



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

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Secession Revisited

Peace is always cheaper than war

Robert Muller, the recently deceased Santa Barbara resident and globally known United Nations official who many of us admired, famously observed:

“Use every letter you write,

Every conversation you have,

Every meeting you attend,

To express your fundamental beliefs and dreams...”.

I was reminded of this wisdom as I poured over the numerous letters we received from our last two columns which were about the strong suggestion made by Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green that the “Red States” should secede. In fact, nothing we’ve published in 2020 or 2021 catalyzed as many letters as those two columns. The comments made were overall remarkably thoughtful and “solutions-oriented” and today’s column is an attempt to address these smart questions.

The first set of questions combined to raise this issue: should the analysis start from the assumption that there are two equal parties who are separating from each other? No, for two reasons: 1) this string of ideas originated specifically in response to what Ms. Green asked of her fellow Republicans—that they decide to secede from the North. To the best of our knowledge, no Democrats have been making a similar request of their compatriots; and 2) the Republican party has vociferously complained that the last Presidential election was “stolen,” that the Red States weren’t being given their rights by being held captive to a Federal system that Republicans have defined as unfriendly to their Confederacy leanings, and they were the ones brandishing Confederate flags as they stormed the Federal capital in continuation of a struggle which did not end at Appomattox in 1865.

The following facts are abundantly clear: a) the Confederacy never surrendered at Appomattox. What General Lee signed was a cessation of hostilities agreement solely for the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Several other Confederate armies signed similar agreements over the ensuing 16 months; b) the Confederacy saw itself as a legitimate independent force that was permitted to defeat the noble cause of Reconstruction with violence, innumerable lynchings, and other violent acts against recently freed slaves combined with the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups. Meanwhile, the Daughters of the Confederacy began erecting statues all over the South to their “war heroes” who lead the rebellion against the Union; c) in this context, Jim Crow laws were specifically created to maintain white supremacy in opposition to Federal anti-segregation laws, and ultimately massive voter suppression laws were specifically created to disenfranchise voters of color. It took the Voting Rights Acts of the 1960s to finally overturn this blatant suppression, only have it be resurrected just this year for the same purpose of

limiting the right to vote; d) an active campaign began in the '70s with Ronald Regan's famous "Southern Strategy" to re-align the old Confederacy of southern states into a voting block that could take power back from the central government, and e) 26 percent of Republicans in a recent poll said they believed that armed insurrection was a legitimate way to protest the results of the last election.

So yes, Ms. Green's invitation to have the Red States leave the Union should be placed in that historical context and be taken at face value: she's asking her Republican folks to secede (Texas first followed by the other states). No one has ever seriously suggested that the old Union states would want to secede. In fact, as history eloquently portrays, for more than 150 years the "Unionists" have done everything in their power to keep the nation together. The North has never wanted, or in the case of the Civil War, permitted secession. This is precisely why Ms. Green is asking for her side to take the initiative.

Hence, our analysis proceeds from that premise to the larger question of "How" to do it in the most peaceful way. The other questions are about this "How".

One reader thoughtfully asked, "how would debt be apportioned?" Currently, we track the national debt as a per person calculation. That seems to be the best idea to follow in this case: allocate the Federal debt to each state in proportion to their percentage of US population. State and local debts would remain unchanged.

The same reader asked: "How would tax revenues be apportioned during the five-year period?" The same as currently, with no change until the end of the five years. This would provide a continuing financial subsidy to the Red States, for they as a group pay far less to the national treasury than they receive back from the Federal government. Since that is the system we've had for a very long time, there is no reason to change it until the separation is complete.

Another question: "Is (the) mechanism for those wishing to move from Blue to Red the same as the other way round?" No, the Blue States are not seceding, so there is no reason to provide for ease of mobility to the cessation states. If anyone wants to leave the Blue States, they will be free to do so, but arranging that will require them to obtain Red State financial support or to provide their own means of achieving it.

Several readers wanted clarification regarding the way lower-income individuals and/or those without assets or the means to make the move, find a job, and successfully relocate would be assisted in making the transition from a Red State to a Blue one. As suggested in the last column, the financial responsibility to provide such assistance to those individuals would be borne by the Liquidity Transition Corporation ("LTC") including the cost of unemployment compensation, retraining expenses, and suitable assistance to locate new housing in a comparable economic area to the state they left.

And, as previously noted, for those of you who think that would be too expensive, rest assured that the entire cost of this secession proposal would be a tiny fraction of the cost of actual armed hostilities occurring. The Blue States would obtain the "freedom" to provide an adequate social safety net for all citizens, more similar to places like Germany and Northern Europe because it is more cost-effective than preserving a system that fails to meet all of its citizen's needs. Providing adequate support for those individuals who want to move North will prove acceptable and more economically viable. Secession would permit the North to test this theory and prove that it works. Not to mention this power of this absolute maxim: Peace is always far more economic than war.

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