



Let's stay together

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January 2, 2022

Mom, can you come pick me up? They're talking about a national divorce again.

This time, it's the Party of Lincoln fantasizing about separation. Marjorie Taylor Greene sparked the latest round of divorce discourse amid speculation about visitation rights for blue-state transplants to red America. She mused that proposals for punitive taxes and a "cooling off period" of suspended voting privileges for new arrivals were "all possible in a National Divorce scenario." Right on cue, blue-checkmark cholesterol levels shot into the stratosphere.

To her credit, Greene clarified that she was "clearly...not in favor of divorce" in a thread she posted the next day. "You know what is necessary about threatening a divorce? It's a wake up call to the one offending the other that they've had enough," she wrote. "And if the other party cares at all, they look at what they are doing wrong and care to fix it...If you are so offended by my comments about #NationalDivorce then take a real hard look inward and ask yourself why it's sadly such a popular idea with Republicans."

There's something to that last point. It's difficult to remember a time in American history when progressives held as much social, cultural and political power as they do today. Their partisans dominate governmental institutions from the federal bureaucracy and the security state on down to local school boards in red and blue states alike. The once-fiercely independent (if still

undeniably left-leaning) press has become a propagandistic Ministry of Truth. The \$2.5 trillion nonprofit and foundation sector acts as an agent of the left-wing culture war.

Powerful activist groups like the ACLU have abandoned long-standing principles like free speech in favor of the most authoritarian brand of elite leftism. Big Tech's control of the public square allows it to effectively unperson political dissidents. Fortune 500 corporations now wield their considerable economic power to punish Republican legislatures for expanding religious liberty, banning abortion and protecting women's bathrooms and sports. Pro-business groups like the Chamber of Commerce, once a reliably conservative force in American life, have followed suit.

It's not clear if a national divorce is as popular with Republicans as Greene implies, but it is clear why its popularity seems to be *increasing*. Things are bad. The barbarians are inside the gates. But the cure can't be worse than the disease: conservatives should be clear-eyed about the state of our late-stage republic, but destroying America to save it is neither viable nor just.

What would a red-blue divorce look like in practice? If the 2020 election is indicative of conservative America's contours, a new federation of red states would cover the South and Midwest, beginning down in Texas and stretching up through the Great Plains to the Canadian border, with its western border at the edge of Idaho and an eastern reach out to Florida's Atlantic coast. Blue America would be cleaved into two or three distinct geographies, separated by a red wall bordering Virginia up to Maine in the Northeast, Nevada, Oregon and Washington in the West, and potentially stranding Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota in the Midwest. What's more, divisions would be *intra*-state as well as *inter*-state: red-state urban areas and blue-state rural areas would both be isolated in the event of an American crack-up.

Fantasies of a peaceful separation run up against the basic geographic unworkability of such an arrangement. At *best*, a national divorce would require something like the 1947 Pakistan-India

partition, which saw tens of millions displaced in a mass population transfer as Muslims in India emigrated east to Pakistan and Hindus in Pakistan emigrated west to India. The deadly violence of the Indian partition warns against such an initiative: almost a million Hindus never made it to India, and some 1.3 million Muslims never made it to Pakistan.

It is likely that separating California from Washington, DC would be unacceptable to the progressive powers that be. In that case, secession would have to happen at the point of a gun, pitting red-state militias against...the most powerful military in the history of the world. No one seriously thinks that the military brass would be on red America's side in such a contest.

Remember that the left's incontestable power is cited as one of the main reasons for national separation: "The Left is not playing games," writes Jesse Kelly, a prominent American divorcist. "They are getting bolder, and they are getting more violent. They have no interest in rational compromises." That's true, and it doesn't bode well for Trump country's chances if our cold civil war turns hot.

I sympathize with national divorce advocates' profound unhappiness with the state of things. Every major American institution seems to be working in tandem to wage war on our way of life, from the Biden administration flagging "misinformation" for Silicon Valley censors (but I was reliably informed by the Cato Institute that Facebook was a *private* company!) to the education system, the media, the culture industry, Big Business and the Democratic Party all working in lockstep to stage a frontal assault on any semblance of positive national identity and advance malicious lies about American history.

Most insidious is our collective desensitization to all this; the sheer, unapologetic radicalism of the progressive elite now strikes us as normal. We are no longer shocked by revelations like last week's news that New York is giving racial preference to non-whites in its distribution of scarce life-saving COVID treatments. But we should be.

In light of these developments, could there ever be a point at which national divorce is the best out of a suite of bad options? Sure. I'm not saying that we should never discuss the idea. *The American Mind's* thoughtful [June 2021 feature](#) on the topic strikes me as the right way to do it. Their intent was not to advocate *for* secession, but to warn that we were on a path *toward* it, and to propose remedies to avoid such a crisis. This conversation seems entirely prudent and necessary. America needs to lower the temperature, and quickly. If something can't go on forever, it won't. We must find a way to live together.

But given that national divorce would almost certainly lead to violent conflict, and given that such a conflict would almost certainly not work out in red America's favor, red-state secession would be less a viable way out than a doomed final stand. Luckily, there are better options. The Trump years were radicalizing for many conservatives. The right is now waking up to the fact that a political strategy organized around tax cuts and deregulation isn't going to cut it anymore. We have not yet begun to fight.

And we should be fighting. Because America is worth fighting for. To give up on it now is to profane our forefathers' lives, fortunes and sacred honors. Our Founders did not bequeath to us a nation predestined for suicide. Abraham Lincoln's insight that "the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy" is as true now as it was in 1861. The sixteenth president's First Inaugural speaks to our bitterly divided moment:

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazard so desperate a step while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to are greater than all the real ones you fly from, will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

My secessionist friends underestimate the political resources that remain available to us. Fantasizing about a national divorce diverts energy that is better spent actually trying to organize and mobilize resistance to the progressive regime. Look at the grassroots parent movement to take back our schools that has swept through state legislatures. Trump country has a fire in its belly. The American people have a lot left in them yet.

If we really *were* to divorce, of course, the new federation of red states would have every right to restrict voting rights to pre-existing residents. They could tax kombucha, quinoa, Birkenstocks and Priuses, just to stick it to progressive emigrés. They could mandate gun ownership, red meat consumption and football tailgate attendance to assimilate new arrivals. They could bar blue-staters from entry altogether.

That would be their prerogative as a sovereign nation-state. But MAGA country — and I mean *real* MAGA country, not Chicago— shouldn't do any of that. Because they shouldn't become a distinct nation-state in the first place. National divorce is a bad idea. Let's stay together.