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Russian Federalism in 2012-2021

Vladimir Kalajdzhyan
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Vladimir Kalajdzhyan

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Walden University
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Abstract

Russian Federalism in 2012-2021

by

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MPA, Harvard University, 2004

BS, Roger Williams University, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration, General

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November 2022

Abstract

Researchers have disagreed on whether the Russian federal system of government was one of the many models of federalism, its own unique form of it, or not federalism. Therefore, the overarching research question investigated was how classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism applied to the contemporary Russian federal system, how the Russian system evolved in its own unique way, and how it related to asymmetrical federalist, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems. The classic theoretical foundation framework on federalism was applied. The purpose of this research was to study current trends within the Russian federal government system and investigate paths for Russia's further development toward either the confederate, unitary or federal system. This research was conducted through a qualitative method design using open data. Sources used in the study included works by U.S., European, Russian, and other international authors. Only relevant works were selected for analysis and reference. The dates of published works and studies ranged from 1603 to 2022. The constant comparison method was used to categorize, compare, analyze, refine, and compile data. The key findings of the research identified the Russian Federation as a unique federal public administration system with constitutional, cooperative, ethnoterritorial, asymmetric, and centralized federal-regional characteristics and features. The implications for positive social change are updated research and understanding of the United States' major counterpart on a global stage, the Russian Federation, which could benefit public policy administration scholars and practitioners.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my family and friends who encouraged and supported me throughout the process. Special thanks are to Dan Berkon, Brad Alden, Doug Dyer, and Simon Limage.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	6
Purpose Statement.....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Theoretical Framework: Classic Theory of Federalism.....	8
Nature of the Study.....	14
Definition of Terms.....	15
Assumptions.....	17
Scope, Delimitations, and Limitations.....	19
Significance of the Study and Implications for Positive Social Change.....	20
Summary.....	23
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	25
Introduction.....	25
Literature Search Strategy.....	26
Theoretical Framework.....	27
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts.....	28
Group 1: Russian Federalism is a Subset of One of the Models of Federalism.....	29
Group 2: Russian Federalism is its Own Unique Type of Federalism.....	33

Group 3: Russian Federalist System is Not Federalism.....	43
Summary and Conclusions	46
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	48
Introduction.....	48
Research Design and Rationale	49
Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis	51
Phase 2: In-Depth System Analysis.....	52
Phase 3: Integrating and Constructing Logical Model	56
Phase 4: Formation of Conclusions	59
Role of the Researcher	59
Methodology	60
Instrumentation	61
Published Data Collection Tools	64
Data Collection Procedures.....	67
Data Analysis Plan.....	67
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	69
Credibility	69
Transferability.....	69
Dependability	70
Confirmability.....	70
Ethical Procedures	71
Summary	71

Chapter 4: Results	73
Introduction.....	73
Setting	74
Demographics	74
Data Collection	75
Data Analysis	75
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	76
Credibility	76
Transferability.....	77
Dependability	77
Confirmability.....	78
Results.....	78
Research Question 1: How do classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism apply to the contemporary Russian federal system, and how does the Russian system evolve in its own unique way?	78
Sub question 1: How is the Russian system evolving in relation to asymmetrical federalist, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems?	87
Summary	98
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	100
Introduction.....	100
Interpretation of the Findings.....	100

Limitations of the Study.....	121
Recommendations.....	123
Implications.....	124
Conclusion	124
References	126

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The topic of this study is the status of federal-regional relations in the Russian Federation today. The reasons this study needs to be conducted include but are not limited to a fast pace of changes occurring within Russia, contradicting fragmented accounts on current processes transpiring within the Russian federal and regional governments, a limited number of studies conducted by foreign observers in the post-2012 era in comparison to pre-2012 (Tarasova et al., 2016; U.S. Agency for International Development, 2012), and the overarching question about direction and evolution of the Russian federalism on whether it is developing along with widely-accepted Western federalist models or in its own unique way.

Potential social implications of this study would be a better understanding of the processes of transformation currently occurring in the Russian federalist system, newly acquired knowledge generated by the study, and the possibility of restarting academic and practical exchanges between the U.S. and Russian scholars and practitioners of federalism in the future.

Major sections of this chapter include background, problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework for the study, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary.

Background

The balance of power and conflicts between federal and regional governments in today's Russia are among the most controversial areas of research in the field of public policy and administration; it is evident from the literature review below. Public administration scholars preferred to focus on specifically limited in-scope narrowly fragmented topics of interest within the much wider paradigm of Russian federal-regional relations. For example, problems within Russian constitutional law, confined issues in federal-regional-local governments, taxes, budgetary-financial, and other phenomena purposely scaled down in scope (Buchwald, 2018; Zametina, 2018).

The practical reason for a simplified approach was based on the enormous complexity of multidimensional factors that encompass the problem of the Russian federal system. These factors include diverse cultural-historical backgrounds, intertwined dynamic socio-politico-economic processes, and the high tempo of undergoing changes occurring in today's Russia. The absence of general clarity and agreement among public policy and administration scholars and practitioners on the exact meanings of fundamental phenomena also added to misunderstandings regarding the Russian federal government system. Such phenomena include unitary, federal, confederate, centralized and decentralized boundaries, symmetry and asymmetry in federal systems, power-sharing among federal, state, and local authorities.

Researching federal-regional relations in today's Russia demonstrates that the current literature devoted to this phenome has difficulty explaining the complex, multidimensional, multilayered, and multi-structural nature of not only Russian regions

and republics but also the functions of the Russian federal government itself. The problems in the distribution of government power among federal and regional governments in autonomous republics, autonomous districts, federal districts, and regions are not holistically described and understood in their entirety. Certainly, there are several comprehensive studies that investigate problems and address issues of the Russian politico-administrative and federal-regional architecture rather well (Martinez-Vazquez, 2017; Narutto, 2018; Zuber, 2012).

Expectedly though, there is not a common point of view or agreement that currently exists in the field of public policy and administration on those issues. There is no clear answer to the complex problems of contemporary Russian federalism, its complicated public administration structure, and a unique system in the division of power between federal and regional governments. As a result, today's Russian federal-regional policy focused on improving public administration leads to disagreements among scholars and practitioners.

Currently, most Russian scholars and practitioners agree that further modernization reforms are urgent and need to be addressed at the highest political level to ensure further development and sustainment of the territorial integrity of Russia. Naturally, there are various contradicting views by scholars and practitioners on these development prospects for the Russian Federation. Some believe that it is desirable to maintain and develop the ethnic state system through the formation of new ethnic republics. Others, in contrast, suggest transferring the entire federation to the administrative-territorial principle of building a federally structured country through the

dissolution of the existing ethnic entities and ethnic autonomous republics. As an example, they refer to a provincial structure of the Russian Empire in the pre-1917 era (Bakulina & Vasin, 2019). In favor of that approach, they argue that only six out of 27 current autonomous republics and districts have 50% or more as a share of the local ethnic population. Ethnic Russians are the majority in the other 21 autonomous republics and districts. Overall, the Federation has 85 units (89 until recent changes), regions, autonomous republics, and districts with over 120 ethnic groups living in Russia.

Generally, the federal structure of one or another country is determined by that country's historical and cultural evolution, formation, and development of its economic system, and development of its political and legal institutions (Althusius, 1603). If viewed through the lens of politico-socio-economic development in any federalist country, then the existing federal system in that country is both – a *factor for* the potential development of the country and at the same time *a result of* this country's previous development (Wheare, 1946). In Russia's case 30 years ago, the collapse of the former Soviet Union government's structure resulted in the emergence of 15 newly independent countries in 1991. The governance of these new countries with a total population of over 300 million people had to be rebuilt completely. The world has witnessed only a few such dramatic transitions in its history as those that have been unfolding in these newly established countries. Due to political, socio-economic, and cultural revolutions that have been sweeping through them, public policy and administration systems in these countries also have been fundamentally transformed. These transformations are still ongoing, and this study focused on Russia's current transformation.

The U.S. public policy and administration scholars and practitioners were involved in the Russian public policy and administration reforms from 1991 through 2012 (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2012). Unfortunately, due to geopolitical reasons, the public policy and administration collaboration sponsored and funded by the U.S. and Russian governments was ceased by October 1, 2012 (Tarasova et al., 2016; U.S. Agency for International Development, 2012). That situation had practically ended all cooperation between the two countries in the discipline of public policy and administration in general, as well as halted scholarly exchanges that had focused on transforming and reforming federal-regional relations in Russia as a subset. This situation has impacted the stream of new knowledge that was pouring in and out of Russia until 2012. Successes, failures, best practices, and lessons learned in public policy and administration reforms, which Russian federal and regional governments have been undertaking after 2012, are not well known in the United States (Osipov et al., 2017; Tarasova et al., 2016). What a discerning investigator finds in the post-2012 era is that the number of scholarly articles on Russian federalism has decreased compared to the period of 1991-2012, scientific articles are predominantly generated by Russian authors and not Western authors as the case was in 1991-2012, the gaps in understanding the nature of Russian federalism as public policy and administration phenomena have increased significantly and with much wider divergence than in 1991-2012.

Therefore, in this study, I have focused on gaps in knowledge and understanding of current Russian federalism, highlighted reasons and factors that determine its ongoing

transformation, and identified potential directions and prospects for further changes in the Russian federalist structure.

Problem Statement

This qualitative study addressed the research problem for the discipline of public policy and administration regarding contradicting data on the current nature of federal-regional relations in Russia that the scholars and practitioners find in comparative public policy and administration literature and prospects of its future status (Sakwa, 2016; Watts, 2015).

Contradicting information is caused by three major factors. The first factor is a continuous transition and ongoing changes in the Russian federal system (Busygina, 2016; Starodubtsev, 2018). The second factor is a post-2012 disengagement between the United States and Russian public policy and administration experts (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2012), and, therefore, limited access to the phenomena for the United States' experts. The third factor is widely divergent opposing views among public policy and administration scholars regarding the nature and essence of contemporary Russian federalism, including political and ideological factors (Martinez-Vazquez, 2007; Zuber, 2011).

Only highly differentiated findings are available on the status and nature of Russian federalism in the post-2012 literature. Some authors traditionally view Russian federalism as an example of asymmetric federalism (Martinez-Vazquez, 2007; Zuber, 2011). Others see it as a hybrid between quasi-federalism and asymmetric federalism in a multiethnic state (Sakwa, 2016; Watts, 2015). Another group of scholars argues that

Russian federalism is not a form of federalism at all (Busygina, 2016; Starodubtsev, 2018). The problem in understanding contemporary Russian federalism causes a growing gap in knowledge and negatively impacts the discipline of public policy and administration, especially the part of it that focuses on federalist, unionist, and confederal relationships in transitioning societies (Sakwa, 2016; Watts, 2015). Therefore, there was a need for further exploratory research and analysis that would provide updates for the United States' public policy and administration experts on post-2012 developments in Russian federalism and provide clarifications on ongoing and future processes of federalization in Russia.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to research, clarify, close gaps in knowledge, and improve understanding of the prospects in the development of the Russian federal-regional relations. Per Maxwell's (2013) description of qualitative exploratory studies, I aimed to clarify problems under study and focus on exploration, clarification, and understanding of the meaning and perspectives of the phenomena. The intended outcome of the study was to generate increased knowledge for the science of public policy and administration and an improved understanding for the U.S. expert community on the topic of ongoing transitioning and future reforms in the Russian federal-regional paradigm.

Research Questions

The following fundamental research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: How do classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism apply to the contemporary Russian federal system, and how does the Russian system evolve in its own unique way?

SQ1: How is the Russian system evolving in relation to asymmetrical federalist, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems?

Theoretical Framework: Classic Theory of Federalism

It is commonly accepted by the public policy and administration scholars that the founder of a *classic general theory of federalism* is Johannes Althusius. In 1603, he developed a federal theory of sovereignty based on the principle of union and consent within a union. The unions can range from family unions to feudalist unions and to federalist unions. The federation, according to Althusius (1603), is created because of the hierarchical rise of the newer stronger unions over older weaker unions. Since 1603, Althusius's ground-laying work has allowed scholars to explore federalism through concepts of sovereignty, political and legal status, division of powers, authority, and competencies within the federalist union and between the federal center and regional components.

Althusius (1603) taught that federalism possesses significant potential for solving societal problems, but it also can create issues within society. The main issue in many federalist countries that sometimes leads to a confrontation or competition between two levels of government is the power, authority, and jurisdiction yielded by the regions and the federal center (Althusius, 1603). At the same time, federalism in many countries is a way of maintaining the territorial integrity of that country (Livingston, 1952). In some

countries, federalism provides minorities an opportunity to influence federal political processes and access to material resources from a federal center. Under certain conditions and factors, federalism strengthens separatist sentiments of one or another federal region (Wheare, 1946). An example of a narrowly defined criterion and the relation between substance and form in one or another federal country can be a ratio of population between its federal capital and other cities in that country. Hypertrophy and oversized dimensions of a capital city likely indicate a probable high concentration of federal government functions and institutions in that federal center. On the other hand, a relatively smaller federal capital would indicate the wider distribution of government functions to the country's regional governments (Tarlton, 1965).

Based on the theoretical foundation of Althusius's (1603) work, its three derivative theoretical works on federalism by Wheare (1946), Livingston (1953, 1956), and Tarlton (1965) have helped with understanding federal processes in today's Russia. These works complement and supplement each other and allow viewing the current Russian federalism through a comprehensive set of theoretical lenses. This theoretical framework has allowed addressing the stated research problems and questions.

My study clarified whether characteristics of Russian federalism fit into the realm of classic Western theories on federalism. Wheare's (1946) ideas have been instrumental in identifying and clarifying such characteristics and attributes of Russian federalism. Wheare described federalism as a method of dividing powers so that the federal and regional governments are in coordination and are independent at the same time. This definition means that under a federal system, the federal center, and the regional

government each have an autonomous sphere of power that can be exercised independently yet coordinated with each other. Under this formula, the powers of the central government are exercised directly over individual citizens rather than indirectly through the states. When the federal central government does not have the power to regulate citizens directly, that form of government would be confederate rather than federal.

Wheare's (1946) definitions provided a basis for distinguishing federalist systems from other forms of government, and they are widely accepted among scholars of the subject. For example, Smiley (1987) built on Wheare's ideas and offered the following three-part working definition of a federal state: legislative powers are distributed between central and regional governments; the powers of central and regional governments are not subject to change by the other levels of government; and individual citizens are subject to laws enacted by both the central and regional governments.

This definition by Smiley (1987) clearly distinguished and separated from the other three forms of government - federal, unitary, and confederate forms. In a unitary government, the ultimate political authority is concentrated in a central national government. The central government may establish regional and local governments, but the local government powers are not constitutionally entrenched. They are subject to unilateral change by the central government at any time the central government decides to change or modify regional governments' powers. Examples of unitary government systems are the public administration system in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the government system in New Zealand (Smiley).

Opposite to unitary, the ultimate political authority in confederations rests in the states or regional governments (Wheare, 1946). The central government acts as its delegate. In this form of government, the central government may not have the authority to enact laws directly to affect individual citizens. The constitutions of confederations, for example, that are adopted by several countries do not grant the national government any authority on taxation. In such countries, the central government's only source of funding is the grants that it receives from the regional governments and only the regional governments have the power to levy taxes directly on their citizens (Wheare).

Countries with a federal system of government establish a system in which the federal and regional governments are both coordinated and independent (Wheare, 1946). There is a sharp division in powers and functions that are divided between two co-equal governments – federal and regional. Wheare outlined principles and conditions for the successful exercise of a federal form of government: the national need for military security and for the common defense; the necessity of the union for state governments that ensure their independence from foreign powers; economic advantages of the union; experiences in disadvantages of other government forms such as unitary or confederate; geographical proximity among regions; and the similarity of political institutions.

Livingston (1952) developed the theory of classic federalism from a perspective of asymmetrical federalism. The reality in some federalist countries is that various federal regions de facto possess different autonomy powers even though they have the same autonomy powers on paper de jure. Livingston viewed federalism as a convergence between two systems – a system of federal institutions and a system of national and

societal diversity. He taught that the national characteristics of federalism are not about the federal and regional governments' division of powers or resulting institutional framework, but rather the federalism in one or another country is about the national society itself. Certain societies are naturally federal because they are pluralist in their original nature and federalism is simply their practical translation (Livingston).

Federalism is an implementation and application of these national values and relations among economic, social, political, and cultural forces that exist in these societies.

Federalism also can play a role in national conflict mitigation and resolution mechanism.

The success of conflict mitigation in the nation is directly related to the forms of the governmental structure. The national consensus among various regions is accomplished via a federalist system of government (Livingston). Some of the main factors for reducing tensions among federal and regional governments can be different in various countries and are ethnic- and nation-specific in nature. Livingstone also explained the role of federalism in national conflict management. Analyzing federalism from that perspective, a federalist system could be viewed as the institutional mechanism of a "social mechanism of conflict management" (Livingston).

Tarlton (1965) furthered federalist studies and demonstrated how symmetrical and asymmetrical paradigms of federalism can affect and differentiate federal government systems in various countries. He explained that federal-regional relationships are viewed differently by actors and stakeholders in the federal systems in various countries.

Cultural, national, regional, economic, social, ethnic, historical, and political factors, among others, may impact and create different forms of the federal government in

various countries. What would be appropriate for one country could be unacceptable to other countries (Tarlton). The theory of federal symmetry and asymmetry focused on environments, conditions, and factors that lead to a federal government system in which different regions have equally symmetrical powers, roles, and responsibilities. At the same time, the federal-regional relations can be based on the asymmetry of interests between the regions and the federal government. Complex federal systems normally have asymmetrical federal relations (Tarlton). Symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships in federalist government systems are formed by national, social, cultural, economic, ethnic, historic, and political factors. These factors impact not only federal-regional relations in one or another federal country but also determine the further evolution of federal systems in these countries (Tarlton).

The definition of a federal country is based on three criteria (Wheare, 1946; Livingston, 1952; Talrton, 1965): a two-level structure of public administration with federal and regional governments; independence and self-sufficiency of these levels of government within their jurisdiction with their own roles and responsibilities according to the country's constitution; and the presence of local self-government that is independently regulated at a local level regardless of the central government. An important criterion for a federal country is the use of its territorial principle in organizing and providing equal political representation for all its citizens on a regional basis (Wheare). In addition to the formal criteria, public policy and administration scholars point out the need for a specific type of political culture among citizens in the federalist country (Livingston). That political culture promotes cooperation among individuals,

social groups, and the government. A federal country functions efficiently and effectively when a partnership between citizens and social groups and recognition of their legitimate interests by the federal and regional governments exists. All this, certainly, applies to today's Russia (Tarlton).

Nature of the Study

This research project used the qualitative multi-factor system analysis method (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1947). The system for the study was the Russian federal government system bounded by the timeframe from 2012 to 2021. Extensive, multiple sources of information and various internal and external factors have been used in data collection to gain an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2013) of the current Russian federal system. I have examined the evolution of Russian federalism using the theoretical framework on federalism that is described in this chapter. The objective of this qualitative research was to gather information, define problems, research hypotheses, and introduce findings (Creswell).

This approach, consisting of a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009) is a valid and credible tool to study the modern-day Russian federalist system. This research design would allow the use of strengths of the qualitative studies such as natural setting, multiple perspectives, meanings, multiple methods of collecting and analyzing data, reflexivity, and holistic approach (Creswell; Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1947; Trochim & Land, 1982). My personal knowledge, experience, and preferences for qualitative studies as a method of expanding and improving the knowledge, analysis, and understanding of the phenomena was also a reason for selecting

this method of study. Applying this methodology was effective in answering the research questions and addressing the research topic, problem, and purpose (Creswell).

Definition of Terms

The attempts to simplify and separate into narrow fragmented categories much broader multilayered complex issues of an overall meaning of federal evolution in one or another country do not normally produce positive results (Livingston, 1952). Reducing overarching systematic national-level state-building issues to scaled-down regional and administrative topics does not provide solutions to key problems of federal systems (Livingston, 1956). Constitutional doctrines, federal and state legislation and legislative reforms, interpretation of constitutional federal law, authorities, and powers of federal and regional governments, general federal structure and architecture, federal and regional governments' relations with local authorities, self-government, religious, ethnic, and cultural organizations are complicated (Livingston). Therefore, with these complex intermixed overlapped concepts, terminology, and constitutional vocabulary that can be interpreted differently by different readers, it is necessary to clarify and agree on several key concepts and terms that were used in this work.

Asymmetrical federalism: A federal system of government in which different constituent regions possess different powers with some regions possessing considerably more autonomy than other regions even though they all have the same constitutional status (Livingston, 1956).

Central federal government: A form of a country's national federal government that has powers that are provided by a country's constitution to make decisions and

delegate authority to members and units of the federation such as states, regions, provinces, districts, etc. (Livingston, 1956; Talrton, 1965; Wheare, 1946).

Confederate government: A form of a weakly-centralized national structure in which the power of the central authority is limited. The main powers belong to the regional governments. In a confederate system of government, the central government possesses only those powers that are delegated to it by the regional governments (Tarlton, 1965).

Ethnic federalism: A federal system of government in which federated units are defined and divided according to ethnicity. Related terms that are used in the science of public policy and public administration are *multi-ethnic federalism* and *ethnic federalism* (Tarlton, 1965).

Federalism: A government system that uses a method of dividing powers and authority between a federal center and regional governments by coordinating spheres of jurisdictions between these two levels of government (Wheare, 1946).

Regional government: A government of a country's unit in a federal form of government. The regional government shares power with the central federal government according to a country's constitution (Livingston, 1956; Talrton, 1965; Wheare, 1946).

Russian Federation: A state with a republican presidential form of government. There are 89 federal regions (oblasts, ethnic autonomous republics, ethnic autonomous districts, and federal districts) united in a federal-state system under the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993). The Russian

Constitution of 1993 was amended by the national referendum on July 1, 2020 (Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2000).

Symmetrical federalism: A federal system of government in which each constituent region in a federation possesses equal powers with no distinction between constituent regions (Livingston, 1956).

Unitary government: A system in which the central government possesses all the national government authority with no sharing of this power with other levels of government. The central government may establish regional or local governments. The local government powers are not constitutionally entrenched and are subject to unilateral change by the central government at any time it decides to change or modify the regional or local governments' powers (Wheare, 1946).

Assumptions

The following assumptions guided this study. The first assumption was that the relationship between the theories of federalism and various countries' practical applications of public administration in real-world federal government systems are two separate paradigms that are intertwined and continually cross-pollinated directly and indirectly (Livingston, 1956; Tarlton, 1965). The reason for this assumption being necessary for the context of this study was that I believe the real-world federal systems do not correspond in their entirety to the existing theoretical works and the opposite. This assumption should be clearly recognized.

Second, it is debatable what is primary and what is secondary - a federal theory or federal practice. In some cases, a real-world phenomenon or phenomena provides study

material for further development of the theory of federalism. In other cases, it is theoretical works that cause and impact the practice of federalism with reforms, changes, transformations in federal systems (Bezrukov, 2014). This assumption helped during the study to understand the relationship between the theory of federalism and its practical implementation.

Third, the evolution of both, the theory of federalism and the practice of federalism, is a constantly ongoing process worldwide (Barabashev & Straussman, 2007). Scholars and practitioners in most countries continuously study, modify, and apply new theoretical and practical concepts and models as well as share their experiences, best practices, and lessons learned. This belief was generated from the literature review and overview of the evolution of the federal systems of various countries.

Fourth, the topic of this research, the Russian Federation, is in the state of a continuing evolution presently and during the past 30 years since the dissolution of the former Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991 (Bardin, 2018). For example, the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation was amended in 2020. That is a valid assumption based on observation and monitoring of real-world developments.

Fifth, the secondary resources provided for this study were reliable, valid, and credible representations of theoretical studies and practical applications in the field of public policy and administration, management, leadership, and federal-regional relations in the Russian Federation. I believe this assumption was necessary to support the reliability, validity, and credibility of this study.

Sixth, all academic and government documents studied and discussed in this research were authentic and conferrable. This assumption was necessary for the context of the study to aim for transferability of it. I believe that the academic and government documents I used in the study, and which relate to the topic, could be used as reference material in my following work or work by other authors in public administration.

Scope, Delimitations, and Limitations

The scope of this study focused on the federal system of government in the Russian Federation. The specific focus was aimed at the federal-regional public administration relations from 2012 to the present time. The reason for choosing this focus was based on the lack of understanding and much controversy and unclarity among scholars and practitioners on what exactly is transpiring in the Russian federalist system as well as disagreements among scholars and practitioners on the direction in which Russian federalism is currently heading (Bezrukov, 2014).

The boundaries of the system under study, the Russian federal public administration system, were clearly defined for this research. These boundaries were the federal and regional governments of Russia. The period from 2012 to the present, which defined the time boundaries for the study, was chosen because there were significantly more studies conducted prior to 2012 than after 2012, and due to constantly continuing changes within the Russian federal system. These changes needed to be investigated and knowledge about them needed to be updated.

The theoretical framework selected for the study is widely considered to be a classic theory of federalism. Other theories were reviewed and considered to add

explanations to the study. These theories were excluded from being used as a theoretical framework in the study due to the fundamental validity of chosen theoretical framework for this study and for the avoidance of unnecessary complexity and loss of focus in the study.

Russian scholars' ability to reflect critically on their country and its government's federal-regional and related policies was another limitation. Non-Russian scholars' ability to reflect on Russia without ideological and political biases likely was one more limitation for this study. I made an all-encompassing effort to overcome these limitations and mitigated them through non-bias research. During this research, I compared and analyzed contradictory standpoints taken by various scholars, and only through a non-bias approach, I was able to produce valid results and a summary of my research. This non-bias approach to the research has addressed the question of dependability and potential transferability for this study (Creswell, 2013). I researched and analyzed diametrically opposing views on Russian federalism, and the results of this research potentially could be used for other studies in this area of research. Another limitation of previous studies was the weakness of the direct relationship between classic theories of federalism and the existing federal system in Russia. To address this limitation, I used the lenses of a classic theory of federalism to view the current Russian federal system. This also added to the objectivity, dependability, validity, and transferability of this study.

Significance of the Study and Implications for Positive Social Change

The significance of this research has been demonstrated in the accumulation of new knowledge for public policy and administration scholars and practitioners

specializing in public sector reforms. This study updated existing knowledge on Russian federal policies, public administration reforms, and federal interrelations. The broader benefit of this research for society includes an improved understanding of public sector reforms in transitioning societies.

The problem statement above aims at the Russian federalist system characterized by features that exhibit systemic contradictions and affect relations between Russian regions and the federal center. Russian Federation has ethnic units that are called autonomous republics, for example, the Chechnya Autonomous Republic. It also has ethnic autonomous oblasts (regions) and okrugs (districts), such as the Jewish Autonomous Oblast and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. Additionally, it has federal oblasts, territories, federal cities, and federal districts with a predominantly ethnic Russian population (Bleshchik, 2014). Such a complex combination of territorial and ethnic principles in the construction of the Russian Federation is potentially conflict-ridden. This construction is not enhancing the consolidation of the country in the event of a crisis. Russia experienced and evidenced this in the 1990s when the Federation was on a brink of a collapse (Zametina, 2018).

The asymmetry in size and inequality in federal status among constituent entities within the Russian Federation provides a wide range of rights and authorities to some federal republics and fewer rights and authorities to other federal regions (Turovsky, 2011). The presence of constituent entities in the federation that simultaneously are parts of other federal entities poses problems for Russia (Smirnov, 2018). For example, three out of four autonomous ethnic districts are the Russian federal units. Remarkably, they

are also parts of the Tyumen and Arkhangelsk federal regions that are also their own federal units. This is a serious federal contradiction that only exists in Russia (Smirnov).

The practice of intellectual drainage, financial debilitation, economic migration, and asymmetric wealth redistribution in some regions creates risks of separatism (Knyaginina, 2015). The powerful federal center accumulates revenues from the most productive and profitable regions through taxes and fees leaving social expenses and responsibilities for the regional authorities to deal with (Kozyrev, 2018). The federal center's political patronage and preferential treatment in relation to certain regional leaders. This leads to the authoritarianism of these regional leaders and the prevalence of the principle of political expediency over the principle of equality (Kuznetsov, 2018). For example, three regions out of 89 received 12% of the total subsidized support of the regions from the federal budget in 2015 (Budget of the Russian Federation, 2015). The significance of this study is in the accumulation of new knowledge regarding today's problems and the transformation of the Russian federal system.

The potential scholarly contributions of this research could also bear practical implications for positive social change. Following this study, I intended to work on reestablishing collaboration or parts of it among the U.S. and Russian public policy and administration scholars and practitioners specializing in federal-state issues. It could help to improve relations between the U.S. and Russian public policy and administration scholars and practitioners. The work on reestablishing exchange programs for the U.S. and Russian public policy and administration scholars and practitioners, who would learn from each other for the benefit of their own countries and for benefit of a larger world

community, was a viable option. Based on my previous discussions with the appropriate individuals in the United States and Russia, our combined knowledge, experience, capabilities, and contacts, it appeared there was a fair chance of succeeding in this endeavor. Unfortunately, recent geopolitical problems have impacted these plans.

Summary

Many countries in this fast-changing and becoming-ever-smaller world are in a constant search for improved forms of effective, efficient, and fair systems of government. An intense discussion is being held among scholars and practitioners about various forms of government, politico-administrative structures, and systems. In federalist countries, this discussion mainly focuses on the distribution of power between the federal center and regional governments (Kolomiytsev, 2014). Researching, creating new knowledge, closing gaps in existing data, and understanding specific characteristics and factors in the ongoing development of today's Russia is an important scientific task. It helps in generating and sharing theoretical ideas and practical knowledge in the implementation of federalist principles. It also enhances and improves limited and contradicting coverage of this problem in the scientific literature on public policy and public administration.

As a result of its contradictions, disbalances, and inconsistencies, the Russian federal-regional policy is often conducted in a micro managerial hands-on manner by the central federal government (Kozyrev, 2018). This approach creates objections and increased return demands from the donor regions. A system that is so unbalanced also deprives regions of a significant part of their authority. All that causes difficulties in the

regional relations with the federal center (Lagutenko, 2016). Some Russian authors study, analyze, explain, and warn in their works that such imbalances in the Russian federal system have significant crisis potential for Russian statehood (Lankina, 2009). They argue that these imbalances and contradictions require a comprehensive public administration overhaul aimed at reforms and modernization in the Russian federal system of government. The next chapter focuses on the literature review covering these problems.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The research problem for this study is a unique complex system of Russian federalism and contradicting opposing data that exist in the comparative scholarly literature on the status and prospects for future development of Russian federalism (Sakwa, 2016; Watts, 2015). The purpose of this study is to research, clarify, close gaps, and improve knowledge and understanding of the current Russian federal-regional relations. This study identifies potential directions for further evolution in Russian federalism for scholars and practitioners of public policy and administration.

Per Maxwell's (2013) description of qualitative studies, this project is designed to clarify problems that have not been studied more clearly and focus on exploration, clarification, and understanding of the meaning and perspectives of the phenomena. The intended outcome of the study is the increased knowledge and improved understanding for the U.S. expert community on the topic of transition and reforms in the Russian federal-regional system.

The current federal government structure in the Russian Federation was largely inherited from the old structure of the former USSR 30 years ago (Smagina, 2014). Most of its numerous fundamental shortcomings are still in place. It elevates this problem within Russia to a such high level as to ensure the country's continuing existence, territorial integrity, and survival itself (Skvortsova, 2015). Thus, it makes this research problem extremely relevant. The multifactorial nature and extreme complexity of problems in Russian federalism are so multifaceted that even their theoretical analysis by

public policy and administration scholars is a difficult task. It makes finding the resolution of all these problems in practical terms by the Russian federal and regional public administration practitioners an interesting challenge.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy for this study was based on electronic research. The main advantages of this type of search under current COVID-19 pandemic public safety conditions were remote access to databases and electronic resources in various scientific libraries and catalogs from Russia, the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, identification, and selection of literature by keywords, and elimination of irrelevant sources.

An observation resulting from the literature review was that despite a wide selection of works on Russian federalism in the pre-2012 period and less so in the post-2012 years, there was no direct application of the classic theory of federalism, whether it was developed by Althusius (1603) or other authors who built on his theory, to the actual scholarly analyses of Russian federalism. Thus, the rationale of selecting the classic theory of federalism to study Russian federalism provided not only the ultimate appropriateness of such an approach of using matching theory to real-world practice but also a necessity of connecting appropriate theory to practice which has allowed achieving objectivity for this study. The selected classic theory directly and comprehensively relates to the study's problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions. The study did not challenge existing theory; it has built upon existing theory. Further explanations regarding this are provided in the following section.

Search engines and databases that were employed in this research included Dissertation and Thesis at Walden University, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Journal of Social Sciences, Global Journal of Politics and Law Research, Google Scholar, Google Books, World Digital Library by the Library of U.S. Congress, UNESCO and Partners, European Union Digital Library, High Wire Press – Stanford University, High Wire Press Journals – UM Library – University of Michigan, Cyberleninka.ru – Russian Scientific Electronic Library, OAPEN Library, Journals4Free – Scopus, ISI Master, Electronic Journals Library, E-LIS – Library and Information Science, NARCIS Archive, Socio-net Russian Science Portal, and DART-Europe Portal.

Search keywords that were used: *Russian federalism, federalism, theory of federalism, federalist models, federal and regional relations, federalism in Russia, Russian Federation, regional policy in Russia, the federal government in Russia, the regional government in Russia, federal policy, national policy, state system, the federal system, government system, self-determination, federal administration, regional government, partner federation, symmetric federalism, asymmetric federalism, and ethnic federalism.*

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study was Althusius's (1603) classic theory of federalism, in which he described ideas for developing a federal system. This founder of the general theory of federalism is regarded by many scholars of federalism as high as Adam Smith with *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) being regarded by scholars of economics and Niccolò Machiavelli with *The Prince* (1505) being regarded by practitioners of

realpolitik. Althusius developed the federal theory based on the principle of union and consent. Since Althusius's ground-laying work, federalism was generally explored through comprehension of national sovereignty, politico-legal issues, powers, and competencies of a federal center and federal components.

The theoretical framework for this study was constructed and derived from Althusius's works by Wheare, Livingston, and Tarlton. Wheare published his theory on federalism in 1946, Livingston on asymmetrical federalism in 1956, and Tarlton on symmetrical-asymmetrical federalism in 1965. This theoretical framework provided a comprehensive toolset for exploring the Russian federal system as it changes right in front of the world's eyes.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

An exhaustive review of the literature addressing the current state of knowledge on the problem of Russian federalism was conducted in preparation for this study. This literature review evidenced that the problem statement for this study, its purpose, and research questions were valid. The authors widely differ in their views of the phenomenon and methods of study applied to their research. The main weaknesses of most studies are the highly politicized approaches to the phenomenon and narrowly selected areas of interest. For example, legal, budgetary, taxation, ethnic, and political realms of the Russian federal system. According to most authors, the Russian model of federalism is far from being perfect and it is criticized by them from diametrically opposing angles. Some authors advocated the need for decentralization, while others argued for consolidation and centralization of power. Other authors adhered to the middle

ground when discussing the distribution of powers between the federal center and the regions.

To mitigate weaknesses and gaps in knowledge in the literature, my study was apolitical and used wholistic systematic scientific methods and approaches. The selection of key concepts was based on a classic theoretical framework on federalism that is accepted both in the Western countries and the Russian Federation.

To organize the literature review and align it with the problem statement, purpose, research questions, design, and methodology of the study, I grouped the available literature into three categories. One category has included works that view the Russian federal system as one of the subsets and models of classic asymmetric federalism which currently is undergoing changes and reforms. The second category has included works that view Russian federalism as its own specific and unique type of hybrid ethnic-asymmetrical federalism that only exists in Russia. The third group has included authors who argue that the federal system in Russia exists de-jure in name only, but de-facto in practical real-world terms it is not a federal system.

Group 1: Russian Federalism is a Subset of One of the Models of Federalism

Various non-Russian and Russian authors stated that the Russian federal system belongs to one of the subgroups in a broader concept of federalism. Dogorov et al. (2019) noted that the nature of Russian federalism is constitutionally legal at its core and the basic pillars of the Russian federal structure are built in the Constitution of 1993. An interesting point regarding the origin of a modern system of federalism in Russia is that the Federal Treaty of Russia was adopted in 1992 and that this Treaty was adopted earlier

than the Constitution of 1993 (Dogorov et al.) in the post-Soviet collapse. The historic context, socio-economic-political turmoil, and radical changes that Russia experienced in 1991-1993 played an important role during the time when the fundamental law of the land was adopted. The Russian federalist system remains one of the cornerstones of socio-political and legal stability in the country. It is an important condition for the country's ability to strengthen its position in the world and adequately respond to internal and external challenges and threats to the country's national security (Dogorov et al.).

Elections of regional governors remain to be a difficult issue in Russia. This view is supported by Kuznetsov (2018), who discussed the functioning of classic democratic mechanisms and principles that regulate the succession of power among heads of the constituent regions in Russia. One of the major reasons related to this issue is the high number of regions in the Russian Federation - 89. This Russian criterion is simply not comparable to any other country. In the United States for example, there is a much lower number. India has 29 states and seven union territories, and China has 34 federal units. With this unprecedented high number of federal units, it is necessary to reduce them to a much more manageable level. Kuznetov pointed out the initiatives of the Russian central federal authorities when several regions were merged during the past several years.

A tendency of transferring some federal powers to regional authorities is currently occurring in Russia (Skvortsova, 2015). The federal center shared its authority with both levels, regional and municipal, while simultaneously transferring funds from the federal budget to regional budgets. This approach of delegating authority and funds for the resolution of certain public issues at the regional and local levels, in the federal center's

mind, ensures the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making. At the same time, it helps to strengthen administrative control of the Russian regions and localities by the federal center. This approach does not contribute to ensuring the interests of the Russian regional governments in strengthening their own budgets (Skvortsova).

It is understood and accepted that federalism is a principle of government structure that provides an opportunity to observe unity and pluralism of the state and public power according to its territorial organization at several levels (Smagina, 2014). Federalism is a method to resolve contradictions and unite citizens and their regional entities at the federal level. As a form of government, federalism defines the vertical separation of state power between territorial entities at various levels in a single country (Gligich-Zolotareva, 2006). The idea of federalism is opposed to the concept of the indivisibility of sovereignty. It is based on a mechanism in which a federation is formed by transferring sovereignty to a higher-state level or opposite and the transfer of that sovereignty is not absolute but only partial. Therefore, federalism determines the right to dual sovereignty by both the federal center and the region, and the question of the relationship between these two sides on their sovereignty remains debatable (Smagina).

The strengths and limitations of asymmetric federalism in Russia were analyzed by Martinez-Vazquez (2017). The overall conclusion of her scholarly work is that Russian federalism is a typical case of asymmetric federalism. Zuber (2012) also viewed Russian federalism as a classic example of asymmetric federalism in a multi-ethnic state. The author used the case of federalism in Russia to support a theory of asymmetric ethnic federalism. At the present stage, the development of federal relations focused on

strengthening financial independence in all regions of the Federation should be a primary task (Zametina, 2018). Further improvement and separation of powers and authorities between two levels of government and optimization in the system of control over the implementation of federal budgetary and financial powers that are transferred to the regions should be a secondary task (Zametina). The current trend of Russian federalism includes the process of constitutionalizing the system of federal relations. The formation of federal government institutions leads to centralization in the Russian Federation and strengthens federal control over the regions (Zametina). This includes ongoing modernization and improvement in the financial component of relations between the federal center and regions. It also helps to maintain the horizontal asymmetry of the regions and influences the impacts of the ethnic factor on the nature of federal relations in Russia. The emergence of new regional entities as part of the Russian Federation is a positive trend toward horizontal asymmetry (Zametina).

Socio-economic intergovernmental problems within Russian federalism could be also viewed through the prism of federal-regional budgetary relations (Buchwald, 2018). The necessity of improving relations between the center and the regions, in addition to the enhancement of legal aspects of these relations, is achieved through economic and organizational means. Buchwald proposed to improve and clarify processes that regulate federal, regional, and local benefits and tax breaks. Also, simplification and enhancement of rules and procedures on federal taxes that are credited to the local or regional budgets are needed. This is one of the solutions to the problem in relationships between the Russian federal center and the regions (Buchwald).

Group 2: Russian Federalism is its Own Unique Type of Federalism

Other authors viewed the Russian federal system differently. Narutto (2018) noted that the existing constitutional model regarding the delimitation of federal and regional governments' functions between the Russian federal government and regional governments is relatively effective. Naturally, there are also some elements of disbalance that lead to disadvantages of excessive influence from the federal center over the regions. According to this argument, the federal authorities should adhere to more self-restraint. Most of all, in situations when regulation of a joint jurisdiction is at hand. The central authorities should not allow themselves to exert unjustified influence on decisions made by the constituent regions. They should avoid constant interference in one or another local regulation and issue. The fact is that at the federal and regional levels the powers of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation on subjects of joint jurisdiction are clearly defined. This characterizes and underscores an overall maturity and balance in the Russian federal system (Narutto). At the same time, there are examples of limitations restricting constituent regional entities on issues of joint jurisdiction. The federal center's-imposed attempts to effectively restrict regions from making their own decisions on regional and local matters is not a sound federal-regional policy (Narutto).

A model of cooperative federalism was formed in Russia over the past 1,100 years, and it is based on cultural and historical features of centralized state administration that have developed during that time (Platonov, 2018). This model involves not a confrontation but a constructive interaction among all levels of state authority – federal, regional, and local. The legal base for the cooperation is a joint jurisdiction by the federal

center and regions over various types of public issues. That cooperation opens opportunities for dialogue and resolution of issues between all levels of government. The uniformity in distribution of jurisdiction and authority between the center and the regions is based upon and supported by the establishment of federal legislation. It forms and shapes the orderly implementation of relevant powers by the federal center and the regions. It also establishes clear procedures for the implementation of lawmaking on relevant public and administrative issues. This ensures legal equality for the constituent federal and regional entities in the Russian Federation (Platonov). The focus on only the legal side of Russian federalism limits studies like this. Other important aspects, such as federal-regional financial and budgetary relations, are not considered. This approach simplifies the complexity of federal-regional issues in the contemporary system of Russian federalism.

The Russian Federation is a complex state, which consists of six types of regions: krais, oblasts, federal cities, ethnic republics, autonomous okrugs, and autonomous oblasts (Primova, 2011). The ethnic republics have greater regional authorities in comparison with other regions. Some researchers considered such a structure to be a constitutional and legal anomaly (Primova). A complex combination of ethnic and territorial principles has become a problem that impacts the unity of the Russian Federation. The experiences of Russia and Canadian demonstrate that multi-ethnic federations that are formed on basis of an ethnic-territorial principle are threatened by various contradictions, instability, and secession. Two Chechen wars in Russia and Quebec separatism are examples of this (Primova).

The principle of ethnoterritorial division is used by virtue of tradition (Shishkov, 2014). Federalism is an instrument for the equality of a population, and it does not have to be built on an ethnoterritorial principle. Multiethnicity does not stipulate the national-territorial principle of the state structure (Shishkov). The example of the United States and other poly-ethnic states that are built based on an administrative-territorial principle proves this thesis (Burgess, 2006). The example of the Russian Federation illustrates that the ethnoterritorial principle of building a state does not solve ethnic issues (Chirkin, 2002). It temporarily reduces their severity while complicating the problem of the territorial integrity of the state. In most cases, an attempt to resolve the ethnic problems within the federation by introducing ethnoterritorial division does not lead to a resolution of conflicts (Chirkin). The desire for secession is a constant feature of such federations. Such examples could be former Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Buchwald, 2018). The situation in the North Caucasus, where the ethnoterritorial principle of the administrative structure contributed to the formation of such regions subject to a titular ethnicity (Buchwald). De facto legitimation of regional political elites on an ethnic basis where leaders of the territories are interested in elevating the status of their ethnic group, and often their own family clan, creates problems. In fact, there is a hierarchization of the population in the region, which is expressed in their different statuses, and that in turn exasperates and elevates the ethnic problem to an even higher level (Buchwald).

Federalism is the only possible government system that is feasible and workable in the Russian Federation (Turovsky, 2011). The attempt to transform the current form of government can lead to the escalation of internal conflicts based on ethnopolitical and

economic-territorial differences. The transition to a unitarist system of government requires an all-Russian referendum on changing the Constitution, the result of which may only deepen current political and territorial issues. Popova and Shakhrai (2014) indicated that the formation of a cooperative model of Russian federalism is determined by the unique historical peculiarity of Russian statehood and society. Philosophy of a strong central influence historically coexisted with the tradition and practice of living cooperatively within one state by different ethnic groups, religions, and cultures. Lagutenko (2016) argued that one of the main obstacles to the further development of federalism in Russia is the internal composition of its regions that are vastly different from each other. Their economic development, geographical location, ethnic composition, cultural, historic, religious backgrounds, area size, population size and density, levels of urbanization, etc. are all mismatched.

The power in many Russian regions is politically dependent on central authority and those regions are led by authoritarian leaders (Eliseev, 2014). The federal center provides support to authoritarian regional leaders in the ethnic autonomous republics of Kalmykia, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Udmurtia, Chechnya, etc. Manifestation of authoritarian tendencies at the regional level among individual constituent entities in the Russian Federation mainly concerns non-Russian ethnic constituencies. They are endowed with a special constitutional status, which in its turn elevates the problem of legal and political asymmetry within the Russian model of federalism (Eliseev).

Attempts to understand the nature of contemporary Russian federalism and how a Soviet-style quasi-federalism has developed into its own category of Russian federalism

in the post-Soviet era were made (Watts, 2015). Sakwa (2016) also searched for answers on whether complicated processes of centralization, devolution, asymmetry, segmented regionalism, re-symmetry, and decentralization can qualify Russian federal-regional relations as federalist, unitarist, or a hybrid of both systems. Smirnov (2018) proposed to classify the stages and phases in the development of Russian federalism. He used the criterion of the prevalence in the principles of either centralization or decentralization in the relationship between the center and the regions. Classification of the 1990s as the decentralization period and the 2000s as years of a centralization period in Russian federalism is valid.

Other authors believed that the main problem of federalism in Russia is in its ethnic aspect and that this problem has accompanied Russian statehood throughout its history (Fedorenko & Kurilkina, 2015). Federal and regional governments applied mechanisms for resolving ethnic issues in each historical period in Russia. Underestimation of ethnic issues in the further development of the public administration system can lead Russia to ethnic conflicts. Once again, simplifying and reducing a multitude of issues plaguing the Russian federal system to only one issue of ethnicity is a problematic and debatable approach. Although the ethnic question is important for the Russian state, focusing only on this one aspect of Russian federalism excludes the influence and impacts of other issues (Eliseev, 2014).

The Russian system possesses both principles of federalism - administrative-territorial structure and ethnically territorial structure (Shishkov, 2014). This hybrid combination of two structures is attributed to the multiethnic composition of Russia with

over 120 ethnicities residing there. In contrast to European-style federalism, the Russian Federation was not formed by combining separate territories with their mutual consent. Russia was formed through the inclusion of relatively independent entities in the already existing composition of the country. The specifics of the Russian federal system are based on the socio-cultural characteristics and historical experiences of building relations between the federal center and the regions (Shishkov). It predetermined the difficulty of resolving issues in building new relations between the center and the regions that appeared immediately after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The asymmetry of Russian federalism was characteristic of Russia from the moment of its origin. It was determined by the need to restrain ethnic separatism and national elites in the regional ethnic republics. The Russian federal central government is still inconsistent in its regional policy by distinguishing and favoring some regions of the Federation over others (Shishkov).

The strengthening of centripetal tendencies in the Russian government during the past twenty years needs to be noted (Kozyrev, 2018). This destabilizes the entire federal-state system due to the increased disbalance of power between the center and regions. That contributes to the deterioration of federal relations. This problem is especially highlighted when the president is often acting in the so-called hands-on mode while he personally micro-managerially resolves minor local issues that are supposed to be resolved by regional governments. The main reason for this practice is public distrust of the regional and local authorities in specific regions and localities (Kozyrev). The approaches regarding the future of Russian federalism that advocate such direction of

further modernization and reform as an enlargement of the constituent regions of the Russian Federation are being discussed. That re-organization would be based on effective and efficient internal economic integration and the creation of 40-50 Russian regions instead of the current 89 regions. The number of 40-50 regions is an optimal number of regions for the Russian Federation (Kozyrev). Dobrynin also substantiated the same idea for the need to transform more than 89 Russian regional entities into a new 46 (2004), while Zametina (2018) on the contrary believed that expanding the composition of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation contributes to maintaining trends towards horizontal asymmetry.

The system of Russian federalism is seen by the current federal central government as a technology for the spatial distribution of power (Kolomiytsev, 2014). It is a system for constitutionally supported distribution of power and authority between the federal center and regional levels of government. Federalism, in the Russian federal center's view, is a system of partnerships and conflict resolution mechanisms that balances the distribution of influence and resources between the center and the regions. Federalism is a tool that should help to resolve various issues between the center and the regions (Kolomiytsev). Problems, similarities, and differences in the development and evolution of Russian federalism and a comparison of how these issues are resolved in the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany were also studied (Bardin, 2018). The comparative analysis was based on a view of these two countries belonging to a similar legal family and dynamics and trends in the development of federalism in a post-totalitarian period. These problems include issues such as a problematic regional

composition of the federation, which results in a significant number of regions in the Russian Federation totaling 89 regions. A controversial ethnoterritorial approach to a divisive nature in the formation of Russian federal regions and significant economic and political differentiation among 89 regions is also problematic. Legal contradictions in Russian federal regulations are also present (Bardin). For example, the Constitution of 1993 declares the leading role for federal legislation, provides unequal autonomy and authority to some federal units and reduces the authority of other units. These shortcomings in the Russian system are explained by the lack of concept of budgetary federalism in the articles of the Constitution. There is no concept for a mechanism of allocating and distributing financial resources among federal and regional governments in the Constitution. This deficiency leads to a situation when some local and regional budgets run deficits of up to 70%, which is a significant problem. In the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, the constitution vests definitive state functions with both regional and local authorities. The Constitution of Germany clearly distinguishes between the authority and competence of the federal center and the lands regarding fiscal policy. The principle of a balanced budget is respected and achieved by establishing clear budgetary indicators for the federal center and the land governments (Bardin).

Some authors in this group explained the unique status of Russian federalism, which according to them is characterized by distinct features (Gulyakov & Leonkina, 2017). This includes mixed ethnoterritorial nature in the formation of the Russian Federation, which potentially leads to ethnic conflicts; de jure and de facto asymmetry of the regions within the Federation; vast economic, budgetary, social, cultural, religious,

and political differentiation among Russian regions; subsidization of many regions in the Federation and their permanent dependence on subventions from the federal center and, thus, other regions; current tendencies towards centralization in the Russian federal government; decreasing authorities of the regional governments in some regions. The outlined problems damage the Russian government system, but the current model of Russian federalism has proven itself to be a fundamentally stable institution (Gulyakov & Leonkina). The system can respond and adapt to changes and challenges in internal and external environments without transforming its essential content. The affirmative answer to the question of whether the current Russian public administration system is a federal model or not regardless of its shortcomings and deficiencies was provided (Gulyakov & Leonkina).

The radical ideas and calls for the unification of Russian regions are dangerous for Russia (Bakulina & Vasin, 2019). Extreme suggestions and recommendations to eliminate ethnic republics through the creation of governorships, similarly to the public administration structure of pre-1917 Imperial Russia, are not unacceptable. These dangerous ideas could lead to the loss of Russian statehood and the dissolution of the Russian Federation. Incremental, evolutionary, continuous improvements in constitutional and legal mechanisms, and further contractual regulation in relations between the regions and the federal center, including division of jurisdiction and authority, are needed (Bakulina & Vasin). This evolving process of improvement is the main element in the overall mechanism of coordinating interests, finding compromises, neutralizing conflicts, and providing guarantees for the formation of harmonious federal-regional relations in

the Russian Federation (Bakulina and Vasin). In an opposing view to it, Knyaginina (2015) explained the need to strengthen the Russian state in an imperial type of governmental system with a much stronger center and much weaker periphery, with Kokotov (2018) adhering to the middle ground when discussing the distribution of powers between the federal center and the regions.

Evaluation of the nature and directions of the current federal reforms in Russia was made (Bezrukov, 2014). The nature of constitutional transformations in the Russian Federation is becoming more democratic. This helps to expand possibilities for applying genuine constitutional principles of federalism not only on paper, *de jure* but also in practice, *de facto*. This democratization contributes to the fulfillment of the constitutional rights in the regions of the Russian Federation (Bezrukov).

Classifications of current Russian regions into two categories based on their own regional goals were attempted (Bleshchik, 2014). One category seeks to expand its regional territory. There are several recent examples of this in the post-1991 Russian Federation, including the most recent in 2020. Another category seeks to preserve its existing regional system and territory. The Russian Federation was created with the aim of maintaining the country's unity and preventing the collapse of statehood in 1991. It makes Russia a preservation federation (Bleshchik). Expansion federations are established with the goals of their further expansion through the inclusion of new regions and territories. An interesting point about this is that the timing of its publication was October 2014. This could mean that the wider theoretical discussion regarding preservation vs. expansion types of federalism had started within Russia prior to the 2014

events between Russia and Ukraine. This absolutely aligns with Althusius's (1603) theory of new stronger unions supplanting older weaker unions. If this thesis is correct, then this is a geopolitically and historically important turnaround not only for Russia but also for the world. It means that Russia is in the process of changing the status of being a preservation federation to the status of an expansion federation. Developments during the next several years and decades would provide us with answers to this question (Bleshchik).

The question of asymmetry in Russian federalism goes beyond the specific features of the constituent entities in the Federation and is determined by the multiethnic composition of the population. It is intertwined with the formation of a single Russian nation that is designated to become a political and socio-cultural basis for the current Russian state (Gligich-Zolotareva, 2006). Therefore, overcoming this asymmetric status of the constituent entities in the Federation, according to some authors, has great importance and is a necessary condition for the political viability of the Russian federal system (Inkina, 2013).

Group 3: Russian Federalist System is Not Federalism

The arguments in support of the idea that Russian federalism is not federalism and that Russian practices of federal-regional relations do not correspond with classical models of federalism accepted in Western countries were made by Busygina (2016). Starodubtsev (2017) supported the same position as Busygina's that Russia's government structure, although federal in name, has not been consistent with the classic principles of federalism. Savin (2017) believed that Russia had fully accepted the peculiar model that

was characteristic of the USSR with the same real threat to the integrity of the state that was dissolved in 1991. He argued that Russian federalism is nominal in its nature and concluded that Russia is currently undergoing a dynamic process of reforming its federalism towards the formation of a centralized unitary government and is in the process of crossing the line beyond which there is no federalism.

The real substance of classic federalism, as understood and accepted by western scholars, is absent in the Russian public administration system (Prozhirov, 2014), although the Russian Federation possesses elements of ethnic federation both in its form and in its institutional content. Moreover, the principles of federalism were not implemented either at the initial stage or in the modern practice of government relations between the federal center and the regions in Russia. During the period of decentralization in the 1990s, the Russian Federation was closer in terms of content to a confederation rather than a federation. The federal center was weak, and that weakness forced the center to make concessions to regional elites to maintain Russian statehood. Due to the socio-economic turmoil in Russia in the 1990s, civil society was not actively involved in the federal-regional processes because the public was more preoccupied with daily survival (Prozhirov). This dysfunctional and poorly performing federalist system is not a good practice or example of a well-functioning truly democratic federation. As a result of that dysfunction and under the remaining threat of the country's disintegration, the new stage in the development and evolution of Russian federalism had begun in the 2000s. It is characterized by increasing movement towards federal centralization with elements of a unitarist system of government. The relations between the federal center

and the regions have acquired the characteristics of dictatorship and absolute subordination to the central federal authority. The regional elites gradually accepted that change in federal-regional relations in the 2000s, integrated themselves into the new centralized management system and became loyal to the federal center (Prozhirov).

Overall, with all these opposing contradictory views, all authors agreed on the point of necessity for further changes and reforms. The Russian statehood in the 1990s was so decentralized that the Russian Federation was becoming a confederation. Some even argued about the potential collapse of the country in the 1990s. Since the year 2000, a clear tendency toward centralization has been prevailing. Scholars adhering to the classic U.S. and West-European models viewed centralization tendencies within the Russian federal system as an indication of movement towards the formation of a unitary state. Most Russian authors focused on finding the right balance in the division of power, authority, and jurisdiction between the federal center and the regions. Unitary tendencies are recognized by most Russian authors as inevitable in the current period of the development of Russian federalism. They emphasized that at this stage of reforms in modern Russian statehood this specific period of centralization is a response to the danger of disintegration that Russia experienced in the 1990s. Therefore, this centralization is acting not so much as a unitary movement but as a stabilization for the imbalanced federal government system. The modern period of Russian federalism is characterized by the transformations in the composition among regions of the Russian Federation (Kokotov, 2018). It can be also concluded that in the 2000s a new stage in the development of Russian federalism has begun. It is characterized by the preservation of

the vertically powerful executive branch as well as the priority of the federal legislation over the regional (Kokotov). At the same time, there is an opportunity for expanding the rights of the regions in the Federation that does not mean movement towards disintegration (Mau, 2016). It is a result of transformational changes in achieving balanced relations between the regions and the federal center.

Summary and Conclusions

Summarizing the literature review, I encountered scholarly works that argued diametrically opposing views on the phenomena of the Russian federal system today and its future. This review substantiated the significance of the research problem and purpose of this study as well as chosen methodology and identified research questions. After reviewing scholarly literature, I grouped it into three categories: authors who viewed the Russian system as one of the subsets of classic asymmetric federalism which currently is undergoing reforms; authors who viewed the Russian system as its own specific unique type of hybrid ethnic-asymmetrical federalism that only exists in Russia; and authors who viewed the Russian system of government not as a federal system de-facto but in de-jure name only. As evident from the literature review, even within each of the three groups while authors agreed on a major point of the Russian federal system belonging or not belonging to federalism, they disagreed on other points.

This summarization underscored the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and selection of design and methodology. Closing gaps and updating knowledge on the phenomena of current changes in the Russian federal-regional system of government is an important task. In the upcoming chapter 3, I will explain the selected

research method and describe how it helps with the study of the Russian federal system and its problems.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to research, clarify, close gaps, and produce new knowledge and understanding of the Russian federal system from 2012 to 2021. I seek to clarify problems more clearly and focus on exploration, clarification, and understanding of the meaning and perspectives of the phenomena. The intended outcome of the study is the increased knowledge and improved understanding of the U.S. expert community on the topic of ongoing transitioning and future reforms in the Russian federal system paradigm. This chapter defines the central concept of the research and provides the rationale for the research method. A brief description of the sections of the chapter is provided below.

Research questions are reviewed, the central research concept and research approach determined, and the rationale for the selected concept explained and validated. My role as a researcher is defined and substantiated, and ethical questions and potential conflicts of interest are addressed. This chapter describes the method of expert analysis as a tool for obtaining objective information about the essence of the problem under the study. Instrumentation, sources of data collection, and sources for each data collection instrument are identified. Historical and legal documents have been used in this study as the data sources. The expert authority of the sources is justified, and the reason why these sources were selected as the best data sources is explained. The sufficiency of data collection tools for answering research questions is substantiated.

Published data collection instruments are described, including information about the author of the tool, its publication date, location, and how applicable the tool was for this study. Procedures for data collection are explained, including the sources of data collection, frequency of data collection, duration of the data collection events, and procedures. The data analysis plan is described in terms of a relationship between the data and a specific research question, as well as software that has been used for analysis and means of eliminating errors. Issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are addressed. Ethical procedures and concerns related to materials, selection processes, plans to address potential problems, and ethical issues related to data collection are explained. The data processing, including archived data, is described. The following questions are clarified – whether the data are anonymous or confidential; is it necessary to protect confidential data, data storage procedures, distribution of data, access to the data, and other ethical issues related to potential conflicts of interest. A summary of the main points of the chapter is provided.

Research Design and Rationale

The following fundamental research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: How do classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism apply to the contemporary Russian federal system, and how does the Russian system evolve in its own unique way?

SQ1: How is the Russian system evolving in relation to asymmetrical federalist, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems?

The study of federalism is important for all federal countries (Buchwald, 2018). For every federal country, it is essential to continuously research improved methods of organizing itself and its system of public administration and explore new ways of harmonizing interests and balances between central federal and regional governments. For unitary countries, especially those contemplating decentralization, it is also essential to study and learn about the distribution of power between federal and regional levels of government and local self-government. Some of the confederations have been transitioned into federations of various types around the globe over the years (Tarlton, 1965). As practice demonstrates, there is no single universal type of federation that would be optimal for all countries. Any federal country possesses characteristic features inherent only to that specific country. These features are determined by the national-historical traditions, and socio-economic and political-cultural backgrounds (Livingston, 1956). Thus, the task of this study is to determine the characteristic features and specifics of the modern Russian model of the federal system and explore potential future developments within the system.

The study of the Russian federal structure and distribution of power and authority between the federal center and regions used the commonly applied research design of system analysis (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). In general, the research design will be presented as a sequence of the following phases: Phase 1 – preliminary analysis, Phase 2 – in-depth system analysis, Phase 3 – logical model integration and construction, and Phase 4 – summary and conclusions.

Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis

The purpose of the preliminary analysis of the research problem was not to form conclusions but to determine the approximate scope of work and directions for the implementation of analytical research (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). It included the selection of the most appropriate method for researching the problem of interest, studying the background of the issue, current situation, advantages, and disadvantages of the existing model. In some cases, if only basic information was required regarding one or another theme within the project, the preliminary analysis was completed at this phase.

The preliminary analysis has been designed for the general collection and review of the essential information (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). This is necessary for a fundamental understanding of the problem and defining the outline and nature of the problem under study. The scope of this analysis was dependent on the goals set. The main difficulty in this phase has been maintaining a balance between the completeness and narrow specialization of the analysis. The assessment has determined the nature of the complexity of the research problem. The more complex and detailed the issues were, the more complex and detailed the analysis had to be.

Due to the extreme complexity of various multi-layered issues related to this research problem, I decided the following. Only factors that are directly related to the issue of determining the existing model of the federalist system in Russia were selected for analysis. Two broad groups of these factors were internal characteristics related to the development of the Russian federal center and regions, and external conditions and characteristics.

Phase 1 was completed with the development of a primary research model and identification of the presumptive directions for further research. This approach was justified by applying techniques and technologies for effective and efficient collection, processing, and analysis of data (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). Research procedures and the search for solutions partially overlapped and were conducted in parallel. Elements of preliminary analysis were included in the following in-depth system analysis.

Phase 2: In-Depth System Analysis

In-depth system analysis included a passive database system - database with information related to the research problem and dynamic system scenarios – analysis of impacts and influence on the system by various changing internal and external scenarios. Phase 2 goals included a comprehensive analysis of the research problem; identification of factors and influences that impact the research problem; preparation of all necessary information for integration; and summarization of conclusions (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931).

This in-depth system analysis allowed interpretation of the reality of the Russian Federation by using two groups of descriptions: information database and internal-external scenarios. The information database contained a set of information about the system under study: the Russian federal system. Parameters of internal-external environment consisting of qualitative data on economic and legal characteristics of the Russian Federation did not vary during research. Scenarios described dynamic impacts on the system containing those internal and external characteristics. Scenarios were grouped

by the organic natural continuation of the ongoing processes in the Russian Federation. Unexpected spontaneous changes that impacted Russia from within and from abroad were analyzed as well. A good example of that were the events of 2013-2014 and 2022 between Russia and Ukraine. Those events impacted the Russian approach to federalism from 2013 to the present. While analyzing internal and external factors, potential influences of geopolitical and internal political situations were considered.

Since internal and external environments affected the system the Russian Federation, information about these factors and their impacts were tracked and coded. The main perspectives from which the system of the Russian Federation was viewed were from the distribution of power and responsibilities between Russian federal center and regional governments; the economic situation in various regions, the levels of regional development, and observed trends; economic policies, including regional development policies and levels of regulation; national and regional economic structures and market trends; financial systems, public and private sector financial states and regional budgets; the taxation systems; natural resources; human resources; national and regional labor markets; educational institutions; political situation nation-wide and in the regions; legal system issues; legislative base and tendencies for its change; the local governments; the political systems and their stability; the impacts of political processes on the economies; regional infrastructure, transportation, and communication infrastructure; housing issues; and environmental pollution and environmental protection.

Researching and analyzing Russian regional information required specialized unique approaches to various areas of activities in the Russian regions. Sources of

information included the published materials, special editions, economic, financial, and statistical government publications, catalogs, brochures, laws, legal decrees and orders by federal and regional governments, and other reference materials from both levels of government; methodological and teaching publications, technical documentation, and manuals; electronic media, global networks, internet, cost-free websites, paid websites, and subscriptions, for example, the Russian State Duma site; external and internal documented reports, regional strategic and tactical plans, and completed work reports; research conducted by experts and consultants; and personal research, work projects, observations, and contacts.

The analyzed and systematized information served to formulate conclusions on the existing model of federalism in the Russian state. The amount of this type of work, especially during the preliminary and in-depth data processing phase, required significant analytical efforts (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). Therefore, this study was focused on official Russian information sources regarding issues related to federal-regional issues. Interpretations and explanations by experts were welcomed. I also possess a plethora of knowledge and experience to search, select, interpret, and analyzing data related to the Russian federalist system. It also should be noted that all information sources listed above were not equal in their accessibility, complexity of collecting information, registration requirements, periods of registration, and amount of material provided or required to collect.

Information processing initially was un-parallelized and conducted on a source-by-source basis without taking into consideration relationships between influencing

factors (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). For a general assessment of collected information, there was no need to use specialized computer technologies, except those discussed in the following paragraphs. The main goal was to establish models of developments in the system of the Russian Federation, define parameters of those processes that were poorly formalized, and obtain various types of expert assessments.

As mentioned earlier, this analysis was conducted for data that were collected independently from various Russian and non-Russian sources, different authors, and experts. A comparison was an important method for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of source-by-source processing and optimizing research. Comparison parameters included past performance, decreasing or increasing performance, development trends, plans and indicators of regional development, actual results in regional development in Russia, and indicators of comparable regions, if comparable data were available.

The described approach was especially useful for conducting this qualitative research. The basis for using comparisons was a classification of regions according to several types of criteria supplemented by descriptions of characteristics for each identified category: the ethnic composition of the population in the region; budgetary independence; and level of economic development. Data provided by official Russian statistics combined with materials researched in Russian periodicals served as a basis for this analysis. Prior to the commencement of this analysis, an assumption regarding the types of results and ways of achieving these results was made. While working on

establishing certain parameters, the need for adjusting and improving parameters and the method of achieving results were adjusted during research.

The preliminary analysis yielded several alternatives, and it was necessary to consider all possible options (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). A pragmatic approach suggested two different methods associated with time and resources while reviewing various alternatives: the phased method with work starting on all alternatives at a generic high level. This allowed more evidence to be collected. Evaluation of alternative opinions and judgments regarding the issue under consideration showed the need to single out one of them or admissibility of several alternatives in parallel. Highest-priority preliminary assessments were made when the most promising idea or concept was developed. If the assessment indicated insufficient data to form a holistic judgment on the issue under consideration, then further research took place on this alternative.

Phase 3: Integrating and Constructing Logical Model

Due to the complexity of the research problem and a large amount of collected data in this qualitative study, a minimalized model method was used (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). This allowed for a simplified and understandable description of what encompasses the complex, contradictory, and dynamic reality of Russian federal-regional relations and the Russian federal system. An active database system contained information related to factors impacting the system, the Russian Federation. That database was built in the process of studying.

The next step in investigating the research problem was understanding the factor of data interdependence (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). Sources of information

provided unrelated information and correlation among various types of data and were directly and indirectly connected. All these interconnections were analyzed and integrated. The primary goal of this phase was to provide a thorough study of important aspects of the relationships between the research problem and the results of this study, and the integration and construction of a logical model. A flow of new information into the analyzing system was generated and knowledge was gained, analyzed, and integrated. Then, a new sub-phase was initiated, which could be described as an organizing program sub-phase. It consisted of a set of procedures for the cause-consequence analysis of all collected data, analysis of interrelated connections obtained through different sources, and, most importantly, the construction of a logical model.

Considering the complexity of the research problem under study and nuanced specifics of the Russian state structure, several sources for generating information were reviewed. Existing knowledge of public administration scholars and practitioners published materials from various sources, official government sources and databases, specialized conferences and seminars, and my personal experience and knowledge of the Russian government system were used.

Special attention was paid to official sources and databanks where the main sources were official databases of Russian regional governments and organizations; databases available over global networks and the internet such as Russian legislative and regulatory acts, budgetary documents, official Russian regional authorities' sites. This study's database was created by using accessible and user-friendly tools offered by the

Windows 10 operating system that has provided effective means for constructing and updating information clusters.

The logical model that was used in this study helped to organize and systemize the complicated reality of the research problem to a certain predetermined degree of abstraction (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). The main requirement for constructing such a model was simplicity in compressing the reality of the Russian federal system by me and understandability of it for readers. The problem of constructing this model was not a trivial task due to the inconsistency of available information, data fragmentation, and data pollution.

The analysis of this model assumed an active use of computer technology while working with large amounts and different qualities of information. While studying the Russian federal system, this research faced a phenomenon that has not only theoretical but also practical significance. The turbulent processes of political, economic, and social changes are presently occurring within Russia. Russian internal processes influence Eurasia and often the world. There is a limited understanding by the Western observers of ongoing changes in Russia. The impossibility of accounting in this project for all internal and external factors influencing the Russian federal system prompted to focus on major directions of its further development.

The scenario-building technique played a special role in this model. It allowed the analysis of selected internal and external influences on the studied environment, the Russian federal system, using several scenarios. At the same time, the ambiguity in potential developments and the multiplicity of ways to correct and improve these models

and scenarios was assumed (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). The introductions of new parameters or a change in existing parameters provided an opportunity to adjust scenarios and analyze the Russian federal system from various perspectives.

Phase 4: Formation of Conclusions

In this phase, I reviewed and produced a final definition of the research goals based on conducted analysis. It included a decision-making sub-phase when a choice of alternatives that meet specified criteria and system constraints was made. Evaluating alternatives was not a one-time activity undertaken exclusively at a certain moment (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). During this research, there was a multiplicity of repetitions in collecting, analyzing, and evaluating data. Formulating final conclusions that defined the most current model of the Russian federalist system combined with insights regarding its future development were the results of this phase.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study consisted of non-bias expert research, selection, compilation, analysis of information on the topic of research, and independent nonparticipant interpretation of its results (Creswell, 2013). There were no potential conflicts of interest and no ethical issues in this study. A mitigation plan for resolving any hypothetical issues was prepared. I am knowledgeable and experienced in Russian data collection and current internal and external political, socio-economic, cultural, religious, and public policy and administration trends in today's Russia.

Methodology

The methodology for this study was based on a qualitative multi-factor system analysis method developed by Louis Thurstone between 1931 and 1947, and further refined by Alex Mucchielli between 1991 and 2006 into the qualitative systematic analysis. Thurstone described this method of analysis as a tool that does not restrict the number of general factors that can be applied in analysis (Thurstone, 1931). This approach has allowed me to review and analyze complex problems of the Russian federal system without pre-set limitations regarding political, ideological, social, historical, economic, financial, budgetary, ethnic, cultural, spatial, and other multidimensional factors.

Using the benefits of this systematic qualitative method of research, I have been able to follow the main steps in the analysis: the definition of the system or framework, which in this case is the Russian federal system; the identification of problems and factors that affect the system and classifying these problems and factors into groups; the modeling of the Russian federal-regional relations and addressing research problem and research questions.

The qualitative multi-factor system analysis method developed by Thurstone (1931) and enhanced by Mucchielli (1991) focuses on finding the sense and meaning of a system, respects the validation process in the qualitative method of research and is capable to analyze and clarify the phenomena (Lalanda-Gonçalves, 2015). It adopts a methodological approach that leads to understanding the system and its interrelations. Application of this method to a system with different types of problems was

recommended due to the entanglement of various problems in the phenomena of the Russian federal system.

The main challenge in this study has been understanding and analyzing internal and external relationships, their qualitative natures, and their comparisons with each other (Mucchielli, 1991; Thurstone, 1931). Expert assessments have been needed not only for formulating preliminary and final conclusions, but also for key factors such as Russian regional economic, social, and political activity. Expert analysis of statistical and economic indicators has been performed as well. This qualitative method involved data collection in a flexible format and has focused on the understanding, explanation, and interpretation of empirical data. The formation of hypotheses was the main goal of applying this method for the study of Russian Federalism.

Various data were helpful in situations where it was necessary to obtain and understand information about a poorly understood problem. For example, the study of budget allocations from the Russian federal center to the regions and the development of a forecast was conducted in the following manner: analysis of the dynamics, characteristics, and factors of Russian budget revenues and expenditures; analysis of trends in building Russian regional budgets; assessment of the analysis model and estimation of its accuracy; and building a forecast.

Instrumentation

The phenomena of Russian federalism include multidimensional problems; therefore, a transdisciplinary philosophical-scientific method has been used as instrumentation in this study. There are a plethora of scholarly works on philosophical

and scientific methods. One of the most relevant for this study was Markus Hesse's (2010) in which he described the application of the scientific method in public administration studies. Jay D. White (1996) discussed the use of the philosophical method in dissertations and publications in public administration. This instrumentation has helped to observe and investigate the research problem, study the essence and nature of federalism in Russia, sequence phases in its development, understand the dialectics of Russian federalism in the past, present, and future, and answer research questions.

A combination of logical, historical, comparative-historical, comparative-legal, system-structural, and functional inquires have helped to examine the definition of the concept of federalism as well as its conceptual foundations in Russia. The historical-comparative probe has been used to study Russian historiography. It has helped with a comparative analysis of historical approaches to the development of ideas and concepts of federalism in Russia and other countries with a federal structure. A comparative legal lens has been used to understand the genesis of the development of federalist ideas in the history of Russian political and legal thought, especially its development in the 21st century.

A comparative review has been used for a comprehensive understanding of the Russian and the Western approaches to various models of federalism as well as their mutual influence on each other. In general, federalist countries could be classified into several groups (Kovachev, 1993): countries with large territories and with highly developed economies. For example, the USA, China, Canada, Germany, and Australia. Small-size highly developed countries, such as Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland.

Average-developed countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, India, Mexico, and Pakistan. Countries with transitional political systems of the post-totalitarian type, such as Russia. Countries with noticeable features of the patriarchal system, such as Tanzania, and Papua - New Guinea. An important criterion for this classification of federalist models was the specificity of their constitutional and legal systems. According to this criterion, two main types of models were distinguished: contractual and constitutional. Within these types, some authors also distinguished the constitutional-contractual or contractual-constitutional types (Kovachev). Federations also differ in their ethnic, cultural-linguistic, confessional-religious, and other characteristics (Stogova, 2012). There are also symmetrical and asymmetric federations (Zuber, 2011). A historical-typological evaluation has helped with studying the differences in historical models of federalist countries.

Systemic-structural and functional investigation has clarified and studied the main features in the formation, development, and transformation of the views on federalism among Russian and non-Russian political and legal academics and practitioners. The terminological lens has made it possible to form a hierarchy of basic terms and concepts within the framework, to clarify content and scope, and to propose a formulation of definitions for the key terms and terms that are ambiguously interpreted and defined in historiography. A historical textual exploration was used to interpret the content of various historical textual materials. These were Russian law decrees, transcripts of meetings of the Russian State Duma and its committees, strategic documents on the development of socio-economic and political life in the Russian Federation, election

manifestos of political parties, and texts of speeches of political and state officials. This has included interpretations of key events and decisions in the history of the studied phenomena and processes as well as provided explanations for their hidden meanings.

Political and governmental changes in the world demonstrate the importance of understanding in delineations of powers between the center and regions (Cosgrove, 2016). For example, events in Europe during the past 20-30 years. They were characterized, on one hand, by integration processes in the European Union, and on the other hand, the dissolution of countries such as the former Republic of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Separatist movements in Catalonia, Spain, and Scotland, the U.K. also were examples of these processes (Lazin, 2014). The problem of federalism in the context of historical experience was investigated from a point of view of both the theoretical and practical needs of today.

Published Data Collection Tools

Two major groups of published data collection tools have been used in this study: Russian historiography; non-Russian historiography, including U.S., U.K, and E.U. Three thematic subgroups have been established within these two groups: works on history and formation of conditions for development in Russian federalism with facts, concepts, and conclusions that were significant for this research; publications on the transformation in ideas of federalism at the turn of the 20th-21st centuries; studies of the issues in the most current post-1991 model of federalism in Russia.

During the analysis of non-Russian historiography, it was necessary to consider the ideological and political preferences of individual authors and research centers. This

directly influenced their perception and interpretation of the Russian model of federalism. The ideological and political factors were based on the historically contradictory attitude of Western society towards Russia and the Russian state system. In Russia, Western authors are known for their specific perceptions of Russian politics. Publications of Western researchers often reflect a subjective perception of the problem. Of course, several of these points are applicable to the Russian authors as well.

Due to the complexity of this research, it was necessary to use a combination of sources of information that comprehensively cover various aspects of the phenomena. The sources were divided into the following groups: Russian archives; documents published by government authorities of the Russian Federation and Russian government websites; documents from official and unofficial meetings; documents from leading political parties in the Russian Federation; books and memoirs by Russian statesmen; analytical works from Russian media, official periodicals, major think-tanks.

The first group of sources included data from the archives of the Russian Federation. These were previously unpublished documents from the federal archives of the Russian Federation, such as letters, messages, or press releases. Relevant documents had clarified trends and specific facts in the formation and development of the Russian model of federalism. The preliminary review demonstrated that there was a significant amount of available archived materials in an electronic format posted on official websites of leading Russian government institutions and Russian government officials.

The second group of sources included relevant documents of the state authorities of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Duma's transcripts of meetings, and the

Duma committees' hearings. They had clarified the positions of political parties on issues of state structure, the balance of power in the Duma, government approach on issues of distribution of power between federal center and regions; official statements of the president and prime minister; transcripts of official speeches and statements by the Russian officials, the president's address to the State Duma. These documents contained relevant information on the overall government's position as well as individual ministries and departments' positions on issues of power and authority at the federal and regional levels; strategic documents of the Russian Federation, including the Spatial Development Strategy of Russia, National Security Strategy of Russia, Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Russia; official materials of the Euro-Asian Economic Union (EAEU), which included documents from EAEU meetings related to the Russian federal system.

The third group included documents from other international organizations related to this issue. These were declarations and communiqués from summits of the heads of states, treaty acts of the Russian Federation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, documents from international meetings, and unofficial international meetings at various levels. They included signed declarations, statements, and protocols.

The fourth group of sources included the statements of the leading political parties in the Russian Federation, parties' leaders' statements from the party conferences, statements to the media, and official websites of political parties. The fifth group was represented by works and memoirs of the leading statesmen from the Russian Federation. This group of sources allowed the determination of views of leading Russian statesmen

and motives for making key decisions, and identification of nuances in the formation of the current state structure in Russia. The sixth group included analytical works from Russian media, official periodicals, and major think tanks.

Data Collection Procedures

Minimal participation by others was conducted during this study. Data collection procedures that were previously described included the use of the web-based libraries, websites, periodicals, and scientific works on the federalist system in the Russian Federation.

Data Analysis Plan

Organizing kaleidoscopic data from various sources for this study was a major challenge and required a disciplined approach. The *constant comparison method* (Dye et al., 2000), which was derived from a comparative analysis approach, was used to categorize, compare, analyze, refine, and compile data. With contradicting views on the status of Russian federalism and its future development expressed by scholars and practitioners, the data was organized in groups. A comparison of data was conducted to evaluate, assess, and categorize data within the groups. Then, an analysis of data comparing groups to each other was performed. Analyzing, refining, and compiling data were aligned and focused on answering research questions for this study. Research question 1 required reviewing and analyzing federal theories which are applicable to the Russian system of federalism, as well as reviewing and analysis of data describing and explaining its status. The same process applied to sub-question 2. Comparing, analyzing,

categorizing, and compiling data (Dye et al.) and connecting it to research questions were conducted through open coding.

Open coding was used in this study as a qualitative methodological tool to segment data into meaningful categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and connect these categories to research questions. The procedure of open coding was conducted through developing words or short terms (Strauss & Corbin) that has served as labels for each category of data. This type of coding helped with organizing data during the meaningful process of analyzing it and connecting it to research questions. As evident from the literature review, there are mostly contradicting opposing scholarly views on the phenomena that are currently available for discerning readers. Each of the major three groups of data, aligned and connected to research questions, had its own coding. Additional coding was used for separating segmented data within each group due to differences in data within the group.

I used NVivo as a software program for this qualitative research. NVivo program helped me with organizing and analyzing the unstructured data which was used in the study. The program was developed for use in qualitative research to work with large volumes and a wide range of qualitative data. It supports Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel data formats which I used in this study. Microsoft Word text editor and Microsoft Excel spreadsheet editor software programs also were used. Discrepant cases were not part of this study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

This qualitative study used a multitude of data sources. A strategy of *triangulation* (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999) was applied to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, and accuracy of the research. Triangulation was used in research with multiple sources of data. Using this process allowed me to validate this study by researching multiple data sources and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton). A thorough understanding and explanation of the phenomena were achieved by conducting a systematic analysis of various points of view and data on the status of the Russian federal system and its future.

The reflexivity strategy (Malterud, 2001), the application of which was closely related to my background, knowledge, and experience, also was applied during this research project to ensure its trustworthiness. This procedure included several steps leading from researching contradicting information available in the Russian federal system, understanding the meaning of that information, synthesizing meanings into themes, and condensing them into conclusions and summaries. Using these strategies helped to structure and systemize my research and made it trustworthy.

Transferability

The findings of this study are available for generalizations and applicability to different contexts in studies of the Russian Federation and the Russian model of the federal system via the use of a *thick description technique* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity and transferability were ensured by comprehensive descriptions and

detailed explanations. Research products, such as an analysis of today's federal-regional relations in Russia and their potential directions in the future, are available for use in my future research and work, as well as applicable to other studies on this topic. Up-to-date research with detailed descriptions and insights is transferable for my own and for others' academic studies and practical endeavors. A thick description technique developed by Lincoln and Guba was an appropriate tool to establish the transferability of this study.

Dependability

Triangulation as a strategy for establishing dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) was used in the research. Findings were supported by collected and compiled data that was organized and coded. The dependability of results obtained in the work was evidenced by in-depth historiography of the topic, impartial analysis of a wide range of sources, and the use of complementary research methods that corresponded to research goals.

Confirmability

The reflexivity approach (Malterud, 2001) helped with establishing the confirmability of this work. *A reflexive journal technique* was in use during the research. The goal of this study was to produce results that are not biased and unique in their perspective. Results of this work were represented in my findings which are available for confirmation. Documentation of records for data collection, checking, and rechecking procedures were applied throughout this study.

Ethical Procedures

The data used for this study was not anonymous or confidential, therefore, there was no need to protect its confidentiality. There was also no need to obtain institutional permissions for collecting and using data. IRB approval was obtained for this study. There were no ethical concerns regarding data collection either. No protection for data storage procedures, dissemination of data, and access to data needed to be developed for this study. There was no conflict of interest for me regarding this work.

Summary

It appears that the Western, primarily the United States', approaches to understanding specifics of the Russian model of the federal system could be more effective. This is evidenced by mostly contradicting perceptions of phenomena by Western scholars and their Russian counterparts. Partially, this could be attributed to different tools and analysis methodology that the Western and Russian public policy and administration scientists use. Another part of that misunderstanding is based on different cultural-political-philosophical fundamental paradigms from which the U.S. and Russian academics view and study the Russian federal public administration system.

In this chapter, I described the tools and methodologies that were used in this study. In qualitative public policy and administration studies, there are many methods of research that can be applied, but the main tool of such research remains to be the researcher himself. Therefore, I was responsible for an unbiased review, selection, collection, and analysis of data, and the generation of objective findings. In the sections above, I described different methodology approaches, research tools, and instrumentation

that I used in the study and explained how they helped me with addressing issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

In the next Chapter 4, I will provide descriptions of the data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to research, clarify, close gaps in knowledge, and improve understanding of the prospects in the development of the Russian federal-regional relations. Per Maxwell's (2013) description of qualitative exploratory studies, this project is developed to clarify problems under study more clearly and focus on exploration, clarification, and understanding of the meaning and perspectives of the phenomena. The intended outcome of the study is increased knowledge for the public policy and administration community and improved understanding for the U.S. experts on the topic of ongoing transitioning and future reforms in the Russian federal-regional paradigm.

The research questions for this study are:

RQ1: How do classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism apply to the contemporary Russian federal system, and how does the Russian system evolve in its own unique way?

SQ1: How is the Russian system evolving in relation to asymmetrical federalist, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems?

This chapter explains the setting, demographics, data collection, and data analysis used in the study, as well as provides evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary.

Setting

The setting for this study was based at my home office, and the study was focused on the system of the Russian federal and regional governments. The individual weekly conferences with the committee and my extensive travel across Russia and the former Soviet Union during the past 25 years enhanced this research. After receiving the Institutional Review Board ethics review and approval, I took a sabbatical leave from my work for researching and completing this study. The conditions that affected the quality of research were related to a large volume of kaleidoscopic data in two languages, English and Russian, and time for collecting, analyzing, and summarizing relevant data. Other significant factors were a large amount of accumulated knowledge and the ability to perform critical analysis for making a judgment on the issues under consideration. The concluding factor was the significant portion of crucial data available only in the Russian language and the ability to synthesize international, U.S., E.U., U.K., and Russian data. Neither personal nor organizational conditions had influenced this study. Interpretation of the study results was not influenced by any conditions of the setting.

Demographics

There were no in-person participants taking part in the study. As planned in previous chapters, the open data sources used in the study included works by U.S., European, Russian, and other international authors. Only relevant works were selected for analysis and reference. The dates of published works and studies ranged from 1603 to 2022. Open sources such as scientific libraries, periodicals, and reports from conferences,

were used. Generalizing applicable information on the issues under consideration and critical analysis of the positions by individual authors on the issues were used.

Data Collection

I reviewed a plethora of scholarly works, books, and records from open sources. All these sources are listed in the reference section below. The data collection was conducted mainly in my home office. The frequency of data collection was daily. The duration of data collection commenced with the literature review in June 2015 and continued to July 2022. The data were recorded in the folders and files. There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. There were no unusual circumstances encountered in data collection. Data collection procedures were described in Chapter 3 and included use of the web-based libraries, websites, periodicals, and scientific works on the federalist system in the Russian Federation.

Data Analysis

The constant comparison method (Dye et al., 2000) was used to categorize, compare, analyze, refine, and compile data. The data were organized into three groups. The first group consisted of data supporting the idea of Russia being a federal state. The second group consisted of data supporting the idea of Russia using its own unique type of federal system. The third group consisted of data supporting the idea of Russia not being a federal state. A comparison of data was conducted to evaluate, assess, and categorize data within the groups. Then, an analysis of data comparing groups to each other was performed.

Specific codes were used for Group1: R1 was the code for Russia being a classic federal system, R2 for the asymmetrical federal system, and R3 for the asymmetrical ethnic federal system. The code for Group 2 was U1 for a hybrid federal system. The code for Group 3 was N1 for a non-federal system. Open coding was used in this study as a qualitative methodological tool to segment data into meaningful categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and connect these categories to research questions. The procedure of open coding was conducted by developing short terms (Strauss & Corbin) that served as labels for each category of data. This type of coding helped with organizing data during the meaningful process of analyzing it and connecting it to research questions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

As planned in Chapter 3, a strategy of triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999) was applied to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, and accuracy of the research. Using this process allowed me to validate this study by researching multiple data sources and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton). A thorough understanding and explanation of the phenomena were achieved by conducting a systematic analysis of various points of view and data on the status of the Russian federal system and its future. The reflexivity strategy (Malterud, 2001) also was applied during this research project to ensure its trustworthiness. This procedure included steps leading from researching contradicting information available regarding the Russian federal system to understanding the meaning of that information, and then synthesizing meanings

into themes, and condensing them into conclusions and summaries. Using these strategies to structure and systemize my research helped me to make it trustworthy.

Transferability

The findings of this study are available for generalizations and applicability to different contexts in studies of the Russian Federation and the Russian model of the federal system via the use of a thick description technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity and transferability were ensured by comprehensive descriptions and detailed explanations during this study. Research products, such as an analysis of today's federal-regional relations in Russia and their potential directions in the future, are available for use in my future research and work and applicable to other studies on this topic. Up-to-date research with detailed descriptions and insights hopefully is transferable for my own and for others' academic studies and practical endeavors. A thick description technique developed by Lincoln and Guba was an appropriate tool to establish the transferability of this study.

Dependability

Triangulation as a strategy for establishing dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) was used in the research. Findings were supported by collected and compiled data that is organized and coded. The dependability of results obtained in the work was evidenced by in-depth historiography of the topic, impartial analysis of a wide range of sources, and the use of a complex of complementary research methods that corresponded to research goals.

Confirmability

The reflexivity approach (Malterud, 2001) helped with establishing the confirmability of this work. A reflexive journal technique was used during the research. The goal of this study was to produce results that are not biased and are unique in their perspective. The results of this work represent my findings that are available for confirmation. Documentation of records for data collection, checking, and rechecking procedures were applied throughout this study.

Results

The results of this research were presented and organized by addressing each research question and included two sub-sections supporting each question.

Research Question 1: How do classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism apply to the contemporary Russian federal system, and how does the Russian system evolve in its own unique way?

On May 13, 2000, the newly elected Russian President Putin issued a decree (Russian Federation Presidential Decree 849, 2000) establishing seven federal districts in Russia and introducing the institution of presidential representatives in these districts. The newly created seven federal districts' purpose was to oversee the existing 89 federal regions. Federal regions in Russian Federation are a general approximation of the States in the United States of America. This was an important change of direction in the centralization vs. decentralization dilemma within Russia. This new federal approach had decreased the institutional, political, and legal authorities in regional autonomies. Presidential representatives ensured coordination among federal executive authorities in

their respective federal districts. These presidential representatives gradually transformed into likings of a *governor-general* type of position by managing the heads of federal regions under their control. This was facilitated by the direct oversight of the president himself. Most of the newly appointed presidential representatives were coming from the law enforcement agencies (Kynev, 2012). This new approach to the Russian federal-regional relations was balancing between a formal federalist and unitary system. That policy had certainly decreased the political influence enjoyed by the regional elites in the 1990s (Kynev).

In December 2004, direct elections of regional governors were nullified. A presidential nominee had to be approved by the regional parliament (Russian Federal Law 159, 2004). The president also gained the power to dismiss governors and dissolve regional parliaments if parliaments failed to approve a presidential nominee after three attempts. This new federal law 159 from December 11, 2004, contradicted other federal laws (Russian Federal Law 106, 2000), which mandated the Russian Duma and not the president to make such changes in the federal-regional relations.

Direct elections of the regional governors were reinstated as part of the reforms under President Medvedev in 2012 (Russian Federal Law 40, 2012). However, these legislative initiatives contradicted the system of federal relations that developed from 2000 to 2011. Thus, more compromising changes were adopted in 2013. The 2013 amendments allowed both direct elections and electing governors in regional parliaments (Russian Federal Law 30, 2013). The adoption of such amendments was based on the decision to prevent direct elections in such republics of the North Caucasus as Dagestan,

Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Chechnya (Siapress, 2013).

As a result, four of these republics abandoned direct elections of the governors: Dagestan in April 2013, Ingushetia in March 2013, North Ossetia in November 2013, and Karachay-Cherkessia in December 2013 (Siapress). In addition, the new Russian Federal Law 6F32025 (February 3, 2015) introduced a similar mechanism for the election of governors in the Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets, and Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous regions (Russian Federal Law 6F32025).

On January 16, 2017, the Russian president approved a decree on the fundamentals of the state policy of regional development of the Russian Federation until 2025 (Russian Presidential Decree 13, 2017). The implementation of that decree was aimed at the “reduction in the difference in the level and quality of life of citizens in different regions, the alignment of the regional socio-economic and infrastructure development” (Russian Presidential Decree 13). The decree also allowed changing the boundaries of the federal regions.

The observation of these internal zigzagging reforms, amendments, and political changes occurring in Russia from 2000 to 2017 clearly illustrates the fact that the Russian federal-regional relations had dramatically changed from the 1990s decentralization to the post-2000 centralization trend. At the same time, the federal system was constantly adapting to the day-to-day challenges facing the country and its leadership.

Mr. Putin’s participation in the 2018 presidential elections was promoted as a campaign to be the “President of all Russians” (Gorbachev, 2017). Formation of a common identity, country unity, territorial integrity, and grappling with ethnic separatism

in several republics were the main themes of that election. The policy of internal mobilization and increased centralization implemented in the context and conditions of foreign economic sanctions was advocated. The interests of local regional elites were again under the threat from central federal authorities (Domanska, 2017).

The unprecedented number of resignations among Russian regional governors and the dismissal of 19 governors in 2017 demonstrated a lowering of their status and weakening of their influence (Domanska, 2017). Direct control by the federal center was exemplified in the appointment of Colonel-General Vasilyev, former head of the United Russia faction in the State Duma, as the Acting Head in the Republic of Dagestan (Zhelenin, 2018). Mass arrests of Dagestan officials who allegedly were related to corruption cases followed. In addition, the newly appointed prime minister of Dagestan, Artem Zdunov, announced the construction of a rigid vertical of control that would allow focus on the improvement of the economy and finances (Kuznetsov, 2018).

An essential element in the current Russian federal system is the actual dependence of the regions on the center. The evidence of this dependence is the subsidization of regional budgets and the mechanisms for redistribution of funding. On January 1, 2018, a decree of the Russian government was issued on the procedure for signing agreements between the Ministry of Finance and the federal regions to receive subsidies (Russian Ministry of Finance, 2018). A governor must submit a quarterly report to the Ministry of Finance. There is an additional list of requirements for highly subsidized regions to be included in these quarterly reports. This agreement produces even tighter control of the regional governments by the federal center.

Most regions cannot establish their own development strategies due to a lack of control over their own finance. The excessive control exercised by the federal government restricts and limits regional aspirations for more financial independence by the regions. This tight control by the federal center disbalances the federal system. It causes inefficient competition among regions. A significant drawback of this system is that only several Russian regions are well-known for foreign investments. Mainly, it is Moscow, St. Petersburg, and oil and gas producing regions. This leads to insufficient investments and leaves a significant part of the country unavailable for potential investments. For example, two capital regions, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the oil and gas-rich Tyumen region accounted for 78% of foreign direct investment in 2012-2016. All other remaining large industrial regions received no more than one to three percent of the total investments (Russian Ministry of Finance, 2017).

Fifty percent of investments of fixed assets in January-September 2017 were made in 11 regions. However, the main share of investments, more than 26% in total, are concentrated only in three regions: Moscow and the oil and gas-rich Khanty-Mansiysk and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous regions. Investments in fixed assets continue to decrease in 45% of the Russian regions (Komrakov, 2018). Crimea stood out with the maximum growth rate of 420% times compared to January-September 2016. Sevastopol was at 230%. Both increases were associated with the construction of the Crimean bridge and related infrastructure facilities. 75.5% of Crimean and 77.3% of Sevastopol investments were financed from the federal budget (Komrakov). Such statistics testify to the unattractiveness of business in many Russian regions due to the high level of political

and economic risks. The large portion of Russian federal investments among other types of investments are explained by international sanctions that impose restrictions on the activities of large Russian and international companies in Crimea and Sevastopol.

The leaders in fixed capital investments, in addition to the main three, were St. Petersburg, Tatarstan, Moscow Region, Krasnoyarsk, Krasnodar, Sakha (Yakutia), Sverdlovsk, and Tyumen regions. The dependence on regulatory policy manifested itself only in one Russian region. The removal of administrative barriers and the creation of favorable conditions for business increased the attractiveness of the Krasnodar region. Only 18.5% of Krasnodar investments were federal or regional money, and 81.5% were from private investment (Tarakanova, 2018). The rapid growth rate of investments in Yakutia with an increase of 35.2% in January-September 2017 compared to 2016 reflects the fact that the republic has become a new promising oil and gas producing region. The Chayandinskoye oil and gas condensate field is being developed in Sakha. The Power of Siberia gas pipeline from Russia to China passes through it as well (Tarakanova).

The unsatisfactory financial situation in such regions as Khakassia and Kostroma resulted in a situation where the government was taking extraordinary measures by introducing external financial management for the first time. Due to debts that exceeded the annual budget, the Federal Treasury was monitoring the spending of the Khakassia and Kostroma regions (Sibreal, 2018). At the same time, debts exceeded annual income in the other seven federal regions of the Russian Federation, and in 16 regions debts accounted for 85-100% of their income (Privalov, 2018). The investment imbalance in the regional structure reflects the general nature of the Russian economy, which is based

on the extraction and export of energy resources and other minerals. Equalizing the volume of investments in subsidized regions, which are entirely dependent on subsidies from the federal center, is interpreted as the area of responsibility of regional officials. They are expected to create favorable conditions for business, implement investment projects, and develop infrastructure. This trend indicates a growing gap between a small group of leading regions and the rest of the country. As a result, many regions lose incentives for vigorous attempts to resolve this problem. They do not seek opportunities for an objective assessment of their efforts and for receiving an adequate amount of federal support. The economic aspects of the tight control by the center over the regions are closely connected to political and administrative reasons (Privalov).

The economic and financial aspects of the federal center's control over the Russian regions are closely connected to political and administrative reasons. The return to direct elections of governors in 2012 was interpreted as a positive sign in the regions. Yet, opposition candidates had minimal chances for success even during the nomination stage (Kommersant, 2017). The appointment of governors by the president was an indirect violation of Article 77 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Russian Constitution, 1993), which states that federal regions form their own authorities according to federal laws. Return to direct elections did not lead to any significant changes in the political landscape of the federal regions. For example, during the third term of President Putin 2012-2018, there was not a single case when a candidate approved by the president did not win (Kommersant). In fact, the intent of reinstating direct elections of governors was to legitimize candidates pre-approved by the president.

A typical scenario that was applied across the regions included the following steps. The federal center selected a specific candidate, a series of public meetings with the president followed, nomination for the elections occurred, blocking of a strong opponent was initiated, simultaneous selection of a significantly weaker opponent was conducted, an appearance of the legitimacy of the elections was created, and a win for the president-supported candidate was secured (Kommersant). In addition to that, the president also reserved the right to dismiss governors. This negated democratic aspirations within the regions and made officials and will of citizens in the regions dependent on the federal center. Politically, interventions by the president were presented as means to prevent damage by ineffective regional leadership. As a result, the central federal government maintained a reputation for effective governance and claimed credit for its close oversight of the regions and correction of mistakes in the regions when needed (Kommersant).

The example of a rare leader who still can conduct relatively independent politics within his own region is Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya. His loyalty to the president is a fundamental part of the political agreement with the federal center. In the absence of influential governors of the past, such as Mr. Shaimiev in Tatarstan, Mr. Luzhkov in Moscow, and Mr. Rossel in the Sverdlovsk region, the regional authorities act as a system of direct regional supervision. A vivid illustration of this was the anti-corruption operation conducted in February 2018 in Dagestan. The arrests of regional leaders by the federal law enforcement agencies clearly demonstrated the real balance of power between the center and regional elites. The operation gained publicity after the president's visit to Dagestan and his meetings with the public on the socio-economic development of the

region. Similar anti-corruption activities in their own regions were expected by 42% of Russian citizens (FOM, 2018). At the same time, 33% of respondents believed that the level of corruption in their region is lower than in Dagestan, and 36% had not heard anything about the Dagestan arrests (FOM).

Reacting to that sting operation and the arrests, the president connected the problem of corruption with the peculiarities of the regional authorities as such. Asserting control over regional elites was accompanied by their discreditation in the eyes of the population. Re-directing public socio-economic discontent at the local officials was also used (Russian Regions, 2018). Public attention during that time was drawn primarily to the arrests of Dagestan officials while other cases were muted by design. For example, the media aimed public attention to the arrests of the leadership in Dagestan and Makhachkala rather than on the arrests of Governor Belykh in the Kirov region and Governor Khoroshavin in the Sakhalin region (Petersburg's Politics, 2018).

The findings above clearly address the first part of research question 1 on how classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism apply to the contemporary Russian federal system. Classic western theoretical works by Altusius (1603), Wheare (1946), Livingston (1956), and Tarlton (1965), which were explained in detail in previous chapters, apply directly to the contemporary Russian federal system only from a theoretical perspective. In the Russian Supreme Law of the Land, the Constitution of 1993, Chapter 3 Federal Structure, articles 65-79, there is a formal description of how the Russian federal system should function. As demonstrated above, in the real world of today's Russia, the constant changes in federal laws and frequent adjustments in the

federal system only theoretically make classic western theoretical frameworks on federalism fully befitting to Russia. Theoretically, Altusius, Wheare, Livingston, and Tarlton's works are applicable and fully relatable to Russian Federation. Practically, they underscore the uniqueness of the Russian federal system and Russian federal and regional relations. After answering the first part, the second part of research question 1 on how the Russian system evolves in its own unique way can be addressed. As already illustrated above, and will be further illustrated below, Russian federalism does evolve in its own distinctive direction. The turnarounds with the direct elections of governors, financial management of the regions by the center, political rotations, ever-adjusting federal-regional laws, and other specific Russian conditions are making Russian federalism a peculiar hybrid of several types of federalism described in the western federal theories. These theories include the framework selected for this study. Altusius, Wheare, Livingston, and Tarlton developed theories on classic, asymmetrical, ethnic, nation-specific federal systems and the Russian system is certainly belonging to these hybrid types of systems.

Sub question 1: How is the Russian system evolving in relation to asymmetrical federalist, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems?

The second part of research question 1 and sub-research question 2 are connected to each other. The results and findings address the question of how Russia evolves in its own unique way and how it relates to asymmetric, quasi-federalist, and non-federalist systems. The issues of enlargement of Russian regions, their future composition, unification, erosion and changes of current borders, the federal center's efforts to

eliminate separatist tendencies, and regional public administration problems are presented,

The Russian Federation's experience indicates that there is no single, optimal, effective model for planning and implementing development for the country and the regions. This is explained by the fact that different Russian regions have different levels of economic development, various structures, cultures, and traditions. The optimal effective models of socio-economic development are aimed at the implementation of a strategic goal to achieve national and regional sustainable economic development. By pursuing one or another federal strategy, a federal center and regional governments need to consider the specifics of the region. The excessive subsidization of budgets in most regions, the rotation of governors based on political expediency, lack of initiative, increased responsibilities of governors for economic and political failures in their regions, and their dependence on the federal center are abundant in Russia. The practice of regional governance in Russia is demotivational. An increase in the region's income leads to a sharp decrease and even termination of support from the federal budget (Russian Information Agency, 2017).

The reaction to this situation had surfaced in Russian public and political debates on federal and regional policy and administration. In December 2017, the President of Tatarstan Minnikhanov publicly complained about an unfair distribution of federal funding by the center among the regions (Independent Newspaper, 2017). The disagreement between the federal center and the leading regions is constant political bargaining. The bankruptcy of Tatfondbank in March 2017, one of the top 50 Russian

banks, triggered a banking crisis in Russia and turned regional problems into wider national political protests. Several rallies in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, not only called for the resignation of a local government but also a federal government (Independent Newspaper). The disbalance in the regional development is also reflected in the specifics of protest movements that arose from the socio-economic problems. The centers of protest have moved from the traditionally active Moscow and St. Petersburg to the south of Russia and the Far East (Committee of Citizenry Initiatives, 2017). The index of socio-economic and political discontent demonstrated a moderate deterioration in the overall situation in the country. Federal funding was spent on maintaining stability and no longer was spent on implementing vital reforms. At the same time, the quality of local self-government was declining and the representation of opposition in leadership positions in regional parliaments was falling. In 2015, the opposition had only about 14% of the seats, and in 2016 about a modest 11% (Committee of Citizenry Initiatives).

At the end of 2016, Altai became a region with increasing socio-economic tensions. The second risk group included Kemerovo, Kirov, Omsk, Samara, Saratov, Chelyabinsk, Astrakhan, Ivanovo regions, the Republic of Buryatia, Moscow, as well as the Crimea, and Sevastopol (Socialist United Party of Russia, 2017). This information was also confirmed by the rating of Russian regions in terms of the number of labor protests. In 2016, the level of social tension was high in the Primorsky, Khabarovsk, and Sverdlovsk Regions, Moscow, and the Republic of Buryatia. There were practically no protests in the North Caucasian regions and Kalmykia, except for North Ossetia-Alania. A low-level labor conflict in the Russian Caucasus is explained by the absence of a

transparent economy in these regions and the lack of information transparency. The map of socio-economic hot spots in Russia shows that the most problems are observed in the European part of the country. Most conflicts related to working hours, decreasing wages, layoffs, and non-labor disputes occur without active civil protests (Socialist United Party of Russia).

Social tension and protest activity are typical for regions with high and medium levels of poverty (Russian Business Consulting, 2017). The powerful influence of Russian mass media keeps public discontent from going beyond the framework of labor disputes. The discontent rarely turns to acute forms of protest and to public demands for changes in central or regional authorities. However, if the conflicts between the central government and regional elites, disputes over economic resources, and the power of central or regional authorities expand, then the situation can become a breeding ground for the growth of separatism in some regions of the Federation. Traditionally, among potential candidates for secession from the Russian Federation are viewed such areas as Dagestan, Circassia, the Far East, Tyva, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Kalmykia, Kaliningrad, Ingria, Pomor, Don, Kuban, parts of Siberia (Russian Business Consulting).

The current situation in several regions of the Russian Federation is characterized by the greatest threats of separatism today. For example, Idel-Ural autonomy ideas have a significant historical basis related to the unrealized project of the national state of the Tatars and Bashkirs at the beginning of the 20th century. Today this region unites the territories between the Volga and the Ural Mountains: Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Chuvashia, Mordovia, Udmurtia, and Mari El. These lands are densely populated by

Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvashs, Maris, Udmurts, Mordvins- Erzya, and Moksha. These ethnic groups have their own history of struggle for independence and their national elites have a desire to increase their influence. Particularly strong autonomy ideas are among the Tatars, who are the second largest ethnic group living in the Russian Federation. Tatarstan holds a special position among other federal regions in Russia. It is the only region that is headed by a president and builds its relations with the federal center on a contractual basis. This is the agreement from 2017 “On the delimitation of jurisdiction and mutual delegation of powers between state authorities of the Russian Federation and bodies government of the Republic of Tatarstan (Profile, 2018).

Since the 1990s, the Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Kazan has been celebrated annually. From time to time it takes place under the slogans “I remember 1552”, “The Holocaust of the Tatar people - 1552”, "Repent, Rus!" and "Our goal is independence." Radical ideas appear periodically to ban Christianity in the republic or ban the use of the Russian language. Admittedly, they are spontaneous and do not have broad support. In addition, cells of the militant Caucasian Emirate, Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami, as well as the Milli Majlis of the Tatar people, the Muslim Human Rights Center, and the All-Tatar Public Center operate in the republic. At the same time, exaggerating the nature of the connections between the Islamists with the socio-political and nationalist movements in modern Tatarstan is erroneous. Most often, this factor is noted by the Russian media to create a tense public atmosphere, which helps with uniting the public opinion against these radical ideas and organizations. Nationalist movements in Tatarstan such as Altyn Urda and the Union of Tatar Youth Azatlyk are more moderate and pursue

pan-Tatar ideas. Representatives of Tatar organizations from republics Yakutia, Bashkortostan, and Mari El also gather in Kazan to celebrate Memorial Day.

North Caucasus area with a diverse population and minimal representation of ethnic Russians is the most challenging area regarding separatism. The North Caucasus includes Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan. The area is known for organized armed underground movements, sabotage, terrorist attacks, periodic counter-terrorist operations, and other hostilities. The internal migration assimilation issues with migrants from the Caucasus moving to proper Russia and the intensive migration processes only exacerbate the problem. The highest birthrate in the Russian Federation and the growing popularity of Salafi ideas among youth make the North Caucasian republics especially troublesome for the Russian federal center. The head of Chechnya since 2007, Mr. Kadyrov, accumulated unparalleled powers to fight the organized underground in that republic. This led to the creation of a state within a state. Often, Russian federal and regional laws are not followed and that causes undisguised irritation and friction with the federal government agencies. Despite assurances from the Chechnya's leadership that it is a peaceful, stable, and secure region in Russia and a record level of formal electoral support for the authorities, stability in Chechnya appears to be superficial (Gudkov, 2005). According to reports, abductions of people are practiced with some disappearing without a trace, and some areas and populations are subjected to pay illegal levies. Several Russian politicians do not like such a privileged position in the region, which also receives the lion's share of funding from the federal budget. Mr. Kadyrov faces criticism and periodic defamation

campaigns in the media with the goal of either eliminating him as a political project or reducing his influence. However, the removal of him as a current leader who is the only guarantor of peace in the republic would automatically lead to an open confrontation among Chechen clans and between the local clans and the federal center. All of these might condition for the emergence of the third Chechen war in one form or another.

Sakha-Yakutia, Buryatia, Tuva, Khakassia, Altai, and other Siberian and Far Eastern regions are a symbiosis of ethnic, socio-economic, and political interests. The Siberian federal district with its vast territory, wealth in natural resources, and ethnic and religious diversity is characterized by a wide range of views on political and administrative issues. These wide arrays of views are ranging from autonomy to independence. However, the activities of such groups as Regional Alternative to Siberia, the Tyumen and Omsk regional movements Siberia, Party of Siberian Independence, Unification of Siberian Union, Siberian Republican Party, and Interregional Association Siberian Agreement do not go beyond social discussions and network activities. A significant geographical distance from the federal center contributes to the formation of ideas about one's own identity in Siberia. These groups are not a result of the ideas about self-determination and separation from Russia. It appears to be a socio-economic need by the Siberians to draw the attention of the federal government to the semi-colonial status of regions located beyond the Ural Mountains. The regional elites are trying to use the Siberian autonomy card to get better results in elections to regional legislative assemblies (Levada Center, 2018).

The Yakuts are usually not considered potential separatists due to the republic elite's focus on socio-economic development rather than on the involvement in federal politics. The population is the most pro-Russian among non-Russian ethnic groups in the Federation. The reverse side of such loyalty is the minimal representation of ethnic Russians in the system of republican power. Since the collapse of the USSR, all leaders of the Yakutia republic have been ethnic Yakuts. Some view the idea to consider Yakutia as a historical homeland of the Yakut people and other indigenous people of Eastern and Northern Siberia as preparation for a possible future nationalization of land and natural resources. Yakutia is home to one-third of the world's diamond reserves (Levada Center, 2018).

In the Far East region, the ideas of separatism have periodically arisen since 1992 among elites of the Khabarovsk, Primorsky, and Amur regions. There are more and more economic relations and ties to China, Japan, Korea, and the rest of the Pacific region than to the Russian federal center. The Far East and Siberia make up approximately two-thirds of Russia's territory. They are rich in oil, gas, metals, gold, diamonds, and other natural resources. Since 2014, ideas have been discussed to create a special economic zone that would connect these Russian regions with the northern provinces of China. The risk for these Russian regions is an enormous disproportion in population with Russian regions populated by 6 million and Chinese regions with 120 million people (Levada Center, 2018).

The Russian regional policy should include a set of legislative, administrative, and economic measures and be part of federal regulation. It should apply to all regions of

the Russian Federation. An important problem in the process of implementing regional policy is the assessment of its effectiveness and selection of direction leading to improvements. However, the Russian domestic public administration community has not developed a unified approach to assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of regional governance and has not created an appropriate scientific and methodological mechanism for that assessment (Afonasova, 2014).

The following criteria could be considered to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of regional governance in Russia (Afonasova, 2014). Results of improvements in the regional socio-economic development, comparison of these results with original plans and forecasts. A ratio of the results achieved, and resources used by the regional government such as finance, property, personnel, and information. A ratio between resources spent and compliance with quality of public services based on accepted standards and administrative regulations. Timeliness of response, pro-active influence on reforms, and anticipated emerging regional problems. Concrete results in reaching compromises among conflicting socio-economic tasks and multitasked reforms aimed at the development of a region (Afonasova).

In this research, I identified general and specific groups of problems and threats, as well as potential priorities and prospects for the federal regions. Common threats and problems for the regions are the following: significant lagging in growth rates for the regional economy compared to the average nation-wide rates, weak diversification of the regional economy, low investment attractiveness and unfavorable institutional environment, significant geographical remoteness from the developed western regions,

harsh and extreme climate conditions, the elevated cost of living and increase in economic activity costs based on climate and remoteness, elevated costs of construction, infrastructure underdevelopment and underdevelopment of internal integration, over-focus on foreign markets and under-focus on the domestic market (Abidova, 2015).

The results of the research demonstrate that the federal centralization policy in Russia from 2000 to 2022 is constricting the institutional, political, and legal powers of regional authorities. The hierarchical system of power does not promote real self-government at the regional level. The system of federal relations in the Russian Federation is blending regions into a single all-Russian political space. The replacement of formal federalism with unitarist policies is impacting the influence yielded by regional elites. Even the regions belonging to the category of regions with a stable economy experience difficulties with organizing their public administration systems. Regions with weak economies face an even greater range of problems. Regional public administration can be conducted through a wide range of specific actions. These actions would stimulate the economy, create new jobs, increase the tax base, and expand opportunities for those types of economic activities in which one or another region is interested.

Analysis of results addressing research questions demonstrated that Russian federalism is characterized by features that exhibit systemic contradictions. These federal-regional contradictions impact relations between regions and the federal center. The federal regions in the Russian Federation are not only national states-republics and national state formations, such as Jewish Autonomous Region and autonomous districts. There are also regions, territories, and cities with federal jurisdiction with a

predominantly Russian population. The combination and mix of territorial and ethnic principles in the construction of the Federation are potentially conflict-ridden. This system does not contribute to the consolidation of the country in the event of a serious national crisis. The events of the 1990s have proven this. Asymmetry of scale and status inequality among regions within the Federation are evident. Republics enjoy a wider range of rights in comparison with other regions. System in which regions of the Federation simultaneously are subordinate to the federal center while being part of other regional structures is overly complex and unbalanced. Three out of four such autonomous regions are parts of the Tyumen and Arkhangelsk regions. The policy of federal budget withdrawal from the regions creates risks of separatism. That policy presumes the federal center accumulates revenues from the most profitable regional activities while leaving social spending as a responsibility of the regional government.

A policy of political patronage by the federal center over the regional governors leads to the authoritarianism of the regional elites. This points to the prevalence of principles of political expediency over equality of federal regions. Chechnya, Crimea, and Sevastopol received 12% of the total subsidized support of the regions from the federal budget in 2015 (Independent Newspaper, 2017). Threats of protest and increased demands from the donor regions are persistent. At the same time, a reduction in federal support of such republics as Chechnya also could lead to a crisis in relations with the federal center.

Results of this research indicate that the federal structure and the system of self-governance in Russia possess crisis potential for Russian statehood. The Russian federal

system needs comprehensive reform, and experts and politicians are discussing various options for such reforms. They agree only on one common yet crucial point. Further development and improvement of Russia are possible only through the continuing development of federal regions. However, the authors of the concepts choose the path to this development in different ways. The decentralization approach is based on the need for full-fledged direct elections of governors and the enhancement of local self-government by providing it with the appropriate power. An alternative is the centralization of public administration. In this architecture, municipal elected councilmen would delegate representatives from their level to the district level, from the district level to the regional level, and then to the federal level. The idea is to overcome the dependence on the entirely untransparent federal system through increased requirements for its accountability to society. Such construction of power in contemporary Russian conditions is justified by the need to adhere to the cultural and historical characteristics of Russia, which are the basis of the legitimacy of power.

Summary

Due to various internal and external factors, including international sanctions and the war in Ukraine, regional tensions and misalignments in the Russian Federation are not being resolved. Problems of financial disbalance between donor and recipient regions persist. The federal government understands this and works on improving mechanisms of regional management and interaction between the federal center and regions. The distribution of power between the federal center and regions and the potential transformation of federal-regional relations remains to be highly debated topics. The

regional dependence on the federal center's political and administrative decisions remains high. The regional financial independence remains low. The vertical federal power structure built by the current administration since the year 2000 remains in place and its transformation in near future is unlikely.

The management system of each region has its own specific features and depends on a multitude of factors. Factors with a significant impact on regional management include a level of economic and social development in the region, infrastructure and housing development, corruption, crime rates, historical-cultural factors, the structure of regional government, the remoteness of the region from the federal center. Despite the interest of researchers in systematization factors influencing the construction of the federal system in Russia, this problem is not well understood (Abidova, 2015). Issues of federal centralization and decentralization, asymmetry, ethnic-territorial subdivision, competition between federal and regional governments, and public sector efficiency remain among the top agenda items for Russian federal and regional governments. In the next chapter, I will interpret the results and provided conclusions for this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The research problem for this study is a unique system of Russian federalism and contradicting and opposing data that exist in the comparative scholarly public policy and administration literature on the phenomena. The purpose of the study is to determine the nature of Russian federalism and whether the current Russian system is federalism in its classical sense. The study analyzes the features of the system in the distribution of power between the Russian federal center and regions and highlights problems and specifics of the existing power in the federal center and in the regions. The study confirms the process of transformation in Russian relations between the federal center and the regions in the direction of strengthening the central federal government. This poses short-term benefits for Russia and at the same indicates a problem for Russia in a long term.

Interpretation of the Findings

Interpretation of this study's findings extends and updates knowledge in the discipline found in the peer-reviewed literature that was described in Chapter 2. Analysis and interpretation of the findings in the context of the theoretical framework selected for this research confirm that despite its uniqueness, the Russian Federation's public administration system should be viewed through a scientific lens rather than political or ideological. The global processes taking place in the economy, politics, culture, science, technology, ecology, etc., manifest two main trends towards centripetal centralization and centrifugal decentralization. These processes impact federal, confederate, and unitary countries. The federal form of government embodies such

principles of organization and functioning of the state system as a combination of centralization and decentralization, the division of power between the federal center and the regions, democracy, and self-government. The geopolitical location of the Russian Federation between Europe and Asia assumes its ties simultaneously to the European Union and the countries of the Asian region. The European Union is a vivid example of global interstate integration with the formation and functioning of supranational bodies. Development and implementation of international legal acts have become the basis for the legislation of the EU member states. The EU exhibits a tendency toward the gradual federalization of Western and partially Eastern Europe and the transformation of the European Union from an interstate association to a European federation. In Europe, the phenomena of federalism, autonomies in the form of federal state structures, and variations of unitarist systems are widespread. For example, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are federal states. Unitary European states are Finland, Denmark, Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Serbia. The same phenomena are common in Eurasia. Russian Federation, India, and Pakistan are federations. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan are unitary states. This requires systematization, generalization, clarification, and classification of various federal and other forms in the state structures. Identifying common generic and specific features in various federations, clarifying meanings in the concepts of state governance, their typology, modeling, and distinguishing between various federal system concepts are important scholarly and practical tasks. The spatial aspect in the functioning of a federal country, the features of

the government design in the official structure of a certain society, and the system of central, regional, and local government relations are all critical to any country's existence. The country's territorial division with political and administrative entities, their political and legal status, and relationship with the center are important factors for federal countries. The mechanism of public law and regulations in federations are organized in a way allowing the federal center and regions to find a proper ratio in coordinating the interests of the federal center and the regions.

The common features of federal countries are the establishment of a federal form of government structure and the distribution of power between the federal center and the regions. The distribution of power is prescribed in the Constitution and other constitutional and legal acts. The application of the principle of bicameralism in the formation of the federal parliament is another common feature. Chambers of deputies representing voters, houses of representatives, and senates have a vertical structure in which the lower chamber adopts legislative acts, and the upper chamber approves them. In scientific literature, the upper house is often generically referred to as the Senate and the lower as the Congress or House of Representatives, taking as a model the U.S. Congress with its House of Representatives and Senate. The principle of combining centralized and decentralized state power assumes the preservation of the federal center as the highest federal body. This automatically leads to the predominance of centripetal tendencies of functioning over centrifugal ones. The regions in the federation have their own regional constitutional legislation adopted by their parliaments and regional referenda. This is consistent with the principles and norms of the federal Constitution and

laws since federal constitutional legislation has the highest legal authority. The constitutional legislation of most federations, unlike confederate countries, does not provide for the right of their regions for secession. The regions sometimes have their own armed and police forces which are part of federal forces. The sovereignty of federal regions sometimes implies their joint representation simultaneously with the federation in international organizations. Also, the ability of individual regions to influence the foreign policy of the federation and conduct their own foreign economic, cultural, and other activities within the framework of federal foreign policy are present. In ethnic and mixed ethnic-territorial federations, the regions that are formed according to the ethnic principle, the federal official language is formally recognized in parallel with the official regional ethnic language. The institution of citizenship in federal countries is characterized by a double-level verticality, in which a citizen of a region in a federation is also a citizen of the federal country. According to these features, the Russian Federation can be formally recognized as a country with a federal structure.

The extent of regionalism and corresponding limits of regionalization determine the level of territorial centrifugalism and the status of their regional autonomies. Sometimes, federal countries consist entirely of autonomous political regions differing from administrative-territorial regions by the following features. They are formed by the country granting an autonomous political and legal status to the region based on a formally recognized referendum and the will of the population. Political autonomy in such cases is enshrined in the relevant section of the constitution or constitutional law. Devolution of legislative competence in certain categories of regional issues, the solution

of which is conducted by the regions independently. Features of the federal countries are following. General direct election of the legislative body of the region by its population. The existence of a regional executive body that is politically responsible to the regional legislative body. Own fiscal competence of regional authorities in the allocation of resources. The authority of the central federal center is formed on a residual basis. No representation of political autonomies in the second chamber of parliament. Adoption and approval of regional constitutions by the national parliament with the provision of independence to the regional parliament on making further amendments. Possession of certain rights with the possibility of adopting regional charters. Constitutional guarantees against interference by the federal center and other regions in the status and power of the region and changes in its borders without providing an appropriate consent by the region. The right of delegating legislative power to a representative regional body on national issues. The presence of regional administrators, commissioners, and governors who coordinate and monitor the rule of law, including the right of veto and the power to dissolve regional parliament. These administrators are appointed by the federal center if elected by the population. The absence of its own monitoring body over the implementation of the norms adopted by the representative branch can be compensated by judicial control by the state. The absence of their own regional judicial bodies, the functioning of a unified system of federal courts, and the resolution of disputes between the region and the federal center by the body of constitutional justice. Regulation of the election of representatives by national, not regional, law. Regional laws do not form a

separate subsystem in the dual structure of the legislative system in a federal country but are included in a single system of legislation.

These features indicate a significantly limited power by political-territorial autonomies, absence of contractual and constitutional relations, and determination belonging of such system to a unitary territorial structure. Among the unitary-decentralized varieties in their content and form, these government systems occupy space between unitary and federal systems. This creates a problem of delimitation between unitary-regional and federal countries. The problem is in the vagueness and ambiguity of the concept of a federal state and the diversity of ideas about federalism. Subjective preferences of researchers using abstract criteria, the impossibility of using unambiguous requirements for identification of federal system, variability of countries' historical context, and many other factors make it difficult to delineate differences between unitary-regional and federal countries. That is the reason I used the classic theoretical framework on federalism by Anthesis (1603), Wheare (1946), Livingston (1956), and Tarlton (1965). Their theories are based on a concept of a federation existing as a union formed by the will of regions and based on their common interest. Their theories also account for specifics of a country's historical development, specific political situation, and other internal and external factors. These features are essential and characterize the basic theoretical model created by generalization and systematization. The versatility and diversity of specific manifestations of common features in federal countries are due to geopolitical, socio-economic, historical-traditional, and ethnocultural factors. In modern scientific classifications, there is a certain discrepancy regarding the criteria. Therefore, it

is necessary to clearly define the concepts, classification, typology, and modeling. Classification is a most universal method, which commences at the highest level and groups concepts, classes, categories, and models. Classification creates a system of subordinate concepts in a certain field of knowledge and is used to establish relationships between the concepts. A federal state is an embodiment of complex forms in government structure. It is structured by regional state entities, based on integration with each other and with the federal center. Federal states are formed by an association of sovereign states through signing a union treaty and the adoption of a federal constitution. The treaty establishes the supreme power of the federal center and the preservation of the legal status of regions. This legal status possesses signs of statehood and defines the distribution of power between the region and federal center based on balanced symmetry or imbalanced asymmetry. Socio-economic, demographic, and other disproportions, national-civilizational contradictions, geopolitical factors, mixed ethnic territorial structure, asymmetry in political and legal power, problems and contradictions of state-building and functioning, form complex and unique characteristics of Russian federalism.

Russia's regional policy has undergone several transformations since the formation of a new state structure in the country in 1991. By the mid-1990s, the main efforts were aimed at countering the processes of disintegration and separatism. At the same time, reforms focused on a centralized management system were attempted. The restructuring economy from a centralized plan to a free market was a priority. Conversion of the defense industry to the production of consumer goods was initiated. As a result, new forms of federal-regional relations had emerged. They were characterized by an

informal nature and led to an increased role for regional authorities. Several regions, including the Republic of Tatarstan and the Republic of Bashkortostan, received significant economic benefits and privileges. This led to an imbalance in the federal policies toward regions. This trend of decentralization was based on a federal center's weakness and need to preserve the territorial integrity of Russia in exchange for significant concessions to the regions. The failure of economic reforms in the early 1990s produced negative economic and social consequences. These failures led to the disintegration of economic ties between the regions and caused a widespread economic decline. The most affected regions were the industrial regions with a high concentration of high-tech companies and the defense industry. The deterioration of the regions was affected by the privatization campaign, which destabilized industrial development and monetary policy. This led to an increase in industrial costs and a decrease in the availability of bank credits for industrial companies. It became one of the most important factors in explaining why Russian industry was falling behind other industrialized nations. The inefficient system of federal-regional relations created a need to balance the interests of many regions and decrease the sharp increase in their spatial differentiation. The pace of socio-economic development in the regions and the development of conceptually new approaches to solving federal-regional problems needed to be increased and improved. One of the main goals in the development of a new Russian federal-regional policy was to achieve a relative equalization among Russian regions. This goal was aligned with the principles of federalism. There was an expansion of independence

among regional authorities, although understanding of the role of the federal center as a guarantor of the country's independence and sovereignty had remained.

During the 1990s, the Russian federal-regional policy was not formed yet, and at the same time, the country lost almost 50% of its GDP. The eventual economic growth was provided mainly by the wholesale and retail trade, communications, financial and other services. Production in industry, agriculture, and other real sectors of the economy was declining. Russia's integration into the international system of globalization only strengthened socio-economic contrasts within Russia. Raw material-producing regions with high export volumes gained a privileged position. The situation in regions with industries that could not fully compete with international competition became worse. In the early 2000s, proposals were made about the need for structural transformation of the Russian economy. In the late 2000s, the demand for its modernization began to be actively discussed. All proposals were aimed at changing the economic structure of the economy. Many industries were lost and could not be restored. The formation of federal districts and the introduction of the institution of special presidential representatives in the districts were aimed, among other tasks, at the improvement of the economic situation in the regions. The results were mixed with further growth of interregional imbalances and unclear impact of economic reforms on the regions. The newly established principles of federal support for the regions and the widespread practice of protectionism through large-scale financial assistance to underdeveloped regions created a situation in which the dependency of the regions on the federal center was encouraged. A dependent subsidized economy was formed. It was represented mainly by the budget service sector and

corruption in the redistribution of federal budget funds. After 2005, the concept in Russian regional policy envisioned its main goal as a transition from a raw material model of economic development to an innovation-oriented one (Russian Presidential Decree 13, 2017).

The nature of relations between the federal center and the regions in Russia has undergone a significant transformation from the chaotic decentralization of the 1990s to the over-centralization in the 2000s. This over-centralization includes political, economic, informational, budgetary, tax revenues, federal redistribution, and many other aspects. The financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009 contributed to this transformation, and the economy recovered from 2010 to 2012 due to the rise in oil prices. However, since 2013 economic growth began to decline with GDP growth falling by 4% compared to 2012. Reduction in regional investments, decreased funding for new industrial facilities, and capital flight overseas impacted ongoing reforms in the regional public administration system. The evolution of regional development was accompanied by the development of financial mechanisms for managing the regions. Improving regional financial policies, stimulating the regional economy, ensuring balanced investments, innovating approaches to foreign economic activities and export, and improving fiscal and customs tariff mechanisms were used to strengthen regional development. Most regions in Russia, especially those which are not in subsidized dependence on the federal center, tried to shift their financial relations with the federal center from receiving federal subsidies to ensuring participation in the federal programs funded by the federal center. The stimulating effect of inter-budgetary relations is increasingly associated not with the

conditions for obtaining subsidies, but with the active participation of the region in these federal programs. Normally these programs are aimed at the development of regional infrastructure, industrial clusters, high-tech and scientific centers, small and medium start-ups and businesses, facilities for providing social services, and support for special economic zones. Distribution of these federal funds on a competitive basis should stimulate competition among regions, improve efficiency in managing their budget process, enhance their investment climate, and promote regional development overall.

The current economic situation in Russia is significantly impacted by international economic sanctions. Fluctuations in world-market prices for the main types of Russian exports, restrictions on external foreign borrowing and long-term loans, outflow and flight of capital, consequences of the worldwide economic crisis, and other factors also impact funding for Russian federal-regional reforms. All this is reflected in the rates of economic growth, inflation, level of investment, foreign exchange market, and level of unemployment in the regions. Currently, the Russian federal and regional governments are implementing anti-crisis measures and anti-crisis plans. These measures and plans are aimed at ensuring social stability, and support for industrial and agricultural sectors, the banking sector, information technology companies, and the labor market. The geopolitical difficulties faced by Russia are prompting federal and regional governments to transition to a new model of economic growth and development and implementation of an innovative strategy. New investment policies for regional socio-economic development and implementation of strategic goals focused on diversification and affect the relations between the federal center and the regions. The federal center maintains

strict financial control and regional oversight but allows some new flexibilities for regions over their budget revenues. Despite these new flexibilities, there has been a consistent strengthening of the financial centralization policy, which is reflected in the Russian fiscal legislation. Regional budgets have lost a significant part of tax revenues. The fiscal relation between federal and local authorities has been reduced to the fiscal transfer mechanism. Sustainable regional development necessitates endowing regional governments with effective levers of management and expansion of their tax authority. Enhancing the interest of regional governments in increasing tax collection and developing regional economies can contribute to the formation of an effective mechanism for regional taxation. All these problems become especially apparent and relevant under the new economic and political conditions in which Russia finds itself today.

The principles of federalism in the Russian Federation include the following. Firstly, it is a country's territorial integrity. This principle addresses the unity of territory, state sovereignty, and economic and legal sovereignty. The unity of the country's territory is secured by a single federal state border with the legal status of the border regulated by federal legislation. The territory of the Russian Federation located within the border provides federal integrity. This implies single state sovereignty of the Federation, a single economic space, a single monetary system, and a ban on any customs barriers between regions, or obstacles to the movement of goods, services, and finances. The legal unity is based on the Constitution and federal laws which are applicable throughout the Russian Federation and the principle of the federal law's supremacy over the regional law.

Secondly, the unity of a federal-regional government system is provided by the same type of public administration system. The public administration system is based on the principles embodied in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the republican form of government, and the separation of branches of power. Thirdly, the equality of ethnic groups and regions in the Federation. The equality of ethnic groups is ensured by the Constitution adopted by the ethnic groups themselves, federal laws, charters in accordance with the Constitution, bodies of state power, public administration, and executive and legislative branches of government. Fourthly, the right of ethnic groups in the Russian Federation to self-determination and independent decision on organizing economic, social, political, and spiritual aspects of their lives. At the same time, ethnic groups and regions in the Russian Federation do not have the right to secede from the Federation. Fifthly, the delimitation of power between federal and regional governments. The Constitution of the Russian Federation provides three forms of federal-regional jurisdiction and authority. Federal exclusive jurisdiction and authority, joint or competing for jurisdiction and authority, and regional residual jurisdiction and authority. The latter presumes everything that is not within the competence of the first two forms. This indicates a cooperative form of federalism in Russia. Sixthly, a uniform standard for all constituent entities in the Russian Federation regarding the basic rights of Russian citizens. Every citizen of the Federation has equal rights provided by the Constitution. Lastly, the Constitution of the Russian Federation mandates provides regions to comply with article 88 which refers to the declaration of a state of emergency. According to that

article, the President of the Federation appoints his/her representatives to the regions during a state of emergency.

For example, a brief comparison among principles of the federal structure between the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany demonstrates that they have common features and certain differences. The common principles include territorial integrity, citizenship unity, complexities of the federal origin, the influence of ideological factors, federal sovereignty, and the cooperative nature of federalism. Differences include the asymmetry of the Russian Federation, its complicated multi-stage system of its regions, ethnic territorial structure, and systematic violations of federal laws by its regions.

The ethnic composition of Russia was manifested in the results of the country-wide population census in 2010. 193 ethnicities with a total population of 142.9 million people lived in Russia at that time. Russian Federation's population consisted of Russians, 111.02 million or 81% of the population, Tatars, 5.31 million people or 4%, Ukrainians 1.93 million people or 1.4%, and other ethnicities such as Bashkirs, Chuvash, Chechens, Armenians, Mordvins, Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis, Udmurts, Mari, Belarusians, Kumyks, Lezgins, Kabardians, Buryats, Ingush, Yakuts, etc. The ethnicity was indicated based on ethnic self-identification by the citizens themselves (Russian Census Bureau, 2010)

An important factor is the use of native ethnic language. 193 ethnic groups living in Russia use 277 languages and dialects. This requires a special approach to the implementation of the internal Russian ethnic policy of Russia. The approach primarily is

aimed at harmonizing relationships among various ethnic groups, minorities, and the indigenous populations living in the Russian Federation. Peace and harmony among ethnicities are the prerequisites for the socio-economic development of the country as a whole and individual region of the federation, ethnic republics, and autonomous districts.

The uniqueness of the ethnic composition of the Russian Federation with a predominance of three ethnic communities, Russians, Tatars, and Ukrainians, and dispersion of the remaining 13.6% among 190 other smaller ethnic groups creates a significant challenge in developing and implementing a country-wide federal ethnic policy. This policy requires extra sensitivity and attention to detail regarding relations among larger socio-demographic ethnic groups and ethnic minorities and the indigenous populations. The result of the census in 2010 indicated that all 192 ethnicities are ethnic minorities in relation to the Russians. Analysis of the regions by ethnic composition showed that the non-Russian population was dominant only in eight republics and regions. In the Republic of Tatarstan, the percentage of Tatars was 53.15%. In Ingushetia, there were 94.1% Ingush. In Kabardino-Balkaria 57.2%, Kalmykia 57.4%, North Ossetia 65.1%, Tuva 82.0%, Chechnya 95.3%, and Chuvashia 67.7% people belonged to the local ethnic population. In all other 77 regions and republics of the federation, the dominant ethnic group was Russian. This factor prompted the use of the definition of *indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation* without using the term *ethnic minority* in the "Strategy of the federal ethnic policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025" (Russian Presidential Decree 13, 2017).

Opportunities for ethnic minorities in the ethnic-regional policy of the Russian Federation are provided by their guaranteed election and participation in regional and municipal houses of representatives. Minorities' participation in public administration and socio-economic development of their regions and municipalities is also encouraged and supported. The ethnocultural autonomy can protect its interests and rights through a guaranteed opportunity to delegate its representatives and empower and elect them to the legislative branch of power at the municipal, regional, and federal levels. Participation of indigenous minorities in the development of the federal policy in Russia is conducted through self-government at the ethnic territorial level. This occurs in the autonomous ethnic republics and districts. Most indigenous minorities' difficulties do not resettle, and their ethnic-geographic locations remain the same. Currently, there are 22 federal ethnic and cultural autonomies in Russia (Strategy of the Russian Federation on ethnic policy, 2012).

Analysis of Russian legislation regarding the participation of indigenous minorities' representatives in the work of the executive branch showed that there is no mechanism for such participation. The federal law "On National and Cultural Autonomy" prescribes in article 4 the right of autonomy to receive the support from state authorities and local self-government bodies necessary for the preservation of ethnic identity and culture, as well as the development of the ethnic native language (Russian Federal Law 184, 1999). Autonomy also has the right to appeal to the legislative and executive branches at the regional and municipal level protecting ethnic and cultural interests and rights. The mechanism of the mandatory response by the regional and local authorities to

such requests and appeals by the ethnic and cultural autonomies is not established by law. This enables regional and local governments to respond according to their own understanding and will.

Analysis of federal laws regulating ethnic policy indicates that they often play only a symbolic role. The creation of ethnic minorities' public organizations and their activities do not guarantee their participation in decision-making processes. For example, federal law "On the general principles of the organization of legislative and executive bodies of state power of the subjects of the Russian Federation" (Russian Federal Law 184, 1999). It does not provide a guaranteed opportunity for representatives of indigenous minorities to be elected. Yet, articles 21 and 26 of that federal law obligate representatives, within the limits of their powers, to implement measures ensuring the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of indigenous minorities (Russian Federal Law 184). These rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests are guaranteed by the government and include the preservation and development of their ethnocultural diversity and their native languages, as well as ensuring interethnic and interfaith peace and harmony. The executive branch is obliged to prevent any form of restrictions and discrimination on ethnic or linguistic grounds. The legislation provides for the establishment of representation at all three levels, local, regional, and federal in articles 5 and 6 (Russian Federal Law 184). The local representation can be created by a certain ethnic group permanently residing in the same area. Local autonomies may establish their regional representation within the region. Representatives of regional autonomies may establish a federal representation. Interaction among federal, regional, and local representation is

aimed at the preservation and development of native languages and cultures. It is implemented on a contractual basis between ethnic autonomies and regional and local authorities.

Further analysis of regional ethnic policy proved that at its core it is rather declarative in nature. Most federal laws do not prescribe the mechanism for the participation of indigenous minorities directly in the work of regional and local authorities. To eliminate this uncertainty in the relations between the authorities and autonomies, it would be prudent to introduce into the legislation a clear and specific mechanism regulating this relationship. This would provide more substantive participation of ethnic minorities in the implementation of federal regional policy and more effectively protect the interests and rights of ethnic minorities. For example, under certain conditions, it could be achieved by introducing quotas in the local, regional, and federal legislative bodies. Alternatively, participation by ethnic and cultural autonomies in developing federal-regional policymaking could be realized through the institutionalization and formalization of direct working relations between them and the federal government. Various solutions to the problem of participation by ethnic minorities in creating federal-regional policy could be also achieved through further development of their ethnocultural and ethnoterritorial autonomy, socio-political organizations in autonomies, permanent representation in the regional and local authorities, and protection of their interests and rights in court. At the federal level, it is feasible to adopt and implement a federal law on ethnic policy in the Russian Federation,

creating the office of the ombudsman for ethnic minorities, and establishing an advisory council to the State Duma on ethnic and cultural autonomies.

The main purpose of improving regional ethnic policy in Russia and the need to change the paradigm of state-building is aimed at mitigating risks and failures inherited from the collapsed Soviet Union. The failed experience of creating the same entity for the *Soviet people* adds urgency to this challenging endeavor. Ideas expressed by political scientists and politicians regarding Russians forming the foundation of the country's population, preserving the purity of the Russian language, and building a hierarchy of ethnic groups negatively affect interethnic relations in Russia. Such ideas increase interethnic social tensions among non-Russian citizens and have a negative impact on the development of the Russian state. Soviet Union's disintegration into 15 newly independent republics formed on the ethnic basis of the titular ethnicity weighs heavily over today's Russia. The role of ethnic minorities and appropriate federal-regional policies could not be underestimated in maintaining interethnic balance, tolerance, peace, and harmony. Political, legislative, and practical support for ethnocultural autonomies in the Russian regions, and preservation of their native languages and ways of life appear to occupy a prominent effort on the part of the Russian federal and regional governments. The necessity to introduce federal and regional legislative requirements for granting rights and opportunities to ethnic minorities by sending their representatives directly to the legislative bodies of the Federation is being currently discussed.

Occasional ideas arguing whether Russia is not a federal but rather a unitary-centralized or unitary-decentralized country are rare and superficial in their nature.

Several countries in the world include both administrative and political autonomies, yet they are unitary government systems with elements of unitary-centralized or unitary-decentralized systems. A degree of their centrifugalism indicates whether they are unitary-centralized or unitary-decentralized. Differences between unitary-centralized and unitary-decentralized countries and federal countries include the formation of regional autonomies by constitutional provision of the federal center, the absence of unionist constitutional and contractual relations, and the federal center. A federal government structure is a generic concept that reflects a complex political and administrative structural and spatial organization in a country. The main reason for the diversity of classifications among types of federations is the complexity and versatility of these phenomena. Their historical formation, status, and role of regions, institutional, organizational, and structural-functional aspects of the federal system, socio-economic, political-legal, ethnocultural and confessional interrelations, relations, and political and legal culture are all different for each country. This creates issues and disagreements when political scientists attempt to classify federations into types and varieties. Formation and development of federalism in federations take place in the process of factual real-life federalization processes. These dynamics are different in each country while every country develops its own systemic-structural government institutions. Some view evolution of federal forms of government, through four main scientific approaches. They are classic, separatist, unitary-centric, and dualistic-synthetic approaches. Others propose to view federations from the standpoint of an integration approach. This assumes

that regions form a union that exercises integral indivisible state sovereignty over the federation.

The findings of this research demonstrated that specifics of the Russian federalism include territorial and political asymmetry, inequality in status among federal regions, economic dependence by most regions on the federal center, a mixed ethnic-territorial system, and authoritarianism among regional elites. Imbalances among regions include historically unequal economic development, ethnocultural factors, climate differences, diverse geographical locations, and access to natural resources. Addressing these specifics and balancing these differences is a key to the further development of Russian federalism. If reforms in the system lead to positive economic and social changes and contribute to the improvement of the well-being of the country's population then such reforms are deemed as effective. If changes lead to a deterioration in socio-economic indicators, an increase in contradictions, disproportions, and disbalances among regions, and overall faltering of the country then such reforms are ineffective. Analyzing the Russian model of federalism in isolation from its foreign policy objectives is not correct. Currently, an increase in external economic and political sanctions leads to a weakening of the economy. This might increase social tension and prompt the need to consolidate the nation in the face of external pressure. It also might trigger further concentration of power in the federal center and redistribution of financial flows considering the current economic situation.

An uncharacteristic and unexpected example of decentralization activity by the Russian federal government occurred in 2020-2021. The rapid spread of the COVID19

pandemic resulted in economic problems and increasing deaths among the population and required immediate measures to prevent and minimize human and economic losses. The situation could be improved by mobilizing financial, economic, scientific, and other resources. Such resources, along with the international-level solutions, normally are the prerogative of the Russian federal central government. The unusual decision by the federal government was made in March 2020. It delegated authorities, normally held by the federal executive branch's agencies, to the regional governments. The logic behind this was explained to the nation on numerous occasions in 2020 and 2021. The logic was based on a belief that regional authorities knew better the situation on the ground and knew better how to resolve it. The idea of the Russian regions having very different from each other conditions and situations related to COIV19 was also explained in detail in the mass media. This step stood out from all other actions implemented by the Russian federal government in recent years. This authorized decentralized action successfully resolved various multiple problems associated with the pandemic. At the same time, this demonstrated that decentralization, under attentive monitoring by the central federal government, can be very effective in Russia. The keen observers might wonder what lessons from this brief and limited, yet very successful and effective, decentralization campaign the federal and regional governments in Russia might learn.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations to trustworthiness that arose from conducting this study are related to the problems described in Chapter 1. These problems include identifying and classifying the Russian version of federalism based on the vagueness and ambiguity of

the concept of a federal state, inconsistency of ideas about federalism, subjective preferences and biases among researchers, unclear and abstract criteria, and constant changes in Russian federal system which are explained in previous chapters.

Impossibility of using unambiguous lists of features characterizing a federal state, variability of phenomena depending on historical, cultural, and local context, mixing qualifying specific characteristics with general ones, and comparing conceptual theories to practical mechanisms of public administration only adds to the list of limitations. In the Russian Federation case, distinguishing between unitary and federal systems is a key. The concept of a federation as a union state formed by the will of sovereign and procedurally equal regions-states, equal among themselves and in relation to the federal center was used in this study. This is a classic concept used in theoretical works on federalism. Another limitation of the study was based on a fact that the object of study, the Russian Federation, is not a static system. It is a dynamic system in constant motion. Factors of external political, military, and economic pressures, factors of internal political, demographic, and socio-economic processes, nature of the relationships among Russian regions and the Russian federal center are undergoing present-day transformation. The Russian model during recent years demonstrating a direct relationship between foreign external pressures and power consolidated in the federal center, both political and economic, is also a limitation of this study. It is clear that if this limitation was not in place, then the Russian federal system would have developed differently.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research are based on the strengths, limitations, and boundaries of this study, and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Current world trends and developments in public administration systems are indicating a focus on the decentralization of government power. This decentralization is translated into a strengthening of local self-government. Local self-government includes the system of representative bodies, processes of social democratization, and the formation and strengthening of rule of law. Globalization also has a significant impact on these trends and processes. On one hand, globalization causes attempts by some communities to protect themselves from economic, political, spiritual, psychological, and social interference. On the other hand, integration at regional, interregional, international, and global levels contribute to the development of socio-economic, technological, political, cultural, and spiritual foundations of the world's integration in various countries. The inclination toward excessive centralization causes disproportions and imbalances in the development of a country. Therefore, to fully ensure people's rights and legitimate interests and create appropriate conditions for the development of a country, it is necessary to balance political and legal authorities between a federal center and federal regions. This applies to executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government. Further research regarding the constant process of the redistribution of power and authority, and the balance between centralization and decentralization policies in the Russian public administration system, including the policy of regionalization with the implementation of autonomy, is recommended. One of the strengths of this study is the

research of Russian language literature and Russian authors on Russian federalism. A surprising diversity of views was discovered. Therefore, researching non-Russian and Russian scientific works in various languages, including Russian, is also recommended.

Implications

Potential impacts for positive social change include my improved understanding of how the Russian government federal system functions, its shortcomings and strengths, and potential paths for its further development, reforms, and changes. My newly acquired knowledge will allow me to improve my organization's approaches to Russia and its neighboring countries. My organization works on resolving problems with international security, thus improving the effectiveness and efficiency of this work would potentially result in positive social changes related to the U.S. and international security.

Potential methodological, theoretical, and empirical implications could include recommendations for further studies which would analyze the Russian government system with the application of scientific approaches rather than viewing the phenomena through political or ideological lenses. Scientific approaches provide theoretical foundations, methodology, and tools which are needed for analyzing Russian federalism on a systematic comprehensive basis. This allows to study, analyze, and provide results and conclusions from a scholarly non-biased perspective.

Conclusion

The key essence of this study was the task of determining whether the Russian Federation is a federation in the first place or not and if it is, how it should be classified, and in what direction it might develop and reform itself. The balance of power between

the Russian federal government and regional governments is constantly changing. After 10 years of democratic reforms and decentralization processes of the 1990s and due to a multitude of internal and external factors, a clear trend of centralization and regaining of power by the federal center from 2000 to 2022 was identified in the research. Theoretical and practical questions on federalism and its various types and models, centralization and decentralization, and the dynamic system of the Russian public administration system were analyzed and answered. Various aspects of the formation of the state power, public authority, and relationships between Russian federal and regional institutions were reviewed. Contradictions between the maximized centralization of the federal apparatus and the decentralized interests of the regions in the federation were revealed. The concept of territorial self-government and its levels are considered. General federal features and specific Russian federal characteristics were investigated and classified. Concepts of federalism, types, models, and criteria for the typology of federalism were determined, refined, and delineated. The analysis of scientific approaches to the studies of federal states and federal systems was conducted. A new view on the problem of phenomena and updated knowledge on the status of Russian federalism was generated. Answering the research questions for this study, I concluded that the Russian Federation has a unique federal public administration system with constitutional, cooperative, ethnoterritorial, asymmetric, centralized federal-regional characteristics and features.

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