

Critically analyze the nature of federation in former USSR.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

"we are against federation on principle. It weakens communities. It is unfit for a single state" - Lenin

The Russian federation is a federation of 15 constituent units. These units are known as **Union Republics**. Below them are 20 **autonomous Republics** and 8 **autonomous regions**, and 10 **autonomous areas**. This federation has unique features.

## 2. NATURE OF FEDERATION IN FORMER USSR:

Article 13 of the Stalin Constitution stated that Russian Federation was a **Federal state**, formed on the basis of a voluntary union of equal Socialist Soviet Republics. Article 70 of 1977 constitution defines Russian Federation as an **integrated federal, multinational state** formed on the principle of **Socialist Federation**.

Union Republics (15 units)

↓  
Autonomous  
Republics (10)

↓  
Autonomous  
Regions (8)

↓  
Autonomous  
Areas (10)

### 3. UNION REPUBLICS:

A Union Republic is in itself a federation of Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions and Autonomous Areas.

A Union Republic is a national Soviet Socialist state, which is voluntarily affiliated to the Union of Soviet Socialist ~~stat~~ Republics on the basis of equal rights with all other Union Republics.

a- All the Union Republics enjoy **autonomy** and independence in all matters except those which have been vested to the All-Union Government by the constitution.

b- They reserve the right to **quit** from the Union. This emphasizes the voluntary character of Union Republics.

c- **Right to frame the constitution** - Each Union Republic has the right to frame its constitution. The only condition is that it should conform to the Constitution of Russian Federation.

d- **Right to territory** - The territory of a Union Republic cannot be altered without its consent.

e- **Right to organize army and diplomatic relations** - Union Republic reserves the right to maintain its separate armed forces and enter into direct diplomatic relations with foreign states.

f- **Right to possess separate flag** - They have their separate flags.

All these facts indicate that a Union Republic in Russian Federation enjoys the full right of self-determination and thus is more autonomous than a state of the **Indian Union** or of the **USA**.

### 3.1. AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS:

Autonomous Republic is a Soviet socialist National State of people having distinct culture, language and genius of its own. It is organised voluntarily by the nationality concerned within the confines of a Union Republic.

a- Self-government: Autonomous Republic enjoys the right of self-government within its territory with regard to its domestic affairs.

b- Right to constitution: Autonomous Republic has the right to frame its constitution in conformity to the constitution of Russian Federation and Union Republic.

c- Right to territory: The territory of Autonomous Republic cannot be altered without its consent. It can make laws which are binding within its territory.

d- Right to citizenship: The citizens of an Autonomous Republic also enjoy the citizenship of Union Republics and Russian Federation.

e- Right to business: All official business of Autonomous Republic is conducted in its own language.

f- Arms and flag: Autonomous Republic has the same flag and arms as those of Union Republic.

### 3.2- AUTONOMOUS REGIONS:

Autonomous Regions are organised by smaller nationalities living within the bounds of a Union Republic. These are named after people constituting the regions.

a- Self-government: These regions enjoy the right of self-government with regard to domestic affairs.

b- Regional language: All official business is transacted in regional language.

### 3.3- AUTONOMOUS AREAS:

Very small national minorities constitute the autonomous areas. They have the same powers and status as possessed by the Autonomous Regions.

Rights of all political units are safeguarded by the **Soviet of Nationalities**, the upper chamber of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation.

## 4. RUSSIAN FEDERATION AS A CENTRALIZED FEDERATION:

All the above political units make the Russian Federation a strong and centralized federation. This is manifested in the following points.

- i- The **powers** of a federal government are very **wide**.
- ii- The **constitution** can be amended by the Federal Parliament without any ratification by the units.
- iii- There is only **one budget** for the whole country. The units make their budgets after allocation is made to them in the central budget.
- iv- The **armed forces** of the Union Republic are organised under the supervision of federal government.
- v- The **Communist Party** controls both the central and unit governments.

#### 5. ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION:

- a- Every unit has its own constitution, though it must be in accordance to that of the Russian Federation. This makes it a weak federation.
- b- The federal government has limited and delegated powers. Residuary powers lie with the Union Republics. Hence, its scope of power is divided.
- c- Every Union Republic can establish diplomatic relations with foreign states and can conclude treaties.
- d- The Presidium of the Russian Federation has representatives of Union Republics as its Vice-Chairmen.

All the above mentioned points highlight that the powers are not solely reserved

to the center in Russian Federation, which makes it relatively weak federation.

## 6. CONCLUSION:

In a nutshell, the political division of Russian Federation has helped in cementing strong bonds of unity among the people of various nationalities and minorities, inhabiting this country. It discourages the discrimination based on race, nationality and language. Alternatively, Russian Federation via its political division showcases real unity irrespective of diversity of race, language and culture. Rather, it is based on equality and freedom granted to their people.

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