transitional form. In recent literature on Soviet federalism, S.B. Batyrov appeared as the most outspoken defender of this interpretation. 47 Lepeshkin agrees that Lenin was emphatically against a federal form of state system for Russia up to April 1917 but claims that, while Lenin in principle always favoured a unitary state, 

46. Quoted critically by Tadevosyan, V.I. Lenin (O Gosudarstvennoi Federatsii) Voprosi Istorii KPSS 1961, no. 2, 49.

even before April 1917, he was not against federation in all circumstances. After the February Revolution Lenin concluded that Soviet Russia needed federal form of state system and this was adopted in January 1918. 48 S.S. Galalio, Yakubakaya and several others hold different opinion that Lenin recognised federation as a desirable form of state construction only after the October Revolution. This, they attribute to the adoption by Third All Russian Congress of Soviets in January 1918 of the declaration of Rights of Working and Exploited people. 49

In Lepeshkin's view, the aim of determining the time of the recognition of federation by Lenin, two aspects deserve to be differentiated.

(a) The possibility of allowing a federation as one of the possible forms of political construction of multinational socialist Russia.

(b) Recognition of federation by Lenin as a historically necessary form of state construction conducive to free union of different national states in a democratic single socialist multinational state.

It is noteworthy that the idea of possibility of allowing state union of national republics of Russia into a federal state was already formulated by Lenin in the period between the two Russian Revolutions of 1917.

And so far as the question of the recognition of federation as a form of state construction is concerned, Lenin arrived at this conclusion only in the process of accomplishing the October Socialist Revolution and particularly during the first months following it. Lenin raised the question of admissibilities of federation in his article 'Task of Proletariat in our Revolution', written a few days after the publication of April Thesis, Lenin pointed out, "As regard the national question, the proletariat party first of all, must advocate the proclamation and immediate realisation of complete freedom of secession from Russia for all the nation and people who were
oppressed by Tsarism; or who were forcibly joined to; or kept forcibly within the boundaries of the state, i.e. annexed". 50

A little later, Lenin explained that he has given a "new formulation of the right of self-determination which has given rise to numerous misinterpretation. I propose the perfectly precise concept "the right to the free secession". 51 This idea was further developed by Lenin in his article "Finland and Russia" (May, 1917) where he developed the idea of voluntary union of "The Russian Proletarian and Peasant Republic and the Republics of all other Nations". 52 He stated that "without recognising the right of secession, all phrase mongering about an "agreement" is self-deception and deception of the people". 53

50. V.I. Lenin, "The Task of the Proletariat in our Revolution", in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), vol. 24, p. 73.


52. V.I. Lenin, "Finland & Russia", in Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), vol. 24, p. 338.

53. Ibid., p. 336.
In his article "Mandate and Deputies of the Soviets elected at Factories and Regiments" (May, 1917), Lenin wrote that "The Great Russians offer a fraternal union to all nations and propose the formation of a common state by voluntary consent.... and all other nations without exception freely to decide whether they wish to live as a separate state, or in union with whomsoever they please". The appeal of Lenin contained in his speech at First All Russia Congress of Soviets of Worker's and Soldier's Deputies in June 1917 - "Let Russia be a union of free republics" confirmed Lenin's position on federation as the possible form of state unity for future socialist Russia.

In all the statements of Lenin there was a reference to the possibility of federation as a form of state unity. It is important to note that Lenin here for the first time used the term 'Union' State i.e., federation (though he did not use this term exactly).


55. V.I. Lenin, "First All Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, June 3-24 (June 16-July 7), 1917", Collected Works, (Moscow, 1964), vol. 25, p. 37.
Proceeding from the new historical conditions emerging in Russia in 1917, Party reconsidered its position vis-a-vis federation and recognised federation as a possible form of state unity for 'Socialist Russia'. Later Lenin in his book, The State and Revolution (August 1917) outlined a new approach to federation.

In January 1918, the recognition of federal form of state construction of the Soviet Republic was legally secured in the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples, "The Russian Soviet Republic", it declared, "is established on the principle of a free union of free nations, as a federation of Soviet National Republics". The declaration, however, did not outline the nature of federal relations, "leaving it to the workers and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their authoritative Congress of Soviets if they wish to participate in the federal Government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms".56

Thus, it was not suddenly that Lenin and Bolshevik

Party recognised the need of a federal structure but it was a gradual development of the situation which made them conclude that only a federal form of state could unite the entire masses of various nationalities.

Some light has been thrown by the foregoing discussion how the conception of a federation originated in the Soviet Union. Now the key question is, why did Lenin give up Marxist concept of centralised state in favour of federation? And here a basic conflict of opinion can be discerned.

Some Soviet authors like M.I. Kulichenko and Semenov think that basically there was not change of views by Lenin on federalism. But the fact remains that Lenin had opposed the federal construction of Russia up to the October Revolution. Tadevosyan and others \(^\text{57}\) who disagree with Kulichenko and Semenov do not base their explanation why Lenin wanted a federative state primarily on notions of self-determination and democracy. A number of more concrete arguments are advanced by them.

(a) Lenin regarded a federal state as a long term commitment to rally the distrustful non-Russian masses to the Bolshevik side.

(b) Lenin believed that the revolutionary transformation of different nations at different stages of development inevitably required a diversity of state forms, i.e., federal state.

(c) Lenin saw the adoption and maintenance of a federal system as one of the means of containing and resolving the then existing and future political conflict between the Central leadership and the national elites.58

For the first time, these conditions were outlined by J.V. Stalin in December 1924 in the note to his article "Against Federalism" published in Pravda on March 28, 1917. In Stalin's view this evolution on the question of federalism took place because at the time of October Revolution:

(a) a number of nationalities of Russia were

actually in a state of complete isolation from one another, and in view of this, federation represented a step forward from the division of the working masses of these nationalities to their closer union, their amalgamation.

(b) The fact that the very forms of federal union suggested themselves in the course of Soviet development proved by no means so contradictory to the aim of closer economic unity between the working masses on the nationalities of Russia as might have appeared formerly, and even did not contradict this aim at all, as was substantially demonstrated in practice.

(c) The national movement prove to be far more weighty a factor, and the process of amalgamation of nations far more complicated a matter than might have appeared formerly, in the period prior to the war, or in the period to the October Revolution. 59

M.I. Kulichenko mentions following reasons which caused Lenin to revise his views on the federation.

(1) The country was on the eve of a socialist revolution, which should have seized the whole country - the centre and the periphery.

(2) The national liberation movement had reached a high level of maturity which had placed the creation of its own independent national statehood by every nation on the agenda of the day.  

Semenov explains this change in terms of inequality of treatment, oppression, economic and cultural backwardness of the non-Russian nationalities.  

Apart from the above factors there were other factors which provided the basis for re-examination of its stand towards federation by the Party. These

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factors have been summarised by Lepeshkin as follows. 62

(1) Recognition by Lenin that Soviet Republic was different from all forms of bourgeois state not only in its essence but also in the principle of its organisation. The federation based on Soviets was in no way contradictory to the creation of centralised strong democratic state. The Soviet which arose before the October Socialist Revolution and became after its victory a political basis of the state cultivated the idea of uniting people by making provisions for their national sovereignty. This realisation by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party made them re-examine their attitude towards federation, which was deemed as a more progressive state form for ensuring unity for the Soviet multi-national state.

(2) The other cause for this change was that the relative strength of the national movement in Russia turned out to be more serious than it

appeared before the October Socialist Revolution. More than 100 nations with different stages of socio-economic development burst into a big upsurge with the February bourgeois democratic revolution which was strengthened by the colonial policy of provisional government. Particularly in the sphere of national question. In the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution three basic tendencies could be noticed in the national areas of the country.

(a) urge for formation of unitary national republics.

(b) National federated union.

(c) Revolutionary democratic movement for the creation of a single strong socialist multinational state.

In such a historical setting the federal form of state construction was potentially more relevant from the standpoint of unity among nations and the cause of formation of a single union state. The federation under such conditions provided the state with legal instrument to forge a structure based on unity and solidarity in a system of single federal socialist state.
Summing up the result of state construction during the first month of the existence of RSFSR, Lenin wrote that on the basis of its example it shows us particularly clearly that federation, which we are introducing and will introduce is now the surest step towards the most lasting union of the various nationalities of Russia into a single democratic centralised Soviet state.63

(3) One of the basic causes for recognition of federation appeared in no way contradictory to the task of forging economic cooperation of the toiling masses of the various nationalities of Russia: The 10th Congress of the RCP(B) noted in its resolution that the Russian experience in applying the federal form of the state "... has fully confirmed the suitability and flexibility of federation as a general form of state union of Soviet Republics".64

64. KPSS V Resolutsiiakh i Resheniakh, T. 2, p. 251.
Another serious cause for change of stand on federation was the fact that it guaranteed the external security of the Soviet Republic, not only in political and economic spheres but also in the military sphere. In the period before the October Revolution the Bolshevik Party was of the view that federation would be less favourable for implementing the political task of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But during the first few months of the existence of the Soviet state, it was demonstrated that without strong military cooperation among the Soviet republics, the civil war could not be won and the independence of every republic, if "attacked by the imperialist powers" could not be defended. Federal form for the multinational Soviet state under certain historical conditions was confirmed by the Party programme adopted in March 1919 and in the "Thesis on the National Question", ratified by the Second Comintern Congress in 1920. But the federation which was to be organised on the Soviet pattern was conceived as a transitional form towards "complete and full unity". Thus it took quite a long time to create the parameters of a new type of federation which had an unbuilt mechanism to respond to the question of its applicability.
not only as a transitional but as a durable form.

In the given circumstances, it was a logical result of the tremendous amount of political work that was undertaken to unite various nations in a single state on the principle of "internationalism". The conception of the principle was almost flawless. However, the historical evolution of its functional parameters left much to be desired. The functional parameters will be examined in chapters that follow.