



P E R S P E C T I V E S

by **Rinaldo S. Brutoco**

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“Conscious Uncoupling”

Loving separation vs. violent divorce

Gwyneth Paltrow famously described her attempts to end a long-term marriage without acrimony as a “conscious uncoupling”, which she explained is a way that a couple can consciously choose to disengage with each other and go their separate ways. No matter what you might think of the talented Ms. Paltrow, or her brand of unusual personal products, it would be hard to imagine that anyone would prefer the old style “War of the Roses” version of divorce (shorthand for a very nasty, prolonged and vindictive) to a more peaceful, respectful separation. She would argue that we have evolved as a species to the point where ending a relationship can, and should, be accomplished with a minimum of mean-spiritedness. In fact, many of us have successfully “uncoupled” through the process of a legal divorce and are often happier and wiser for it.

Last week’s column in this space dealt with the statement by Marjorie Taylor Greene that the “Red States ought to consider a divorce.” Comments to the piece ran the gamut from questioning the accuracy of various Republican and Democratic politicians’ descriptions of Greene, to thoughtful inquiries about how the mechanics of such a separation could occur. Interestingly, not one reader of the many who commented challenged the underlying assumption that we are locked into a “culture war” of “Red” vs. “Blue” that is rapidly devolving from being what we’ve historically viewed as the United States of America. In a similar vein, no one argued that it would be better to have a violent, rather than non-violent, separation. Ok, seems like there is the basis of some joint agreement right there.

One of the folks who contacted us wanted to be deeply reassured that the Academy is not arguing that the Red and Blue states should separate. We’re not making that argument. We’re merely responding to the basic observation that the two cultures of Red and Blue are diverging to the point that the ultimate dissolution of the Union is, based on today’s political climate, likely to occur in the near future.

Over 625 right-wing armed militia groups have assembled over the last few decades, with a distinct coalescing in the last few years. Calling themselves Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, the Aryan Nation, or a dozen other names, they all have this in common: they subscribe to an alt-right, white supremacism which includes anti-Semitism and a healthy dose of misogyny. Do we want more Oklahoma City bombings, more Charlottesville rallies, or another January 6th Insurrection?

Hence, our inquiry isn’t focused on whether the Union will dissolve. We assume it will. Our inquiry is, can we peacefully achieve that likely outcome? Can we find a “conscious uncoupling” by letting the Reds and Blues separate without violence?

Asked another way, if President Lincoln had responded to the shelling of Fort Sumter with an agreement to let the South go and permit the Confederacy to set up their own independent nation (the issue of slavery forced his hand, and isn’t a factor today), we would have saved the 750,000 combatant lives (not to mention untold civilians, and the injured on all sides) on the battlefield which equaled 2.5 percent. of the American population at the time. With today’s population that death toll translates into over 8,500,000 Americans who

could die if our upcoming separation isn't peaceful. Do we want to inflict that on ourselves and our children? Absolutely not. And, had Lincoln allowed the South to secede peacefully, we wouldn't be having the culture wars that rage today, 150 years later. It's time to let those leave who feel constrained by the system we have, complete with its constitutional protections for individuals no matter where in our great country they live, to have the opportunity to at last form the Confederacy they've been dreaming about since Appomattox.

Back now to "the mechanics". How can today's "Confederacy" peacefully secede from the Union so as to minimize the adverse effects on those who want to leave the Confederacy and "go North"? For starters, any Confederate state that changes its vote about seceding within five years of secession would have the automatic right to change direction and remain in the Union by a simple majority vote. During that five-year "separation" period all citizens would continue to be allowed to use US passports, travel freely between states, and sell their goods without tariffs in interstate commerce as is presently the case. Following that separation period, the Confederacy would develop its own passports, foreign embassies, military, civil service, and their own constitution as a separate nation.

Any individual wishing to leave the Confederacy would be allowed to deed their property (residential and commercial real estate) at its then current present value to a new "Liquidity Transition Corporation" or "LTC") established by the Federal government. The LTC would utilize bonded indebtedness to pay cash for the real estate being surrendered so that an individual would have the cash resources necessary to invest in residential and/or commercial real estate after they move into the Union. When the assets left behind in the Confederacy and acquired by LTC are ultimately sold, the proceeds would be repatriated to the LTC to help pay off the bonds. In case you're thinking this is an expensive process you're underestimating how vastly more expensive war/armed conflict is.

Providing liquidity for the people who want to move where they feel most comfortable is hundreds of times less expensive than conflict. In addition to providing liquidity for real estate that cannot be moved from South to North (or rather, Red to Blue), there is the additional burden of providing comparable jobs in the Union for those who leave the Confederacy. The LTC could provide both training for new job skills, a stipend until those new skills could be deployed, and incentives for employers to hire recently arrived Confederacy refugees.

We end where we began. The idea of preventing violence by enabling Conscious Uncoupling is far superior to unleashing "the dogs of war", which inevitably will be the default result if we don't act consciously towards one another. We must learn that it is no longer acceptable to hold any group of individuals as "prisoners" because they live in a place where they no longer feel safe or "at home." Let's be mature enough to "let my people go" even if they, the people, are making life choices we don't agree with. If Texas leaves and other states choose to leave the Union for the Confederacy, let's choose to create a Conscious Uncoupling.

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