

## A Federative State as a Complex System

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**Abstract:** This article considers a federative state as a complex system of government characterized by a union of partially self-governing states or regions, political institutions, social and political communities, forms of interaction and relationships among them. As consistent with G. Almond's roles approach to the description of the processes taking place in a political system we suggest it to include 5 subsystems: institutional, regulatory, communicative, ideological and cultural.

**Key words:** Federalism • Federative state • Federative system • Integrity and stability of a federative system  
• Systems approach

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### INTRODUCTION

An operation and development of various political systems is one of the major fields of study in political science where the systems approach is commonly used. Nevertheless, it has not been long time since they started to consider federalism as a complex system. The founders of the modern theory of federalism D. Elasar, R. Watts, W. Riker regard it as a many-sided political phenomenon, thus employing the systems approach in their study [1]. R. Watts suggests to distinguish federalism, federation and federative political systems, pointing out that a federation is one species of a federative order, the others being a confederacy, a union, a constitutionally decentralized union, an associated state, etc. [2] W. Riker defines a federative state as a political system in which "the activities of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions[3].

The traditional interpretation of the essence of a federative state limits the understanding of it to a juridical construction characterized by particular structural elements, a certain framework.

Nowadays a federation (a federative state), as a specific manifestation of federalism, is liable to changes and modifications due to some inner and outer factors. That is why the methods of its study should be

reconsidered with the systems approach being recognized as fundamental. M. V. Gligich-Zolotareva notes that a federation may be considered as a complex self-organizing social system in which "the structure of government is complicated and includes states or regions independent outside the sphere of realization of the federal goals and tasks and also having an opportunity to participate in making the decisions for the whole federation [4].

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to M. V. Gligich-Zolotarev the existing systems of government are getting less and less able to answer the grand challenges of our time and it is reasonable to use the synergy methods in political and law studies [4].

The systems approach is applied in different sciences. It incorporates various methods and means to study characteristics and structure of an object as a whole considering it as a complex social system. The systems approach is based on the general systems theory designed primarily by A. A. Bogdanov, L. Bertalanphy, P.K. Anokhin, N. Viner, etc. Studying a modern federative state it is reasonable to apply the methodology based both on the synergy concept and the theory of political systems developed by T. Parkinson, D. Iston and G. Almond.

As consistent with G. Almond's roles approach to the description of the processes taking place in a political system we suggest it to include 5 subsystems: institutional, regulatory, ideological, communicative and cultural.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In comparison with a unitary form of government, in certain historical conditions a federation is regarded as a more democratic type of government; as a form of detecting and satisfying the peoples' versatile interests, aspirations, needs for self-expression and self-determination; as a means to reflect the national sense of being, peoples' consciousness, their traditions (civil, ethnic, religious, etc).

A federative system of government is characterized by the following:

- A federal territory which is a sum of the regions' territories endowed as a whole with the federal sovereignty;
- The security of the status and the borders of the states or regions;
- Constitutional or both constitutional and contractual distribution of authorities between the federal government and the governments of the states or regions;
- A single or in some cases dual citizenship;
- The establishment and institutionalization of a superior state power mechanism (parliament, government, courts);
- The federal law system providing a common legal framework, supremacy of the constitution and priority of the federal laws;
- At least two levels of government: the federal institutions and those of the regional units;
- A chamber in the federal parliament representing the interests of the regional units in a federation;
- The establishment of a single economic and defense area, single monetary, financial and credit systems, common armed forces, the national language or languages, national symbols.

Based on these characteristics a federative political system may be defined as a complex system of government characterized by a union of partially self-governing states or regions, political institutions, social and political communities, forms of interaction and relationships among them. Structurally it is a two-level system acting as a whole.

N.M. Dobrynin and M. V. Gligich-Zolotarev point at the static, dynamic and synthetic features of a federative political order [5].

The static features characterize this system at a fixed moment of time. The main one of them is integrity which means that the system acts as a unit, separate from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, it is still not a unit in its nature, but a complex system consisting of various self-acting parts. The integrity of a federative political system can be explained not by its structural characteristics, but by a unifying basis, a synergistic effect which is originated from the sovereignty of a federation and voluntarily limited sovereignty of its constituent parts. Usually the integrity of a federation is guaranteed constitutionally.

The second static feature of a federative system is its openness which, in our opinion, has three aspects: the transparency of the federative government structures and the provision of a safe political development of the state in the certain geopolitical conditions aimed at the preservation of its political space. The latter can either coincide with the state borders or not – in case of separatist movements claiming their own political space (for instance, in Canada it is the province of Quebec, in Iraq – Kurdistan). There is an opinion that the state political space is weaker in the outlying districts of the country due to the less intensity of their political lives and less influence of the central power there. The third aspect of the openness is the perceptiveness to the outer stimuli, or an ability of the system to interact and develop.

The third feature is the presence of the constituent parts, a hierarchy. According to N.M. Dobrynin and M.V. Gligich-Zolotarev, it is a species character for a federation which distinguishes it from a unitary state.

The fourth characteristic of a federative political system is its structuredness manifested in the multiple connections and interactions between the federal centre and the regional units, the division of powers and authorities between them. The structural characteristic of a federation allow us to describe it as a political institution with the government system formed under the impact of the territorial structure.

The dynamic features of a federation are revealed in its transformation, modernization and development. The scientists include here functionality, changeability, responsiveness to stimuli, ability to exist in the changing environment.

The synthetic characteristics of a federative system are integral qualities relating to the system's integrity and its interaction with the environment. The scientists study them from the point of view of the laws and regularities

stated in the general systems theory, organizations theory and synergetics (an empirical study of self-organization and formation, maintenance and disintegration of the structures in the systems of various natures).

An important synthetic characteristic of a federation as a complex system is emergence which is conceived as a process whereby the system acquires new qualities. A similar regularity was registered by A. Bogdanov – the so-called synergistic effect – “any system has such set of resources which always allows its potential either to be considerably bigger than in case of a simple amount of all its resources or considerably smaller” (the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts) [6]. Accordingly, a federative system is something more than an aggregate of its regions.

The second synthetic characteristic is the nonseparability of its parts. If we want to maintain a system, we cannot separate any of its parts. When we withdraw any of the system’s constituents (an element or a subsystem), it changes both its content and structure. As a result, we have another system with different qualities [5]. As for a federation, nonseparability of its parts is accounted for by an aspiration of any federative state to preserve all of its territories under its power. Secession weakens a federation, drops its international authority and in the long run leads to its disintegration.

The third characteristic is inherence, i. e. an ability to adapt to the environment, compatibility with it, a capacity to function fully being open and exposed to its disturbing influence.

The fourth characteristic is expedience which means that the very existence of any system is aimed at achieving a particular end. “The purpose of the system’s creation predetermines all its architectonics. A system is a means to achieve it, not vice versa. If this purpose cannot be attained at the expense of the available opportunities, the system is dismantled and a new one appears in its place” [7]. The goals of a federative state as a system are determined by the essence of federalism. They are indissolubly tied to the need of cooperation among its regions, reconciliation of the federal, regional, national and other interests of the population. Goal-setting is a compulsory element of any executive system.

Hence, from the point of view of a systems approach a federative state (a federation) can be characterized as a complex integral system of government consisting of the structural elements (the subjects or regions of the federation). Structurally it has two levels, but as any system it functions as a unit.

As a system of government a federation includes in its structure not only states or regions, but also political institutions, social and political communities, forms of interactions and relationships among them. That makes it reasonable to base its consideration on the structural and functional approach by G. Almond [8]. From this perspective we can talk about the following elements of a federative system:

- An institutional subsystem which in G. Almond’s theory includes all the institutions (organizations) related to a political power. This subsystem is brought about by the nature of the management system of a federative government. In a wide sense the fundamental institutions of a federative system are regarded as all the political institutions allowing to carry out federalist principles and regulating a political and administrative organization of the state. From this perspective the fundamental institutions of a federative system are a social and political phenomenon resting upon repeated and established collective behavior which leads to the formation of the universal regulations of a federative state. In a narrow sense these are only institutions, organizations and structures made to govern the country, i.e. bodies of the state power.

The institutional systems of the federative states vary extremely. There is a broad range of factors which influence structural characteristics of a federation. These are: federal subjects, a form of government, a type of a political regime and also a set of historical, geographical, cultural, social and political conditions specific for a particular situation.

Most of the institutional and structural characteristics of the modern federations are directly related to the process of democratization. The very existence of a two-level system of power does not guarantee achievement of the aspired effects of federalism. The structure of a federative state involves elections and representation a priori. A.A. Zakharov points out that regardless of the conditions, place and time, democracy, civil institutions and federalism come together. The federative model degrades into farce where civic consciousness is weak, democratic institutions can’t function and government is prior to individual [9]. Therefore, none of the federative constructions can be stable without a democratic basis: a coordination of interests, a democratic political culture, a civil society and an electoral institute.

- A regulatory subsystem includes political norms and traditions defining and regulating a political life of the society. By these norms and traditions we mean legal provisions (constitutions, laws, standard acts and decrees), work standards of social organizations, unwritten customs and traditions and ethic norms. A regulatory subsystem of a federative state is framed by a set of fixed (constitutional norms and principles of law) and non-fixed regulations which determine the way the government functions.
- A communicative subsystem is formed by the relationships and forms of interaction among social classes, groups, nations, individuals in respect of their participations in an organization, realization and development of political power as well as elaboration and enforcement of policy in the state. With regards to a federative system, we should add here a set of the federative relations in division of authorities and powers between the federal government and the regions and also the relationships among the regions themselves.

A communicative subsystem of a federative state has two differently directed groups of relationships: the political ones aimed at strengthening the existing federative order and those destabilizing and destructing a federation. "A modern federative state poises between the centripetal and centrifugal forces, between the integrative or unifying principles and reinforcement of independence and variability of its regions [10].

- An ideological subsystem is formed by the contently different political ideas, views, notions and feelings of the people participating in a political life of the society. This subsystem includes the individual views and ideas; class and group opinions; universal and intergroup values. We can single out 2 levels of the ideological subsystem: a theoretical one (political ideology) which manifests itself in the views, principles, theories, concepts, ideals and slogans; and an empirical one (political psychology) which is all about feelings, emotions, moods, prejudices, traditions and opinions.

An ideological subsystem is as important for a federative state as the regulatory and institutional ones.

Federalism is a doctrine, a set of interconnected ideas which is used to initiate and govern political actions. Depending on the purpose, a federalist ideology has three basic orientations: centralistic (centripetal), decentralistic (centrifugal) and genuinely federative (related to the achievement of a certain equilibrium among the levels of government).

In this case federalism is considered as a value concept having an ideological content which distinguishes it from the conceptual foundations of federation, confederation, unitary state or associated state which are descriptive in character and relate to certain governmental structures. An American political scientist Vincent Ostrom defines federalism as the ideology of a truly self-governing society, alternative to a centralized chain of command, or a homogeneous society [11].

- A cultural subsystem is an integrative factor of a political system. It represents a complex of standards (stereotypes) of political views, value orientations and political actions well-established in a particular society. G. Almond doesn't divide cultural subsystem into parts, but he believes it to have the following functions: to provide the stability of a political system, to unify different segments of the people, to make it possible to foresee the people's reaction to the adopted decisions and to ensure the continuity of the political life of the society.

Federalism is the relationships of citizens, a form of their self-organization made to secure and reconcile their individual interests. A. Zakharov points out that the basis of a federative system should be a particular anthropological substratum. An individual having inviolable rights and freedoms is a priority and government created to guard and carry them out comes second. The cultural content of federalism is more important as it implies predisposition of the representatives of a certain culture to a special, "federalist", type of the social relations [9]. Thus, federalism is a form of self-organization of the society which is rooted in the social needs and appears also as a political institute. The federalist culture is regarded by the followers of the American political school as a criterion for a true federalism [12]. Sociological analysis of civil and democratic institutes of different countries demonstrates that essential condition of their effectiveness is a high level of social cohesion, high level

of credibility of population to power structures, commitment of a municipal unit to social, cultural, educational and human resources [13].

### CONCLUSION

A federative state is not just a form of government, a juridical or institutional construction. From the point of view of the systems approach and structural and functional analysis, a federative state is an elaborate political system consisting of five subsystems: institutional, regulatory, ideological, communicative and cultural. A federative state has all the features of a complex system: integrity, goal-setting, a synergistic effect, structuredness, a complicated dependence of a federation on the qualities of its elements (subjects and nonsubjects) and subsystems.

The integrity, stability and effectiveness of a federative system are generated not only by its structural characteristics, but also by a uniting principle, a synergistic effect, originating from the functioning and interconnection of the mentioned subsystems of a federative state.

A federative system is something more than a sum of its states or regions. This system of government also includes political institutions, social and political communities, forms of interaction and relationships among them.

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