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Libertarians Should NOT Support Texan Secession

Eric Fleischmann

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Recently, the Republican Party of Texas released a brand new platform stating that “Texas retains the right to secede from the United States, and the Texas Legislature should be called upon to pass a referendum consistent thereto” and calls “for the people of Texas to determine whether or not the State of Texas should reassert its status as an independent nation.” On the surface, this may appear to be an ideal situation to many libertarians as it would mean a reduction in the authority of the federal government and would ultimately challenge the legitimacy of the U.S. state. And there is a precedent for pro-secession thinking among libertarians: paleolibertarian Lew Rockwell argues that though “the idea of secession has been systematically demonized among the American public” it is in fact a “libertarian principle” (while not differentiating between state and individual secession), and Clifford F. Thies and José Niño both write favorably of secession through the Mises Institute, forwarding respectively that states have the right to secede under “the inalienable right of secession, the international law of secession, and the US law of secession” and that residents of the

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U.S. should not “dismiss separatism just because their history textbooks said it’s illegal, racist, or treasonous” and instead see it as a potential solution to “[t]he hyperpolarized state of American politics.” More disturbingly, as Johnathan Blanks identifies, there is even “a strain of libertarian contrarianism that holds that the Confederate States of America were within their ‘rights’ to secede from the Union.” And while I have not witnessed many libertarians come out in support of this specific move by the Texas GOP myself, I—as someone who supports the dissolution of the U.S. Government—would like to preemptively outline in this brief piece why libertarians should not support Texan secession.

First, it must be pointed out that (obviously) the call for secession *cannot* be viewed in isolation from the Texas GOP’s overall platform, and said platform is filled with extremely hateful and authoritarian stances. It calls for the state government to “enact legislation to abolish abortion by immediately securing the right to life and equal proaction of the laws to all preborn children from the moment of fertilization,” refers to homosexuality as an “abnormal lifestyle choice” while calling for an end to same-sex marriage, and opposes “all efforts to validate transgender identity.” Alongside this, Texas has already become a hotbed for anti-trans legislation, has what essentially amounts to a bounty system for people who get abortions, bans books on race and sexuality from schools, and employs one of the most inhumane and violent border patrols in the country—who have been documented whipping Black migrants from Haiti and systematically separating migrant children from their parents and placing them in cages. This is not even to mention the *long* history of government-ignored and government-backed white terrorism against BIPOC communities within the state. As a *left-wing anti-capitalist anarchist* libertarian, I would oppose these things even if they were (somehow) more ‘non-violent’ and not emerging from various levels of government and decry both non-legislative bigotry and anti-state reactionary separatists like national ‘anarchists’ and certain far-right mili-

tias. But even from a thin right-libertarian perspective—which holds non-aggression and individual property rights as the only fundamental concerns of libertarianism—there is no good libertarian reason to support Texan secession. All it will do is create another government that already has a history of and plan for the oppression of racial, sexual, and gender minorities.

The truth is that libertarians should not be defending some abstract concept called ‘states’ rights’ at all whether that amounts to banning abortion or outright secessionism. John McClaughry proclaims that “the important goal [for libertarians] is not to preserve inviolate some magical balance of countervailing governmental powers, but to protect and enlarge liberty. ‘States’ rights’ in our time has meant unpunished lynchings, Jim Crow laws, denial of the right to vote, exclusion from occupations, and countless burdens and humiliations inflicted on black Americans by racist state governments.” And Darian Worden goes even further in arguing against secession and in favor of autonomy. He holds that...

[s]ecession splits authority into smaller parts, so authorities impose themselves in more distinct areas. Autonomy denies authority from imposing itself, so liberty can expand in as many areas as possible. Secession creates new states and new opportunities for authority to intrude on the individual. True liberation requires autonomy, breaking down the control of authorities without creating new ones.

As such, this is the distinction between defending the autonomy of territories like the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities, Freetown Christiania, and ZAD de Notre-Dame-des-Landes from the states they exist within and supporting the secession of Texas from the United States. And if libertarians truly support the reduction and even abolition of government, they cannot advocate for the creation of a new independent state if it will only lead to more governmental oppression within its borders.