Analyzing full Decentralization Based on Power Transition

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ABSTRACT

Background: By assuming the ideality and competency of “full decentralization paradigm” in the level of political – official management. Objective: present paper attempts to explore the ultimate reason of such thinking in terms of public laws and by emphasizing on power transition. Results: thinking and then it tries to use research findings to introduce resilient-based local government through challenges which prevent citizenship permanent power and the right of citizens; determination and role playing in political era in the light of full decentralization theory and by considering the shapes of government such as extensive government and its types, combined government and its types and how to monitor tem by central government. Conclusion: According to this paper, the main trait of resilient government is that citizen’s power process can be stabilized and strengthened by transiting decision making in political and official affairs to citizens. Present paper addresses this issue by a historic and analytical approach.

INTRODUCTION

Public tendency to run the affairs of each neighborhood by its people is an old demand by local democracy proponents. In such perception, the concept of real democracy is manifested in an administration based on citizens’ tendency and satisfaction and democracy exercise starts form the lowest social units like family. Thus, in the level of a neighborhood, people experience democracy practically and can use their citizenship rights directly as seen in relations between any government and its citizens and other government namely what called as Weltburgerrecht “citizenship world” by Kant [1]. For instance, Athenian democracy compared to today democracies relied upon indirect elections and citizens act indirectly in decision making by government and parliament was able to establish the first participatory political government and direct participation by citizens. Although direct democracy is not consistent with today political relations, one may say that direct democracy especially Greek one is the most democratic implication experienced by western civilization [2]. Hence, instead of participation by selected entities in policymaking, citizens are directly involved in politics. It was a basis for social contract and public will theory [3]. Therefore, compared to new political paradigms age, one should say that except than some parts like Swiss Cantons and Open Town Meeting in USA an d free study forums in Sweden [4]and in some local areas like Turkey, Iceland and Poland where citizens participate directly [5], modern age, citizens participate more indirectly in public decision making or it is only through indirect way that they can participate in running their own affairs [6]. Irrespective of this issue, what important is that decentralized regime can establish citizens’ governance in running at least their neighborhoods through which process and then which conditions are needed to establish a local government? Present paper attempts to answer this question. Hence, we review briefly research questions, hypotheses and methodology.
1. To realize a resilient-based government, which methods to grant authorities to citizens are more fruitful? It seems that full decentralized regime is the most efficient way to assign authorities to citizens to run local affairs.
2. Can we make resilient based government into practice by using decentralized theory? By assuming the mitigation in governments’ power to the benefit of people, this regime can play a sustainable and effective role in establishing resilient – based government and more participation in both local and macro administrative levels.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Power transition based on governments’ political structure:
   Historically, the first human communities were shaped in the format of participatory social system with complete personal interests and based on an integrated collective forum or “Community/Gemeinschaft” [7]. In Athens, community system was called political unit which may be beyond one city. However, its main feature was a limited territory and population so that one social – political organization could only involve a few cities, village and farms [8]. In ancient Greece, emergence of community was based on Police City- State as a very small entity which prepared an emotional life along with defined and frequent share for exercising citizens’ power. In fact, Police smallness made it possible for citizens to participate effectively in the most important decision on Police and overall on all important affairs which could impact on their individual and collective life [9]. Therefore, one can say that the first shapes of democratic governments were designed in ancient Greece and they experienced many changes to now. Historically, Greek philosophers criticized the idea of power transition to people due to its conflict to national cohesion theory and tendency to limited communities. The roots of such discussions basked to Plato’s age. In “Laws”, Plato confirmed the idea of small cities and centralization in them because that people know each other easily, feel commitment to each other and can select the best choice as governor. Although this approach was softened in middle ages to some extent and compared to ancient Greece in which male citizens were free and influenced over decisions, in a short period, it became possible in some cities where all people could intervene in running neighborhoods [10]. Afterwards, despite of the importance of people’s opinions, scientists supported the idea of centralization in power more that assigning the authorities to local people [8]. Despite of such background, the advantages and necessities of assigning the authorities to local people were gradually revealed and central governments found that the existence of public and local governments not only has no damages against the power structure of dominating entities but also it will be a factor of their sustainability and efficiency. Therefore, full democratic local administrations were emerged in late 19th century in Western Europe. In France and in 1880 namely 10 years after the third revolution, the mayor was elected by a public panel rather than being assigned. In UK, counties became democratic since 1888 namely 21 years after devising the second act of election reforms. Max Weber has also emphasized on the transitional role of middle age mayor in encouraging local democratic styles [8]. In fact, powerful central government in early 20th century took an initiative which resulted into dividing central administration’s power in the benefit of different local groups since they believed that power brings corruption and “Power; corrupts and absolute Power, corrupts absolutely” [11]. Therefore, one can consider power transition to citizens’ theory as a way toward the power of citizens which would lead into establishment and strengthening democratic governance throughout the society [8].

1.1. Power transition in single-texture government: the existence of powerful central government and, consequently, obeying all political group members or population from a single political authority is seen as one the most distinguished traits of integrated governments [12]. Such trait alongside all factors constructing local organization lead into unity in the structure of population, territory, administration, governance and independence of the government [5]. In a definition, sheer government is one that has nothing more than one political center. In such government, political power emanated from a single source which is legal personality of the government and although sheer government is not in conflict with its complicated shape by decentralized structure and assigning local authorities, it legal logic requires that power transfer process and, consequently, granting independence to local officers can conducted in a manner that prevent degradation of central power and independence of local governments from central power [8].

1.2. Power transfer in federal government: federal governments have several political performance centers. Their political and legal members are so that one can call all of them as government [12]. Despite this and owing to the fact that decentralized political pattern has no room in federal government and the flow of affairs is around on central power, dividing social affairs among political units and political power layout would increase the scope of authorities and competencies of local governments [13]. which would lead into their strengthening and integration of relations with relevant t units. Overall, the diversity of federal governments is one of their traits. It causes that these governments cover from the strongest type of government (federal) to the weakest one (confederal) [8].

1.3. Power transition in autonomy governments: it seems that creating and realizing autonomy local government is only possible in the light of administrative de centralization pattern. Thus, local units such city and village and professional syndicates can participate in decision makings independently [13]. In fact, one can conceive the relationship between autonomy government and decentralized federal regime in general and special rational ratio [14]. In a general categorization, one can say that governments pursue two strategies in executing their policies: first, they are relied upon a pyramid-type structure monitored by central administration and bureaucratic system in which they execute policies through a service system by their representatives rather than assigning the power to local governments. This strategy is falling down in representative – based administrations and it has changed by increasingly importance of local and regional administrations. The second
strategy is to rely upon autonomy local or regional authority. In most western countries except than UK, local autonomy levels operate at least through three layers of local authorities. In Italy, these autonomous layers include: latent, county and regions; in Germany, they are around cities, suburbs and provinces; in USA, they are municipality, county and states and in France and Belgium, they are latent, division and regions [15].

Results:

1. Centralization: a barrier against democracy:
   Historically, administrative centralized system emerged by the establishment of national governments and to meet three principles: 1. cohesion inside the country to prevent the risk of degradation, 2. keeping public and national interests, and 3. monitoring on economic and specialized plans. Therefore, one can assert that the idea of centralized power looks for creating a society or public area in order to implement regulated policies easily and rapidly. In general law literature, centralization pattern is organizing the country so that all administrative initiatives can be controlled under the competency of central organs [14]. Usually, this decision making center is located in the capital of the territory [16]. And they are constantly pursued by executors in capital and political center or outside the center like province, county, city and village. As the highest legal authority in the country, the government has the right of decision making on all important and radical affairs [13]. Since in this pattern, it is mainly believed that central government is the only public legal personality and the only administrative authority [14].

2. Centralization features:
   As it seems in real world, the tendency of governments to use official – [political power and their propensity to assign authorities to citizens and accepting their participation in decision makings indicates their approach to power accumulation or resilience. As historical evidences show, in centralized system, the focal point for decision making in the highest level of political, administrative and organizational hierarchy is controlled by a few people [17]. Increase in administration’s control over power sources would mitigate the possibility of participation and political competition and is considered as a serious barrier to extend citizens’ political participation. In fact, one can say that centralized control on power sources would add its political authority and to the same extent, it reduces the possibility of competition and effective and efficient participation by citizens. Although power centrality may add the continuance of the administration, it would create a serious barrier in local participation and people’s impact on running their own affairs. Put it differently, all public affairs are controlled by a protectionism entity as called government which would undoubtedly to exploitation in administrative decision makings [13]. Below, some general attributes of power accumulation are mentioned:
   2.1. Power obligation: it means that all affairs on peace and security are conducted by central government and all military and law enforcement forces are operating under the supervision of central government. Therefore, it is obvious that local entities have no power in this regard.
   2.2. Centrality in decision making decisions: centrality in authorities cause that ventral government acts a centralized executive and decision making entity and use the authority of adopting and executing decision and tries to pose its discretion absolutely. Hence, the outcome of such centrality in decision making authorities is that the realization of an efficient local government will be far from imagination.
   2.3. Centrality in selecting and employing the officers: centralization by central government in selecting all administrative officers is seen as a serious danger against local governments and their efficiency and continuance. Such centrality causes that local organizations have no authority in selecting and employing competence forces.

3. The damages of centralization:
   3.1. Centrality in administrative competencies: once of the most important requirements of administrative centralization is to neglect local affairs running. Under such attribution, local societies are seen only as domestic geographical units ran by central government without any difference between them [14]. Under such structure, there is no independent existence for local agencies constituted by human groups.
   3.2. Centrality in lawmaking competencies: centralization in authorities and competencies of lawmaking is a symbol of political authority and will of government. Here, the government tries to pose integrated laws and regulations to be executed by all people. Hence, when there is centralization in political competency and lawmaking, no local entity will be emerged which can cover local citizens’ requests and can attract their participation [14].
   3.3. Centrality in technical competencies: it creates as huge network of bureaucracy in center of the country since centralists try to facilitate the affairs by eliminating local services and local distributions [14]. And they create the accumulation of competencies and authorities in center. As a result, such approach would gradually
derail its raison d’être and would create a wave of hurried statements without any visionary and local – regional precise assessments.

4. Full decentralization as the factor of local bureaucracy realization:

Decentralization theory is based on assigning the power to organizations except than central government selected often by direct democracy [8]. However, executing such idea in current situations is not possible due to reasons: low population and citizens’ lack of open minds [18]. Decentralists have shown their tendency toward this model for several reasons: 1. creating a responsible and accountable local administration; 2. increasing citizens’ participation in running neighborhoods; 3. providing citizens with more sufficient public services; and 4. creating the feeling of belonging and local national correlation among citizens [19]. Therefore, it seems that among current models, administrative full decentralization model can turn on this human ideal (plyarchy) by the aims of power transfer to local organizations since what I relied upon in modern public administration attitude as ideal governmental organization is an organization which has more shares in involving employees further in decision makings [20].

4.1. Types of decentralization:

4.1.1. Decentralization by assigning a part of responsibilities and authorities: in this way, decentralization is conducted by assigning administrative authorities to lower level in ministries supervised by central government. 1) Delegation: in this way, decentralization is conducted by assigning the responsibilities of management and clear tasks to organizations out of bureaucratic structure and the government only supervises this trend. In fact, central government outsources administrative affairs to efficient local agencies and steps forward indirect service to deprived regions. 2) Devolution: In power transition approach, governmental units act autonomously and legally they are separated from central government. In this way and similar to delegation, central government has an indirect and free supervision in terms of consultancy to local units. Local entities to which decision making power is transferred, are limited to a certain geographical scope and in terms of legal personality, they are similar to stock companies [21]. 3) Privatization: in this method, government uses outsourcing to assign authorities to semi-governmental organizational including local association and professional groups, civil entities and cooperatives. In this process, central government outsources a wide part of authorities to local organizations including executing constructional and rural projects and planning [21]. To supply citizens’ basic needs, the government outsources such services as training and health while control over other service like military, security and judiciary [22].

4.1.2. Decentralization methods:

In terms of changes in centralization in government’s administrative structure, three models are categorized: 1) Geographical decentralization: in this way, since activities are distributed in distributed in local regions and decision making power is the hands of central power, geographical decentralization becomes necessary. This way of decentralization includes communities and groups with joint benefits in terms of territory and belonging to an integrated totality such province, county, city and other micro geographical decisions [16]. 2) Technical decentralization: it means granting independence to an organization with integrated machinery like university based on a certain need or benefit [16]. 3) Relative decentralization: in this way, only a part of decision making is delegated to geographical units like what mentioned. 4) Full decentralization: in full decentralization process, authorities are fully delegated to local government and power geographical distribution is assigned to local government fully [23]. In explaining this model which relates to present study’s title, one should remind that local government is an auto-manager, autonomous, self – sufficiency and self – regulatory entity that is fully depended to central government in political, identity and national terms and is obliged to keep the existence of political system and political, legal and security macro structure of the country.

5. Supervision process in decentralization system: traditionally, central government would monitor in different levels on auto-manager entities. However, before addressing the necessity and mechanism of supervision in decentralized system, it is merit to contemplate it. As mentioned, the raison d’être of local government is seen as the objective symbol of democracy and the existence of determinants such as independence and freedom in decision making and self-sufficiency traits are doubled in terms of technical and financial and managerial terms. In reality, this situation is considered as special and distinguished with some limitations and it makes it necessary the supervision by central government as a democratic entity like city and village councils. Historic experiences indicate that if an entity albeit bureaucratic and citizen – based one is released without any supervision on desired performance, it can create a wave of concern and lead into corruption. Hence the type of local and central governments’ interactions can be categorized in three attitudes: sometimes, they show democratic values and refer to the independence of local government and monitoring on limited supervision by
central government; sometimes, it is based on servicing insight and emphasizes on facilitating services to people and to create public welfare by local entity; and sometimes it is a mixture of both insights and looks for a rational balance between democratic values and servicing [19]. Hence, central government can pose its different structure from the lowest to the highest degrees. For instance, the monitoring role of the central government in different times and situations are pursued and executed by different aims and purposes like promotion; financial aids and facilities for the growth, efficiency and sustainability of local government; prevention in the framework of protecting the organization and preventing abuse of authorities and competencies of local government; punitive in terms of legal interventions by central government and such initiatives as recalling the employees and removing the member, cancelling the decisions and liquidating local organization; and reformative in top-down manner along with articles of associations and amendments[19].

1) Monitoring local government in macro level: as mentioned before, the principle is lack of supervision by central government on local one. To assure that the organization works always on its missions, supervision by central government on local government becomes necessary so that one can say that monitoring on local government is the right of local government [19].

2) Monitoring on persons: one of the commonest monitors by central government on local organizations is to monitor local individuals and officials. Since local officials and members of local councils are elected, monitoring them is toward their tasks and competencies of local officers and individuals such as removing a city council member when his competency is discovered. Therefore, when one or more members of local associations and councils are assigned without legal protocols and competencies and conditions mentioned in the law, central government can postpone or remove incompetent members based on its legal authorities.

3) Monitoring on local entity: since the operation by local entity should be based on the requirements of law governance including 1. Law obey, 2. Obligation to rationality of trends and 3. ensuring citizenship fundamental rights[15], then in cases that local government or council is derived from its legal tasks scope namely in the path of respecting law governance principle and violating citizen’s rights, the decision of the central government can be manifested toward liquidating that entity (council). In terms of protocols, in the case that governor general as the highest representative of central government approve the decree, the issue is submitted to Interior Ministry by mentioning relevant evidences and then the decisive vote is taken by the Cabinet [13].

5.1. Supervision by local government in minor level: assuming the importance and impact of government’s supervision on the efficiency of local entity and the method of normal supervision on local units run as eternity which indicates the limited scope of controlled entity and its independence [13]. One can point out somehow unusual supervision mechanism which can be used to prove the theory on full administrative decentralization pattern. Noteworthy, among studied supervision mechanism, what respected by present paper more is citizenship – type supervision.

1) Legal supervision: this kind of supervision is the responsibility of the local association or council. The main tasks of Islamic councils are their supervision as lawmaker on municipalities [19].

2) Financial and administrative supervision: among administrative supervision mechanisms one can point out financial performance supervision of municipalities. In this kind of supervision, budget discount and one-year financial performance of the municipalities as well as their expenditures are monitored[19].

3) Citizenship supervision: it means supervision by local people on local entities. In fact, citizenship supervision is posed indirectly by councils, association, and local media and, sometimes, governmental forces in the region or directly by citizens. Noteworthy, if this kind of supervision which involves citizens is deviated and cut the links to central government and leads into lack of eternity supervision by central government, then not only it is inefficient but also it would hurts public trust to a governmental official or entity[24]. Considering the sensitive issue of citizens’ supervision on local government and to achieve better efficiency of citizenship supervision regime, condition should be created by which citizens can supervise the performance of local entities more effectiveness. Some of these conditions include:

1. The right of all citizens to be a member in local forums voluntarily;
2. The obligation of local entities to respond regularly and continuous representativeness of citizens;
3. The possibility that local forums or councils are the representatives of clients multilaterally;
4. Responsiveness of local entity to all citizenship organizations or entities;
5. The possibility that all citizens have the opportunity of direct contribution by membership in urban associations, voluntarily associations, self – regulated entities, local groups and personal accessibility to local representatives [25]. Considering such conditions, a proper ground is paved for citizens’ supervision over local government and people’s direct participation in local affairs will become possible [26].

5.2. Evaluating centralization, decentralization and full decentralization paradigms in power:

5.2.1. A critical evaluation of centralization in power:

1) In political – legal terms: despite of political deficiencies of centralized regime which mentioned briefly, decentralization in power resources can strengthen the government in keeping and establishing discipline. Likewise, it can foster cohesion in national level and prevent chaos in the country. Additionally, one of the most
important benefits of centralized political system is that it makes political leaders to be accountable to their performance legally. As a result, the principle of people’s equality against law is fostered and incorrect prejudices are prevented [13].

2) In administrative – financial terms: centralized system of adopting integrated decisions is another pattern of power centrality and centralized management style leads into coordination and discipline in nationalized affairs and facilitates administrative affairs, mitigates administrative costs of the country and improves organization’s returns [13]. Likewise, it would lead into between running and rational and steady performance of central entity [16].

3) In structural term: although several advantages are imagined for political – official centralized regime and the reasons of their defenses and justifies are expressed on tendency to such regime, it seems that such fully centralized political – administrative management system in the society would bring deficiencies and challenges. In fact, one can explicitly say that the establishment of centralized regime can generate problems to some extent and corrupted political and administrative environment by blandishment and replaced norms by relations by which corruption is based. On this basis, there will be no opportunity for people’s participation and role-playing in their affairs and it would be a barrier against their political growth [17].

5.2.2. A critical evaluation of decentralization in power:
1) Creating a new class: perhaps, one can say that one of important deficits of decentralized regime and delegating power to local entities is that a new class will be generated after a while can have negative effect in power [17].
2) Lack of national unity: another deficit of decentralized system is the possibility of damaging national unity by which there is a risk that the people of a region (in the format of local or regional government) only think about their local interests and ignore national ones.
3) Failure in resolving the crises: it is said that local communities are always facing with crises which going out of them is beyond their authority such as politicalizing being political the local election increasingly so that local power becomes inevitably the subject of conflicts among parties and dominating political powers in the society.
4) Economic vulnerability: another weakness of decentralization is that local powers are eliminated against economic big power.
5) Political vulnerability: concerning the weaknesses of decentralization, it is said that local parties and critics prevent the establishment of democracy and running local affairs is finally assigned to influential groups who play godfather roles [14].

6. A justified evaluation of full administrative decentralization:
6.1. Decreasing the power of central government: one of the most important positive features of decentralization is that it mitigates the power of central government on the one hand and, on the other hand, it enhances the political and efficient legitimate of the dominating regime remarkably.
1) More efficiency: another advantage of decentralization is high efficiency since there is no room to meet and even hear the requests of all citizens in the center and in the name of the government. Hence, the requests of all citizens are possible by decentralization and disturbing the power to local entities.
2) Easy supervision: another advantage of this pattern is easier supervision on managers’ actions by people.
3) Increase in people’s cohesion: the rate of philanthropy, honest and cohesion of local people to achieve their interests is the result of full decentralization model.
4) Ensuring the rights of minorities: considering the diversities of people, full administrative decentralization paradigm would lead into the realization of most citizens’ demands by which a guideline can be generated to keep the rights of minorities.
5) Government’s managerial role: another advantage of full decentralization is that government does not play the role of guardian; rather, it would be committed to other obligations of government’s roles including responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness and it is also obliged to pursue general and macro policymaking countrywide [14]. Noteworthy, citizens’ satisfaction from government is a tested way which would lead into fostering people’s satisfaction and optimism on the one hand and increase in the legitimacy of political regime on the other hand [27]. Therefore, accepting the fact that all citizens can participate in running their affairs and manifest their effective participation in different form with any prejudice and limitation by central government would create a wave of interaction between people and government along with a climate with trust and understanding [28]. In fact, it seems that the ultimate aim of full decentralization is to consider people’s governance right as a principle over democracy and as a part of political unawareness in interactions between government and citizens [29]. Therefore, it seems that the realization of administrative full decentralization idea can cause that citizens share their ideas and governance [30].
Discussion:
An important issue is that the first local governments such as counties (a board of society), citie (cities and town) and municipio in Rome (municipality) were gradually limited by local governors including khans, lords, counts and feudal despite of their initial independence. Under such circumstances, local governments got out of the control of people and transferred to local influential individuals. Therefore, the main function of local affairs which reflected their tendencies and requests was discounted to local influential people. Hence, to conclude from the data and findings of present paper, one should emphasize that the ultimate target of creating a sustainable and efficient local government is preliminary to foster the feeling of commitment to citizenship and democratic values since based on such values, citizens are obliged in their political community to respect the law and to pursue their citizenship demands including local participation in a legal framework and then they attempt to prove the right of citizenship participation. In fact, pursuing citizenship demands is a radical right in all life affairs including priorities to which governments are obliged to execute. Hence, resorting full administrative decentralization paradigm and assigning all local affairs to citizens and involving them in all local decision making and policymaking can yield to establish citizenship-based governance in urban management system in micro level and in society’s political management in macro level.

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