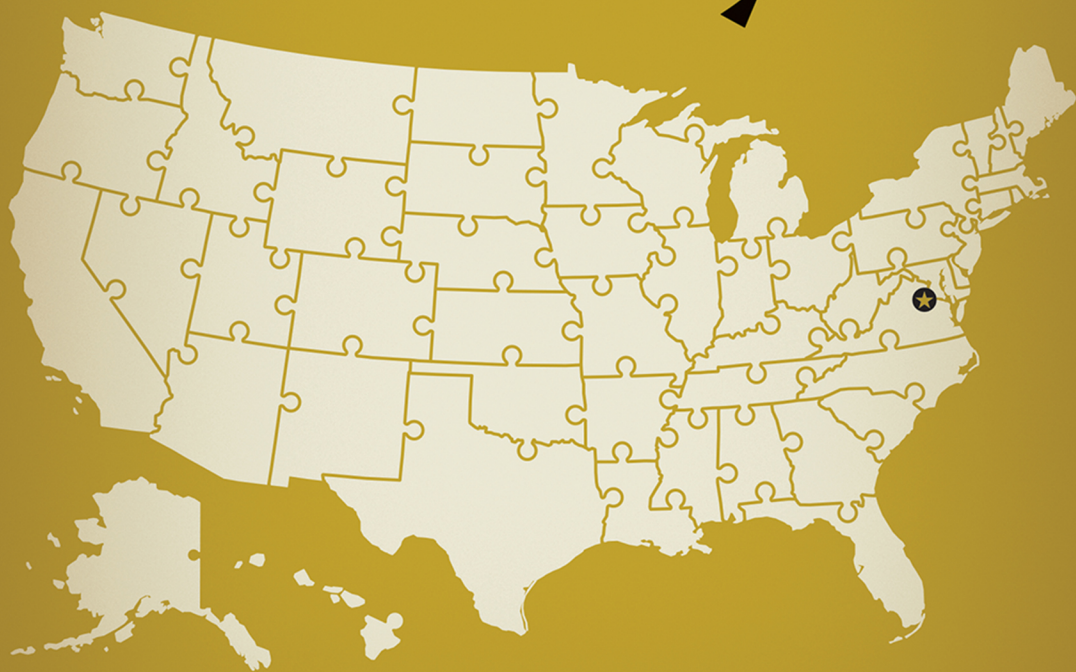


Perspectives on Political and Economic Governance

# American Federalism Today



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EDITED BY

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## Preface

After many hours of discussion exploring our shared belief that strong and clear federalist principles, institutions, and policies had an important role to play in improving our prospects for the nation's future, George Shultz and I decided to launch a small Hoover project on federalism. We began the project a year or so before the arrival of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns. They caused a two-year pause but also provided a timely and painful reminder of, indeed an experiment demonstrating, the importance of the relationships among the federal government, state and local governments, and the private sector.

Our goal was to bring together leading experts on the subject, thinkers and practitioners, to discuss, debate, and illuminate various aspects—legal, economic, historical, and political—of America's federal experiment. By doing so, we hoped to contribute to the understanding of federalism's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and challenges that it faces in the nation's political and economic governance.

I had noted in some previous writing that relationships between central and subnational governments seemed to be growing ever more strained. At one extreme were calls for secession. French-speaking Quebec had been quiet for a long period, but in many other areas there was more recent contention. The Scots demanded, and received, considerable devolution of authority from Westminster. While they have voted once not to secede from the United Kingdom, they periodically threaten to conduct another referendum. In Spain, Catalonia attempted to secede, but the movement was quashed and its leaders arrested, although a recent political deal will grant them amnesty. Venice and the Veneto have raised secession threats in Italy. And in the process of seceding from the European Union, a supranational institution, Brexit revealed many analogous tensions.

In the United States, there are periodic calls to break up the state of California into two to six separate states (a movement sometimes referred to as Calexit); and seven eastern Oregon counties, unhappy with governance from Salem, want to leave and become part of Idaho. And at an apparent dramatically increasing rate over the course of the last three federal administrations, attorneys general of states controlled by the other dominant political party than the one in the White House have repeatedly sued the federal government over its policies. A prime current example is a bitter fight over the Biden administration's failure to secure the southern border, with border states taking things into their own hands.

While George's passing soon after his one-hundredth birthday prevented him from seeing the Hoover project on federalism to its completion, his imprint on it is immense. After promising him two weeks before his passing that I would bring it home, I consider the September 2023 conference and the essays and presentations by prominent experts in this volume as very much a joint product of our collaboration. That imprint, as with the innumerable other remarkable contributions he made in government, business, and academe, endures and hopefully shines in these pages.

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A book such as this does not get into print—and the conference upon which these papers and presentations are based does not occur, let alone run smoothly—without the diligence of many talented people. I would like to especially acknowledge the participants whose papers and presentations contributed to a spirited and insightful series of discussions.

The staff at Hoover covered every detail of the conference and publication, from facilities and catering to sound, videoconferencing connectivity, substantive note-taking, audiovisual recording, transcription, copyediting, and book production, all superbly. Included in alphabetical order are: Barbara Arellano, David Fedor, Julie Gontijo, Joel Gonzalez, Kristin Halle (Culinary Eye Catering), Danica Michels Hodge, Lisa Kohara, Alison Law, Abel Mendoza II, Sharyn Nantuna, and Janet Smith. I would also like to thank Beverly Michaels for her superb copyediting expertise, proofreader Susan Richmond, and Emily Weigel for the engaging cover design. Special thanks to my executive, research, and administrative assistants, Kelli Nicholas, Garrett Te Kolste, and Jennie Tomasino, who kept the project—and me—on track, with grace.

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