Federalism and Democracy: A Bibliometric Review and Future Research Agenda

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the complex relationship between federalism and democracy through bibliometric review through Scopus database from 1962 to 2024. Based on 522 articles extracted on "Federalism and Democracy" from Scopus database, highlights how these two political concepts interact across countries including United States, Ethiopia, and Nigeria and historical contexts, emphasizing the complementary yet potentially conflicting nature of their relationship. The paper points out the critical role of federalism in enhancing democratic principles such as accountable governments, increased political participation, and protection against majority tyranny. It also acknowledges the challenges and tensions arising from intergovernmental coordination and democratic governance within federal systems. Authors have done a comprehensive analysis, exploring the dynamics of fiscal policy, legal and constitutional frameworks, and the influence of federalism within the European Union. It further examines the application of federalism and democracy in specific national contexts, including the United States, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, to illustrate the diverse ways these concepts evolve and impact societies. Through this exploration, the paper provides insights into how federalism can either strengthen or weaken democracy based on factors such as party politics, fiscal decentralization, and the legal-institutional setup. This study sets a future research agenda by exploring 20 research questions spread across ten thematic clusters. These clusters cover a wide range of topics, from fiscal policy and party politics in federal systems to the role of political parties, elections, legal aspects of federalism, and new developments in European federalism. By outlining these future research directions, the paper aims to guide further scholarly exploration and understanding of the complex relationship between federalism and democracy.

Keywords: federalism, democracy, bibliometric

Introduction

The complex relationship between federalism and democracy has long been a subject of scholarly interest, as it summarizes the dynamics of political power distribution and citizen participation in a diverse and evolving socio-political landscape. This paper explores the multifold interaction between federalism and democracy, drawing insights from various research studies to understand their past, present, and future implications. Federalism and democracy are often viewed as complementary, yet they can also present multiple tensions due to conflicts between intergovernmental coordination and democratic governance. These tensions can lead to conflicts and impasses, but can also be productive in balancing power within two institutional dimensions (Benz & Sonnicksen, 2015). The Nigerian experience with federalism, democracy, and constitutionalism highlights federalism as a form of government organization capable of accommodating diverse interests, yet challenges in practice suggest the need for reforms to align with modern federations (Ibiam, 2016).

Longstanding democracies in multilingual and multinational polities are typically federal states. Federalism requires democratic institutions, a judicial system, integrated national political parties, and appropriate electoral incentives for its success. Outside a democratic context, federalism can lead to instability or become merely a constitutional formality (Filippov & Shvetsova, 2013).

Federal democracies, characterized by election-driven leadership and divided power among government levels, present a hybrid form of governance. The success of federal democracy relies on its ability to assign issues to the appropriate forum - democracy or federalism - suited for resolution (Gardner, 2017).

Literature Review

Background on Federalism and Democracy

Federalism and democracy, as political concepts and practices, have evolved and interacted in various ways across different nations and historical contexts. This background overview draws on recent scholarly research to provide insights into their relationship, characteristics, and implications. Complementary yet Tension-Filled Relationship: Federalism and democracy are often viewed as complementary elements of a political system, but this relationship is not

without tensions. The need for intergovernmental coordination in federal systems can sometimes conflict with democratic processes, leading to tensions that can be both conflictual and productive (Benz & Sonnicksen, 2015).

Federalism in Multinational Polities

Longstanding democracies in multinational polities are usually federal states. The success of federalism in such contexts is contingent on well-functioning democratic institutions, an integrated judicial system, national political parties, and democratic political competition. Conversely, in the absence of a democratic context, federalism may lead to instability or become a mere constitutional formality (Filippov & Shvetsova, 2013).

Enhancement of Democratic Principles

Federalism enhances democratic principles by fostering accountable governments, increasing political participation, and protecting against majority tyranny. This relationship indicates that federalism and democracy can operate in a mutually reinforcing manner (Ye, 2020).

Variations in Federal Democracies

The success of federal democracies is attributed to their ability to assign issues for resolution to the most appropriate forum, whether it be democracy or federalism. However, evolving political and social circumstances can challenge this assignment process, leading to mismatches and tensions (Gardner, 2017).

Federalism in Different Political Contexts

The implementation and impact of federalism vary significantly in different political contexts. In democratic settings, federal structures promote pluralism and rule of law, while in authoritarian regimes, they can lead to different sets of tensions and challenges (Kropp, 2019).

Impact on Economic and Rights Performance

Decentralized policymaking in federal systems contributes uniquely to enforcing property rights, protecting political and civil rights, and enhancing economic performance. However, the success of federalism is closely tied to the presence of democracy, as adding federal structures to non-democratic regimes does not significantly improve their economic or rights performance (Inman, 2008).

Research Gap

Taken collectively, existing analyses of Federalism and Democracy are often narrowly focused, with different aspects presented separately rather than in a unified context. Notably, none of these past analyses offer a comprehensive classification of Federalism and Democracy with respect to their applications in various political systems. Therefore, in this overview, we adopt a holistic and inclusive approach, narrating a comprehensive perspective on the adoption and implementation of Federalism and Democracy across different nations and historical periods.

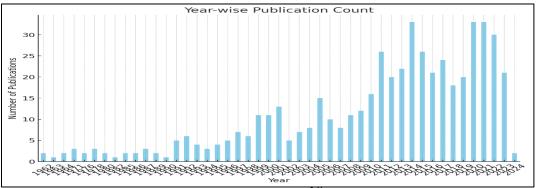
This paper is structured in four sections. The first section introduces and highlights the importance of complete relationship between federalism and democracy. The methodology is covered in second section of the paper entailing bibliometric review, a detailed analysis of the most influential journals, authors, documents along with thematic maps is covered in the third section. In the last and fourth section, paper is concluded following the future research agenda.

Research Methods

This study aims to assess the relationship between federalism and democracy for setting up the future research agenda. For this purpose, bibliometric review (a bibliometric data analysis technique) and content analysis (future research streams) methods are applied. Using Bibliophagy/Bibliometric in R-Studio, the most relevant sources, corresponding authors, affiliations/organization, countries and documents are extracted. Authors have extracted the bibliometric data from Scopus database and applied the filters as a selection criteria and found 522 documents published in Scopus database with the article title (Search within), article (Type of document), English (Language) and social sciences (Subject area) with publication range from 1962 to 2024. Furthermore, future research streams are derived through content analysis on the highly cited and the most relevant documents on federalism and democracy.

Publication Activity of Federalism and Democracy

Graph 1
Publication Trend on Federalism and Democracy from 1962 to 2024 (Scopus Database)



Graph 1 shows the trend of publication activity related to the topic of federalism and democracy over a period of time. The x-axis represents the years from 1962 to 2024, while the y-axis represents the number of publications. The graph provides insights into the changing interest and research focus on the relationship between federalism and democracy over the years. The graph can be used to analyze the growth or decline in research activity in this field, identify peaks or trends in publication, and understand the overall interest and importance of the topic. Relevant results from the graph includes identifying periods of increased research activity, identifying specific years or time periods with significant publication output, and comparing the publication trends with major political or social events. Important conclusions that can be drawn from the graph may include the increasing or decreasing importance of the topic over time, the impact of political or social changes on research activity, and the potential areas of future research based on the trends observed in the graph.

Data Analysis

Results

Table 2 provides information on the top authors, institutions, and countries that have contributed to research on federalism and democracy from 1962 to 2024. The table includes data on the total number of citations (TC) and the total number of publications (TP) for each author, institution, and country. The table also includes information on the institution and country associated with each author. Treiaman D. is the top author in terms of both total citations (2087) and total publications (2). The top institution in terms of total citations is the Department of Political Science at the University of Califormiz, Los A, Los Angeles, with 2046 citations. The top country in terms of total citations is the United States, with 6294 citations. It provides a ranking of the most influential authors, institutions, and countries in the field of federalism and democracy research. The data suggests that the United States has been a significant contributor to research in this field, with the highest number of citations. The table is used to identify key researchers and institutions for further study and collaboration in the field of federalism and democracy.

Table 2
Top Authors, Institutions and Countries

AUTHOR	TC	TP	INSTITUTION	TC	TP	COUNTRY	TC	TP
Treisman D.	2087	2	Department Of Political Science, Univ.	2046		United States	6294	164
			California, Los A., Los Angeles,					
					1			

Weingast B.R.	529	2	Stanford University, Department Of Political Science, Stanford, Ca, Encina Hall, United States	381	1	Germany	875	42
Sorens J.	142	3	Max-Planck-Institute For The Study Of Societies, Köln, 50677, Lothringer Str.	326	1	United Kingdom	755	56
			78, Germany		1	Kingdom		
Ross C.	133	3	Office Of The Chief Economist, Inter-	243	1	Canada	670	31
RUSS C.	133	3	American Development Bank,	243		Callada	070	31
			Washington Dc 20577, Stop W-0436,					
			1300 New York Avenue Nw, United					
			States		1			
Kymlicka W.	118	2		225	1	Switzerland	649	33
Kymnicka w.	116	2	•	223		Switzeriand	049	33
			University Of Washington, Seattle, Wa, United States		1			
Vatter A.	91	2	Department Of Health Behavior And	225	1	Netherlands	404	12
valler A.	91	2	Health Education, University Of	223		Netherlands	404	12
			Michigan School Of Public Health,					
					1			
Danis E	90	2	Ann Arbor, Mi, United States	225	1	Ci	207	2
Requejo F.	80	3	Department Of Health Policy And	225		Spain	287	2
			Management, University Of Michigan					
			School Of Public Health, Ann Arbor,		1			
	70		Mi, United States	225	1	T. 1	202	1
Myerson R.B.	73	2	Sao Paulo School Of Business	225		Italy	283	1
			Administration, Getulio Vargas					
			Foundation, Sao Paulo, Brazil		1			
Erk J.	55	3	University Of Michigan, Brookings	216		Denmark	276	6
			Institution, Ann Arbor, Mi, United					
			States		1			
Kincaid J.	53	2	Department Of Social And Political	210		Brazil	273	10
			Sciences, European University					
			Institute, Florence, Italy		1			
Weinstock D.	46	2	Institute For Political Science,	210		Australia	171	16
			University Of Copenhagen, Denmark		1			
Tillin L.	43	3	Department Of Political Science,	165		Belgium	134	1 1
			Mcgill University, Montreal, Canada		1			
Golosov G.V.	42	3	Temple University, United States	165	1	India	86	17
Schleicher D.	34	2	Stanford University, Ca, United States	148	1	Finland	84	2
Frey B.S.	26	2	California Institute Of Technology,	142		Austria	73	6
			Pasadena, 91125, Ca, United States		1			
Benz A.	23	2	London Business School., United	120		Ethiopia	71	6
			Kingdom		1			
Frey B.S.;	23	2	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1081	119		Norway	65	4
Bohnet I.			Hv Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1081,					
			Netherlands		1			
Reutter W.	19	5	New York University, School Of Law,	118		Turkey	54	3
			United States		1	•		
E 1 4	14	2	African Studies Centre, 2300, Rb	107		Argentina	53	8
Eschet-						2		
			Leiden, P.O. Box 9555, Netherlands		1			
Schwarz A. Breen M.G.	12	2	Leiden, P.O. Box 9555, Netherlands Harvard University, United States	103	1	Russian	52	9

Note: TC: Total Citations & TP: Total Publications

Table 3 provides information on the top journals for the study of federalism and democracy. It includes columns for the journal name, total citations (TC), total publications (TP), specific articles, and TC for those articles. The top journal for federalism and democracy is the "Journal of Public Economics" with 2364 total citations and 5 articles. Other notable journals include the "Columbia Law Review" with 740 total citations and 3 articles, and the "Journal of European Public Policy" with 638 total citations and 6 articles. The table highlights the most influential journals in the field of federalism and democracy, based on their total citations and number of articles. Researchers and scholars interested in this topic can refer to these journals for valuable insights and research findings.

Table 3
Top Journals for Federalism and Democracy

JOURNALS	TC	TP	ARTICLES	TC
JOURNAL OF PUBLIC	2364	5	Treisman D. (2000)	2046
ECONOMICS				
COLUMBIA LAW REVIEW	740	3	Dorf M.C.; Sabel C.F. (1998)	723
JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN	638	6	Weingast B.R. (2009)	381
PUBLIC POLICY				
HARVARD LAW REVIEW	386	3	Scharpf F.W. (1997)	326
JOURNAL OF URBAN	381	1	Gervasoni C. (2010)	249
ECONOMICS				
PUBLIUS: THE JOURNAL OF	344	15	Panizza U. (1999)	243
FEDERALISM				
PUBLIUS	337	15	Greer S.L.; King E.J.; Da Fonseca E.M.; Peralta-Santos A. (2020)	225
REGIONAL AND FEDERAL	332	26	Rabe B.G. (2008)	216
STUDIES				
COMPARATIVE POLITICAL	275	7	Marcussen M.; Risse T.; Engelmann-Martin D.; Knopf	210
STUDIES			H.J.; Roscher K. (1999)	
REVIEW OF POLICY	251	2	Bradley C.A.; Goldsmith J.L. (1997)	167
RESEARCH				
WEST EUROPEAN POLITICS	249	7	Wlezien C.; Soroka S.N. (2012)	165
WORLD POLITICS	249	1	Weingast B.R. (2014)	148
GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH	225	1	Ordeshook P.C. (1992)	142
JOURNAL OF EASTERN	220	4	Handy C. (1992)	120
AFRICAN STUDIES				
AMERICAN POLITICAL	214	6	Crum B. (2013)	119
SCIENCE REVIEW				
WORLD DEVELOPMENT	210	4	Levinson D.J. (2011)	118
CONSTITUTIONAL	170	4	Abbink J. (2011)	107
POLITICAL ECONOMY				
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL	134	5	Lauglo J. (1995)	104
OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW				
JOURNAL OF COMMON	134	4	Koh H.H. (1998)	101
MARKET STUDIES	120	1	G I (2005)	100
HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW	120	1	Sorens J. (2005)	100

Note: TC: Total Citations & TP: Total Publications

Table 4 provides a list of top references for the topic of federalism and democracy, along with their respective details such as document title, year of publication, LC (Local Citation), GC (Global Citation), and LC/GC Ratio. The table shows the top references in the field of federalism and democracy, based on their citation counts and impact. The references listed in the table are valuable sources for further research on the topic of federalism and democracy. The citation counts and impact of these references indicate their significance and influence in the field. Researchers can use these references to gain insights into the complex relationship between federalism and democracy, as well as to understand the past, present, and future implications of this relationship.

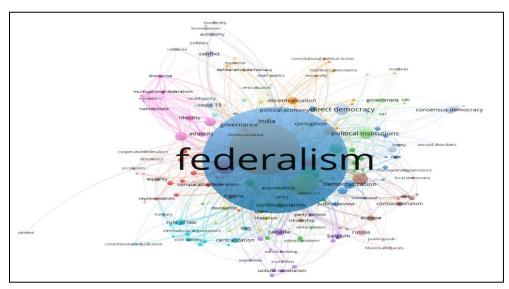
Table 4
Top References for Federalism and Democracy

DOCUMENT	YEAR	LC	GC	LC/GC RATIO (%)
GERVASONI C, 2010, WORLD POLITICS	2010	8	249	3.21
WEINSTOCK D, 2001, INT. SOC. SCI. J.	2001	6	23	26.09
OBYDENKOVA A, 2013, TERRIT. POLITICS GOV.	2013	5	30	16.67
WEINGAST BR, 2009, J. URBAN ECON.	2009	5	381	1.31
WEINSTOCK D, 2001, INT. SOC. SCI. JA	2001	5	23	21.74
MYERSON RB, 2006, Q. J. POLITICAL SCI.	2006	4	73	5.48
VAUGHAN S, 2011, J. EAST. AFR. STUD.	2011	4	76	5.26
TREISMAN D, 2000, J. PUBLIC ECON.	2000	4	2046	0.2
SWENDEN W, 2016, SWISS POLITICAL SCI. REV.	2016	3	16	18.75
MASSETTI E, 2013, EUR. J. POLITICAL RES.	2013	3	51	5.88
ABBINK J, 2011, J. EAST. AFR. STUD.	2011	3	107	2.8
SAMUELS D, 2000, PUBLIUS: J. FED.	2000	3	79	3.8
PANIZZA U, 1999, J. PUBLIC ECON.	1999	3	243	1.23
CALZADA I, 2017, PALGRAVE COMMUN.	2017	2	17	11.76
GOLOSOV GV, 2016, INT. POLITICAL SCI. REV.	2016	2	33	6.06
ANDERSON L, 2016, SWISS POLITICAL SCI. REV.	2016	2	10	20
ERK J, 2014, REG. FED. STUD.	2014	2	36	5.56
CRUM B, 2013, J. COMMON MARK. STUD.	2013	2	119	1.68
FISEHA A, 2012, REG. FED. STUD.	2012	2	30	6.67
WEINGAST BR, 2014, WORLD DEV.	2014	2	148	1.35

Note: LC: Local Citations & GC: Global Citations

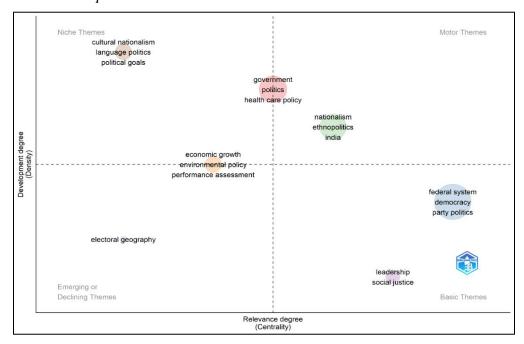
Conceptual Structure

Graph 2
Co-occurrence with Author Keywords

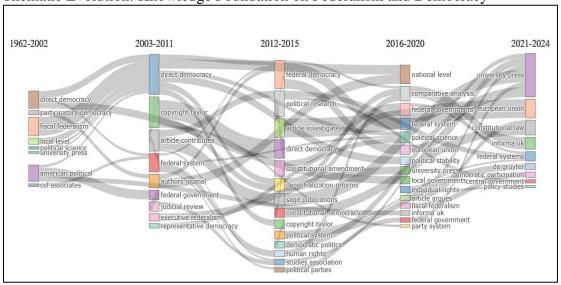


A visual representation in Graph 2 showing how frequently certain keywords related to federalism and democracy appear together in literature, indicating prevailing themes and interconnections within the research.

Graph 3
Thematic Map



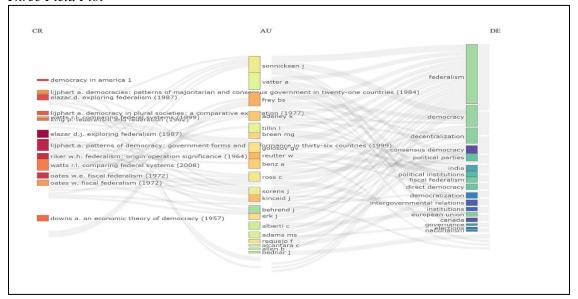
Graph 4. Thematic Evolution: Knowledge Foundation on Federalism and Democracy

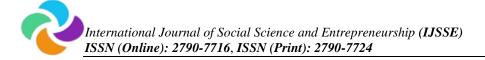


Thematic Map in Graph 3 above shows the visualization illustrating the landscape of research themes, showing areas of high density (well-studied themes) and emerging areas (topics gaining academic attention).

As far as thematic evolution is concerned, Graph 4 is showing how themes related to federalism and democracy have developed over time, highlighting shifts in focus or the emergence of new research areas.

Graph 5 Three Field Plot





Graph 5 is the representation likely combines various dimensions such as key authors, institutions, and thematic focuses, providing a holistic view of the field's intellectual structure.

However, detailed breakdown is given below, under thematic clusters/research stream offer insight into specific areas of focus within the study of federalism and democracy, such as fiscal policy, EU federalism, local governance, economic dimensions, and more. Each cluster summarizes key contributions, offering a snapshot of research trends and major findings in each area. There are ten thematic clusters/research stream given below extracted based on the scholarly contribution on Federalism and Democracy literature:

- 1. Focuses on fiscal policy, democracy, and party politics in federal systems.
- 2. European Union-focused topics, touching on EU federalism, democracy, and constitutional aspects.
- 3. General political discourse on federalism, public policy, and state governance.
- 4. Democratic principles, constitutional rights, and federalism in the context of the American and Ethiopian political systems.
- 5. Local governance, ethnic and indigenous issues, particularly in the context of Nigerian federalism
- 6. National and constitutional aspects of federalism and democracy.
- 7. Economic dimensions of federalism, including fiscal policy, decentralization, subnational governance.
- 8. Political parties, elections, and their role in federal systems.
- 9. Legal aspects of federalism, American politics, and foreign policy.
- 10. Law, state governance, and new developments in European federalism.

Conclusion and Future Research Agenda

This study shows how countries are run and how they make laws shows that the way they share power and involve people in decisions is complicated. In this study, a bibliometric review and future research agenda is set by exploring the 20 future research questions on federalism and democracy. The future agenda is set on the basis of research articles extracted from Scopus database from 1962 to 2024. This study has given extremely important research streams. Sharing power can cause problems, like when different parts of the government don't agree. But it also gives great chances to spread power more evenly, get more people involved in making decisions, and make sure the government does its job well. We looked at everything from how money is managed in these systems to the detailed rules that guide the European Union, and we learned a lot about how sharing power and making laws work together.

It's important to see that sharing power isn't just about how a country is run. It can actually make democracy stronger or weaker, depending on things like political parties, how money is shared out, and the rules and laws in place. Our study looked at different countries like the USA, Ethiopia, and Nigeria to see the many ways sharing power and democracy can change and affect people's lives.

As far as future research agenda is concerned, each research stream below contains at least two future research questions setting future research agenda.

Focuses on fiscal policy, democracy, and party politics in federal systems.

This research stream explores how fiscal policies are formulated and implemented within federal systems, the role of democracy in these processes, and how party politics influence fiscal decision-making. Studies might examine the distribution of financial resources, budgetary autonomy, and the interplay between different levels of government and political parties.

- How does the decentralization of fiscal policy affect economic inequality across regions in federal states, and what role does party politics play?
- In what ways can democratic mechanisms enhance fiscal accountability and transparency in federal systems?

European Union-focused topics, touching on EU federalism, democracy, and constitutional aspects.

This research stream explores the unique federal-like structure of the EU, exploring its democratic principles, governance mechanisms, and constitutional framework. It examines how these elements influence member states and EU policy-making.

- How do variations in democratic engagement across EU member states impact the legitimacy of EU-wide policy-making?
- What constitutional reforms could strengthen federalism within the EU, ensuring more cohesive but flexible governance?

General political discourse on federalism, public policy, and state governance.

This research stream investigates the broader political debates surrounding federalism, including how public policies are crafted and implemented across different governance levels and the impact on state functionality and sovereignty.

• How does federalism influence policy responsiveness to local vs. national concerns?

• What governance models within federal systems best facilitate effective public policy implementation?

Democratic principles, constitutional rights, and federalism in the context of the American and Ethiopian political systems.

This research stream compares and contrasts how democratic principles and constitutional rights manifest within the federal frameworks of the United States and Ethiopia, offering insights into the diversity of federalism's application.

- How have Ethiopia's recent political reforms affected the balance of power between the federal government and regional states in terms of constitutional rights?
- What lessons can be drawn from the American federal system regarding the protection of democratic principles and constitutional rights in ethnically diverse societies?

Local governance, ethnic and indigenous issues, particularly in the context of Nigerian federalism (A Case Example for Other Economies).

This area focuses on how Nigeria's federal system addresses local governance challenges, ethnic diversity, and indigenous rights, exploring the tensions and synergies between national unity and local autonomy.

- How can federalism in Nigeria or countries with same economic structure be restructured to better accommodate ethnic and indigenous demands for autonomy and recognition?
- What impact do local governance structures have on ethnic conflict and integration in federal systems, with a specific focus on Nigeria or countries with same economic structure?

National and constitutional aspects of federalism and democracy.

This research stream examines the foundational and constitutional underpinnings of federal systems, analyzing how they structure national identity, democracy, and governance.

- How do constitutional arrangements in federal countries accommodate or exacerbate national identity conflicts?
- What constitutional amendments could enhance democratic participation and representation in federal systems?

Economic dimensions of federalism, including fiscal policy, decentralization, and subnational governance.

This research stream looks at the economic implications of federalism, focusing on fiscal decentralization, economic disparities between regions, and the governance of economic policy at subnational levels.

- How does fiscal decentralization affect regional economic development and disparities in federal states?
- What models of subnational governance promote economic efficiency and equity in federal systems?

Political parties, elections, and their role in federal systems.

This research stream explores how political parties and electoral systems function within federal contexts, including their impact on federal structure, intergovernmental relations, and policy-making.

- How do federal structures influence the strategies and performance of political parties during national and subnational elections?
- What are the effects of electoral systems on federalism and intergovernmental relations?

Legal aspects of federalism, American politics, and foreign policy.

This research stream assesses the intersection of federalism with legal frameworks, the conduct of American politics, and the formulation of foreign policy, considering how federal structures influence legal and international affairs.

- How does federalism shape the legal frameworks governing foreign policy decisions in the United States?
- What are the implications of federal legal decisions on the conduct of American politics, domestically and internationally?

Law, state governance, and new developments in European federalism.

This research stream focuses on recent developments in the law and governance of European federal systems, considering new challenges and opportunities for integration, democracy, and policy innovation.

 How are emerging legal challenges in the EU, such as digital privacy and data governance, being addressed within its quasi-federal structure? • What governance innovations within European federal systems could serve as models for addressing transnational issues like climate change and migration?

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