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APPROACHES TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF DECENTRALIZATION*

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"Decentralization" is an apparently simple term. Yet the appearance is deceiving and often leads to simplistic treatments that generalize too broadly, start from a doctrinaire position predetermining answers to concrete problems, or concentrate on a single phase of decentralization to the exclusion of others. "Decentralization" is a term of rich conceptual and empirical meaning; it can designate static fact and dynamic process; and it can refer to pure ideal-type and to moderate incremental change.

The understanding of complexity is often advanced less by immediate search for the single path that will carry us to the heart of the matter than by successive exploration of different avenues of approach, some of which may be then found unpromising and others of which may seem to be converging toward the goal of understanding. My intent in the present paper is to examine four such approaches to the problem of decentralization, each of which seems important to a rounded view of the topic but none of which has yet been carried to the point of resolution. The approaches lend themselves to pairing. The first two are concerned with doctrine and with politics, and so with the scope and complexity of decentralization and with interpretive attitudes. The last two are concerned with specifically administrative problems: the forced choices—or the opportunities for reconciliation—between function and area as bases of decentralization, and between law-and-order and economic-and-social-development as the responsibilities of decentralized administration. These last two problems of approach will be only briefly delineated.

Before turning to these several approaches, however, we may appropriately note three methodological problems that trouble political scientists' efforts to move discussions of decentralization from

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generalities to a degree of precision. They may be briefly designated as linguistic, mensural, and differential deficiences.

Our languages dichotomize "centralization" and "decentralization," a peculiarity that easily converts to a polarization and antithesis that poorly serve political science. We appear to have neither a term that embraces the full continuum between the two poles, nor a term that specifies the middle range where centralizing and decentralizing tendencies are substantially in balance.

A second problem is the weakness of indices of centralization and decentralization. Power is a complex phenomenon and its distribution difficult to measure. It is this that makes available measures (e.g., distribution of governmental expenditures, revenues, employees, and workload) only a *faute de mieux* approach to comparing degrees of decentralization among countries or among different time periods in a single country.[1]

A third problem is the difficulty of differentiating degrees of decentralization within a single country at a given time. Particular regions, provinces, and local governments are differentially treated in practice. Constitutions and general statutes mislead us, and the urge to generalize tempts us to treat evidences of variety as minor deviations from the norm, worthy at most of parenthetical reference. Yet to homologize metropolis and village as "local governments," primitive areas and highly civilized areas as "states" or "provinces," and prosperous areas and endemically depressed areas as "regions" is likely to obscure as much as enlighten our discourses on general patterns of decentralization.[2]

[1]There are of course problems of statistical validity and reliability in the available cross-national measures of decentralization. A major effort to resolve some of these problems, as well as to open possibilities of correlation between these measures and other national variables, is being undertaken by the Yale Political Data Program. See Bruce M. Russett, et. al., *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1964).

That the problem is more than statistical, however, is suggested by the difficulty American political scientists would have in rank-ordering their own fifty states in terms of degree of state-local centralization, or even in naming the most centralized and the most decentralized states.

[2]Differentiating characteristics are, of course, far more numerous than those mentioned in the text. For example, in the United States, eight of the fifty states contain about half of the national population; in four states the Federal Government owns between 64 and 94 percent of the land; the states of Alaska and Wyoming each receive Federal grants-in-aid that per capita are about six times what New Jersey or Florida receives; and the Federal Government's

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Acknowledgement of these problems of language, measurability, and variety is the first step in attracting talent to their solution. Meantime, as in this paper, the tools of analysis we use must be blunter than we should like.

1. *The doctrinal approach*

Governmental arrangements institutionalize the means for maximizing some values and for minimizing others. How far the political scientist *qua* scientist should engage in choosing or rank-ordering the values is a question debated within the profession. But there is probably no disagreement to the proposition that he should diligently seek to identify which governmental arrangements institutionalize which means for achieving which values. At the same time, unless he chooses to construct abstract, single-value models, his specifications will demonstrate awareness that in any real political system a number of values clamor for recognition. The *satisfactory* institutionalization of several may mean the *maximum* institutionalization of none.

Decentralization is a means to the achievement of a number of end-values. However, by close association with certain of those values, decentralization appears to have been transformed into a value in its own right, and so into an article of faith for "right-thinking people," and into an end-value for which political scientists need merely specify how it may be maximized. This transformation has been accompanied by a romantic idealization of decentralization which, along with the hardening of doctrine, seems dysfunctional for political science—just as would be an assertive and sentimental advocacy of centralization as the means to, or embodiment of, the nation's organic unity, economic efficiency, or historic destiny. We are all witnesses to how tragic can be the consequences of centralization as the means for maximizing values chosen by one or a few powerful men. But it does not follow that the opposite value, decen-

efforts to nullify official state and local policies of racial discrimination are focused on eleven Southern states, only a few of which constitute the hard core of resistance (e.g., the presence of Negroes of voting age who are registered and so entitled to vote range from 7 percent in Mississippi to 65 percent in Tennessee). In these circumstances, which have rough parallels in other countries, generalizations about national-state relations and their centralist-decentralist characteristics must be read (and preferably advanced) with caution.

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tralization, is an absolute good. If, as appears true, decentralization has hardened into a dogma that furnishes the conscious or unconscious premise of much political analysis and prescription, an effort to explore its articles of faith and even its mysteries may be timely.

The doctrinal case for decentralization usually rests on a romantic view of both the locality and the cultural region. Part of the argument is an invocation of tradition, and so of history. Before the nation was, the towns and reginos were. Indeed, they have endured a series of national regimes and some have been successively incorporated in different nations as boundaries shifted after wars, dynastic marriages, and inheritances. Europe is so replete with familiar examples that I cite instead the less obvious case of the United States—whose New York City was first the Dutch New Amsterdam; whose Louisiana and much of the Middle West were part of the vast territory ceded to France by Spain and purchased from Napoleon by President Thomas Jefferson; whose Texas was first a part of Mexico, then an independent republic, and finally a state of the United States; whose Alaska was purchased from Russia.

The strongest doctrinal case for decentralization is the one focused on the local community—the city, town, or village. There are hard facts to start with, particularly the community's concrete reality[3] (in contrast to the vagueness of cultural regions) and its possession in all countries of some powers of local government. Even the French doctrine of tutelage assumes the existence of the communes as centers of decision-making.

Yet the hard facts of the case are overlaid with romantic elements. The invoking of a historical tradition of local autonomy is one indication of the role of sentiment. In Vietnam an ancient saying is that even the Emperor must not come past the grass fence bordering the village without permission of the village elders. In India the *panchayat raj* supposedly embodies an ancient tradition of

[3]The argument is weakened, however, where the "natural" communities of settlement and sentiment are so tiny that even a "village" has to be an artificial construct joining a number of settlements into a new "community." American readers at least are often misled by discussions of villages in India and elsewhere because of unfamiliarity with this artificial factor. For brief notes of the problem see Henry Maddick, *Democracy, Decentralisation and Development* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 119-122; and John T. Dorsey, Jr., "The Bureaucracy and Political Development in Viet Nam," in Joseph LaPalombara (ed.), *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 352f.

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local autonomy.[4] English and American local self-government has been held to stem from practices of ancient Germanic tribes. The historical scholarship supporting such traditions is often faulty, but romanticizing is seldom deterred by scruples of accuracy.

Romantics are inclined to idealize. This may take again a pseudo-historical form: there was a golden age sometime in the past when local affairs were well managed by the local communities' respected leaders and all the present-day inhumanities, complexities, and inefficiencies of centralized government were absent. In developed countries this is closely connected with a nostalgia for a rural, agricultural society that has now yielded to one predominantly urban and industrialized. The aspiration is to turn the clock back, to restore traditional values and face-to-face dealings between men. In at least some of the developing countries the initial impulse is to reject the values and institutions of the period of colonial rule and re-establish a culture that expresses indigenous values and modes of behavior. The picture offered of a harmony among men in their little communities with a generous sharing of dignity, economic satisfaction, and happiness is often so inaccurate historically that one suspects it is borrowed from philosophers' portrayals of an idyllic state of nature before men organized politically or is a time-reversed vision of the withering away of the state.

Much of the idealizing of local autonomy, however, avoids the pit-falls of seeking to revive a golden age. Such idealizing may instead be intendedly relevant to contemporary life. To consider this body of decentralist literature we must first recall an important distinction. "Local self-government," though a single formula, pertains to different kinds of communities. One is the city, with thousands or millions of inhabitants, a complex society built on industry and commerce, an aggregate of many specialized workers, managers, entrepreneurs, and professional men dependent one on another for provision of the basic essentials of life as well as the amenities possible in an urban culture. The other is the small town, village, or rural area with only a few hundred inhabitants, most of whom are

[4]The literature on the *panchayati raj* is voluminous. It includes, and is selectively cited in, Hugh Tinker, "The Village in the Framework of Development," and Richard L. Park, "Administrative Co-ordination and Economic Development in the Districts of India," in Ralph Braibanti and Joseph J. Spengler (eds.), *Administration and Economic Development in India* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press; and London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 94-133, 134-151 (esp. at p. 138).

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engaged in agriculture and minor skills that serve agriculture; most families produce their own essential needs of food, clothing, housing, and fuel, and what little else is needed can be provided by someone in the local community—priest, physician, midwife, veterinarian, teacher—or by a minute quantity of imports. This is not to be confused with the distinction between developed and newly developing countries: the memoirs of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower recall fondly that their boyhoods were spent in just the kind of rural, small-town environment that I have described.

The romantic case for decentralization typically apostrophizes the virtues of the rural, small-town society. But the historic fact appears to be that it was the cities that first successfully laid claim to rights of self-government. In medieval England and France, for example, the cities obtained grants from the kings that wholly or substantially freed them from the jurisdiction of national field agents —in England the sheriffs, in France the bailiffs and seneschals. It is rural and small towns that have remained wards of the national governments.[5] If this seems curious it may well be because the rural communities had few distinctively governmental functions to engage them. Much of the limited amount of collective activity was traditional in the society—barn-raising in the American farm country, a day's labor each year on local road repairing, charity for the unfortunate, volunteer help in putting out fires—or an obligation whose performance by tenant farmers was organized by the landlord. Little remained for the local government as such: mostly arresting, judging, and imprisoning violators of the community's peace and order. Its heavier duties were likely to be assigned as burdens by the national government: assessing land for tax purposes, collecting revenues for national even more than for local purposes, drafting soldiers. But as often as not these were functions of the national

[5]In federal countries, it is the state or provincial governments, rather than the national government, that provide tutelage for the towns and rural areas. In the United States the process of municipal incorporation is principally, though not wholly, a means for the larger communities to acquire a degree of self-government; rural territory and unincorporated villages and towns remain subject to county governments which in legal doctrine are agents of the state government rather than autonomous governments. In unitary countries the tutelage is administratively performed by the prefect and subprefect: in France I have been struck by the extent of the subprefect's local role—extending often to actual preparation of a commune's budget—and by the socio-psychological distance between the elite corps of administrators and the communes' "peasant" officials.

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government's field agents in the area or he stood by as supervisor to assure that local governments performed their national responsibilities.

Nonetheless, the romantic case for decentralization dwells on rural virtues, not urban virtues. The case is so well known that it need be only sketchily suggested here. Village people choose good officials for they know them personally as neighbors, respect qualities of character, and cannot be fooled by political campaigns and mass media. The officials' actions are subjected to constant and critical scrutiny. In a small community communication processes are highly efficient: if nothing escapes notice, nothing escapes discussion for conversation is the principal form of recreation. The villagers can gather for a full meeting when the occasion requires it—something impossible in cities; in Africa the barraza, in New England the town meeting are illustrative. Only in such a setting can democracy really operate; any larger setting requires the sending of representatives to a distant city where they deal with representatives they have not previously known and where the legislative decisions are remote from the people to be affected. The village is not an artificial construct of government; it is truly a community with social and economic integration, a complete social system, an organism with a vitality of its own, and the governmental aspects of it are integral to the system, rather than superimposed upon it from the outside.

It is an attractive picture, one that most of us wish were true. But its attractiveness is that of romantic work of art, or that of a reifying of ideological concepts that are widely cherished.[6] It necessarily generalizes about hundreds of thousands of rural communities and must be taken by the reasonable man as a probabilistic state-

[6]Further suggestive of the romantic quality of the expectation of rural-urban differentials in local participation and of variation of influence in inverse relation to size of community is a finding of Gabriel Almond's and Sidney Verba's study of political attitudes and democracy in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. Although average levels of local participation vary among the countries, there is no significant difference by size of town or city within any one country. Five size categories were used, the lowest at 5,000 or less population and the largest at 100,000 or more. The test applied is individuals' belief that they are competent in their relations with their local government, a composite of measures showing a person's belief that he can understand local politics, can and would act to influence the local government, expects to succeed in influencing it, and has sometime actually attempted to influence it. Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 234f.

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ment rather than a prediction about each single community. Even with this shift of terms indulged, its accuracy is doubtful.

In many countries and many communities village government is conservative government. In villages and towns where economic and social power is strongly hierarchical, the local government tends to be dominated by landlords and other possessors of economic power. If, as is often the case, they do not hold governmental office, they effectively influence the choice of officials. In villages and towns in strongly traditional societies the local elders control local government. Even in circumstances other than those outlined, the isolated life of the village produces leaders with little interest in or exposure to the outside world, unalert to the possibility of emulation of more advanced villages, and indisposed to seek advice from more sophisticated officials of the provincial or national government. Here the spirit of innovation is rare; a sufficient justification is that "We've always done it that way." The young men who acquire education and are moved by ambition are lost as potential village leaders because they seek greater opportunities in the cities and in the higher levels of government.

Being conservative government, village government is likely to resist opportunities to expand its services to the common people and increase regulation of those having economic power or traditionally high status. It tends to be routine and minimal government that attracts little interest even under democratic conditions. In the United States the turnout of voters is lowest for local elections, with both national presidential elections and state elections attracting greater proportions of the electorate.[7] Even if there are rival candi-

[7]A study of 176 elections for governors of 15 states in the period 1926-1952 revealed that when held at the same time as presidential elections, 48 percent of the gubernatorial elections attracted over 70 percent of the potential electorate, while of those held in years other than those of presidential elections, only 5 percent attracted over 70 percent of the electorate. Indeed, in almost half of these non-presidential-year-elections, less than 50 percent of the electorate participated. V. O. Key, Jr., *American State Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1956), p. 16.

A study of the most recent elections for mayor and councilmen in the 729 American cities of over 25,000 population showed that in half the cities 50 percent of adults voted when the municipal election was held concurrently with state or national elections, 44 percent when held concurrently with other local elections, and 29 percent when held independently of any other election. *Municipal Year Book: 1963* (Chicago, Illinois: International City Managers' Association, 1963), pp. 82f. Over 60 percent of adult citizens vote in national presidential elections and over 40 percent in elections to the U.S. House of Representatives in the election years when the presidency is not at stake.

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dates for local office the contest tends to be highly personalized, with voters choosing their personal friends, or, out of charity, choosing a man who needs the job since he is physically handicapped, too old for active work, or otherwise unlikely to qualify for regular employment. If political parties are organized locally, it is common for one party to be so dominant in a local area that in fact there is no party contest;[8] in many predominantly one-party communities the real rivalry, if there is one, is between personal factions within the party. The possible patterns of local politics are too varied for description here. In the main, however, local politics tend not to be issue-oriented politics.[9] That is, the people are not asked to decide on the direction and pace of local government policies. This, of

[8]In elections to the Kansas State House of Representatives during the 1940-1962 period, an average of 43 (out of 125) seats were uncontested, and the number uncontested in individual election years ranged from 25 to 89. In elections to the Kansas Senate an average of 11 of the 40 seats were similarly noncompetitive, and in one election year 25 were uncontested. Earl A. Nehring, "Party Competition in Kansas State Elections," *Your Government* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas) 18 (October 15, 1962), pp. 1-3.

In South Dakota's 1962 general election, out of the 439 county offices only 159 (35.5 percent) had more than one candidate; the overall 1940-1960 average was 42.4 percent. Alan L. Clem, "The 1962 Election in South Dakota," *Public Affairs* (Vermilion, South Dakota: State University of South Dakota) 12 (February 15, 1963), pp. 3f.

[9]The problem is analytically difficult. As the text goes on to indicate, the issue of increased taxation arouses public interest; the fact that it may not often be put before the people in rural communities does not establish that the people's known attitudes on it are not effectively influential. On the other hand, national and state political campaigns may be significantly personalized: interestingly, this appears to be increasing with the use of television in American campaigns, with the consequence, among others, that the larger political arena is acquiring, through technological advances, some of the virtues and defects of local politics. In newer nations, local campaigning may be issue-oriented, but often the issues raised are national and international and thus irrelevant to the problems facing the local community.

Further, advocates of local autonomy are often advocates of nonpartisanship, either because local affairs are deemed to turn on efficiency of means rather than choice among ends (i.e., road repair and garbage disposal, rather than the political question of "who gets what"), or because politics, parties, and politicians are disdained as divisive, self-seeking, and corrupt. This double advocacy is true of countries as different as India and the United States. In the latter the evidence is clear that nonpartisan local elections attract fewer voters. In the most recent elections before 1963 in cities of over 25,000 population, where the municipal election was held independently of any other elections, 27 percent of the adults voted in cities with nonpartisan elections and 41 percent voted in cities with partisan elections. *The Municipal Year Book: 1963* (Chicago: International City Managers' Association, 1963), p. 83. The association of democracy and local autonomy, therefore, is disserved by nonpartisanship (unless, of course, the pattern in the 729 cities of over 25,000 is grossly different from that in smaller communities).

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course, is wholly consistent with the conservative character of rural communities' governments. A community indisposed to innovate is not likely to be confronted with issues of policy. And when the electorate or town council does confront issues of policy, conservative dispositions tend to prevail; probably no level of government is less disposed to vote to raise taxes, and yet without increased revenue no advances can be made in education, public health, and other "local" responsibilities.[10]

Throughout the doctrinal approach, it should now be clear, is a tendency to link, then merge and confuse, decentralization and democracy. So basic to the case is this confusion that it merits explicit consideration. Two points are basic. First, the fact is that local governments, like national governments, take a number of forms and that neither level of government has a distinctive impulse toward the democratic form.[11] Second, decentralization can readily exist in the absence of local democracy. The prevalent confusion on this point is partly verbal. "Local self-government" is an ambiguous term. Though often equated with local democracy, it can as readily mean simply local autonomy without specification of the power structure within the locality.

[10]For perceptive and critical appraisals of rural and small-town democracy, see Roscoe C. Martin, *Grass Roots* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1957) and Lane W. Lancaster, *Government in Rural America* (2nd ed., New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1952). A revealing study of a particular community is Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1960).

I do not pretend to have done full justice to the advocates of decentralization. Many arguments are neglected and some virtually resist analysis. The most forceful of the latter simply declare irrelevant all questions of efficiency and substantive consequences: Better for a local community to govern itself, however badly, than for a national government to exercise power or influence on matters not exclusively national (e.g., foreign affairs and national defense). The Doctrine, though infused with the *petitiou principii* fallacy, may be extended to include a doctrine of progress through learning: Experience in exercise of power builds toward responsible behavior, and local oligarchy is sure to breed dissatisfaction leading to democratization. The latter seems testable, e.g., in the centuries of undemocratic but quite autonomous local government in England. For a valuable affirmation of the decentralist view, see Duane Lockard's excellent *The Politics of State and Local Government* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963), pp. 44-56.

[11]I am using "democratic" in the sense of popular control through elections including the election of representatives to legislative bodies. "Pure democracy," the assembly of all citizens to vote directly on measures, in concededly an option only for small communities, though the device of the referendum extends the range of applicability to large cities, states, and, in some countries, the nation.

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The point is perhaps best demonstrated by reference to a nation fully committed to both democracy and local self-government. In England, local autonomy is centuries old, but local democratic self-government is largely a development of the last hundred years. Of the English boroughs, Helen M. Cam has written that in the charters of incorporation granted to boroughs "the national government definitely placed power and responsibility in the hands of the governing clique, and narrowed or even eliminated popular control. From the time of Henry VII, royal policy steadily strengthened the position of the oligarchy. . . . By the 19th century in only a few exceptional cases, notably at Berwick, Norwich, and Ipswich, was there any trace of democracy in the borough constitution: it was only in connection with parliamentary elections that, here and there, the whole body of townsmen had any share in the liberties of the town."[12] It was the creation of a uniform borough franchise and the sweeping away of "the whole mass of obsolete and unrepresentative institutions" by the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 that added democracy to the boroughs' local autonomy. Similarly, outside the municipal boroughs, as recently as eighty years ago local government in England was notoriously undemocratic. Members of the aristocratic landed gentry, serving as justices of the peace, held the principal powers of local government.[13] Only in 1888 did elected county councils come into being, followed in 1894 by elected rural district and parish councils.

There is a further source of confusion about the relation of democracy to local self-government. This arises from the repeated assertion that people are highly involved in local affairs and only slightly interested in the affairs of the "far-away" national government. If more moderately phrased, a statement of differential degree of interest would be correct for most countries, and would have special force for countries with large agricultural populations and

[12]Helen M. Cam, "Borough," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1951), vol. 3, pp. 919-22, at pp. 920f. See also W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Theories of Local Government* (London School of Economics and Political Science, 1961).

[13]The model of undemocratic local government at home may have affected British administration of colonies. "Indeed, there is evidence that the early district officers of Northern Nigeria saw in the emirs the counterpart of the landed gentlemen to which they were accustomed in England. In consequence, they were prepared to permit the emirs the same latitude of powers in local administration as the local justice of the peace might have had at home." L. Gray Cowan, *Local Government in West Africa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 65.

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low levels of national integration. Granted the obvious facts of the immediacy of local problems, greater potential access to neighbors holding posts of local governmental power, and one's own higher probability of being chosen for a local post than for one in a larger area with its wider competition, the consequence is not necessarily a strong case for decentralization.

Instead, one is struck by the facts that in five countries recently studied by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba,[14] drawing on some five thousand interviews, (a) a surprisingly large proportion of the people feel no involvement in public affairs, national or local, despite assumptions about the natural disposition to at least local involvement; (b) interest in national affairs is quite substantial and favorable; and (c) actual participation and even motivation to participate in local affairs is quite low.

Alienation from public affairs is so substantial in some countries that the distinctive orientations to national and local governments have slight bearing on the question of democracy. Asked about how much effect the national government and the local government each has on one's day-to-day life, the answers that there was no effect or that they did not know were given by from a fourth to over two-thirds of the persons asked in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Mexico, and the proportions did not vary as between national and local governments.[15] From a fourth to two-thirds of the respondents in each of these countries and in the United States "never talk politics."[16]

If we turn to how attitudes vary toward the national and the local governments, there is confirmation for the expectation that people are more involved in local than in national affairs, but the difference in sense of ability to do something about an unjust or

[14]*Op. cit., supra*, note 6. Almond and Verba interpret their data as confirming the customary view that citizens are more interested and involved in local affairs than in national affairs. The interpretation I give, though based on Almond's and Verba's data, moves in a different direction. Part of the difference occurs because their data do confirm the customary view (when stated as simply "more" or "less"), whereas I am struck by the failure of the data to confirm the common assumptions that people are *highly* involved in local affairs, have *sharply* discrepant attitudes toward national and local governments, etc. It would take disproportionate space in this article to do full justice to the rich data provided on the central question and to present the several possible arrangements and interpretations of the data. This note, however, suffices to caution that those who know the data best derive an emphasis different from mine, and that my use of their data is highly selective.

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 80f.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

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harmful proposed national law or local regulation is relatively small in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Mexico, though relatively large in Germany and Italy.[17] Even in these two countries, if we eliminate those who feel incapable of affecting decisions at any governmental level, over half of the remainder feel able to influence the national government,[18] so that in none of the five countries is there as sharp a dichotomy between local and national orientations as is sometimes assumed. Furthermore, appraisals of the national government's role are predominantly favorable. From 58 to 76 percent of those who recognized that their national government has some effect on their daily lives believe that the national government's activities tend to improve conditions in the country. (And most of the others, except in Mexico, believe that those activities sometimes improve conditions and sometimes do not.)[19]

Unfortunately, the subjective sense of ability to exercise local influence (ranging from 51 to 78 percent)[20] is not strongly sustained in practice. Of those who claim such a sense of ability locally, only about a half or less say they would in fact attempt to try to do something about a proposed unjust or harmful local regulation, and, except in the United States, less than a fifth have ever tried to influence a local decision.[21] Only 10 to 51 percent (10 to 39 percent, excluding the United States) of the people say that the ordinary man should be active in his community.[22]

Relating these extended comments to our introductory concern about the doctrinal approach to decentralization, the lessons to be drawn are several. First, as Carl J. Friedrich has observed, it is "essential 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. This continual change is a matter of fact; but unless it is clearly recognized and institutionally provided for, all decentralization of power . . . [is] apt to become [a] source of tension and conflict. . . ."[23] This way of looking at the problem properly implies a continuum between the poles of centralization and decentralization and one

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 185.
[18]Calculated from data in *ibid.*, p. 186.
[19]*Ibid.*, p. 82.
[20]*Ibid.*, p. 185.
[21]*Ibid.*, p. 186, 188.
[22]*Ibid.*, p. 169.
[23]Carl J. Friedrich, *Man and His Government* (New York, London, etc.: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1963), p. 667.

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may expect most governments to be mixed systems and "systems in motion." Second, it follows that decentralization is not so absolute, so unmixed, a good that one's responsibility as a political scientist can be discharged by operating from the premise of "the more decentralization the better." Third, as I have tried to illustrate but now would formulate more clearly, one of the greatest elements of confusion is the close linkage of democracy, freedom, and decentralization. It is this association of values and means that has introduced the most difficult problems of logic and practice. The freedom of the individual is, to be sure, closely identified with the idea of islands of self-determination. Yet in extreme principle it can mean anarchy; and in muddled practice it can be so closely associated with islands of group or community self-determination that subordination of the individual to a local autocracy may be lost from view, as can the potentially liberating influence of a national leadership committed to development of social and economic opportunities for individual achievement of personal goals. Fourth, one of the most curious aspects of decentralization is the responsibility that a national government must assume to assure realization of the goals that decentralization, as doctrinally advocated, is supposed to serve. National legislation, overriding local objections and implemented by national administrative action, is often required to democratize the selection of local officials, to establish viable units of local government with the size, resources, and diversity of interests that are preconditions of effective local self-government, to recruit and train skilled staff for local administration, to minimize corruption and regularize fiscal practices, and to provide grants from national revenue to help finance the more impoverished communities. The paradox is often by-passed by the congratulatory thought that this is all for the good end: decentralization. Yet these elaborate interventions in local government by the central government—often to save local self-government from itself—are central constraints that strikingly qualify the idealized vision of a decentralized polity.[24]

[24]The confusion of individual freedom with nonintervention by government in the affairs of corporate groups that may suppress or reduce freedom is common. An American illustration is the enthusiasm with which large industrial corporations greeted Friedrich A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), only to discover that the author favored intervention, as under the anti-trust laws, to preserve competition against private monopolies and combinations in restraint of trade.

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2. The political approach

Decentralization occurs in a political setting. It is this setting that substantially accounts for initiatives to decentralize, conditions the operation of decentralization, and is in turn altered by the political consequencies, both anticipated and unanticipated, of decentralized structures and processes. For example, as I have elsewhere suggested, the establishment and operation of a prefectoral system of field administration is affected by four variables: "(a) the nature and seriousness of threats to stability of the state, to the pattern of government, and to the current rulers' retention of central power; (b) the availability of stability-maximizers alternative or complementary to the field organization; (c) the adequacy of the ruling group's resources for establishing and maintaining a field system against the external pressures of other powerful groups in the society, and, closely related to this, the ruling group's mastery of the repertory of methods for keeping field administrators in loyal service of the goal of stability; and (d) the effect of internal pressures for fragmentation of power."[25]

Avoiding revisitation of the political aspects of a prefectoral system, I shall here call attention to other political dimensions of decentralization: (a) the shaping of policy outcomes; (b) the interplay of elements within the total political system; and (c) the phenomenon of illusory decentralization.

Decentralization of a combined political-administrative character, such as devolution to subnational democratic governments, has political features that, though often explicit or implicit in the rhetoric of decentralist-minded people, are not always clearly incorporated in more analytical treatments. One objective of decentralization is certainly to transfer decision-making on certain policy matters to subnational constituencies. Three probable consequences should be noted. First, and most obviously, there will in many instances be different policy outcomes when a majority of a subnational area's population or of its legislative body makes the decisions than there would be if a majority of the national population or parliament were making the decisions. Similarly, of course, the population of a

[25]James W. Fesler, "The Political Role of Field Administration," in Ferrel Heady and Sybil L. Stokes (eds.), *Papers in Comparative Public Administration* (Ann Arbor), Michigan: Institute of Public Administration, University of Michigan, 1962), pp. 117-143. The quotation is at pp. 118f.

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local-government unit, and its town council, will often reach decisions different from those likely to be reached by the population or legislature of the province or state.

Second, the national *aggregate* of town (or provincial) decisions in the same policy field may significantly differ from the decisions that would have resulted from a national popular vote or the parliament's action. This is not only because in the latter case there would be a single policy applicable to the whole national area, while an aggregate of local policy decisions produces a patchwork pattern over the nation. In addition, the different shaping of electoral districts for local governments from those used for election of national legislators, variation in participation by voters in local and national elections, different orientations of local councillors from those of national legislators, and other factors may combine to make local decisions affecting a substantial majority of the nation's population consistently favor a policy opposite to that which the national parliament would have adopted. In the United States, for example, state legislatures, so constituted as to overrepresent rural and small-town constituencies, have neglected the interests of city dwellers though over half the nation's population lives in places of over 10,000 inhabitants; the national Congress is more attentive to urban interests, largely because of different electoral arrangements, and city people and city governments themselves often therefore look to the Congress for policies addressed to the solution of urban problems.[26]

Third, a real morcelization of decision-making may itself preclude the reaching of decisions that would probably attract majority support even on an aggregating, rather than amalgamating, basis. This is a familiar feature of interprovincial or intertown problems that cannot be dealt with effectively unless *every* directly affected province or town agrees in detail on a joint solution or on parallel, interlocking actions. Illustrative are the difficulties of interstate and intermunicipal agreement on control of pollution of any river that flows through several states or past several cities, with

[26]The United States Supreme Court has recently ruled that (a) Federal courts have jurisdiction to hear cases alleging that gross discrimination in state legislative representation of urban and rural voters violates the constitutional guarantee that no State shall deprive a person of "equal protection of the laws," and (b) representation in both houses of bicameral state legislatures must be apportioned on a population basis, as "the weight of a citizen's vote cannot be made to depend on where he lives." *Baker* v. *Carr* (1962), 369 U.S. 186; *Reynolds* v. *Sims,* and five related cases, (1964), 377 U.S. 533.

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the down-river states and cities the victims of pollution practices in up-river states and cities. Within metropolitan areas, where the large urbanized community is divided among a multiplicity of local governments (e.g., 250 or more in each of 11 American metropolitan areas, and reaching over 1,000 in the Chicago area), collaborative decision-making may be virtually impossible. In general, then, the smallest possible minority (i.e., one) of the governmental units concerned with a common problem has an effective veto over a decision favored by an extraordinary majority of people in the "problem-defined area." "Decisionlessness" in the face of urgent problems may be an unanticipated consequence of the localizing of decision-making power.

These political consequences of decentralization of decisional power are obvious to thoughtful students of local and provincial government. But the consequences, as noted earlier in this paper, tend to be obscured by invocation of democratic ideals. If democracy be taken to mean government by the majority, the critical question becomes "majority of what?" Much of the early advocacy of democracy was framed in terms of abstract principle, or specified a city-state as the ideal setting, or was wholly nationalist in emphasis.[27] Our doctrines stem from a time when town and adjoining farming-area interests were assimilated, and when each densely populated local area was under a single local government instead of ministered to by a multitude of abutting and overlapping local governments. With a few notable exceptions, there was slight grappling with the subtler questions of democracy that are posed by a governmental system that is multi-tiered and whose provincial and local governmental areas are noncongruent with the "natural" areas defined by the problems to be dealt with by these governments. "Majority of what?" was often simply answered by "majority of the people." The varieties of constituencies by which "the people" are grouped and the differential policy consequences of these groupings received scant attention. If the content of policy is a product of the majority that is likely to prevail in the constituency or legislature of a particular government, and if that is what principally motivates those outside the scholarly world who press for decen-

[27]A thoughtful review of an important part of political theory in relation to decentralization and democracy is Stanley Hoffman, "The Areal Division of Powers in the Writings of French Political Thinkers," in Arthur Maas (ed.), *Area and Power* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 113-149.

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tralization, then this political ingredient of decentralization should be adequately reflected in our scholarly literature. Taking account of probable policy outcomes is perfectly compatible with scientific analysis, but instead we have until recently tended to impute superior democratic values to small constituencies and to take as a standard premise that government is always too centralized.

A second neglect in studies of decentralization arises from failure to take account of the total political system (and, by extension, of the total social and economic system). Macroanalysis is always difficult, and much research must focus on particular aspects of a governmental system. The division of labor developed in the discipline of political science—at least in the countries with which I am most familiar—has tended to a division between those who study public administration and administrative law on the one hand, and those who study political parties, public opinion, electoral behavior, and legislative institutions and processes, on the other. However sound this be for some purposes, it may have blinded each group to relevancies that the other might contribute; particularly it has discouraged the development of scholars who would specifically blend the findings and approaches of the two fields.[28] Let me illustrate.

A formal description of the governmental systems of France, Britain, and the United States might distinguish them as unitary or federal, speak of the centralist tradition in France and the tradition of local self-government in Britain (though both are unitary governments), note that the French national prefect has no true counterpart in Britain or the United States, and observe that France and the United States have intermediate levels of government between nation and localities, while Britain does not. But before classifying these governmental systems as centralized or decentralized more information than the formal distribution of powers and the formal system of administration needs to be introduced. Partly because of administrative doctrine we tend to speak of a national legislative body that passes national laws that then are carried out

[28]Among the notable exceptions are V. O. Key, Jr., whose first book was *The Administration of Federal Grants to States* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1937), and David B. Truman, whose first book was *Administrative Decentralization: A Study of the Chicago Field Offices of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940). Both subsequently made notable contributions in the fields of political parties, public opinion, and legislative processes.

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by national administrative agents and enforced by national courts. But the national legislative body is composed of representatives elected by *local* constituencies that coincide with or divide or group the areas served by provincial and local governments. In France a number of these "national" legislators may also be mayors of towns and cities and members of the departmental council.[29] The point is that these "national" legislators have their political base in local constituencies, a remarkably decentralist feature of probably all democratic national governments.

It is a short step from legislators to political parties. In Britain and France the "localism" of legislators is apparently qualified by their dependence upon the national party for their candidacy for election (a dependence that probably varies in degree among the parties), by party discipline in the legislative process, and by the hazard of precipitating a new election if they deny their vote of confidence to the cabinet in power. In the United States the political party system is highly decentralized and party discipline in the Congress usually weak. Each national party is a mere confederation of state and local party organizations. A national senator or representative is therefore peculiarly attentive to his local constituents and his local political party organization.

To treat decentralization in purely administrative, formal-power, legislative, or political terms is clearly an inadequate way of gauging the degree of centralization or decentralization of the total governmental system. It is conceivable that decentralist legislative and political portions of the system make almost irrelevant the centralist qualities of the administrative portion of the system, because the national administrators will be charged with few responsibilities that involve national incursion into private and local concerns. With a multi-party system, the possible combinations and permutations are numerous. A locally elected national legislator may take an active and often influential interest in the national executive's choice of a prefect for his local area. In the United States Senate, the custom gracefully called "senatorial courtesy" permits a senator of the President's party to object to a presidential appointee to

[29]In some states of the United States the lieutenant governor and other politically elected or appointed state executive officials are also mayors of local governments. Of course, some state and national legislators may hold local political-party posts; some of these carry with them extensive power over local governmental affairs.

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serve in his state, on the ground that the appointee is "personally obnoxious" to the senator; the Senate will almost invariably support the senator and refuse confirmation of the appointment. Under such circumstances it can be foreseen that locally elected national legislators may choose, or greatly narrow the range of choice of, locally stationed national officials, and also take an active interest in some of the decisions that the national field agent confronts and seek to influence those decisions.

A third kind of problem, that of illusory decentralization, is presented when formal powers or administrative arrangements are purportedly decentralist but politically controlled or influenced by the center. This underlies the often skeptical reactions in the West to Soviet and East European decentralization. Local elections in a one-party state, if accompanied by strong hierarchical controls within the party, appear not to afford that freedom in making choices that is the essential ingredient of decentralization.[30] Similarly, a substantial decentralization of the bureaucratic apparatus, such as that effected by Khrushchev in 1957, may be offset by continued centralization of the party apparatus, by inclusion of all local-government and administratively decentralized activities in a national economic plan and comprehensive national budget, and by centralization of functions on which decentralized activities must depend (e.g., construction and equipment).[31] Nonetheless, pressures for decentralization of work and decision-making are strong in such systems. The scope of state action makes acute the costs of congestion at the center and central officials seek to reduce it by decentralizing; such pragmatic policies if widely practiced may become substantially irreversible, and decentralization may even attain the status of incorporation as a major item of official doctrine.[32] On the other hand, even in a centralized totalitarian system, field officials indulge in efforts to escape the frustrations of excessive controls, sometimes illegally distorting statistical reports and seeking to establish congenial "family circle" relations with the control officials.

[30]Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled* (rev. ed., Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 381-383.

[31]*Ibid.,* pp. 403-418.

[32]On Yugoslavia, see Antun Vratusa, "Patterns of Decentralization in Yugoslavia," in United Nations Technical Assistance Programme, *Decentralization for National and Local Develepoment* (New York: United Nations, 1962), pp. 226-243; Vratusa, "Decentralisation on the Basis of Selfgovernment [*sic*] in the

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The phenomenon of illusory decentralization is not peculiar to totalitarian systems, though the elements involved may be administrative, rather than political. Workload is often decentralized to field officials but with such detailed regulations or requirements of referral of cases to the capital that there is scarcely any effective decentralization of decision-making. In some circumstances even the substantial delegation of decision-making power may have some elements of illusion. It is a frequent complaint that when the United States Government makes grants-in-aid to the state governments they are accompanied by so many conditions and are so well supervised by Federal officials that state officials have very limited discretion in use of the money and administration of the program. The result is considerable perplexity as to whether federal grants-in-aid programs are centralist or decentralist in their total effect.[33] A more telling instance may be the U.S. Forest Service, generally regarded as highly decentralized, but interpreted by Herbert Kaufman as a case of illusory decentralization.[34] The forest rangers in the field, goes his argument, have been so well-trained in the forestry schools of the country and in the Forest Service itself that their decisions, apparently freely made, are substantially predictable, uniform, and nicely conformable to headquarters doctrine.

This last example suggests a broader and a most perplexing range of considerations in appraising, and especially comparing, nations' patterns of formal decentralization. Social and psychological factors make even a political approach seem unduly restricted. The "pre-conditioning" of citizens, including local and state officials

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Yugoslav Practice," a paper preesnted at the Sixth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, held at Geneva, September 21-25, 1964; and George W. Hoffman and Fred Warner Neal, *Yugoslavia and the New Communism* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), pp. 211f, 224-228, 489f.

On Poland, see Juliusz Gorynski, "Principles of Administrative Organization in Poland and the Decentralization Measures Adopted," in United Nations Technical Assistance Programme, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-174; Stanislaw Ehrlich, "The Social Aspects of Decentralization in a Socialist State: On the Example of Poland," and Sylwester Zawadski, "Decentralization and Democratic Development of the People's Councils in Poland," papers presented at the Sixth World Congress of the International Political Science Association (1964).

[33]U.S. 88th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Committee on Government Operations, *The Federal System as Seen by State and Local Officials* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963).

[34]Herbert Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960).

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and national field officers, occurs through children's experience with family patterns of authority and with groups of childhood friends, through the school system's inculcation of values and modes of acceptable behavior, and through the lessons inadvertently taught by the nation's communications media. Such pre-conditioning may build a sense of national or parochial identity, establish habits of conformity or rebellion, foster dependence on authority or harmonious accommodation of a variety of points of view, emphasize reliance on arbitrary use of power or concern for individual and minority interests. The building of a national culture in which certain kinds of actions are "unthinkable," or at least would precipitate strong disapproval by one's peers, helps create a situation in which formal authorization of autonomous behavior creates few risks. Decentralization, therefore, is more compatible with this kind of situation than where the range of autonomous behavior is very broad, including extremes that threaten the values of those responsible for deciding whether to decentralize or not.

3. *The administrative approach*

The administrative approach to decentralization is handicapped principally by the administrative preference for clarity of authority and orderliness in operations, because neither of these values is maximized by decentralization. We may start with a broad view that embraces both devolution to subnational governments and administrative deconcentration within a national government. Confusion of both power and responsibility attend devolution and deconcentration, and for much the same reasons.

A basic problem, certainly in developed countries, is inability to treat functions as wholes. In the United States, at least, we can no longer find comfort in the concept of "dual federalism" whereby the national government was supposedly responsible for one bundle of functions and the state governments for another bundle of quite different functions. It is a commonplace that the national and state governments share in almost every functional field other than defense, diplomacy, and postal service.[35] Local governments share in most of these joint functional fields and have scarcely any fields

[35]On this, as well as other aspects of American experience, a discerning analysis will be found in Morton Grodzins, "Centralization and Decentralization in the American Federal System," in Robert A. Goldwin (ed.), *A Nation of States* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), pp. 1-23.

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of their own.[36] In the developing countries, while the national government carries the prime responsibility, it is apparent that social and economic development requires penetration to local communities. Whether this means collaboration with local governments or direct national performance of functions at the local level is still in debate, but clearly the national government is not confining itself to functions that are purely national rather than local.

One may then visualize a pattern of two or three "levels" of governments indicated by horizontal lines, and of ten, twenty, or more functions indicated by vertical lines. In such a pattern the attribution of credit for program achievements or of blame for program failures becomes difficult. So, too, problems arise in coordinating functions at such lower levels as the state governments and local governments. The state governor or local mayor or their corresponding legislative bodies may suppose they have the obligation to determine and alter priorities among functional programs, to impose on them common administrative regulations (on such topics as personnel, purchasing, and record-keeping), or to coordinate their operations. But often efforts to discharge such obligations must yield to the requirements imposed by a functional agency at a higher governmental level or confront resistance by a three-level alliance of the specialists engaged in an individual function.

This can be thought of as a conflict between area and function.[37] Each state and local government exists to perform a multiplicity of functions for a given area, and it is presumed to concern itself with making sense out of its total activity in relation to the total needs of the community embraced by its area. But if such a government has but a piece of each function to be performed and if the totality of a function is thus a vertical combination over which no single government has full control, the area-based claims of governments confront the rivalry of the "functional communities" of specialist civil servants and the private interest groups specifically concerned with particular functions.

One might imagine that these problems of intergovernmental

[36]"Hardly any urban service is performed purely by a local government." U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Performance of Urban Functions: Local and Areawide* (Washington: Government Printing Office, September, 1963), p. 8. This Commission's reports provide a mine of information and a set of maturely considered recommendations.

[37]This is the theme developed in James W. Fesler, *Area and Administration* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1949).

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relations would be avoided when presented in strictly administrative terms within a unitary government. In France, for example, orthodox doctrine holds that, although there are functional ministries at Paris which have functional specialists stationed in the field, the prefect is in complete charge of his field area, the *département*. He represents the Government as a whole and has authority over all field officials assigned to his *département* by the Paris ministries. It is a pattern widely accepted over the world. British colonial administration had a prefect in the District Officer, Deputy Commissioner, or Collector, even though there is no direct counterpart in Britain's own governmental system. Newly independent countries have often continued the French or British prefectoral pattern, although important modifications have been made. Diplomatic services, including that of the United States, insist that the ambassador to a foreign country is chief of the mission and all specialists in the mission are under his direction. Even countries that avoid the general prefectoral pattern, such as Britain and the United States, often accept it *within* individual ministries so that regional directors or district directors for the ministry are officially in authority over any specialists stationed in the field by the ministry's bureaus.

Almost everywhere, though, doctrine and practice do not agree. Functional ministries seek to elude the prefects' grasp by instituting administrative regions of their own that do not fit the master scheme of prefectoral areas. Or they establish independent channels of communication with their specialists in the field. When possible, they outvote the Minister of the Interior in the Cabinet and obtain authority to command their specialist agents on "technical matters"—a term that is subject to generous interpretation by the concerned ministry.[38]

Within a national administrative system, then, the conflict between area and function is common. The prefect (or, in Britain and the United States, the regional director of a particular ministry) is a general official for his area, and he is supposed to coordinate the specialist activities of national agencies within that area, adapting national administration to the peculiar needs and resistance of

[38]A very useful treatment of the traditional prefectoral pattern, function-area conflicts, and the March 1964 institution of supra-departmental regional prefects is Institut d'études politiques de l'Université de Grenoble, *Administration traditionelle et planification régionale,* Cahiers de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, No. 135 (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1964).

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the local population. But this area generalist is constantly beset with the claims of national functional agencies to direct their own field agents.

Here, too, the issue is not simply a brutal battle for personal power. On the contrary, each contender has a rational basis for his claims. The prefect is there to bear responsibility for application of national programs in his area, and he is expected to bring to his task a broader, more sensitive appreciation of the character of that area than any highly specialized functional agent can be expected to have. His concern is the total area and the total national activity in relation to that area. But the functional ministries can put forth an equally valid case. A Minister of Agriculture is responsible for the achievement of program results throughout the nation; this is a responsibility he cannot discharge fully if he is but a head without a body, if he cannot direct the work of his field agents in carrying out the national agricultural program. He is concerned that all geographic areas play their full parts in the program and cannot abide the interposition of some "outsider" who may decide not to push the program forward in his area or who may distort priorities within the program.

The conflict is inescapable, for all decentralization involves both areas and functions. Historically it is clear that as soon as functional differentiation appeared at the capital and the volume of work assigned to each field area exceeded the capacities of one man the seeds of conflict were planted.[39] The problem was greatly intensified when specialized training developed for different functions, and then in our own time when specialties have proliferated so remarkably that specialists in "subfunctions," chafe even under the direction of men professionally trained but lacking special preparation in the particular subfunction.

The solution, if one can even use the term, does not lie in incantations of conventional doctrines. The best that can be hoped for is an uneasy accommodation that will vary from country to country and, within each country, vary from time to time. Both historically and doctrinally the generalist area director, such as the prefect, has the advantage. But the dynamic and pragmatic pres-

[39]The development of functional fragmentation in an intendedly prefectoral system in medieval France is traced in James W. Fesler, "French Field Administration: The Beginnings," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (October, 1962), pp. 76-111, esp. pp. 102-111.

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sures are on the side of the functional ministries and their field agents. As in the study of royal decrees in the medieval period, one can get an insight into threats to an established system by noting the frequency with which a simple grant of power has to be renewed and insisted upon. Recurrently, for example, the United States Government finds it necessary to reassert the primacy of its ambassador in relation to other American officials assigned to foreign countries.[40] The 1953 decrees in France attempted to restore the prefect's traditional command of national ministries' field agents in his *département,* but they lost something in translation into practice at the same time that they testified to the departure from orthodox doctrine that had already occurred. A new effort, initiated in 1964, shifts the focus to supra-departmental regions and regional prefects.[41]

4. *The dual-role approach*

Decentralization needs to be adapted to the role that governments and their officials are expected to play. As the functions that governments are expected to perform expand in range, shift in relative importance, and change in technique, one may reasonably assume that the vertical distribution of responsibilities for functions will change and that subnational governments and field administrators will have to alter their customary behavior. The problems this raises can be conveniently observed in field-administration systems. The most basic conflict is that between the maintenance of law and order, and the advancement of economic and social development.

Most field-administration systems were developed in a simpler era, when revenue collection, maintenance of law and order, and appraisal of local opinion, were the principal responsibilities assigned to field agents. Certainly this is the case with the field systems in-

[40] Of a number of studies the most recent are U.S. 88th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Committee on Government Operations, *The Ambassador and the Problem of Coordination,* A Study submitted by the Subcommittee on National Security Staffing and Operations, (Committee Print; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), and the Subcommittee's summary-of-findings staff report (88th Congress, 2nd Session), *Administration of National Security: The American Ambassador* (June, 1964).

[41] On the 1953 decrees, see Alfred Diamant, "A Case Study of Administrative Autonomy: Controls and Tensions in French Administration," *Political Studies* 6 (June, 1958), pp. 163f. Cf. Georges Langrod, *Some Current Problems of Administration in France Today* (San Juan: School of Public Administration, University of Puerto Rico, 1961), pp. 17f. On 1964 reforms and for texts of the relevant decrees, see the volume cited above, footnote 38.

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herited from colonial regimes by the newly independent nations. It is substantially accurate for such a country as France; in its case one would want to add the political function of the prefect, which for much of the period since the Revolution extended beyond the appraisal of local opinion to the more specifically political function of advising his political superiors on election prospects and even manipulating elections.

This bundle of functions was appropriate for an administrative generalist—a man liberally educated, selected for intelligence and character, perhaps given additional training in law and administration, and further developed by assignments in the early stages of his career. There was nothing esoteric about the knowledge required for discharge of his functions; experience in performing them was the teacher. Capacity to exercise power—the power of influence and if necessary the power of force—was critically important, but much was arranged to assure that the field generalist would be obeyed. He represented the distant ruler and embodied something of his majesty; his housing, style of living, and ceremonial duties all bespoke his high status. He came from outside the area he was to administer and did not stay long enough to fall captive to local interests when they conflicted with national interests.

In large part his role was a negative one: to keep things from going wrong and to extract necessary revenues from the population. This, at least, was the basic job, even though his time might be much occupied with granting licenses, arbitrating disputes, seeing individual petitioners, touring his area, and presiding at ceremonial occasions. Basically the established order of things was accepted and indeed supported; while he might encourage private initiatives, he himself was not the mainspring of innovative schemes or the provider of social services to the people.[42] He gave advice to

[42]I do something of an injustice to a number of compassionate and development-minded colonial-service district officers in Africa and Asia. But, largely because of the frequent transfer of district officers, their initiatives were often incomplete and short-lived, and the local populace was confusd as the focus of energy shifted with the successive officers from soil-conservation to latrine building to water wells to insect control. See, for example, Philip Woodruff (pseud. for Philip Mason), ***The Men Who Ruled India: Vol. II, The Guardians*** (1954; paperback ed., London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), pp. 96, 285f. Of one district officer it was written (p. 96),

"'Why is my district death-rate low?'
Said Binks of Hezabad,
'Wells, drains, and sewage-outfalls are
My own peculiar fad.'"

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the local governments or tribal groups in his area and, on appropriate occasions, might exert power over them. If a local council was associated with him for advice or legislation, he was usually able to dominate it.

It is this pattern that shaped the field-administration systems that most developing countries and some developed countries now enjoy. But the system is today expected to perform functions quite different from those for which it was originally designed.

The new functions place strains on the old administrative system in several ways. First, the volume of work to be performed in a field area is increased, and the field generalist in charge must find relief by delegation to subordinates or by sharing with co-ordinates. Second, the technicality of the work threatens the myth of the generalist's omnicompetence. He may then become specialized himself—that is, he may specialize on performance of those functions that are traditionally his and require no technical training, of which his ceremonial duties, police functions, local-government tutelage, and general reporting are typical. In that case, he regards the technical ministries' field agents as specialists like himself, substantially co-ordinate with him in terms of autonomous authority over their own functions although they still acknowledge his precedence on ceremonial and social occasions. The ministries' field agents receive their orders from their respective ministries and the generalist field agent receives his from the central ministry of the interior. Third, the new functions have a positive thrust to them that demands a different spirit and vigor of administration than that embedded in traditional field administration. The intent is to change established ways of doing things so as to carry economic and social development forward rapidly. This contrasts with the *status-quo* orientation of a field system geared to maintenance of the established order and may conflict with the personal orientation of field generalists so chosen and trained as to identify themselves with the classes, families, and other groups who constitute the "Establishment." Fourth, the new functions require the evocation of popular enthusiasm sufficient to build receptivity to new ways of doing things and, often, to spur substantial voluntary effort by ordinary citizens. Finally, somewhat in contradiction to the earlier points, the new functions are often so much integral parts of an overall strategy or plan that their coordination both in planning and execution stages is a major need.

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This reorientation of roles is particularly apparent in countries that are engaged in major programs of economic and social development. Some of these are in Europe. Those on other continents not only encounter the stresses of an administrative nature that I have enumerated. Their problem is further complicated by adaptation of a colonial system to a new political system that has only recently given rise to parties and factions, politicians eager to share local power so as to rise to greater power, and local-government councils. A shortage of trained specialists and trained generalists exacerbates the problem of staffing a far-flung field service and of determining and stabilizing the relations expected to prevail among field agents in the same field area and between them and the ministries at the capital. The conservative quality of existing local-government councils and often of district officers, creates temptations to station vigorous young community-development workers in local communities who, in association with specially chosen committees and councils, may act independently of the established local bodies and localized national administrators.

What we have, then, is the function-area conflict in a new setting. The new elements point in two directions, and which course is likely to be taken appears as yet unsettled. On the one hand, the technical ingredient of public health, agriculture, social welfare, and public works threatens to undermine the role of the field generalist: he will find either that field specialists are operating in his area with substantial independence of him or that he himself is subjected to multiple commands from the functional ministries that leave him little discretion. On the other hand, the multiplication of functional components of economic and social development and the very vigor of advocacy of each component emphasize the need for coordination to fix a scale of priorities in relation to resources for accomplishment of the total program; more exactly, it is not so much a scale of priorities that is needed but rather, since each part of the program needs to advance, a concerted strategy in which available resources are allocated in appropriate proportions among the competing claims. This is a situation that could restore the area generalist to a major role. Whether this can occur depends heavily upon the capacity of those holding generalist posts to adapt to this kind of role, or alternatively upon the ability of the government to find and train new men capable of mastering this more specialized kind of work. An open question is whether the traditional core func-

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tion of maintaining law and order, with its considerable emphasis upon force, is compatible with the positive function of popular leadership and the technical function of directing the mélange of specialized development programs.

5. *Conclusion*

The issue of decentralization is more complex in concept and practice than is generally acknowledged. A linguistic deficiency accounts for some of the difficulties. For one thing, it leads to the dichotomy of centralization-or-decentralization. This may account for the tendency of doctrine to harden and develop emotional overtones as writers, faced with only two alternatives, proceed to "take sides." It may also complicate scholars' efforts to describe and appraise a mixed system in which formal-power distribution, politics, legislative institutions, adjudication, and administration reveal different orientations toward the centralist and decentralist poles and interact each with the others to constitute the whole governmental system. Certainly the dichotomy blocks discerning analysis of the role of intermediate levels of government, a problem that I have deliberately not faced in this paper. Decentralization from a national government to a provincial government or regional administrative office may actually tighten centralized controls over local governments and district administrative offices. The perception of the reason for an either-or doctrinal approach and the acknowledgment of the complexity that is real government may serve to moderate tendencies toward an instinctive identification of decentralization with democracy.

If one can escape these problems of doctrine and politics, there are then a number of troublesome issues of a more technical character. Of these, two have been briefly explored here. One is the conflict between two bases of organization, area and function, a conflict that probably is universal and so substantially independent of doctrine. The other is the question of the convertibility of a traditionally oriented governmental and field-administration system to the positive functions involved in programs of economic and social development. This problem may be merely the temporary one of transition from a single orientation to a double orientation. It may, on the other hand, raise the more serious question of whether functions addressed to security maintenance and revenue extraction are

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inherently incompatible with functions dependent on motivating individual citizens to help themselves and their communities.

Our task, in sum, is to bring concepts and methods of modern political science to the study of a problem that can no longer be disposed of by mots about apoplexy at the center and paralysis at the extremities.

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