1979

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Recommended Citation

Previously published in Public Administration Review, November/December 1979, 39(6), pp. 556-561 http://www.jstor.org/stable/976184?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

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Ron Mock

"(The effective intergovernmental manager) will understand that intergovernmental relations are in fact intergovernmental 'negotiations' in which the parties are negotiating in dead earnest for power, money, and problem solving responsibility."

In this statement Allen Pritchard[1] has identified the central issue in intergovernmental management. If our system of intergovernmental relations (IGR) reflects, as Wright suggests,[2] society's ongoing effort to provide a systematic solution to public problems, then it is of paramount importance that any who would understand IGR grasp how the triad of "power, money, and responsibility" are distributed among the many units of government.

Money is necessary for any unit of government to function. If we were to draw a parallel to industry, money would be by far the most important of governmental raw materials. The possession of this resource determines largely the availability of all others, such as manpower or equipment.

Problem solving responsibility corresponds to James Thompson's concept of domain.[3] In intergovernmental management, domain is the claim a unit of government stakes out for itself in the range of problems it addresses, the people it serves, and the set of specific programs it provides. The organization establishes domain by winning consensus on its boundaries from units in its "task environment."[4] For governments, these units include clients, suppliers of resources, competing agencies or jurisdictions, and regulatory groups (other governments and unions, for example). The people are the ultimate arbiters of domain since they can play any of the four roles as clients, taxpayers, private competitors, and voters.

Power is the most important of the three factors in intergovernmental "negotiations." In IGR, power is the means by which a unit of government establishes and protects its domain. This paper will focus on power as the key to understanding the structure of the intergovernmental system, and the distribution of resources and responsibility in it.[5] It will describe how power can be measured, strategies whereby it can be won or preserved, and the effects each strategic option will have on the intergovernmental structure.

Power and Dependence

This strategic model is derived from an analysis of power relationships developed by Richard Emerson.[6]

Power to control or influence the other resides in control over the things he values. . . . In short, power resides implicitly in the other's dependence.

Dependence (Dab). The dependence of actor A upon actor B is (1) directly proportional to A's *motivational investment* in goals mediated by B, and (2) inversely proportional to the availability of those goals to A outside the A-B relation.

The keystone to Emerson's approach is the statement that the power of actor B upon actor A is equal to the dependence of A on B. Thus, Pba=Dab. It is not enough to describe the relationship from A's perspective as Pab=Dba. We must also understand it from B's perspective as Pba=Dab. The dynamic nature of this concept arises out of the possibility that A's dependence on B can be unequal to B's dependence upon A; and that either actor can take action to change a power disadvantage (being relatively more dependent upon the other) to a power equivalency (equal dependence on both sides) or even a power advantage (being relatively less dependent than the other actor). If, as several theorists have pointed out, power can run both ways,[7] we can always describe a power relationship in one of the following three ways:[8]

$$\begin{array}{ccc} Pba=Dab & Pba=Dab & Pba=Dab \\ \vee \quad \vee & \| \quad \| & \wedge \quad \wedge \\ Pab=Dba & Pab=Dba & Pab=Dba \end{array}$$

Alternatives to Compliance

When an actor in a power relationship finds himself under pressure from any other actor he may yield, or he may adopt one or more of four strategies designed to

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*The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to the faculty at Drake University who provided the encouragement needed to complete this paper. My special debt of gratitude goes to Professor William Collins for his sponsorship and guidance of the effort, and to Professor Walter Roettger for his valuable and frank editorial critiques.

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manipulate the power relation to retain independence.

From his concept of dependence Emerson derives four alternatives to compliance.[9] The first two alternatives—developing alternative routes to the goal outside the power relation in question, and decreasing one's own motivational investment in the goals controlled by the other—have the effect of reducing the power of the threatening actor. The second two alternatives—increasing the other's motivational investment in one's own resources by supplying resources the other needs to achieve his goals, or closing off alternate sources of the things one currently supplies—increase one's own power in the relationship.[10]

These four basic options when applied to intergovernmental administration can suggest some strategies for governmental units in each type of power situation: weak, strong, or balanced.

Strategies of the Weak

Weak units of government can work to correct their power disadvantage in several ways.

Developing alternate routes to the goal means, of course, coming up with new supplies of needed resources, particularly money. It can also mean developing new customers or clients for the jurisdiction's products or services.

It is obvious how an organization can be dependent if it is limited in sources of supply. A monopolistic supplier can easily exercise power by threatening to cut off vital supplies; however, an organization can be just as dependent on consumers of its output. Burton Clark illustrated this in his study of an adult education organization which, because it lacked secure markets, found itself having to cater to every fleeting whim of whatever clientele it could persuade to use its services.[11]

In a recent issue of *Public Administration Review,* Charles Levine suggests several tactics for building alternative resources: broadening the jurisdiction's revenue base; seeking support from businesses, foundations, or other units of government; and adopting new methods of raising revenue, particularly user fees.[12] Another tactic is embodied in the Lakewood Plan developed in Los Angeles County, which opened the door for smaller cities and special districts to contract with each other for municipal services as alternatives to supplying them themselves or going the traditional route of contracting with the county or the city of Los Angeles.[13]

An indirect way to "create" new resources is cost reduction. Levine suggests improving productivity, automating, and increasing hierarchical control as ways to economize.[14] Derived from cost reducing is Thompson's prediction that hard-pressed organizations will strive to consolidate control of those sections of their environment over which they do enjoy power advantages.[15] Increased hierarchical control over employees has a hint of this strategy in it; resisting unionization of employees is certainly within this strategy.

Creating new clienteles is a tougher task. Good public relations is essential: improved productivity can be very useful here, especially if accompanied by better, more effective performance. The objective is a three-pronged diversification of clients, programs, and constituents.[16]

Decreasing motivational investment in the goals controlled by the other unit of government is a process of value formation, and will likely be the last resort after all other strategies have failed.[17] It is ideological because it requires the weak party to decide it can do without the goal controlled by the strong, adjusting its aspirational values to a lower level. Jason Boe, president of the National Conference of State Legislatures illustrated the option of reduced motivational investment when he warned the states that if they succeeded in forcing a balanced federal budget, "they must be aware of the price (in terms of less federal aid), be prepared to pay for it, and be willing to share responsibility for living with it."[18]

The rise of the "Big Seven" public interest groups (PIGs) is an example of coalition building, especially as they work together in handling relations with the national government on whom they depend. The effect of the Big Seven would be even greater were they to coordinate more closely their pressure on the federal government.

The opposite strategy, increasing the strong actor's motivational investment in goals controlled by the weak actor, can be broken into two substrategies: *coopting* and *contracting.* Coopting is the practice of "absorbing new elements into the policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats."[19] Thus, coopting involves granting something of value (status, in this case) to a powerful agent in order to increase his motivational investment in the weak unit. Here coopting involves a broader range of possibilities than granting status: in intergovernmental relations, it means making a powerful agent dependent upon any resource over which the weak unit of government may have influence. A unit of government can coopt if it can make another unit dependent upon it for implementation, enforcement, or the favorable outcome of an election.

Contracting is the process of establishing an agreement (either formally or informally) for the exchange of performances in the future.[20] It has the effect of institutionalizing a relationship. Contracting may not work to the advantage of the weak agent if its major effect is to make concrete a disadvantageous arrangement. If the weak unit can make the security of a contract important enough to the strong unit, however, it can balance the relationship somewhat.

Closing off the powerful actor's alternatives is the final of the four basic strategies open to weak governments in IGR. It can take two forms.

The first is the most widely recognized: coalition building. If the weak unit can unite with others that are dependent upon the same strong unit of government, and if they can act as one in their dealings with the strong actor, they may be able to close off alternatives to the latter. The rise of the "Big Seven" public interest groups (PIGs) is an example of coalition building, especially as they work together in handling relations with the national government on whom they depend. The effect of the Big Seven would be even greater were they to coordinate more closely their pressure on the federal government.

A second option available to the weak actor for closing off alternatives is coercion by a countervailing power.[21] Countervailing powers may include regulatory agencies or prohibitory laws. In either case, the option of setting up countervailing power is only open if there is a third party in a position to enforce compliance by the powerful, and if that third party can be convinced to undertake regulation of the powerful. In intergovernmental relations, the most common source of countervailing power is the federal government. Unfortunately, reliance upon it by state or local governmental units may exacerbate their dependence upon the federal government. A more promising avenue from the state and local perspective is the states' appeal to an even higher authority, the Constitution, in their attempts to set limits on federal activity via resolutions calling for a constitutional convention. Or, witness the tactics of Moon Landrieu, former Mayor of New Orleans, when he threatened to deny welcome to the city to the powerful Congressman Hale Boggs unless he supported general revenue sharing.[22] This essentially was a threat to appeal to the voters, one of Boggs' "regulating agents."

Normal Strategies of the Strong

Emerson seems to assume that once a power advantage is gained, its maintenance requires no further effort. Peter Blau makes no such assumption. Thus, this section will draw heavily upon Blau.[23]

The strategies available to the strong units of government are, for the most part, available to the weak. For example, where the weak try to develop their alternatives by building sources and markets, the strong will try to deny these options to the weak by maintaining their monopoly. Monopoly maintenance tactics include enforcing institutionalized hierarchical relationships, establishing a "law" that the weak must deal with no one other than the strong, and contracting with the weak on terms that lock them into their disadvantage. Where the weak try to reduce their costs, the strong can impose costly reporting or performance requirements.

Where the weak try to build an ideology of "doing without," the strong will try to reinforce ideologies that place value on resources they control. In intergovernmental relations, this can take the form of mandating protection of special populations in ways that place extra burdens on the weak, or building up democracy when the people are sympathetic to the aims of the strong. When the weak have not been successful in building ideologies of independence, the strong can increase their power by offering new services (upon which, over time, the weak will come to depend) or by offering special deals. The latter is especially devilish: once a weak unit of government has accepted a special deal, it has become doubly dependent since there will be no other equivalent arrangements available except through the same strong supplier or client. Whether intentional or not, rapid increases in grant programs under the Great Society aegis greatly increased national power, especially since so many of the grant programs offered special deals in the form of matching provisions.

Where the weak try to stimulate motivational investment on the part of the strong, the powerful will try to remain indifferent to what the powerless offer. One way to accomplish this is to maintain control over key intergovernmental resources, particularly money and, where appropriate, voters. Moreover, where the weak try to close off alternatives to the strong, the powerful will try to maintain them. Outlawing or hamstringing coalitions of the weak and preventing the establishment of countervailing powers or restrictive rules are the principle options here. The attempts on the part of many federal leaders to discourage the movement to call a constitutional convention is a case in point.

Powerful units of government also have the option of reducing costs as a means of reducing dependence on others. It seems safe, however, to predict that this tactic will be employed less by the powerful than by the weak, since the powerful inherently are more likely to have an abundance of resources.

Strategies of Equals

Just as the strong will try to increase their strength, the parties to a perfectly balanced relationship will try to make their positions more secure. Some of the strategies available to them have the effect of stabilizing equal-power relationships, others have the effect of gaining a power advantage.

Most of the strategies for equals can easily be derived from the discussions of those available to the weak and the strong; however, significant implications for intergovernmental management in some of the equal-power strategies will be highlighted here.

Even though a governmental unit in a symmetrical power relationship has by definition adequate alternatives in suppliers and clients, it must maintain readiness to react should its environment change to its detriment.

> We might expect, for example, that under favorable conditions the organization would practice exchanging with each of its several possible sources, thus establishing with each a precedent for support if conditions become less favorable.[24]

The same treatment would be expected for client groups. States and localities in this condition can be expected to get key personnel out of federally-paid positions. Further, governmental units in equal-power balance will keep the doors open to coalitions and will maintain good public relations, in case the force of a united front or an appeal to the voters is ever needed to forestall a takeover by an emerging powerful actor.

Contracting can play a very important role among equals. By establishing contracts, equals ensure the continuation into the future of the relatively favorable arrangement of the present. They also forestall dalliance by their equals with alternative suppliers and clients and the accompanying threat that they will provide the competitor with a power advantage.

One other strategy should be noted. Governmental units dissatisfied with equal-power arrangements may be able to increase their power by initiating new programs.[26] This is how the ephemeral resource of superior leadership can be translated into concrete power advantages.

Devolving Strategies of the Strong

It would be tempting to assume that the strong will always want to increase their power advantage. It is also conceivable, however, that there may come a movement in intergovernmental management for the stronger units of government to reduce their power advantages voluntarily.

That such a strategy can emerge was graphically demonstrated when President Eisenhower sought to decentralize powers to the states in the late 1950s by creating a high-level task force to suggest areas of federal responsibility that could be delegated to the states. The effort failed. Morton Grodzins asserts that no such effort could ever succeed.[27] According to power-dependence analysis, however, there are a wide variety of strategies the powerful might employ to reduce their own power advantages. This condition would arise should leaders be elected to head the strong unit who were ideologically committed to a more equal distribution of intergovernmental power. Such a commitment might arise, for example, out of a belief that the safeguards provided by "balance of powers" are endangered when one unit or type of units dominates, or it could stem from a belief that innovation and responsiveness can be maximized in a power-balance system.

In intergovernmental relations, the most common source of countervailing power is the federal government. Unfortunately, reliance upon it by state or local governmental units may exacerbate their dependence upon the federal government.

These strategies consist of the strong helping the strategies of the weak to succeed. Thus, when the weak try to build their resources, the strong can help by reducing their share of the resources they hold in common. For example, they might reduce their own tax rates, grant tax deductions for taxes paid to weak governmental units, or even shift their tax base entirely to eliminate tax competition with the weak. Private grants or investment in the weak can be stimulated by the strong. The strong can also help the weak take power over other elements of their environment. For instance, unions might be restricted in their dealings with weaker units of government, or minimum wage or other regulations might be eased for weaker units.

One of the most promising strategies would be to help the weak reduce the costs of their operations. Reducing performance requirements for the weak is one possibility; even more useful would be assistance with management training and capacity building. If these last two efforts are successful enough, there would be beneficial impacts throughout the weaker agent's organization, including increases in the ability and popular support necessary to assume more program responsibilities.

There is little a stronger unit of government can do to encourage the weak to develop ideologies of doing without. That is an internal process and cannot be forced on anyone. About all that the strong can do to help this process is to hold off on offering new resources or special deals.

The strong can act to make themselves more dependent on the weak. Following up on Terry Sanford's observation that every level of government depends on every other level of government to get its job done,[28] the strong unit can increase its dependence by giving away responsibilities important to its own functioning. Enforcement of laws is one vital function commonly carried out by a different unit of government than the one that made the laws.

One interesting idea might be an adaptation of the coopting process. If the strong were to create advisory boards made up of representatives of the weak and allow them to have input on the actions of the strong, balancing of the power relationship should take place. The strong would to some degree have limited its own options by allowing itself only those options approved (or not too strenuously condemned) by the weak. The movement on the part of some states to assert rights to appropriate federal money coming into the state is a variation on this theme. Suggestions for state-federal, local-federal or local-state commissions to study or advise on this or that are also variations on the coopting theme.[29]

The final broad strategy of devolving power would be to allow one's own options to be cut. President Carter's freezes on federal hiring and his attempts to cut federal spending are examples of this strategy whether or not they were meant to be. Proponents at the federal level of limiting federal spending are intentionally pursuing this strategy. Robert Newton's suggestion for a conscious practice of "administrative federalism" is also a variation on the theme inasmuch as it would delineate more strictly the federal role Congress intends and prevent any expansion of that role by the executive branch.[30]

At the state level, states finding themselves with an excessive power advantage over local governments can grant home rule options with the most flexible provisions possible.

Granted, many of these strategies for devolution would be unpopular with some elements of the political system. It is not "normal" for anyone to give up power willingly. If the decision were ever made, however, to spread intergovernmental power around more equally, these would be some of the options available.

Cohesion

Emerson defines cohesion in power relations as $\frac{Dab + Dba}{2}$.[31] Operations based on the principle of reducing the dependence of one party on another have the effect of reducing cohesion, while those that increase the dependence of one on the other increase cohesion. Cohesion can be affected in either direction by the actions of any member in a power relation: weak, strong, or equal.

In intergovernmental management the factor of cohesion has important implications. First, all else being equal, the higher the cohesion the less the independence. Thus cohesion has to be kept in mind for those planning to use IGR as a tool to achieve some political purpose. If coordinated action by several governments is required, then strategies should be chosen that increase cohesion; that is, when manipulating the power balance, the strategist should emphasize those options that serve to increase power rather than to decrease dependence. On the other hand, if flexibility and freedom for isolated experimentation is needed, the strategist should use options that reduce dependence more than those that increase the other's dependence.

A second consideration to be borne in mind is that, especially in balanced situations, partners in highly cohesive power relations must be carefully watched. An agency locked into a highly cohesive bond has to be sensitive to factors in the partner's environment as well as in its own, since changes imposed on the partner from a third party may very likely change the reciprocal balance in the highly cohesive relationship.

Intergovernmental Implications

Finally, power-dependence analysis can predict what structural effects each kind of power-manipulating strategy will have. When governmental units are trying to develop their own alternatives, there will be a rise in competition for resources and for clients. Since this operation will only become dominant when sources of supply and customers or clients are relatively plentiful, there should be an expansion in government services. Note that this does not mean the struggle over resources will cease in times of government cutback; rather, in situations approaching "free market" competition, the role of government will be under pressure to expand as the various units of government try to improve their power position by developing alternate resources and clients.

When governmental units are moving to reduce their own motivational investment in goals mediated by others, there will be a developing ideology of independence and a sense of limits. There should be reductions in governmental activity when this strategy is dominant.

Units of government that are trying to increase the motivational investment in the relationship on the part of other governments should be involved in the creation and distribution of resources and services, especially those directed at other units of government. There will be increases in intergovernmental exchange when this strategy is in the fore.

Finally, when governmental units are moving to deny alternatives to other units, there will be serious structural impacts. When the weak are advancing, there will be structural changes as they succeed in forming coalitions and setting up countervailing powers. If, however, the weak are not advancing, there will be structural ossification as the strong reinforce and institutionalize the status quo.

Conclusion

When historians write about the decade of the 70s, they undoubtedly will chronicle the transition of the public sector from a "do anything at any cost" era at the beginning of the decade to an "era of limits" at the approach of the 80s.[32]

If this comment from a recent issue of *Public Administration Review* is correct, then the concepts developed in these pages are of immediate importance to the public administrator having to cope with intergovernmental issues. It becomes vital that there be some tool available to judge what is going to happen to the intergovernmental system and how each administrator involved can best prepare his agency and its environment to handle the changing power relations. The scheme presented here does not purport to be completely developed. It would be improved by including analysis of the internal politics of the governmental organization, although in a more analytical context than has been done here.[33] It does, however, represent one approach for administrators and theorists seeking a better understanding of the dynamics of intergovernmental relationships and of the strategies available to maximize service to society in the midst of a system in flux.

Notes

1. Allen Pritchard, Jr., Editorial, *Nation's Cities* (August, 1972), p. 12, as qhoted in Deil Wright, *Understanding Intergovernmental Relations* (North Sciutate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1978), p. 317.
2. Wright, chapter 1.
3. James Thompson, *Organizations in Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 26, 27.
4. Thompson, pp. 27, 28.
5. Note that in this essay we are speaking of relative power more than absolute power. It should be kept in mind that changes in relative power structures can take place in the context of an increase or decrease in the total power of the entire system.
6. Richard Emerson, "Power-Dependence Relations," *American Sociological Review* (February, 1972), p. 32.
7. David R. Hampton, et al., *Organizational Behavior and the Practice of Management* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1978), p. 75.

8. Emerson, p. 34.
9. Emerson calls these "balancing operation," but we will borrow Peter Blau's term from his *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), pp. 118-125.
10. Emerson offers another option, which may be chosen in conjunction with any of the other five: cost reduction. He defines cost reduction as efforts on the part of an actor in power relations to minimize the cost of dependence on other actors either by aligning one's own values with those of the other, or by improving one's own operations to make them more efficient. This distinction is not very useful in intergovernmental power relations. For governments, the "efficiency" aspect of cost reduction has the effect of freeing up resources for use elsewhere and of building a reputation for effectiveness which may open doors to new sources. The "values" part of cost reduction will be covered in our more detailed analyses of the manipulation of motivational investment, although we will speak of it there in terms of ideologies rather than cost reduction.
11. Cited in Thompson, p. 31.
12. Charles Levine, "Organizational Decline and Cutback Management," *Public Administration Review* (July/August 1978), pp. 316–325. Levine's entire list of "Tactics to Resist Decline" can be predicted using power dependence analysis.
13. For a fuller account of the Lakewood Plan, see Robert Bish, *The Public Economy of Metropolitan Areas* (Chicago: Markham, 1971), pp. 81-93.
14. Levine, p. 321.
15. Thompson, p. 36.
16. Levine, p. 321.
17. Emerson, p. 34.
18. Jason Boe, "President's Column," *State Legislatures* (January, 1979), p. 2.
19. Thompson, p. 35.
20. Thompson, p. 35.
21. Thompson, p. 31.
22. Wright, p. 150.
23. Blau, pp. 118-125.
24. Thompson, p. 32.
25. Richard Hodes, "The Neglected Art of State-Federal Relations," *State Legislatures* (January/February, 1978), pp. 7-9.
26. Recommended by Daniel Elazar in Carol Steinback, "The Resurgence of the States: An Interview with Daniel Elazar," *State Legislatures* (January/February, 1978), pp. 5, 6.
27. Morton Grodzins, "Centralization and Decentralization in the American Federal System," in Robert A. Goldwin, *A Nation of States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), pp. 1-23.
28. As summarized in Wright, pp. 3, 4.
29. Neal Pierce, "Federal Preemption and the States' Role," *State Government* (Summer 1978), pp. 173-179.
30. Robert D. Newton, "Administrative Federalism," *Public Administration Review* (May/June, 1978), pp. 252-256.
31. Emerson, p. 34.
32. John J. McTighe, "Management Strategies to Deal with Shrinking Resources," *Public Administration Review* (January/February, 1979), p. 86.
33. One promising approach might be to chart the effects of increased reliance upon intergovernmental transfers in the rise of "picket fence" federalism.

Strategies in Power Relationships

	ACTORS						
Alternatives	**Strategies of the Weak**	**Strategies of Equals**	**Strategies of the Strong (Normal)**	**Strategies of the Strong (Devolving)**	**Cohesion**	**Structural Effects**	**Economic Condition**
Developing Alternatives	–Build alternate sources –Build alternate clienteles –Reduce costs –Control other elements in environment	–Keep alternate sources and clienteles open –Reduce costs –Be alert to changes in close others	–Forestall coalitions of others –Forestall restrictive regulation –Reduce costs	–Reduce own share of common resources –Nurture alternate resources for the weak –Shield weak from their environment –Help weak reduce costs	Declines	–Competition –Expansion of government services	Plenty
Decreasing Motivational Investment	Build ideology of doing without	Maintain readiness to do without	Remain indifferent to what others offer	Refrain from offering new programs to weak	Declines	–Sense of limits –Reduction of government role	Scarcity
Increasing Others' Motivational Investment	–Contract –Coopt	–Take initiative –Contract	–Maintain ideology valuing things under own control –Offer new services –Offer special deals	–Give away vital responsibilities –Create advisory groups representing weak	Grows	–Exchange –Growth of intergovernmental activity	Plenty
Denying Alternatives to Others	–Build coalitions –Build countervailing power	–Contract –Keep doors open to coalition, appeal to voters	–Maintain monopoly –Contract –Institutionalize hierarchy	–Limit own authority and resources –Give home-rule options	Grows	–Structural change (weak advancing) –Structural ossification (weak not advancing)	Scarcity