
Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Cost of Federalism* by Robert T. Golembiewski and Aaron Wildavsky

Review by: Delba Winthrop

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Book Reviews

ROBERT T. GOLEMBIEWSKI and AARON WILDAVSKY, eds., *The Cost of Federalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1984), 312+ ppp. \$29.95 cloth (ISBN: 0-88738-000-x).

The Costs of Federalism is a collection of essays in honor of James W. Fesler. Its form and content are uniquely harmonious: It is in the nature of both festschrifts and federal polities for the whole to both profit from and pay the costs of autonomy of its parts. While this book of twelve essays, introduction, and conclusion may be said to profit from the diversity of concerns and the variations in breadth and depth of its contributions, it pays dearly for a failure to determine just what federalism is. Without a notion of what federalism was intended to be and has become it is hard enough to arrive at a tally of its costs and (as the title of the book concedes?) even harder to specify its benefits. Wildavsky's introductory observation that the contributors' agreement that federalism is good enables them to disagree over what federalism is ultimately is incoherent.

Not all of the essays examine federalism proper, that is, the Constitutionally sanctioned division of spheres of responsibility between the state and national governments, but most address the topics of pluralism, decentralization, and (adding Wildavsky's useful distinction) non-centralization. Although there are no necessary connections between pluralism, non-centralization, and federalism, the history of our formal and informal institutions suggests that there are in fact important political connections that need to be understood.

Understanding federalism to be a formal structure facilitating pluralism, Nelson Polsby looks at the interest groups that are the matter of pluralism. In particular, he looks at the "intermediation" of followers and leaders in these groups. He finds in our now geographically, economically, and personally mobile society a gain in influence of the mass media at the expense of political parties and of interest groups that depend on these media for intermediation at the expense of those dependent on propinquity and personal interaction. The costs of this, so to speak, nationalization of our lives will be a politics characterized by instability, (seemingly warranted) lack of trust, irresponsible leaders and ungovernable followers. The benefit, Polsby contends, will be more alternatives in public policy, presumably facilitated by a newly increased television channel capacity. How substantial is this benefit? That the formation of more interest groups intermediated by more open mass media will lead to the articulation of saner public policy options, much less to better choices, surely does not follow.

For Theodore Lowi, the cost of federalism has been a foreign policy plagued by an irrational fear of socialism. This cost is debited to federalism's account because federalism has been the chief reason why the United States has never had a major socialist party (which presumably would teach us that socialism here and elsewhere poses no

threat to our political and economic health). Because the national government played a relatively small role in the regulation of capitalism until the 1930's, when many of its new regulations were in fact hostile to capitalism, "there was, in effect, no national pattern of law, legitimation, or repression to confirm a socialist critique." If federalism is the cause of the non-occurrence of a socialist party, other conditions for its occurrence have been present, including working class discontent and violence. But America has a tradition of "rebellious" rather than "revolutionary" violence, one that seeks to change the behavior of the existing regime instead of overturning it. This Lowi also traces to federalism, without argument. What about the explanation for the non-occurrence of a socialist party that Lowi dismisses as an explanation for rebellious, non-revolutionary violence, namely that American political culture embodies a fundamental liberal consensus? The extent to which this culture has been formed and perpetuated by our political institutions is the subject for another essay.

In an argument that does address political culture Aaron Wildavsky contends that our federal structure has been weakened in recent years because our values no longer support it. America has always been characterized by a mix of political cultures, predominantly "hierarchical collectivism" and "competitive individualism." When "egalitarian sectarianism," a commitment to equality of result, becomes our dominant value we will opt for a highly centralized government, capable of achieving homogeneity or equality, over local discretion, which inevitably brings heterogeneity or inequality. Wildavsky might well be correct that what was once Tocqueville's bad dream now has become or threatens to become our reality. But he does not really prove his crucial point here, that federalism's formal institutions have been weakened because we have willfully undermined our non-centralized political parties out of a sectarian passion for equality.

For Donald Kettl, the costs of federalism in its mature form are a lack of coordinate management of government programs, of political accountability, and of participation by the majority who lack knowledge of the rules of the game. Our federal system is now characterized not by a division of functions between governments, but by a "segmented politics" in which everyone has a say at some point, but in which no one can finally be held responsible for any policy. It is Congress that determines who gets federal money, however much or little Presidents would like spent. What money is used for is determined increasingly by bureaucratic regulation and judicial intervention. Who actually uses the money are often "third parties" who receive or contract to deliver services for which governments pay. Interest groups and state and local governments use their influence where they can do so most effectively. How precisely this situation is a consequence of federalism rather than of a changed conception of what our rights are and of an expanded national government's agenda Kettl does not say.

In a study of the health-care delivery system in Ontario, Canada, Carolyn Tuohy and Robert Evans examine the possibilities for decentralization. They conclude that nothing more than an advisory role for district health councils is feasible. The councils could make policy planning at higher levels better informed and less arbitrary. Ironi-

cally, however, even this much decentralization is possible only where health care is already more centralized than in the United States.

Fred Greenstein makes a strong case for Eisenhower's having been a theoretician as well as practitioner of the art of public administration. He was more firmly in control of the White House than was apparent to us at the time, precisely because he excelled at delegating authority. He was able to use the peculiar abilities and energies of his subordinates to the fullest and to further his goals. Unfortunately, Greenstein fails to see that when our founders opted for federalism they had for the most part to forgo opportunities for this kind of prudent delegation. Federalism creates a structure of multiple independent outlets for ambition, reflecting a choice primarily to make the use of political power harmless and only secondarily to harness political energies to further the common good.

Alfred Diamant contributes a study of French administration and of its reforms undertaken by a socialist party long committed to decentralization and democratization and newly empowered by its double electoral victory of 1981. How the French situation compares to ours Diamant does not make clear. He does make clear what he refers to as "the ultimate paradox": It is difficult indeed to administer a welfare state, which presupposes a strong economy and commitment to equality and requires central planning to secure these, and at the same time, to promote administrative autonomy and democratization.

Surveying campaign financing reforms of the 1970's and noting other changes in our party system, Herbert Alexander finds a general shift of citizen participation from geographically based, consensus gathering parties to ideologically oriented, single-issue interest groups. Federal election financing laws have facilitated a redistribution of campaign resources along these lines. Whether the newly reinvigorated parties of the 80's can outbid national ideological interests that were once feared as potential "factious majorities" for candidate loyalties remains doubtful for Alexander.

David Caputo assesses the impact of Reagan's New Federalism on American cities. The premise of Reagan's policies is that greater reliance on local resources and "privatization" will increase citizen participation and create more realistic expectations about what government can do. Caputo shows that federal cutbacks have caused service reductions and tax increases, especially in larger cities, but that the impact has not been as great as feared. Local political leaders, nonetheless, remain displeased. The inevitable necessity, forecast by Caputo, of reexamining what services are to be provided and how they might be financed is not yet a welcome challenge.

Gary Brewer joins the debate over whether the national government should have an industrial policy with his insistence that, willy-nilly, we already have one. Government already operates directly on the economy, it delegates, it monitors, licenses, and regulates, it shares revenues, and it acts as a catalyst. There appears to be no policy because democracy assures a certain "messiness." Brewer urges that we not add to the mess; government should do less, but do it well. This means transferring responsibilities and resources to state, local, and private authorities. This is recommended not only because these authorities might do things better, but because when government attempts anything it takes risks, and failures eventually undermine its legitimacy.

Writing “in the vernacular of the technical literature,” Robert Golembiewski proposes that “public work” be restructured on an areal instead of a functional model. Whatever the merits of his proposal from a “management view,” from a political view this restructuring would have been inconceivable for the first hundred years of this nation and may well be unwise today. Golembiewski fails to take into his accounting the pressures that might be brought to bear by sectional majorities, passionately committed to destructive political agendas.

James Swiss argues that intergovernmental programs exemplified by AFDC and food stamps, can best be made efficient if the national government assumes responsibility for their administration. There are no incentives for the states to administer them efficiently, and none can be designed without greater costs. Washington would not necessarily staff state offices, but it would fund and regulate them, and collect and publicize efficiency data. The availability of this information, Swiss anticipates, will facilitate its use not only by federal inspectors, but by interest groups and “state-level political entrepreneurs,” who have reasons for creating a political constituency for efficiency. The costs would be few, and the benefits might be considerable.

An evaluation of federalism must begin with a recollection of what it was meant to be, and why. To this end, it is useful to recall a few points: The most intransigent opponents to our Constitution in 1789 were those who came to be known as Anti-Federalists. They opposed the balance created between state and national governments as being weighted too heavily in favor of the national government. Their explicit reservation against the Union was that it would endanger rather than safeguard the republican liberty whose protection was government’s first purpose. Thus, as several contributors to this volume need to be reminded, the defenders of the Constitution, the Federalists, were proponents of a relatively strong national government. To borrow a few telling phrases from Tocqueville, they regarded the states as “powers to be humored,” and they succeeded in creating “an incomplete national government.” They could have succeeded even this far only by meeting the fundamental objection of their critics with a demonstration that the Union would be not less, but more favorable to republican liberty than were the states. This, republican liberty, is the chief consideration in an accounting of the costs and benefits of federalism.

Republican liberty as conceived of by the Federalists could be safely exercised so as to secure rights in a sphere at least as large as the Union, in which diverse economic interests could be encouraged and indulged and in which government could be designed to operate at a certain distance from popular majorities. The greatest threat to republican liberty, majority faction or tyranny, could be held in bounds by enlarging the bounds. The threat to republican liberty posed by government itself could best be met by defusing and diffusing the political ambition that fuels tyranny, by multiplying ambition’s economic and political opportunities. In this scheme the states are useful not as being closer or more responsible to the people, but as convenient historical accidents. The states do not figure in the logic of *Federalist* #10, but they are ready-made foci for ambitions that can be satisfied while exercising a salutary, if self-serving, vigilance over the national government. In sum, the Federalists humored the states as (and insofar as they could be) vehicles of a kind of popular participation

and public spiritedness that might impede democratic majoritarianism at any level of government.

If these remarks make clear the way in which federalism is most appropriately evaluated, they also justify the felt need of the contributors to the volume who go beyond the narrow issue of federalism to the broader issues of pluralism and non-centralization to determine how well republican liberty is served by our formal and informal political institutions. In fact, one might wish to see this inquiry pursued further. Now that presidents are elected as popular political leaders, is the more or less unplanned and as yet still ill-governed bureaucracy the last best hope for a national government less responsive to the demands of popular majorities and more attentive to the requisites of the common good? Does the decline of traditional political parties and the rise of national ideological interest groups—factions—pose the threat to our political health that our Founders feared? Do we want to perpetuate or restore non-centralization and local participation for their promise of greater efficiency or for their ability to arouse and accommodate the political passions that are the mark of a free people?

DELBA WINTHROP

*Lecturer in Extension
Harvard University*

GRAHAM T. ALLISON, ALBERT CARNESALE, JOSEPH S. NYE, JR., eds., *Hawks, Doves, & Owls: an Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 273 pp., \$14.95 hardcover (ISBN 0-01995-0).

Hawks, Doves, & Owls, written by nine prominent specialists on national security affairs (including the three Harvard editors), could be described as a manual for reducing the risk of nuclear war. To be sure, the book is more than a manual, for it provides a thought-provoking conceptual framework for its prescriptions. Nonetheless, its intent is avowedly prescriptive. The book's approach flows from the proposition that nuclear war is the preeminent threat to American interests and values. Accordingly, the authors argue, the nuclear debate should be conducted not in terms of numbers and types of weapons, but in terms of how policy choices reduce the *net* risk of nuclear war in a world where any step increases some risks and decreases others. The analytical framework is constructed around three questions: (1) What are the possible paths to nuclear war? (2) what are the deep, intermediate and precipitating factors that affect the probabilities of war down each path (for example, underlying Soviet-American hostility, the real and perceived balance of forces, types and deployment of forces, operating procedures, and misperceptions)? (3) and most important, what significant actions could reduce the risks along each path? The authors find that the most serious threat of nuclear war arises neither from appeasement alone (the traditional assumption of "hawks"), nor provocation alone (the traditional assumption of "doves"), but from the interplay of many factors, including loss of control in crises (the assumption of the new birds on the block, "owls"). They conclude that avoidance of war will