

# The transmutation of administrative value and the choice of Chinese administrative value in post-industrial society

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**Abstract:** Administrative values are the ideological system upheld by administrative subjects in social administrative practice activities, which provide the direction of administrative decision-making and administrative execution activities for administrative subjects and their staff, and guide the stable development of administrative management. In the post-industrial era, the society is characterized by high complexity and high uncertainty, and the pluralism of social forces makes the choice of administrative value in this era face great difficulties. Based on the historical background of the evolution of public administration value, this paper analyzes the choice of administrative value and its changes in the post-industrial era, and summarizes the current social choice of administrative value in China, its existing problems and the trend of future choice of administrative value.

**Keywords:** Administrative Value; Post-Industrial Society; Administrative Value Choice

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## 1. Introduction

The original definition of value is related to human beings themselves, Marx believes that “the essence of man is not an abstract object inherent in a single person, but in its reality, it is the sum of all social relations.” It is about the maintenance and development of the essence of human self. Therefore, administrative value refers to “the positive significance of administrative activities for human society and the satisfaction and realization of human society needs”.

## 2. Evolution of administrative value

### 2.1 Core of administrative value in traditional public administration period

At the end of the 19th century, the development of the Industrial Revolution provided western countries with a new mode of production and economic development, the deepening of social complexity and uncertainty, and the change of the main social contradictions. The existing administrative management mode of the government could no longer adapt to the new social conditions, and a new scientific theory was urgently needed to guide the government to make changes to adapt to the new social conditions. Influenced by the trend of German administrative studies, Woodrow Wilson published a book on Administrative Studies, which proposed the theory of “political administration dichotomy” and advocated the separation of administrative studies from political science.<sup>[1]</sup> Wilson believes that in the social changes, the government’s own functions have been expanded, but its efficiency is not compatible with its functions, which makes the whole government powerless in the improvement of efficiency and efficiency. Goodnow believes that politics and administration are the two basic functions of government. Politics means “the expression of the will of the state”, while administration means “the execution of the will of the state” and emphasizes that “the extreme form of the principle of separation of powers cannot be used as the basis of any specific political organization”. As government functions, these two aspects cannot be completely separated and will inevitably lead to coordination to a certain extent. Therefore, in the specific era and social development background of the traditional public administration period, instrumental rationality has become the main object sought after in theoretical research, and “efficiency first” has become the core of administrative value selection in the cooperation with administrative tools in this period.

### 2.2 The core of administrative values in the new public administration period

In the 1970s, a series of problems such as economic stagflation in Western countries led by the United Kingdom and the United States made the public’s overall trust in the government’s administrative ability decline. There is a strong public will for government reform in

order to seek social justice. Herbert A. Simon believes that it is unreasonable to separate politics and administration from the perspective of decision-making and execution. In addition to politics, administration also makes a series of decisions, and strictly speaking, the two cannot really be separated. In view of the mismatch between the “limited rationality” of decision makers and the “complete rationality” of administrative instruments, Simon advocates the “relative satisfaction” of decision schemes and the introduction of fair value into the government decision-making process. H. George Fredrickson proposed to promote human happiness as an administrative value pursuit, emphasizing that “fairness first” replaces “efficiency first”. Administrative scientists in this period reflected on the value orientation of the traditional administrative period from different angles, called for the realization of the exploration, return and utilization of value rationality, and advocated value rationality with “fairness first” as the core, but lacked the internal investigation of the organization to realize the advocated value pursuit.

### **2.3 The core of administrative value in the new public management period**

The new public management theory believes that it is necessary to introduce the concept of “entrepreneur government” into the government, introduce the competition mechanism inside the enterprise into the government system to improve the efficiency of administration and the quality of public service, adhere to the “customer orientation”, and rebuild the government process. The theory also advocates decentralization of government power and decentralized management, so that the government can flexibly adjust its own structure and maintain good administrative performance under the new situation, and better fulfill its public service responsibilities. Under this proposition, we can see the obvious return of instrumental rationality on the basis of the value rationality represented by equity in the new public administration period, and the value rationality represented by equity is provided to the public as a by-product to enhance the public’s confidence in the government and safeguard public interests. Therefore, the administrative value in the new public management period is mainly centered on “efficiency return and fairness return”.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **3. Problems existing in China’s current administrative value in post-industrial society**

### **3.1 Cultural confusion in the value concept of administrative subject**

The traditional Chinese society is dominated by the empirical administrative management mode and the single administrative value. The negative impact of administrative activities based on experience management was mainly reflected in the decision-making process of administrative subjects. Many decisions were not based on precise investigation and research, but on their own personal experience and preferences, which resulted in the lack of scientific and effective demonstration of decision-making schemes. It is likely to cause errors in decision-making through its own subjective arbitrariness. Under the influence of experience-oriented administrative values, administrative subjects have a low degree of information disclosure for administrative management activities and insufficient acceptance of political participation of the public, thus blocking the public’s participation in public affairs. In the face of a highly complex, highly uncertain, highly changing and rapidly evolving society, there is no one-size-fits-all administrative value. The diversity of demands makes the choice of administrative value of the government in modern society can not and will not be accepted as a single feature. Therefore, the cultural confusion of the administrative subject in the concept of administrative value is an important problem and difficult point of the existing administrative value in our country.

### **3.2 The same administrative value subject is faced with value conflict**

The value conflict that the same subject faces is mainly manifested as: the contradiction between ideological and moral value and utilitarian value in real life; The contradiction between the value of policy unity and the value of diversified thinking consciousness; The contradiction between freedom of innovation and legal norms; The contradiction between profit maximization and environmental protection value; The contradiction between the value of economic benefit and social benefit; The contradiction between the value of economic benefit and cultural benefit; The contradiction between fairness and efficiency value; The contradiction between the values of power and rights and responsibilities and obligations; The contradiction between centralization and decentralization; The contradiction between humanism and instrumental rationality; The contradiction between traditional administrative value and administrative value in the new era.<sup>[3]</sup> The contradictions between different value orientations are sharp and difficult to reconcile.

### 3.3 Different subjects of administrative value are faced with value conflicts

The new public management movement continues, and the main body of public service is no longer limited to the government administrative department. The government department no longer plays the role of “paddler”, but becomes the real “helmsman”, plays the role of leading the direction of public service work and actively coordinates the relationship between various public service participants. However, as public service providers, pluralistic social forces have different behavior patterns and value pursuits while assuming different social roles. Administrative values are the basis for social forces to recognize and judge values in the process of social practice. In the process of the development of the socialist market economy in China, multiple social forces based on their own different pursuit of interests and needs, will produce contests and conflicts at the level of thinking awareness and values, collision with each other will produce different degrees of consequences, this is an inevitable phenomenon for the continuous development of society.

## 4. The future trend of China’s administrative value orientation in the post-industrial era

In the post-industrial society, with the development of market economy, globalization, democratic politics and civil society, all walks of life and various fields - administrative, economic, social, cultural and ecological fields - have gradually begun to pursue diversified administrative values such as decentralization, justice, integrity, democracy, rule of law and service, and realize the collection of various advanced administrative values. To realize the coordination, integration and matching of domestic governments at all levels according to local conditions, and to exert reasonable administrative value has practical guiding significance for the construction of China’s government by law and service-oriented government, the innovation and reform of social governance, the standardization of power operation and the improvement of integrity, and the improvement of government affairs efficiency. Therefore, the future trend of China’s administrative value orientation in the post-industrial era is multidimensional.<sup>[4]</sup>

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