

Toward a Theory of Governmental Decentralization: Conceptual and Methodological Consideration

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contents

- I . Introduction
- II . Debate over Governmental Centralization and Decentralization
- III . Methodological Issues
- IV . Conceptual Varieties of Decentralization
- V . Conclusion

I . Introduction

Considerable scholarly writing, as well as political action, has been undertaken over the last several decades to further governmental “decentralization.” This has been the result, in part, of a reaction to what some have characterized as a long-term trend in the concentration of power at the national level.¹ There is also a body of literature concerned with governmental structure that puts forth theoretical and normative arguments that such values as democracy and efficiency in the public sector will be better achieved with a decentralized than a centralized distribution of power.² This view is frequently advocated in discussions of development strategies for Third world countries and is used to justify structural change. There have been a number of experiments, as well, in Western

1. Leonard D. White, Trends in Public Administration (NY : McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933) : 140 ; Frederick C. Mosher and Orville F. Poland, Costs of American Governments (NY : Dodd, Mead & Company, 1964) : 44-45 ; Noel Boaden, “Central Departments and Local Authorities : the Relationship Examined.” Political Studies, Vol. 18, No.2(1970) : 175-186 ; Philip Mawhood, “Negotiating from Weakness : the Search for a Model of Local Government in Countries of the Third World.” Planning and Administration, Vol 1., No, (1974) : 17-18.
2. A.H. Marshall, Local Government in the Modern World (London : The Athlone Press, 1965) : 6 ; A. F. Leemans, Changing Patterns of Local Government (The Hague : International Union of Local Authorities, 1970) : 13.

industrial nations to create greater decentralization in local governments.³ However, there is no consensus on the matter. There are scholars who reach the opposite conclusion about the appropriateness of decentralization for nations in general and for developing countries.

An obvious way to “settle” disputes over the appropriate degree of decentralization in the structure of government is to measure the performance of nations which are centralized and decentralized in relation to agreed upon criteria. Once done, empirically-grounded propositions can be generated concerning the relationship between centralized and decentralized governmental structures and the probability that specified goals or values will be more effectively achieved. There are, however, a number of constraints to such an undertaking.

One limitation is the absence of a widely accepted empirically-based method of measuring the degree to which a nation’s governmental structure is centralized or decentralized. Without such a measure it is not possible to use the structural distribution of power as an independent variable in comparing the performance of governments in either developed or developing countries. It is a primary goal of this study to examine both conceptual and methodological difficulties in devising a more adequate method of measuring decentralization than presently exists. First, however, it is necessary to consider the nature of the debate over the relationship of structure and performance and the reasons why no agreed upon method for measuring decentralization has emerged despite a substantial body of literature on the topic.

II. Debate over Governmental Centralization and Decentralization

1. Pressures to Decentralize

Although both developed and developing countries are experiencing certain decentralizing pressures, there are often differences between them in the functions and goals of decentralization. Decentralization in developed countries is generally viewed as an effort to create alternatives to the growing strength of centralized government and to counteract bureaucratization.⁴ Focused on urban areas, the primary goals of decentralization are to

3. D.C. Rowat (ed.), International Handbook on Local Government Reorganization (Westport, CO : Greenwood Press, 1980).

4. Lennart Lundquist, Means and Goals of Political Decentralization (Sweden : Studentlitteratur, 1972) : 16.

promote both more citizen participation in community decision-making and more efficient and responsive urban service delivery.⁵

In both the United States and Britain, the term "decentralization" has frequently been used with such adjectives as "urban," "municipal," and "neighborhood." Neighborhood decentralization refers to the allocation of more authority to territorial subareas of a city below the level of the municipal government.⁶

The top priority for decentralization in less developed nations is usually given to social, political, and economic development. The over-centralization of authority in ministerial headquarters and capital cities is regarded as a formidable obstacle to development.⁷ To students of underdevelopment the term "decentralization" generally means the transfer of planning, decision-making or management powers from the national government to sub-national levels.⁸ However, there is no consensus on the appropriateness of decentralization as a structural policy for Third World nations.

2. Values and Roles of Decentralization

There are scholars who believe that in the Third World a nation's capacity to successfully implement development, measured by whatever criteria used, depends upon the extent of decentralization in the exercise of governmental powers. Such proponents of a decentralized structure in the public sector argue that it will make government more efficient, responsive, and stable. On the other hand, there are other writers who take the position that a strong centralized national government is necessary in countries characterized by limited resources, a dependent economy, and political instability.

Differences of opinion over the merits of governmental centralization and decentralization are not new or limited to the Third World countries. In fact, there is a far more extensive literature on the issues of decentralization, particularly in theoretical terms, which has industrialized western countries as its referent. Much of the writing on

5. Douglas Yates, Neighborhood Government (Santa Monica, CA : Rand Corp, 1971) : 15-25.

6. Terry N. Clark, "On Decentralization " Polity, Vol.2, No.4 (Summer 1970) : 508 ; Robin Hambleton and Paul Hoggett, "Introduction," in P.Hoggett and R.Hambleton (eds.), Decentralization and Democracy : Localising Public Services (Bristol, England : School for Advanced Urban Studies, 1987) : 1-8 ; Janice Morphet, "Local Authority Decentralization-Tower Hamlets Goes All the Way," Policy and Politics, Vol.15, No 2 (April 1987) : 119-126.

7. J. J. Heaphey Spatial Dimensions of Development Administration (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 1971) : 5-10.

8. Dennis A. Rondinelli, "Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective," International review of Administrative Science, Vol. 47, No 2 (1981) : 134-35.

governmental structure in the Third World draws upon models and theories of decentralization that have been generated from the experience and values of the First World.

Various theoretical claims made with respect to the roles and values of decentralization can roughly be categorized into two groups. Advocates of decentralization commonly associate it with a wide range of positive economic, social, and political effects in both developed and less developed societies.⁹ Economically, decentralization is said to improve the efficiency with which demands for locally provided services are expressed and public goods provided.¹⁰ Market models of local decision-making treat decentralization as a means of expanding the scope of consumer choice among public goods.¹¹ Decentralization is also said to reduce costs, improve outputs and more effectively utilize human resources.¹²

Politically, the redistribution of power downward is assumed by advocates to bring government closer to people and strengthen accountability, political recruitment and national integration.¹³ Decentralization is also credited with promoting liberty, equality, and welfare¹⁴ and providing a training ground for citizen participation and political leadership, both local and national.¹⁵ Decentralization has even been elevated to the guardian role of basic human values.¹⁶

In countries where development must be achieved as a very condition to the nation's survival, many scholars regard decentralization as a necessary condition for national and local development.¹⁷ Mawhood, for example, argues that centralization of formal

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9. B.C. Smith, Decentralization: The Territorial Dimension of the State (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985): 4.
 10. W. Bruce Shepard, "Metropolitan Political Decentralization: A Test of the Life-Style Values Model," Urban Affairs Quarterly, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Mar. 1975): 297-313.
 11. Charles M. Tiebout, "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures," Journal of Public Economy, Vol. 65, No. 5 (Oct. 1956): 416-424.
 12. David K. Hart, "Theories of Government Related to Decentralization and Citizen Participation," Public Administration Review, Vol. 32, Special Issue (Oct. 1972): 603-621.
 13. Brian C. Smith, "Measuring Decentralization," in G.W. Jones (ed.) New Approaches to the Study of Central-Local Government Relationships (Westmead, England: Gower Publishing Co., 1980): 137-151.
 14. Arthur Maass (ed.), Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government (NY: The Free Press, 1959).
 15. D.M. Hill, Democratic Theory and Local Government (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974).
 16. Henry Winthrop, "The Meaning of Decentralization for Twentieth Century Man," American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Oct. 1967): 351-366.
 17. Dennis A. Rondinelli et al., Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1984); Hubert J. Allen, "Decentralization for Development: A Point of View," Planning and Administration, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1987): 23-29.

authority is the one organizational form which is wholly inappropriate for Third World governments if they seek to bring about social change and modernization. He believes that local authorities in most of the developing world are more apt to be stifled by too much central control and influence than fail because of having too little of it.¹⁸

Yet, decentralization, as a policy in the Third World, is not without its critics. According to some, decentralization appears parochial and separatist. It threatens the unity of the general will and reinforces narrow, sectional interests.¹⁹ Thus, it is believed to be possible that decentralization can legitimate forces that can be antagonistic to the regime by incorporating them into the state apparatus at the regional or local level. The result can be the creation of dispersed power in the periphery without balancing it with a capacity to act at the center.²⁰ Some students of underdevelopment have also warned that the proliferation of administrative arrangements at the local level can bring about a deterioration in the quality of administration as larger numbers of officials with less education, narrower outlooks and limited experience are employed.²¹

Critics of decentralization are not limited to developing countries. In Britain, there have been warnings against assuming that more centralization in local government is inevitably bad.²² Sharpe, for example, believes that improvement in efficiency and democracy has not automatically followed the reorganization of local government in more decentralized forms.²³ In the United States, too, some scholars have reacted strongly against what they see as the inefficiencies and diseconomies of political fragmentation within metropolitan areas.²⁴ On a more micro scale, the decentralization of power from the city to the neighborhood level has been opposed not only as a betrayal of racial integration, but as an invitation to replace personnel systems in urban government based

18. Philip Mawhood, "Decentralization for Development—A Lost Cause?," in F.C. Bruhns et al (ed.), Local Politics, Development, and Participation (Pittsburgh, PA : University Center for International Studies, 1974) : 28-31.

19. B.C. Smith (1985), op. cit., p.5.

20. Ira Katznelson, "Antagonistic Ambiguity : Notes on Reformism and Decentralization," Politics and Society, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1972) : 323-333.

21. B. Mukerji, "Administrative Problems of Democratic Decentralization," Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1961)

22. N. Boaden, op. cit., pp. 175-186.

23. L.J. Sharpe, "Reforming the Grass-Roots : An Alternative Analysis," in D. Butler (ed.), Politics, Administration and Policy (London : Macmillan, 1978) .

24. Robert C. Wood, 1400 Governments : The Political Economy of the New York Metropolitan Region (Garden City, NY : Doubleday & Company, 1961) : 56-63.

on merit ,with patronage system.²⁵

III. Methodological Issues

However persuasive arguments for or against governmental decentralization are, their claims are frequently based on normative preferences rather than objective assessment. Many of the benefits of decentralization, for example, are based on theoretical assumptions rather than evidence. As Rondinelli puts it, assertions or hypotheses concerning the advantages of decentralization have seldom been supported empirically.²⁶

These unresolved conflicting views pose a dilemma for policy planners, particularly in the Third World, who are interested in understanding whether there is a positive relationship between a specific distribution of power among levels of government and governmental performance. Two things are required in order to evaluate the actual political, economic, or administrative consequences of more or less decentralization. One is a method of measuring the degree to which governmental power is distributed between national and subnational governments within a nation. Then, using cross-sectional or time series data, countries can be compared in terms of political and socio-economic performance criteria²⁷ using the distribution of governmental power as the explanatory variable.²⁸ Adequate methodology for the necessary first step of measuring decentralization, however, has not been developed.

James Fesler, in a seminal article on the issue of defining decentralization, identifies three methodological problems that trouble our efforts to move discussions of decentralization from generalities to a degree of precision.²⁹ The first problem is

25. Douglas Yates, Neighborhood Democracy: The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization(Lexington, MA : D.C.Heath, 1973).

26. D.A.Rondinelli(1981), op.cit., p.136.

27. Brian C.Smith, "The Measurement of Decentralization," International Review of Administrative Sciences. Vol.17, No.3(1979) : 214-25.

28. The importance of the structure of government, as an independent variable, is made clear by James March and Johan Olsen in their discussion of the "new institutionalism." They point out that much contemporary political theory assumes that government is influenced by external social factors, but that the reverse is not true. They argue, however, that government institutions are important for influencing patterns of interaction in society. James G.March and Johan P.Olsen, "The New Institutionalism : Organizational Factors in Political Life," American Political Science Review, Vol.78, No.3(Sept. 1984) : 734-743

29. James W.Fesler, "Approaches to the Understanding of Decentralization," Journal of Politics, Vol.27, No.3(Aug.1965) : 536-537

characterized as linguistic. It refers to the way in which our use of language has tended to dichotomize the terms "centralization" and "decentralization" which has led to an inappropriate polarization and antithesis in their use. The second problem concerns measurement and the limitations of the indices that have been used to identify decentralization. Finally, Fesler argues that there has been a failure to differentiate the requirement of measuring decentralization among countries and within a single nation. At the same time, he concludes that recognizing the bluntness of the measurement tools available is the first step in their solution.³⁰

One of the real challenges in much of empirical social science research has been finding new and better ways to define and measure abstract, theoretical concepts.³¹ Any empirical research, whatever analytic technique is used, requires explicitly defined and validly measured variables. Problems frequently arise both in defining the variable appropriately and in obtaining measures that fit the definition.

As Fesler suggests, previous studies on the subject of decentralization reveal both conceptual ambiguities and measurement deficiencies. No common meaning has emerged for decentralization. As noted above, the term has been used differently between the developed and less developed nation, reflecting their distinct conditions, goals and interests. The ambiguity is increased because scholars in different disciplines use the same word "decentralization" to mean a variety of phenomena and concepts. Organizational theorists use the term from an intra-organizational perspective. Students of underdevelopment understand it as an inter-governmental phenomena. Some writers use it to refer to a specific policy or program, while others apply the same term from broader ideological standpoints. It is understood as a process by some, but as an end-state by others.

Beyond the definitional issue, measuring the relationship between decentralization and governmental performance requires systematic comparisons between states or within states over time. Fesler notes that much of the best work on centralization and decentralization is of the monographic, case-study type, focused on a single country, agency or substantive program. Almost none of the empirical experience recorded in these monographs and case-studies has been synthesized. He says, "one major result is that they rarely clarify the conditions under which various degrees and patterns of

30. J.W.Fesler, *op.cit.*, pp.537-538.

31. Eric A. Hanushek and John E.Jackson, *Statistical Methods for Social Scientists*(NY: Academic Press, 1977) : 8.

centralization and decentralization tend to occur, to have particular consequences, and to evolve toward other degrees and patterns.”³² Yasumasa Kuroda also finds that those who have studied local politics cross-nationally pay little attention to the concept of decentralization in various parts of the world.³³ In his comparative study of sub-national units in Western Europe, M.Aiken concludes that comparative analysis of variations in decentralization is urgently needed.³⁴

As one of the few scholars who have tried to build a theory of decentralization,³⁵ Douglas Ashford advises that we need to construct a model of national-local linkage which deals with the structural relationship between the center and sub-units of government. Only through cross-national comparison can we penetrate the many ambiguities and confusions in the theoretical writing about local government.³⁶ The empirical experiences in the case-studies need to be synthesized in such a way as to specify both conditions and consequences of decentralization. As such a synthesis is attempted, gaps will be discovered in our knowledge of important variables and the development of empirically based theory of local government might eventually be possible.³⁷

The construction of a theory of local government is a goal that will require numerous contributions. Determining the relationship between governmental performance and the distribution of power between national and local governments and local governments and internal subareas constitutes one part of the larger undertaking. To accomplish this, however, an even smaller step must be taken first. A method of reliably measuring decentralization must be developed.

In light of what has been discussed, research of this type will require a number of things. A theoretically relevant and operationally adequate definition of decentralization is

32. J.W.Fesler(1968), op.cit., p.376.

33. Yasumasa Kuroda, "Levels of Government in Comparative Perspective : Conceptual and Operational Consideration," Comparative Political Studies, Vol.7, No.4(Jan.1975) : 431.

34. M.Aiken, "Comparative Cross-National Research on Sub-National Units in Western Europe : Problems, Data Sources and a Proposal," Journal of Comparative Administration, Vol.4, No.4(Feb. 1973) : 444.

35. As B.Guy Peters points out, there is as yet little well-developed institutional theory or theory linking government institutions to policy outcomes. B.Guy Peters, "The Machinery of Government : Concepts and Issues," in Colin Campbell and B.G.Peters(eds.), Organizing Governance and governing Organizations(Pittsburgh, PA : University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988) : 19.

36. Douglas E.Ashford, "Theories of Local Government : Some Comparative Considerations," Comparative Political Studies, Vol.8, No.1(April 1975) : 91.

37. J.W.Fesler, op.cit., p.376.

needed. It must be possible to construct multiple measures of decentralization to avoid the limitations of single-variable explanations of complex phenomena. Data representing the variables used must be available from an appropriate array of countries from several time points. Appropriate statistical methods are needed to validate and apply the measures to a cross-national sample of countries.

IV. CONCEPTUAL VARIETIES OF DECENTRALIZATION

Fesler suggested in the following remarks some of the conceptual difficulties encountered even in the initial phase of the study of decentralization :³⁸

“Decentralization” is an apparently simple term. Yet the appearance is deceiving and often leads to simplistic treatments that generalize too broadly.... It is a term of rich conceptual and empirical meaning.

As a matter of fact, the term “decentralization” is used with many different meanings and in various contexts. We speak, for instance, of economic, administrative, and political decentralization.³⁹ Some people talk about “deconcentration,” while others use the term “devolution.” Organizational theorists understand the term from an intra-organizational perspective, whereas students of underdevelopment deal with it in terms of inter-organizational relations. Scholars in both Western and Third World countries use the same term with different connotations. In the discussion that follows, these conceptual varieties of decentralization will be discussed in detail.

1. Dichotomy vs. Continuum

The terms “centralization” and “decentralization” tend to be dichotomized in our language. They are easily applied as polar states rather than as points on a continuum. This has contributed to the “either-or” framework of them adopted by scholars who identify themselves as centralists or as decentralists.⁴⁰

Indeed, we have observed the tendency toward a doctrinal association of centralization or decentralization with a number of end-values. Thus, centralists equate centralization

38. James W. Fesler, “Approaches to the Understanding of Decentralization,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 3(Aug. 1965) : 536.

39. Norman Furniss, “The Practical Significance of Decentralization,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 4(1974) : 961-973. He also classifies these three major types of governmental decentralization into eight different categories. He even refers to our hope for the better world as “millennial decentraliozation.”

40. J.W.Fesler, *op.cit.*, p.565.

with efficiency. Decentralists identify decentralization with democracy. As Fesler pointed out, either centralization or decentralization is a means to the achievement of various political, administrative, and economic values.⁴¹ However, these terms are often treated as values in their own right.

This dichotomization of centralization and decentralization is dysfunctional from both a conceptual and analytic perspective. These concepts need to be understood as end points on a single "continuum" or a continuous scale of governmental power, along which different governmental systems can be arrayed. Maass, for example, uses this approach for measuring the areal or territorial distribution of power among central and local units of government within countries.⁴²

2. Static View vs. Dynamic View

Another confusion surrounding the concept of decentralization is that the term can refer to either a process of change or an end-state. It can designate either a dynamic process or a static fact. Friedrich argues that decentralizing patterns of the distribution of power be considered as dynamic rather than static, as continually evolving and oscillating between greater unity and diversity. Friedrich believes that unless this is clearly recognized and institutionally provided for, the dynamic aspects of the spatial distribution of power are apt to become a source of tension and conflict.⁴³ Conyers shares the same view in saying that decentralization should be seen as a process of change rather than as an end-state. In her definition, decentralization refers to any "change" in the organization of government which involves the transfer of powers or functions from the national level to any sub-national level.⁴⁴

For the sake of analysis, however, the term "decentralization" needs to be interpreted as both a process and an end-state. That is to say, it is necessary to analyze both *decentralizing* and *decentralization* in order to grasp it comprehensively. To do this, both a time-series and a cross-sectional analysis of decentralization can be employed.

41. J. W. Fesler, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

42. Arthur Maass (ed.), *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government* (NY: The Free Press, 1959). Also see Ivo D. Duchacek, *The Territorial Dimension of Politics: Within, Among, and Across Nations* (London: Westview Press, Inc., 1986).

43. Carl J. Friedrich, *Man and His Government* (NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1963): 667.

44. Diana Conyers, *Decentralization for Development: A Select Annotated Bibliography* (London: Marlborough House, 1983): 4.

3. The Semantics of Power Distribution : Decentralization, Deconcentration, and Devolution

In French usage, *decentralisation* is a term reserved for the transfer of powers from a central government to an areally or functionally specialized authority of distinct legal personality : e.g. the increase of the degree of autonomy of a local government or of a public-enterprise corporation. *Deconcentration*, on the other hand, is the French equivalent for "administrative decentralization" within a single government's hierarchy.⁴⁵

In both England and the United States, *decentralization* is the generic term. Adjectives such as "administrative," "political," and "governmental" serve to specify narrower usage, whereas "federalism," "local self-government," and "intergovernmental relations" are alternative terms for special purposes. *Devolution*, used by English, but rarely by American scholars, is the equivalent of the French *decentralisation* but occasionally embraces *deconcentration as well*.⁴⁶

According to the United Nations' definition, the term *decentralization* refers to the transfer of authority on a geographic basis, whether by *deconcentration* of authority to field units of the same department, or by *devolution* of authority to local government units or special statutory bodies.⁴⁷ The United Nations, therefore, considers all transfers of decision-making power away from the central agency of government to be *decentralization*. The terms used to describe power dispersal in the United Nations' documents include *deconcentration* through an administrative hierarchy of agents employed by the center, or *devolution* to partially autonomous government authorities.

Other writers have used various terms for the same concepts, using "administrative" or "bureaucratic" decentralization instead of deconcentration, and "political" or "democratic" decentralization instead of devolution. For instance, Brian Smith says that decentralization involves the delegation of authority and such delegated authority may be broadly classified as either political or bureaucratic. *Political authority* is delegated when power is devolved through legislative enactment to an area government (as in a unitary state) or allocated between national and area governments by the constitution (as in a federal

45. M. Waline, *Droit Administratif* (Paris : Sirey, 1944).

46. James W. Fesler, "Centralization and Decentralization," in D. L. Sills (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 2 (NY : The Macmillan and Free Press, 1968) : 370.

47. United Nations, Division for Public Administration, *Decentralization for National and Local Development* (NY : United Nations, 1962) : 88.

responsibilities from the headquarters of an organization to the field.⁴⁸

Rondinelli understands the meaning of decentralization in different ways. He makes distinctions among three different degrees of *decentralization* (deconcentration, delegation, and devolution) and then divides *deconcentration* into three different types (shifting of workload, field administration, and local administration). However, he views these dimensions of decentralization as non-dichotomous, stating "although there are differences among the various forms of decentralization, they are not mutually exclusive and thus must be analyzed on a continuum."⁴⁹

According to Rondinelli, the least extensive form of decentralization is *deconcentration*. At one extreme, this merely involves the *shifting-of-workload* from ministerial headquarters to staff located in offices outside of the national capital.⁵⁰ A greater degree of deconcentration is achieved through *field administration* which implies the transfer of decision-making discretion to field staff, allowing them some latitude to make routine decisions. *Local administration*, in Rondinelli's framework, is the strongest form of deconcentration in which all sub-national levels of government within a country are agents of the central government, usually the executive branch. Regions, provinces, districts, municipalities, and other units of areal government are headed by leaders who are either appointed or are responsible directly to a central government agency, usually a Ministry of the Interior or Local Government.

Another form of decentralization is the *delegation* of decision-making authority for specific functions to semi-autonomous or parastatal organizations that are only under the indirect control of central government ministries. Public corporations, regional planning authorities, and special-purpose functional authorities are examples.⁵¹ Finally, the most

48. Brian C. Smith, Decentralization: The Territorial Dimension of the State (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985) : 8-9.

49. Dennis A. Rondinelli, "Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective," International Review of Administrative Science, Vol. 47, No. 2(1981) : 137-139 ; Dennis A. Rondinelli and G. S. Cheema, "Implementing Decentralization policies: An Introduction," in G. S. Cheema and D.A. Rondinelli (eds.), Decentralization and Development (Beverly Hills, CA : Sage Publications, 1983) : 18-25.

50. J.W. Fesler refers to this shifting-of-workload as a "pseudo decentralization" since it does not involve any decentralization of power (J.W. Fesler, op,cit., p. 373) ; however, D. A. Rondinelli expresses different views by saying that although Fesler's observation is valid for most Western nations, even the shifting of workload from central offices to field staff can have significant meanings in highly centralized governments in developing countries (D. A. Rondinelli, op,cit., p. 137).

51. R. E. Wraith defines the term "delegation" differently by saying that what delegation is to the individual administrator, decentralization is to the administration. R. E. Wraith, "The Four Dimensional Administration: Deconcentration, Delegation, Devolution and Decentralization," Quarterly Journal of Administration, Vol. 2 (Jan. 1971) : 154.

extensive form of decentralization is the strengthening or creation of independent levels and units of government through *devolution*.⁵²

As one of writers who adopt the United Nations' definition, Maddick interprets the meaning of *decentralization* to include both the processes of deconcentration and devolution. *Deconcentration* is defined as the delegation of authority adequate for the discharge of special functions to the staff of a central department who are situated outside the headquarters. *Devolution*, on the other hand, is defined as the legal conferring of powers to discharge specified or residual functions upon formally constituted local authorities.⁵³

Some organizational theorists argue that decentralization is a hierarchical concept, whereas devolution is non-hierarchical one. These two terms, therefore, should be distinguished from each other. Sherwood, for instance, says that within an organization, centralization is best defined as involving the concentration of power at the top of the pyramid and decentralization as indicating the dispersal of power throughout the structure. From this organizational point of view, *decentralization* and *deconcentration* become synonymous and their meaning is restricted to the power relationship within a given hierarchical structure.⁵⁴

On the other hand, devolution means the transfer of power to geographic units of local government that lie outside the formal command structure of the central government. It is not decentralization, but represents the concept of separateness, of diversity of structures within the political system as a whole. Thus, according to Sherwood, we need two words: *decentralization* to describe an intra-organizational pattern of power relationships and *devolution* to describe an inter-organizational pattern of power relationships.⁵⁵

52. D.A. Rondinelli, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

53. Henry Maddick, *Democracy, Decentralization and Development* (London : Asia Publishing House, 1963) : 23.

54. Frank P. Sherwood, "Devolution as a Problem of Organization Strategy," in Robert T. Daland (ed.), *Comparative Urban Research : The Administration and Politics of Cities* (Beverly Hills, CA. : Sage Publications, 1969) : 64-69.

55. F. P. Sherwood, *op.cit.*, p. 68. For this distinction, D. A. Rondinelli holds a different view by saying that although the specifications for devolution may be valid from a western theoretical or legal perspective, actual requirements are less stringent in most developing nations. *Devolution* is usually seen as a form of decentralization in which local government units are given responsibility for some functions but in which the central government often retains some supervisory powers and may play a large financial role (D.A. Rondinelli, *op.cit.*, p. 139).

Mawhood questions the validity of using decentralization as a blanket term, arguing that the distinction between deconcentration and decentralization is particularly significant among different political cultures. To him, *decentralization* means units of local government in which formal decision-making is primarily exercised by (i.e., devolved upon) locally representative councillors or officials, whereas *deconcentration* means units of local administration in which formal decision-making is exercised by (i.e., delegated to) centrally appointed officials.⁵⁶

The sharp difference between decentralization and deconcentration, according to his observation, is easier to appreciate in the Third World context than in the circumstances of the industrialized countries. In a pluralistic society such as Western Europe or North America, political allocations made within the government structure are subject to multiple pressures from outside. There are numerous unofficial linkages between any locality and the national center. There may be, for instance, a local project to build a new highway, removing a number of dwellings and affecting the natural beauty of the locality. Whether the decision is taken by a "deconcentrated" regional office of government or by a "decentralized" (autonomous) local government body, the effects tend to be similar. Individuals and groups argue about the merits of the project. The communications media publish the debate. The issue becomes one of common local concern and pressure upon the decision-makers is generalized. It is also frequently carried to the national level through political parties and nationally organized interest groups.⁵⁷

The contrast is striking in the less developed countries where government is commonly controlled by the educated few. Information links with the central government may be weak for officials in the field, but they are weaker still for the mass of ordinary people. Most of the latter have small influence over any allocations in the modern sector and their lack of knowledge excludes them from the affairs of government. This is particularly true of rural people. In this situation, a "deconcentrated" field office takes most of its decisions without being subject to local pressures. Demands from the central government are much stronger than those from the local population, and the field officer (less secure than his counterpart in the West) is constantly concerned to satisfy the directives of the central government. In the allocation of modern resources in these

56. Philip Mawhood, "Negotiating from Weakness: The Search for a Model of Local Government in Countries of the Third World," *Planning and Administration*, Vol. 1, No. 1(1974): 19-20.

57. Philip Mawhood, *Local Government in the Third World* (NY: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 1983) 2-4.

countries, the pattern of real power corresponds closely to that of formal power. The "deconcentrated" prefecture or district office, and the "decentralized" local representative council, are different political animals, according to Mawhood. The former can, and the latter cannot, escape the influence of popular interests in reaching its major decisions.⁵⁸

4. Decentralization and Local Autonomy

Decentralization and local autonomy have sometimes been confused and treated as same concepts. To take an example, the International Union of Local Authorities(IULA) defines the concept of "local self-government" as the right and the duty of local authorities to regulate and manage public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population.⁵⁹ Harold Wolman also defines the term "local autonomy" simply as the scope for independent action by local authorities : i.e., the range of choice available to local government unconstrained by higher levels of government.⁶⁰ Their understanding of local autonomy is confined only to the organizational relationships between central and local governments and does not distinguish local autonomy from decentralization. Also, they imply that there exists some form of reciprocal relationship between local autonomy and decentralization.

The historical-legal tradition in public administration, however, emphasizes the extent to which decentralization is to be distinguished from local autonomy. The former is a function of the rules which delegate authority from one geographic level to another and is susceptible to manipulated change. The latter is a function of socio-economic aspects which may support or undermine the independence of a particular subnational territory or community.⁶¹ This indicates that it is necessary to distinguish the formal-organizational constraints over local autonomy emanating from the center from those which originate from the socioeconomic environment of a particular local community. Thus, a community's wealth, resources, political power structure, etc. may be important in determining its autonomy.

58. P. Mawhood, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

59. International Union of Local Authorities(IULA), "World-wide Declaration on Local Self-Government," *Planning and Administration*, Vol. 14, No. 1(Spring 1987) : 126.

60. Harold Wolman, "Local Autonomy and Intergovernmental Finance in Britain and United States," in Richard Rose and Edward Page(eds.), *Fiscal Stress in Cities*(Cambridge, London : Cambridge University Press, 1982) : 169.

61. Brian C. Smith, "Measuring Decentralization," in G. W. Jones(ed.), *New Approaches to the Study of Central-Local Government Relationships*(London : Social Sciences Research Council, 1980) : 138.

Increasing decentralization may or may not produce all that is expected of it.⁶² Political factors could operate to make a governmental system which is constitutionally decentralized subordinate to highly centralized power. More decentralization thus does not necessarily mean more local autonomy, and vice versa.⁶³

Another relevant point to be made here is that there is a tendency to link, then merge and confuse, local autonomy and local democracy. As Fesler point out, "local self-government" has come to be an ambiguous term. Though often equated with local democracy, it can as readily mean simply local autonomy without specification of the actual governing power available within the locality.⁶⁴ There are many examples of undemocratic but quite autonomous local governments. For instance, in England, local autonomy is centuries old, but local democratic self-government is largely a development of the last hundred years. Also, in villages and towns in strongly traditional societies, the local elders control local government. Local government tends to be dominated by landlords and other possessors of economic power and become a local autocracy.⁶⁵

Most of all, decentralization needs to be distinguished from local autonomy in order to assess the impacts of variation in the organizational aspects of local autonomy. In other words, it should be treated as a matter of formal-organizational relationships, separable from other elements of local autonomy.⁶⁶ Only then can it be measured as a variable factor in the design of governmental machinery and progress be made in the evaluation of changes designed to alter the distribution of power between the center and periphery within a country. Variations in the degree of decentralization can then be related to the political and administrative consequences which might flow from them.⁶⁷

62. Ivo Duchacek points out that the extent of decentralization may or may not produce real local autonomy. Ivo D. Duchacek, The Territorial Dimension of Politics; Within, Among, and Across Nations(London : Westview Press, 1986) : 68.

63. B.C. Smith, op.cit., p. 142.

64. James W. Fesler(1965), op.cit., p. 545.

65. Ibid., p. 543, p. 546.

66. M. Kesselman and D. Rosenthal suggest three elements of local autonomy such as localism, pattern of government for the locality and localistic political processes. Mark Kesselman and Donald Rosenthal, Local Power and Comparative Politics(Beverly Hills, CA : Sage Publications, 1974) : 7-9 ; T.N.Clark, on the other hand, lists four elements of local community autonomy including devolution, local resources, localism, and local political power. Terry N. Clark, "Community Autonomy in the National System : Federalism, Localism, and Decentralization," in T.N.Clark(ed.), Comparative Community Politics(Beverly Hills, CA : Sage Publications, 1974) : 22-24.

67. B.C.Smith, op.cit., p. 149.

5. Decentralization and Federalism

The classification of governments and constitutions into federal (decentralized) and unitary (centralized) forms has had a long tradition among the students of comparative government. It remains a useful basis on which to begin an analysis of patterns of institutional centralization and decentralization among contemporary regimes. According to this view, decentralization can take any one of a number of different institutional forms.⁶⁸ These form a *continuum* which begins with the simple delegation of administrative tasks by the central government to its "field agents." A further stage of decentralization is achieved through the statutory transfer of powers to "local authorities." Beyond this, the continuum progresses to the conditional and reversible devolution of authority to "regional assemblies," and thence to the permanent and constitutional division of functions and authority of "federalism." Finally, the continuum arrives at such loose "confederal" or "supra-national" alliances of independent states as the European Economic Community (EEC).

The number of countries placed in a particular category along a decentralization continuum by scholars often varies widely, both as a result of varying definitions and due to variations in the strictness with which similar definitions are applied. Thus, in the case of federalism, one eminent authority finds only four modern examples of genuinely federal governments,⁶⁹ and another finds a total of nineteen.⁷⁰

One of the main differences between a federal and a unitary system of government is that in a federal system the powers of the different levels of government are embedded in the constitution. In a unitary system, however, they are only embodied in ordinary legislation. The constitution in federal states guarantees that the activities of government are divided between regional governments and central government in such a way that each level of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions. These constitutional arrangements are intended to deal with the problems presented by territorial diversity by providing a degree of regional autonomy and systematic national

68. Roger Charlton, Comparative Government (NY : Longman, Inc., 1986) : 55.

69. Wheare classifies only four countries as genuinely federal : Australia, Canada, Switzerland, and the United States. K. C. Wheare, Federal Government (England : Oxford University Press, 1963) .

70. Riker, on the other hand, finds nineteen countries as federal governments : Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Czechoslovakia, W. Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Switzerland, Tanzania, USA, USSR, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia. W. H. Riker, "Federalism," in F. I. Greenstein & N. Polsby (eds.), Handbook of Political Science, Vol. 5 (NY : Addison-Wesley, 1975) : 93-172.

representation for geographically distinct units. Indeed, federalism is viewed as an institutional mechanism through which the balance between the forces for unity (centralization) and diversity (decentralization) may be achieved.⁷¹

This constitutional aspect of federalism also implies that the autonomy and discretion of regional governments cannot be removed by the central government without their consent. This is what Elazar called a principle of noncentralization. He claims that a diffusion of power in the federal system may be termed as *noncentralization*. It differs from *decentralization*—the conditional diffusion of specific powers to subordinate local governments by the national government, subject to recall by unilateral decision. It is also more than *devolution*—the special grant of powers to a sub-national unit by a central government, not normally rescindable.⁷²

However, does this mean that the extent of power held by the sub-national governments in a federal system is necessarily greater than that in a unitary system? In other words, can we assume that a federal state is automatically more decentralized than a unitary one? This question is also important conceptually since those students of comparative government adopting conventional classification systems tend to equate the term “federalism” with “decentralization.”

The answer appears to be that the extent of decentralization to the local level between unitary and federal states cannot be precisely known from the form of government.⁷³ It seems empirically true that some unitary states are more decentralized than some federal states. In the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries, for instance, traditions of municipal government have allowed for sizable powers over appointment and the bureaucracy, as well as the fields (housing, education and planning) that are mainly in the hands of local authorities. But in federal states such as Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela, the powers of the states are not very pronounced, and in Communist federal countries (particularly the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, but not Yugoslavia), the indirect or direct influence of the central government is very large over the economy and many social services. Of course, the Western federal states that have been historically more decentralized (e.g. United States, Switzerland and Canada) are still believed to be

71. Ivo D. Duchacek, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

72. Daniel J. Elazar, “Federalism”, in D. L. Sills(ed.), International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 5(NY: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1968): 357.

73. Jean Blondel, Comparing Political Systems(NY: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1972): 116.

more decentralized than the most decentralized unitary states.⁷⁴ Thus there appears to be limited value in the traditional classificatory distinction between federal and unitary systems of government as a measure of decentralization in practice.

6. Decentralization and Areal Division of Power

In the literature of political science, centralization and decentralization are frequently used in a wholly non-territorial sense to characterize the distribution of power within the central government, often only in the capital. In this sense, "centralization" refers to either the growth of power of the chief executive or the bureaucracy at the expense of legislative and judicial institutions, or the gaining of substantial power by the upper levels of an administrative hierarchy within the capital. Organizational theorists discuss the term, sometimes modified by "administrative," particularly in the latter sense.⁷⁵ Joseph A. Litterer, for instance, says that in "centralization," all or at least most important decisions are made by one individual or a very small group of individuals and this usually occurs at the top of the organizational hierarchy.⁷⁶ Consequently, they define "decentralization" as the transfer of power to a lower hierarchical level and view it mainly as a general problem within an organization.

This understanding of decentralization, however, lacks an important aspect, the territorial dimension. According to Fesler, one can view "decentralization" as a condition or a trend in an areal distribution of power. This view contrasts the powers of a government whose formal authority extends over a large geographic area (e.g., a nation) with the powers of other government whose formal authority is confined to particular spatial segments or sub-areas (e.g., regions, states or provinces, districts, local communities, etc.). Here, the important dimensional setting is geographic and the classic issue is that of the whole and the individual parts.⁷⁷

74. J. Blondel, op.cit., p. 117.

75. A. R. Negandhi and B. C. Reimann, "Task Environment, Decentralization and Organizational Effectiveness," Human Relations, Vol. 26, No. 2 (April 1973) : 203-214; Roger Mansfield, "Bureaucracy and Centralization," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec. 1973) : 477-488; M. Kochen and K. W. Deutsch, "Delegation and Control in Organizations with Varying Degrees of Decentralization," Behavioral Science, Vol. 22, No. 4 (July 1977) : 258-269; Herbert Kaufman, "Administrative Decentralization and Political Power," Public Administration Review, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Jan/Feb 1969) : 3-14; John W. Macy, "To Decentralize and To Delegate," Public Administration Review, Vol. 30, No. 4 (July/Aug 1970) : 438-444.

76. Joseph A. Litterer, The Analysis of Organizations (NY : Wiley, 1965) : 379.

77. J. W. Fesler (1968), op.cit., p. 370.

Some scholars have sought to develop terms to distinguish between territorial and non-territorial decentralization. Maass, for example, refer to the former as the areal division of powers and the latter as the capital division of powers.⁷⁸ Pfiffner and Sherwood make a distinction between territorial and functional decentralization.⁷⁹ It is this emphasis upon the territorial organization and distribution of power that is particularly useful in providing a definitional anchor in an effort to empirically measure decentralization among and within countries.

V. Conclusion

Many conflicting arguments for or against governmental decentralization have been made by scholars as well as governmental officials with no conclusive evidence. Traditional approach to understand the issue of governmental decentralization was either normative or prescriptive rather than theoretical. "Governmental decentralization" needs to be measured as an independent variable in order to test various conflicting hypotheses which have been suggested not only in the industrialized nations but in the Third World. In this article, two major issues were addressed to build a theory of governmental decentralization: conceptual ambiguities and methodological difficulties. Based upon this discussion, another research will be conducted subsequently to measure the actual degree of governmental decentralization from a comparative perspective.

78. A. Maass, *op.cit.*, p. 10.; a "capital division of powers" means that the total capacity to govern is divided among governmental officials and bodies of officials(e.g., a legislative chamber) at the capital city of a defined political community. On the other hand, an "areal division of powers" means that the total capacity to govern is divided among areas or regions which exist or can be created within the political community.

79. John M. Pfiffner and Frank P. Sherwood, *Administrative Organization*(Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1960): 195; a "functional decentralization" refers to the distribution of functions or powers between the political rulers of society at the central level, whereas a "territorial decentralization" means the transfer of power to an organization that is responsible for a subarea of the social territory.

〈國文抄錄〉

“地方分權化”의 理論定立을 爲한 概念的·方法論的 考察

金 益 植

최근들어 國內學界에서는 地方自治制의 도입문제와 더불어 地方分權化(governmental decentralization)에 대한 論議가 활발히 이뤄지고 있는데, 우리보다 훨씬 앞서 地方分權을 이룩하고 여러 試行錯誤를 경험한 歐·美諸國에서는 地方分權化를 어떻게(how) 이룩할 것인가? 하는 소위 制度化(institutionalization)의 문제뿐 아니라, 보다 근원적인 地方分權化에 관한 理論定立(theory-building)을 시도하려 하고 있다. 地方分權化現像은 왜(why) 일어나며, 發生에 필요한 條件들(conditions)에는 어떤 것이 있는지, 分權化에 따르는 結果(consequences)는 실제로 어떠한지에 관해 一般的이고도 普遍的인 說明이 不在한 상태에서 分權化를 이룩하는 方法에만 치중하는 것은 先·後가 뒤바뀐 것이며 아울러 많은 誤謬를 범할 가능성도 있는 것이다. 集權과 分權의 문제를 둘러싼 그간의 學界의 論議는 서로 상충되는 主張들에 의해 兩分되어 있는 실정인 데, 소위 集權論者(centralists)에 의해 集權이 가져오는 여러 가지 長點들이 주장되는 한편으로 分權論者(decentralists)들은 그와 상반되는 分權의 長點을 역설하곤 하였다. 마찬가지로 短點에 관해서도 集權 또는 分權을 지지하는 學者들은 서로 배타적인 주장을 해 왔었다. 問題는 集權과 分權을 통해 유발되는 이같은 結果

(consequences) 또는 影響(impacts)들이 실제로 檢證됨이 없이 하나의 主張(arguments)들로서 우리에게 제시되어 온 점이다. James Fesler는 이같은 學界의 경향을 가르켜 教條的 接近方法(doctrinal approach)에만 의존해 왔다고 비판하였다. 여기서 우리에게 하나의 課題가 주어지는 데, 集權 또는 分權은 과연 어떠한 結果를 실제로 가져오는가? 에 대한 經驗的(empirical)이고도 實證的(positive)인 研究가 필요하게 되는 것이다. 이 경우 분명한 것은 集權 또는 分權이 하나의 獨立變數(independent variable)이자 說明變數(explanatory variable)로서 各各이 가져 올 結果로서의 長·短點들은 從屬變數가 되어지는 것이다. 集權이나 分權을 獨立變數의 시각에서 이해하고 접근할 때 발생하는 問題들 가운데 本考에서는, 論議의 始發로서, 우선 集權이나 分權을 어떻게 이해하고 정의할 것인가? 에 관련된 概念化(conceptualization)의 문제와 그다음으로는 集權 또는 分權의 相對的 程度를 測定(measurement)하는 문제에 관해 고찰해보고 있다. 集權과 分權을 概念化하는 데 있어 첫번째 장애는 言語 그자체에 내재된 兩分法(dichotomy)이다. 이같은 兩分的 성질은 우리의 사고를 兩者擇一(either-or)의 강요하며 集權論者 또는 分權論者로 나뉘어, 前

前者는 集權과 效率性(efficiency)을, 後者는 分權과 國民性(democracy)을 同一視하는 教條的 傾向을 띄게 되는 것이다. 따라서 集權과 分權을 따로 따로 분리해서 생각할 것이 아니라 하나의 連續體(continuum)로서 이해할 필요가 있다. 다시 말해, 集權과 分權은 “權限의 地域的 配分(areal distribution of power)”이란 한 連續的인 概念의 兩極端을 나타낼 뿐이며 그 중간에 수많은 형태의 政府體制(governmental system)가 위치할 수 있는 것이다. 한마디로 集權과 分權의 概念은 地域的(territorial)인 權限配分の 相對的 程度(relative degree)를 나타내는 말로서 實際로 連續體의 兩極端에 위치하는 國家는 존재하기 어렵다고 하겠다. 그밖에도 分權의 概念化에 있어 고려되어야 할 몇가지 爭點들, 예를들어, 靜態的 視角(static view)과 動態的 視角(dynamic view)의 문제, 分權化를 둘러싼 다양한 語義(semantics), 分權과 地方自治(local autonomy)와의 구분, 分權과 聯邦主義(federalism)와의 관계 및 權限의 機能的 配分(functional power distribution)과 地域的 配分(territorial power

distribution)의 문제를 고찰해 보고 있다. 方法論的(methodological) 視覺에 있어선 分權의 相對的 程度를 測定(measurement)할 필요성에 관해 문제제기를 하고 實際的인 測定은 뒤따를 論文에서 다루기로 하였다. 앞서의 Fesler는 分權의 理論定立과 관련된 몇가지 方法論的 문제들 가운데 測定에 있어서의 결함을 지적한 바 있는데, 실제로 기왕에 행해진 經驗的 研究들 가운데 分權의 程度를 測定하려는 노력이 있어 왔으나 대부분 그 信賴度(reliability)나 妥當度(validity)에 있어 의문을 제기받는 실정이다. 分權의 相對的 程度에 관해 測定이 올바르게 이뤄짐으로서, 우리는 獨立變數로서의 分權과 從屬變數들로서의 여러 政治·經濟·行政的인 結果들(consequences)과의 관계를 實證的으로 밝혀 낼 수가 있는 것이다. 구체적 方法으로는 서로 다른 分權化의 水準에 있는 國家들 간의 比較分析(comparative analysis)을 이용하거나, 어떤 國家內的 特定時點을 前後한 比較方法(time-series analysis)을 이용할 수도 있겠다.