

What is federalism

[History](#)



What is Federalism?

Abstract

These great united states were founded on the idealism and dreams of a people who dreamed of a federal society governed by the rules of freedom and democracy. We live in times when the sacrifices of our forefathers helped to shape the nation that has nurtured and protected our forebears and will hopefully, also be called home by our successors. Yet for all the dreams and aspirations that we have as a nation, for all the history that helped to create the United States of America, we know very little about the federal form of government that governs our existence. This paper aims to shed light on the history of federalism and how it has helped shaped our nation into the enviable dominant country that it has become today. Through the use of various academic sources, this paper will help others understand what federalism is all about and why it is important to respect the history of federalism in relation to the growth of our nation today.

What is Federalism?

We acknowledge the fact that our country has been run under a federal system of government for over 200 years. It is a system of governance that works for the American people because it has its basis deeply rooted within our lawful constitution and has continued to evolve with the changing times that our country goes through. Yet it is highly doubtful that the average American will know what federalism is all about and how it functions in terms of governance of our country.

It was Roche (1966) who explained that “ federalism refers to the division of authority and function between and among the national government and the various state governments. But it has come to possess a wider meaning in <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-federalism/>

American political history". However, James Q. Wilson and John Dilulio Jr. have come to define federalism as " a system of government " in which sovereignty is shared [between two or more levels of government] so that on some matters the national government is supreme and on others the states, regions, or provincial governments are supreme." (Boyd, 1997). The pre-federalism period in from 1775 to 1789 saw the building blocks and foundations for the union of the various states and the development of the governing principles of our country through the Declaration of Independence and the eventual creation of a new constitution. After this so-called pre-federalism phase, the American government began to fall into its development era.

The Dual Federalism phase lasted from 1789 to 1865. This was the era when the national and state governments found themselves functioning as equal partners that functioned with separate and distinct spheres of authority. This limited the federal, also known as national government, to the powers bestowed upon it by the constitution. This led to some friction between the state and national government which eventually became a major issue of the civil war. 1865-1901 came to be known as the Dual Federalism period of the United States. It was an era that saw the national government pushing the envelope and insinuating itself more and more into state issues. Decisions pertaining to the power to regulate the economy, civil rights, and the industrial revolution allowed the government to pass the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, Interstate Commission Act, as well as the 12th and 15th amendment to the constitution. It is interesting to discover that the issue of too much government interference is an issue that has long been standing in the arena of American politics rather than just being a more recent debatable topic for <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-federalism/>

most citizens. Then the American people found the government being transformed into a Creative Federalism type from 1960-1968 which was the time of the Johnson presidency. which is known for having shifted more governance towards the national government because of the widening government aid systems. These differing federalism types eventually led to the Contemporary Federalism period from 1970-present. Which is the era of ever growing unfunded federal mandates, concerns about federal regulations, and continuing disputes over the federal system of government. (Boyd, 1997).

In our history as a nation, we have come to discover that the concept of Federalism is something that we learned about and understood from our time as a colony of Great Britain. It's concept was something that our forebears used to develop the Articles of Confederation which helped steer the nation during the Civil War against Britain. But the articles did not last soon after the war because of the every man for himself attitude of the states under the union. The United States was now more than just a decentralized hierarchy and as such, required an administrative unit that could help it implement centralized government policies. While some states wished to total independence from the union, the others were fine with power sharing. Which led and still leads to a great deal of discussion about the way the federal government should actually be run. by the 1950's and 1960's. the national government had already cemented its image as the promoter and defender of civil rights and liberties. All actions which, according to history, allowed the concept of federalism to help shape the American behavior and policies.

Sources

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