Is This the End of the United States?

There have been so many people talking about civil war, states leaving the union, states splitting up to several smaller states and irreconcilable political differences, that it's just about surprising to see that we're all still together.

Presumed President-elect Joe Biden has been calling for "unity" ever since the mainstream news media declared him the winner of the election. But there are a lot of Republicans who are responding to that by saying "Are you kidding?"

It's a bit ironic that the party which spent the last four years saying "Not my president" and trying to impeach the man who fairly won the 2016 election, would now be calling for unity. But then, when most people say the word "unity," whether in politics, church or business, they're really saying "You come unify with me. Throw away all your beliefs and accept mine as your own." This is nothing new.

While I have no expectation that conservatives will take to the streets to start rioting and bring about the civil war that people are talking about, the possibility of militant leftist groups doing that does exist if President Trump's legal team is successful and he actually wins this election. They've already said so.

It's actually rather ironic and sad that the "party of

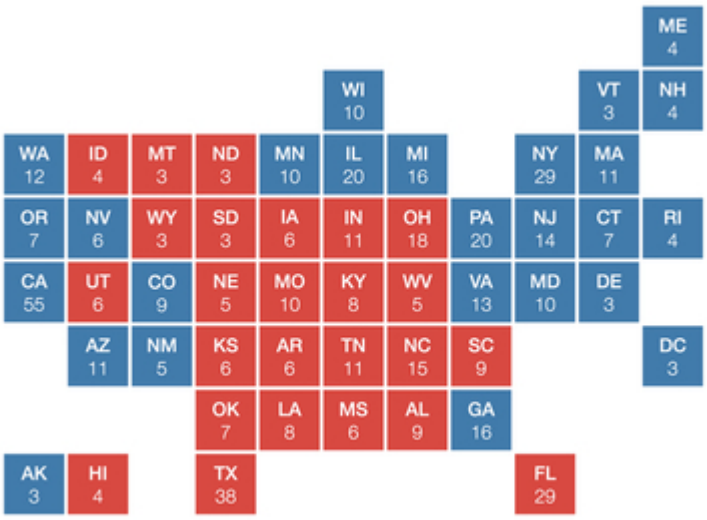
inclusivity” has reached a point where they only include those who march in ideological lockstep with their more extreme beliefs. Whiles these people still call themselves “liberals,” it is clear that they aren’t. One of the key tenants of classic liberalism is “I may not agree with you, but I’ll fight to the death for your right to think that way.” If you want to find that attitude in the world today, you have to look to conservatives, not those who still call themselves liberals.

With the great political divide in our county today, we seem to be on an inevitable course towards a national divorce, breaking up the nation into several smaller nations. The only real question is when and how this will happen. Will we eventually do this by peaceful agreement or will it be through another bloody civil war.

One of the crazy things about this debate is that both sides of the political aisle want things their way and don’t want a breakup. Regardless of who is president and who controls Congress, there will be a federal effort to prevent any such breakup and to quell a civil war. The only question there will be which side federal forces are ordered to see as the “good guys” and which side they will be coming against. I think it’s clear how that will work out.

But if neither side wants to stay together, unless it is on their terms, why are we staying together?

Some Major Political Mistakes



There have been a few major political mistakes in our nation's history which have brought us to this point. If we look back to the founding of our nation, the intent was a union of sovereign states. This gave the states the right and ability to develop along their own lines, seeking to follow the beliefs of the citizens and meet their needs.

This idea goes back even farther than the foundation of this country, all the way back to the original settlers. The Jamestown colony was established for commercial purposes, while the Pilgrims settled Plymouth for religious freedom. Maryland was founded to give Catholic subjects of England a place to go, where they would not have to come under the Anglican Church, the official church of the British government.

As the Constitution was originally written, the federal government had very limited power. It can very easily be seen by the number of Cabinet Secretaries there were: the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War. All the federal government was supposed to do was: mint money, regulate commerce, raise our armed forces, declare war and create a federal Post Office. That's it. So where did we go wrong?

It was the ability to regulate commerce which gave the federal

government the “in” it needed, so that it could start regulating a whole lot more than just commerce. With businesses in the various states selling goods to other states, the door was opened for the entire gambit of regulatory agencies we have today. Each one has taken some of the power from the states, consolidating it in the federal government.

But in the process of doing that, they’ve destroyed the individuality of the states. While some states still claim a strong cultural identity, it is severely curtailed by the overpowering reach of the federal government. States legislatures basically can’t go against what Congress and the regulatory agencies establish.

The other piece that ties into this puzzle was changing the way that Senators are appointed to Congress. Before 1913, the state legislatures appointed Senators, who were to further the cause of the state’s interest, whereas Representatives in the Lower House furthered the cause of the people. But that all changed in 1913, when the 17th Amendment to the Constitution established a popular vote for Senators, making them little more than Super-representatives. This eliminated there being anyone in Washington looking out for the individual states’ interests.

Can We Fix It?

Many of our country's most fundamental divides would be solved by simply going back to the original intent of the Constitution and allowing states their individuality. While there are things that have been legislated at the federal level and have been advantageous, there have been many more which have not.

Sorting out which are beneficial and which are not is probably impossible, as there will always be those who insist that some government agency is absolutely critical and that we can't survive without it. Just look at how much opposition Trump has received from trying to cut things out of the federal budget. As best as I can find, not one of his budget cuts survived Congress and in many cases, he was villianized for trying to make those changes.

One solution to this is to let the states fund those departments which they believe are important and opt out of those that they don't. This would allow left-leaning states to have all their regulatory agencies, while more conservative states ignored them. But then, that's too practical so it won't happen.

Without a practical way to return power to the states and allow each state to find its own way, the only solution left is a violent clash, resulting in either one side conquering the other or the nation being destroyed in the ashes of that conflict. What would be left behind wouldn't be pretty.

Granted, it's highly likely that conservatives would win such a conflict, unless the sitting president commanded our military to fight on the side of the leftists. While that would probably cause a lot of people to abandon their posts, we need to remember that former President Obama largely purged the upper ranks of the military of conservatives. Trump hasn't reversed that.

But even winning that conflict wouldn't be winning, as it would bring about great destruction. Nor could it possible purge left-leaning politicians from Congress, so it would likely continue on, without acceptable resolution.

One clear result of all this is that the United States would lose its place as the world's number one superpower. We would end up essentially abandoning our post, leaving the rest of the world to fend for themselves, while we dealt with internal issues. This would allow bad actors to enter into a new era of conquest and colonization, conquering whoever they could and changing the balance of power.

What Would a Breakup Mean?

So, what would an actual breakup mean? I've heard about different states wanting to leave the union for years, especially Texas and California. Considering that Texas would be the 10th largest economy in the world, if everything else

remained equal and California would be the 5th largest, those two states have a very real possibility of surviving such a breakup. But things wouldn't be that simple.

One of the things that are talked about, as part of states leaving the union, is that they would retain a percentage of the U.S. Military. Using the same two states as examples, California has 14.2% of the total active military personnel stationed there and Texas has 12.6%. That would give either of those states a sizeable military, if they retained those forces.

But where does anyone get the idea that federal military forces and their hardware would be turned over to states in such a division? Most military personnel aren't serving in their home state, so why would any of them want their citizenship changed? Besides, those are federal assets, which belong to the federal government. What would make more sense is that the federal government would order those forces out of the states which left the union.

Perhaps the federal government would agree to selling some of those military assets (bases, equipment and weapons) to the states leaving the fold. After all, they sell and give away military hardware to allied countries all the time. But I wouldn't count on it. If it happens, that will be a huge bill for the states to have to pay.

The idea that our military could survive a breakup of the United States is probably rather far-fetched. It could survive one or even two states leaving the union, but not a complete breakup of the country. Our military budget runs somewhere around $600 billion per year. Even taking just Texas and California out of the equation would lower federal revenues by 23.4%, making the current budget level unsustainable. But then, the current budget level is already unsustainable anyway, so it's hard to say what Congress would do to keep things going.

All of this might be immaterial though. The one historic example which might be the most applicable to the breakup of the United States is the breakup of the former Soviet Union. Once having a military might to rival our own, the leftovers of the Soviet military were largely abandoned by their government in the years following the fall of the Berlin Wall. It wasn't until the rise of President Putin that Russia's military started becoming strong again, working to overcome the years of neglect.

If that model holds true for the breakup of the United States, then our military will probably end up a mess in any post-breakup world; at least for several years. That again leaves room for those same bad actors to cause problems, gobbling up countries that they already have their eyes on.

But the damage to the military would probably be nothing compared to the damage to our economy. Once again, we have the breakup of the Soviet Union to use as a model. While our economy is in much better shape than theirs was, even after the damage that COVID has done to it, the idea that it would not be damaged by breaking up the country is ludicrous. Just about every business in the country is dependent on goods and services from other states, much of which would become international trade. Sorting out that mess would drop our combined GDP for months or even years.

Get Ready

As I said earlier, either civil war or a breakup of the United States is bound to happen. I just don't know when it will happen or what form it will take. But knowing that it will come is enough to get ready for it.

So what should we do? Besides fighting the war itself, something that not everyone will do and that each of us will have to decide our part in, we need to be ready to survive. That means being able to survive war on our home soil. We can

count on shortages of all kinds, as well as utility disruptions as one side or the other destroy those utilities in an effort to make the other side suffer. That it will hurt their own supporters is something that will somehow be forgotten.

We also need to be ready to defend home and family. If you haven't taken the necessary steps to harden your home and build a perimeter, I would heartily recommend doing so. While that might not keep your home from being attacked, chances are that any attackers will seek out an easier target. That is, unless you are so outspoken that they are specifically looking for you, rather than just looking for a target to hit.

We're each going to have to decide how outspoken we are going to be about the issues, when that time comes; knowing that we could be painting a target on our backs. It's really going to come down to a decision of protecting our families or standing up for our beliefs. As always, that's going to be a difficult decision to make.

In the mean time, we bide our time and prepare. If there be war, let it be the other side which starts it. History rarely looks at those who start wars as being the good guys. That's important as we want the world to know where we stand, when we emerge out of the shadow of war.