

Secession and Voluntaryism



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Secession can take many different forms and involve different quantities of people, but is secession always compatible with voluntaryism? And more, is secession ever really necessary? I’m skeptical toward an affirmative answer to either question, and here’s why.

Forms of Secession

To secede means to “go apart.” It’s been traditionally used to mean “the action of withdrawal from membership of a federation or [state] body.” Secession, then, is a political, meaning “affairs of state,” act. Historically, secession has had many forms, including, a city seceding from a nation, a colony seceding from their “mother” country, a federated state breaking into two federated states, and individuals physically moving out of the jurisdiction of a state.

Of all the various forms of secession, which are compatible with the voluntary principle? Any form that coerces dissenters to withdraw from membership of a political body, and/or into membership of a new one, is incompatible with voluntaryism. For if even 99% of property owners within a given territory choose to secede, they are thus forcing the remaining 1% to “go apart” from their political loyalties, and, likely, to make new ones. What right do they have to do that? No more than would the 1% if they had the firepower to pull it off. It’s an act of domination by the secessionists over the dissenters. Therefore, the only legitimate form of secession is that of individuals either moving or claiming secession from the state that rules over them.

Necessary?

Even so, individual secession begs the question: what exactly are they seceding from? If an individual or group secedes by moving, then their motives may vary, such as escaping persecution or disassociating with a disagreeable culture or conventions, all of which are necessary for different reasons. Well and good. But a stationary individual secessionist is claiming a withdrawal from something mythical, something that doesn’t really exist, ie. the

legitimate authority of the ruling class. In other words, to secede is to acknowledge the false legitimacy of the state as true. In reality, there is no real reason that one must secede in order to withdraw from a political body, because that political body is a fiction.

Final Thoughts

If we broaden the concept of secession to mean to “go apart” from any association, then secession happens all the time, and voluntarily. Leaving a church, a school, a business, a relationship, are all acts of secession. There’s nothing wrong with seceding from an association that you no longer want to be apart of, political or otherwise. But forcing others to go along with you is antithetical to voluntaryism.

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