

THE BYSTANDER —★—

It's just like the '60's----the 1860's

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The most significant effort to influence an American election by a foreign country, the Confederate States of America, was at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, according to a National Park Service plaque stating that one of General Lee's goals was to "influence the fall mid-term elections." That time, it wasn't through hacking of computerized voter rolls and private emails or unleashing internet trolls and bots: it was by literally hacking each other to death with cannon balls, muskets and bayonets.

Today's political climate is somewhat reminiscent of the 1860's, when decades of gridlock prevented Congress from passing legislation to resolve the issue of the "Peculiar Institution." Now, states like California and Texas are threatening secession, again, and talk of resistance and rebellion is heard from all sides of the opinion fields.

And for what? Look at the Confederacy. They were basically a knock-off of the Union right down to their currency system, laws (except for that slavery thing) and government structure. They borrowed all of it, plus a huge debt, and within four years had managed to gridlock their own selves into inertia, just like the country they'd left.

The Constitution is still not clear if it is legal for a state to secede, but the *Happy to See You Go* list would certainly include the former slave states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, South Carolina and Missouri, all of which take more from the Federal Government than they pay back in taxes. Those are some of the states that waged a war that took 618,222 lives, destroyed their own infrastructure, and where the Rebel Flag still flies. They are, to quote *Business Insider* magazine, "Welfare Queen states.... a net drain on our economy."

A recent article by Patrick Buchanan coyly questioned if we are 'nearing' another civil war. That could be seen as a subtle prompting that we should start one. But we're not finished with the last one, by a long shot. One

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thing we can count on is that the war of words over why we fought, or will fight, would never end. We're still arguing over the cause of the first American Civil War. What would we call this one? The War of Democratic Aggression? The War Between the Parties? The War for Republican Independence, defending the Rights' Rights? Instead of the Blue and the Grey, it would be the Blue and the Red taking opposite sides of the battlefield.

It's hard to imagine that our overweight and highly-invested-in-Wall-Street citizens would have the incentive to engage in hand-to-hand conflict with each other, even though we are the most heavily side-armed population in the world. For everyone but the extremely angry with nothing to lose, it would be risking the stability that we now have for uncertainty and certain loss.

If we framed a second attempt to divide this country more like an amicable divorce based on irreconcilable differences, we could just go our separate ways. The 50 states, without the alleged government over-reach and job-killing regulations, would have the autonomy that the Founding Fathers might have intended in the first place.

Then all we would need to do would be to divvy up that \$20 trillion-dollar debt we owe before we head out the door. And just like in 1860, politicians will insist that the basis of our conflict is simply over who gets to control the commerce and the economy.

But 157 years later, I suspect it's race---not money---that divides us still.