

# Political Science

## Part - I

(CSS 2016)

Q: Explain Confederation. How it is different from Federation? (20 marks)

### Introduction:

A confederation is a political arrangement where a group of independent states or entities comes together for common purposes such as defense, trade or foreign policy while retaining their individual sovereignty. In a confederation, the central authority or government is typically weak and limited powers, often only those explicitly delegated to it by the member states.

Decision-making in a confederation usually requires consensus or a high degree of cooperation among the member states, and the central authority has little to no power to enforce its decisions on the individual members.

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## II. Key Characteristics of a Confederation:

### 1. Sovereignty member states:

In a confederation, member states retain complete sovereignty and control over their own affairs, delegating limited powers to a weak central authority.

In contrast, a federation shares sovereignty between the central government and the constituent states, with both having authority in their respective domains.

Each state entering into the confederation retains the "sovereignty, freedom and independence"

(Jean-Jacques Rousseau)

### 2. Limited Central Authority:

In a confederation, the central authority has limited powers typically confined to specific areas like defense or foreign policy and cannot enforce decisions on member states.

(3)

In a federation, the central government has significant authority, defined by a constitution to govern over national matters.

“Under the Articles of Confederation (1781-1789), the U.S. central government lacked the authority to levy taxes or regulate commerce, relying entirely on states voluntary contributions.”

### 3. Voluntary Association:

In a confederation, member states voluntarily join together for common purposes but maintain the right to secede or withdraw at any time. Unlike a federation, there is no binding authority preventing their exit from the union.

### 4- Decision-making by Consensus:

In a confederation, decision making requires unanimous or broad agreement among member states, ensuring that all states consent before action is taken. This process emphasizes cooperation but can lead to delays.

## 5- Weak Central Government :

In a confederation, the central government is a

"A mere shadow without substance"

(James Madison)

possessing only the powers explicitly granted by the member states, often insufficient for enforcing laws or policies.

## Difference Between Confederation and Federation :

### a. Sovereignty :

#### i- Confederation :

Sovereignty remains with the individual member states. The central authority is subordinate and derives its powers from the states.

#### ii- Federation :

Sovereignty is shared between the central (federal government) and the constituent states. Both levels of government operate directly on the people and the central government has significant authority over national matters.

## b. Central Authority:

### i- Confederation:

The central authority is weak, and its powers are limited to the members of states grant it. It often has no power to enforce its decisions.

"The Confederation is a government without coercive power"

(Thomas Jefferson)

### ii- Federation:

The central government has substantial powers which are usually outlined in a constitution. It can enforce laws and decisions within its jurisdiction.

## c. Constitutional Framework:

### i- Confederation:

There may not be a formal Constitution, if one exists. It emphasizes the sovereignty and independence of member states.

The member states have the final authority.

ii- Federation:

A formal Constitution usually exists that outlines the division of powers between the central government and the states. The Constitution is typically supreme, and both levels of government derive their authority from it.

"A strong central government is essential to the protection of liberty and the stability of the union"

(Alexander Hamilton)

d. Membership and Secession:i- Confederation:

Membership is often voluntary, and states have the right to withdraw at will.

ii- Federation:

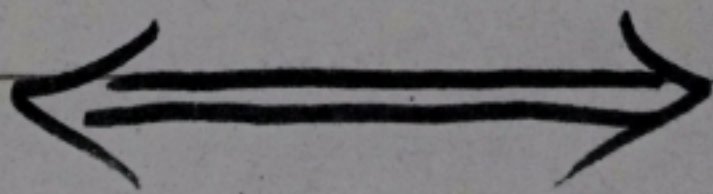
Membership is not voluntary, and constituent states cannot unilaterally secede from the federation.

Example:

The United States, Canada, Germany, India, and Australia.

## Conclusion:

In Conclusion, a Confederation is a union of sovereign states with a weak central government, while a federation is a political entity with a strong central authority and shared sovereignty between the central government and the states. The choice between these systems depends on the degree of autonomy desired by the member states and the need for a centralized authority to tackle national or collective interests.



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