

9 ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRALIZATION

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Commentary. This chapter is a summary of the process of centralization of administrative activities in the United States. While it is based entirely on my subjective judgment, most students of American federalism would probably agree with me on most of these judgments. Thus, in the category "external affairs," for example, it seems indisputable that, in 1790, the states controlled the entire military force of the United States, but by 1850 they controlled almost none of it. On the other hand, there may well be dispute about my judgment that only recently has the United States come to share control of civil rights. Subjective as it is, however, I am emboldened to reprint this summary because it coincides extremely well with the data later collected by Alexander (1974) and Pommerehne (1977). Alexander found that in 1962 the federal portion of domestic expenditures was 0.49, and Pommerehne found that in 1965 the federal proportion of all expenditures was 0.55. My judgment for 1964 was similar: that the federal government controlled slightly over half of total administrative activity. (That is, in table 9-1 in this chapter I attribute an average score of 2.8 on centralization, which is slightly on the national side of a scale, where 1.0 is national control and 5.0 is state control.) Similarly, at the earlier end of the time series, I had,

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subjectively, assigned the federal government about one-fifth of the administrative control in 1850 and Alexander found that the federal proportion of domestic expenditures was about 0.22.

This chapter contains an examination in 19 categories of action of the degree of centralization (or peripheralization) of federalism in the United States. It is apparent that one theme running through these brief verbal descriptions is that the federal government has acquired more duties, in relation to the states, over the years. Both kinds of governments have grown with the nation, but the federal government seems to have become somewhat more conspicuous than that of the states.

This conclusion is summarized numerically in table 9-1 which indicates, for each of the 17 substantive areas of spending money, the relative position of federal and constituent governments at four time periods. The entries are defined thus

1. The functions are performed exclusively or almost exclusively by the federal government.
2. The functions are performed predominantly by the federal government, although the state governments play a significant secondary role.
3. The functions are performed by federal and state governments in about equal proportions.
4. The functions are performed predominantly by the state governments, although the federal government plays a significant secondary role.
5. The functions are performed exclusively or almost exclusively by the state governments.
- The functions were not recognized to exist at the time.

The choice of a particular entry is, of course, my highly subjective judgment based only on my immersion in the study. Others might disagree with my assignments, but by keeping the discriminations crude, that is, by using only a five-point scale, disagreements are probably minimized. The last row of the table shows the average for each of the time points of all functions then recognized to exist. Since the 17 (or 14, or 15) categories of functions are by no means of equal significance politically or socially, it may well be argued that the average is without meaning. Therefore, I have made the same kind of judgment for possibly equally significant groups of functions (external affairs, internal order, trade, and welfare) and the result is approximately the same.