

E-CONTENT

Prepared by

MR.SUBHRANSU GON

SACT

Department of Political Science

BARJORA COLLEGE

NAAC ACCREDITED 'B'

Affiliated to the Bankura University

Barjora, Bankura, West Bengal, Pin-722202

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E-CONTENT FOR

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Topic of the E-Content

Federation V/S Confederation

The terms federation and confederation refer to similar – yet very different – concepts. In a confederation, states come together creating a loose (often temporary) union for matters of political, economic or administrative convenience. Within a confederation, member states maintain their sovereignty and often appoint a weak central authority to speed up bureaucratic matters.

Definition of Federation : A federation is a political system in which individual states come together under the umbrella of a central authority. The decision of entering a federation of state can be voluntary, but in most cases, it is the result of a long historic process or the transformation of a confederation (i.e. temporary and voluntary agreement) into a federation.

Definition of Confederation : A confederation is a system of governance, in which the constituents (states or provinces) come together for political, economic, security or administrative reasons. Entering a

confederation is entirely voluntary and depends on the government of every individual states – or on the local authority in the case of provinces.

Similarities between Federation and Confederation

Despite their natural differences, federation and confederation have some aspects in common:

1. In both cases, various states, countries or provinces come together to create a new entity for matters of political, economic and security convenience. Federations and confederations only exist if there is a common agreement among constituents. Indeed, members need to adopt a common constitution to become part of the federation, while entering a confederation is not binding; and
2. In both cases, being part of the federation or the confederation should benefit member states. In the first case, constituents give up part of their sovereignty in order to receive protection, security and economic or political advantages. In the second case, states and provinces enter the confederation to create a stronger entity and enjoy administrative and economic advantages without losing power or authority.

Differences between Federation and Confederation

Federation and confederation are political and strategical agreements among countries or provinces, created in order to enable the constituents to enjoy political and economic benefits. In spite of some similarities, the two concepts are quite different:

1. Confederations were very popular in ancient Greece and during the Middle Age, but there are not many examples of existing confederations. International organizations have a similar structure, but have legal treaties and enforcement mechanisms, while confederations were loose agreements with no written constitution. Conversely, federations are more common today, and many confederations formed centuries ago evolved into federations.
2. The powers and responsibilities of the central authority vary greatly between the two. First of all, there is no central government as such in a confederation, but rather a weak body elected by member states, while the federal government has great power and influence over the constituents. In a confederation, the central government has no power de facto, and it is only in place to facilitate the decision-making process and speed up communication. Conversely, when states come together to create a federation, they create a new nation state, with a functioning and powerful central government. The constituents lose part of their autonomy and authority, and the central government acquires the ability of making decisions regarding national security, military, foreign policy and diplomacy.
3. The ties among states and provinces are much stronger in the case of the federation. Indeed, in a confederation, states agree to come together for various purposes, but they are not legally tied together and can technically back up or exit the confederation whenever they want (depending on the type of confederation). Conversely, in a federation, there are binding legal agreements that

prevent states from leaving the union. Relations among states within a federation are stronger as the different entities come together to create a new nation state.

Federation V/S Confederation

Being part of a federation or a confederation has different implications for member states. In the first case, the constituents give up part of their power and sovereignty – while maintaining the ability of taking some independent decisions – while in the second case, individual states maintain control over their territories and citizen.

Summing up, Confederation and federation are two government systems in which states or provinces come together for political, economic, social, or security reasons. Even though they are often confused, they are quite different. In a confederation there is no new central government and constituents maintain their autonomy, independence and sovereignty. Conversely, members of a federation are subject to laws and regulations created by the federal government, although they maintain a certain degree of autonomy. Today, the number of existing confederations is limited, while the number of federations is quite high. The main difference between the two is the constitution (absent in the case of a confederation), which creates legal ties among member states and sets the balance of power between central and local authorities.

