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Cotton and Slavery: An Unconventional Civil War Analysis

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Abstract

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Although the American Civil War was ultimately won by Lincoln's forces in 1865, the Union might not have been victorious had Great Britain decided to join forces with the Confederate States of America. Traditional scholars and historians have attributed initial British sympathy for the South to its practical need for Southern cotton in its textile industry. They maintain, though, that Britain ultimately remained neutral because of its presumption that the North was ethically superior in its abolitionist stance.

However, after examining British speeches and editorials from the Civil War era, this thesis has determined that these conventional conclusions are overly simplified, and are in some cases entirely wrong. Building off the work of more recent scholars, this thesis will first analyze the issue of cotton and determine if it were indeed a strong reason for Britain to join the South. Upon review, this thesis will show that the issue of cotton could actually be used as a strong pro-Union argument, or at least a reason to remain neutral in the conflict.

Secondly, and perhaps more provocatively, this thesis will then deal with the issue of slavery, and why abolitionists might actually favor the Confederacy as the side more likely to enact positive emancipation. Sources indicate that many British were wary of Lincoln's abolitionist stance, whether because of inherent flaws in his plan or because British onlookers doubted Lincoln's true intentions for abolition. The Union's poor treatment of its African American population, and its role in the continuation of the slave trade internationally is also analyzed in this context. Finally, this thesis delves into the issue of Confederate emancipation. Many British onlookers felt that the South would soon be forced to abolish slavery for various reasons and that the methods that Confederates would use to free slaves would be more beneficial to their enslaved brethren than any Northern practices could be. By analyzing these two issues, cotton and slavery, this thesis questions and contests views typically held by historians studying the American Civil War from the British perspective.

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Section I: Introduction

The study of the American Civil War, with its myriad of topics, has fascinated scholars even as the first cannon was fired in 1861. Historians have pondered why Great Britain made the decision to remain neutral, not officially recognizing the Confederate States of America, and certainly not entering the American Civil War on the side of the South. During the Civil War, everyone from politicians to textile workers began to differentiate the groups of people most likely to sympathize with the Confederacy and those who showed the greatest support for the Union, noting everything from geographical location to religious beliefs. The issue of British intervention loomed large over the heads of Lincoln and the Union, while it gave the Confederacy a source of hope, and at the same time exasperation, as they desperately tried to obtain official recognition and support from Great Britain. Yet this inaction on the part of the British perhaps led directly to an eventual Union victory.

Until recently, there has been a customary line of thinking as to why citizens of Great Britain debated entering the Civil War at all, as well as the ultimate reason for their eventual choice to remain neutral. The British textile industry received an enormous portion of the cotton they refined and wove from the Southern states in America. One of the chief worries for manufacturers in Britain, according to conventional theory, was that if the South were forced to fight the Civil War alone, not only would it lose a vast amount of cotton due to destruction in the fighting, but the cotton would also be kept in the South, and not shipped over to Britain, thus crippling British textiles. Thus, those people who most supported the Confederacy would be those whose fortunes were directly tied to the textile industry, usually conservatives and upper class sympathizers who often resided in London.[1] To conventional historians, "the paramount

[1] John D. Bennett, *The London Confederates: The Officials, Clergy, Businessmen and Journalists Who Backed the American South During the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008),

consideration [for British textile workers was] the acquisition of cotton to keep their factories in motion,"[2] and they were willing to overlook any other issues in order to keep industry running.

Traditional scholars also argued that numerous British citizens felt compelled to disassociate themselves from the Confederacy. Though cotton was indeed important to these people, fighting the institution of slavery, which Englishmen had been combating for nearly a century, was more important than any economic boom they might receive by helping the South. In the usual view, "the common folk of England, Lincoln's 'plain people,' workless and hungry felt what the wealthier classes refused to believe, that the cause at issue in America was the right of a working man to his own share in the results of his toil."[3] This argument of morality, many traditionalists such as Villiers and Myers[4] argued, was the ultimate cause of British neutrality, whose supporters were the working classes and poor, often residents of Lancashire, who, interestingly, were employed by the textile industry. These points of view formed the status quo for many years. However, historians such as Ellison[5] and Bennett[6] have recently reopened their examination of British intervention in the Civil War and come to radically different conclusions. After studying newer secondary works, as well as reexamining primary texts from the Civil War era, it becomes apparent that there is a need to reconsider such conventions. The purpose of this thesis will be to demonstrate that the debate about intervention and neutrality in Britain was not as clear-cut as historians once thought, neither about cotton, nor about slavery.

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[2] Parliament of the United Kingdom, *Extract from the "National Intelligencer" of May 16, 1862?* in *Correspondence Relating to the Civil War in the United States of North America. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty* (London, England: Harrison, 1863), 2.
[3] Brougham Villiers and W.H. Chesson. *Anglo-American Relations: 1861-1865* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920) ,49.
[4] Phillip E. Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008).
[5] Mary Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1972).
[6] Lerone Bennett Jr., *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000).

The approach taken by this study will be to analyze two of the significant factors that influenced British citizens' opinions for support of the Union or the Confederacy, that of cotton and slavery. When analyzing the influence of cotton, historians originally believed that any pondered British intervention stemmed from the necessity of obtaining cotton.[7] Due to international naval law, there could be no commerce conducted "between a belligerent and neutrals, [as long as the] ports and places [were] actually blockaded."[8] In order to buy what cotton they could obtain from the Confederacy, Great Britain either had to avoid the Northern blockade and risk getting turned back, or they had to openly challenge it, thereby officially declaring war on the Union and fully committing itself to the Confederate cause.[9] This thesis, however, upon examining several primary sources and more recent scholarship, will question these classic analyses. Although such cotton was indeed desirable, both the quantity and the necessity of Southern cotton were not certain, and were and are actually debatable. Against the view equating support for the Confederacy with concern for cotton, this investigation will examine whether cotton was indeed such a Southern advantage. As this research will show in Section II, cotton ironically turned into one of the strongest pro-Union stances for continued British neutrality, refuting claims made by conventional scholars on the matter.

The other main claim of previous scholars that this thesis will question regards the issue of slavery within both pro-Union and anti-Southern rhetoric. Arguments regarding slavery were not, as it turns out, so clear-cut, and both abolitionists and Confederate supporters sometimes

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[7] R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

[8] Parliament of the United Kingdom, *Correspondence Relating to the Civil War in the United States of North America. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty* (London, England: Harrison, 1862), 3.

[9] Conventional sources referred to throughout this paper refers to the stereotypical line of reasoning offered both by firsthand accounts of the Civil War, and, later by traditional historians. In this instance, several people during the Civil War voiced concern that Britain needed Southern cotton in order to run its textile industry. Later, various historians echoed this line of reasoning. See Parliament, *Correspondence 1862* and Villiers and Chesson, *Anglo-American Relations* for various examples.

took what seem today to be counter-intuitive stances. Upon first glance, it would appear only natural that many citizens in Great Britain should have favored the Union. With a long history of abolitionism, the vast majority of British subjects sought an end to slavery around the world and were often willing to take the side of any nation that was prepared to end its slave practice.[10] Therefore, classical scholars argued that it was only natural for the majority of British citizens to favor the Union in its struggle against the secessionist states.[11] This question of morality, traditionalists often state, became the primary cause for the unbroken neutrality touted by Great Britain throughout the war.[12] This sources studied, however suggests that the established view is overly simplistic and misguided. It argues that while most citizens in Britain generally accepted that the institution of slavery was wrong, observers often differed as to the best way to enact abolition, as people analyzed the Union and Confederate efforts and reached different conclusions about whom they should lend support.

The majority of this thesis will analyze the concern of slavery, as people of all classes and regions attempted to distinguish which side would be truly favorable to the slaves about whom they were concerned. In addition to identifying and analyzing primary accounts of speeches and rallies, this thesis will also consider the work of secondary scholars and historians as they, too, have wrestled with many standard conventions of the American Civil War. From authors such as Lerone Bennett Jr. who claimed that Lincoln was no emancipationist to Ephraim Douglass Adams who questioned the Union's supposed love of abolition and Charles Adams who claimed that the most effective way to end slavery would have been to support the South, there have been numerous authors in recent years who have questioned the validity of the

[10] Brycchan Carey, *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807* (Woodbridge, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2007).
[11] Blackett, *Divided Hearts*.
[12] Ibid. See also Carey, *Slavery*.

conventions offered by several traditional historians. By examining British attitudes toward Lincoln's emancipation plans and Northern treatment of African Americans, this thesis will discover that many British civilians were skeptical of the Union's abolitionist designs. Upon further examination, many of these same British subjects felt that the South would be best equipped to enact successful emancipation, a line of thinking that many people today would find shocking. This thesis will first establish how far the usual line of reasoning considering slavery held true, and then will scrutinize some British arguments that run counter to the norms and views of today.

This research will be unique to the literature already published on the American Civil War through the British perspective. The two areas of discussion, that of cotton and slavery, will be addressed due to their relative importance to the British observers at the time of the Civil War. In the minds of traditional scholars and skeptics alike, cotton and slavery were two of the most discussed issues of the time, and were therefore critical in Britain's decision of whether to remain neutral.[13] The ultimate conclusion of this investigation is the discovery of relatively weak support among anti-slavery and Union-leaning forces early in the War, until the beginning of 1863. At this point, events became radically unstable, and it becomes nearly impossible to track the myriad of changing opinions about the Union and Confederacy, as well as the cause of these evolving feelings. Did pro-Union feelings increase as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation, or was additional support for the North won because Gettysburg was the first potentially tide-turning Union victory about which the North could boast, or were both factors equally important? Did people really change their minds and believe that the North was finally

[13] Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), introduction. Other areas of consideration include the balance of power in Europe, anger toward the United States stemming from the American Revolution, identification with the South as being more "British" than the North, etc. However, such topics have been deemed to be less important and harder to quantify than the topics of cotton and slavery.

fighting for abolition, or were people becoming bored of this conflict and began to lose interest, thereby accepting the adage that the North stood for freedom and the South for slavery? These issues are too complex for a study of this length, and as such, the thesis will only try to tackle the "simplistic" issues of cotton and slavery until the year 1863.

This thesis will first examine the background of British emancipation efforts and then delve into the topic of cotton and why the need for cotton did not necessarily equate to support for the Confederacy. A brief study of British abolition efforts is critical in understanding the mindset of British subjects viewing the Civil War, and gives an understanding of how observers could possibly believe the South would abolish slavery. This thesis will then address the issue of slavery and its impact on British opinion. This being the crux of the examination, the issue of slavery will be broken into three parts. First it will deal with the established view of Lincoln as the "Great Emancipator," and question whether the British believed that Lincoln's true desire for the outcome of the Civil War was to end slavery. Specifically, this thesis will address whether the British thought Lincoln was being altruistic, or if he had motives for freeing the slaves and thereby controlling a weakened South. Next there will be a study of British views of the history of Northern abolition and its subsequent treatment of the freed African Americans living in the Union. Contrary to traditional views, this research will find that many British subjects were, in fact, horrified at the way in which the North treated its freed slaves and wondered if the Southern slaves would be better served with a Confederate victory. Finally, and most provocatively, this thesis will scrutinize the issue of slavery itself in the South. Contrary to popular education, many British citizens believed that the Confederacy would truly offer better conditions for slaves and might even free them from bondage if the South were victorious in the Civil War.

The purpose of this thesis will be to challenge beliefs about two areas of popular assumption with regards to the American Civil War. The North, as everyone knows, eventually won the conflict. However, had Great Britain intervened, the results might have been completely different. Slavery and cotton were central issues in this, but often not in the ways that have been previously thought.

Section II: Background and Pro-Union Arguments

The Civil War captured Great Britain's attention, and its citizens realized that the outcome would determine the future of one of the biggest slave-trade operations,[14] the availability of cotton for British textile industry, and possible diplomatic relations with a new country across the Atlantic Ocean. Between the onset of the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the issue of whether to recognize the Confederacy officially and throw the full weight of the British Empire behind them was one of the most discussed topics in British newspapers, editorials, speeches, and political agendas. The differing qualities between the North and South served to drive debate among British citizens, forcing them to address the myriad of seemingly conflicting characteristics between the two sides. The purpose of this section will be to analyze the background of several important British ideals and historical movements, and examine if a sizable percentage of the British populace sympathized with the Union and Lincoln and pushed for Great Britain to maintain a stance of neutrality and not officially recognize the Confederacy as an independent country. Surprisingly, many of the arguments associated with the traditional study of the British stance on America are proven quite misleading by the sources that this section will study.

Inarguably, one of the most gripping issues concerning the American Civil War was the concern over slavery, a matter that the British had had personal expertise in combating. A precursor to possible American emancipation, the British were one of the first societies to abolish its slave trade and the practice of slavery altogether. Starting in 1787, groups of abolitionists, mostly comprised of religious leaders, began to campaign for the elimination of the slave trade, with emancipation eventually being the ultimate goal. As early as 1807, many

[14] Approximately twelve million slaves were shipped to America in roughly three hundred years. See David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67-68.

British citizens favored the destruction of slavery, when their Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act on March 25. According to this Act, the slave trade would be abolished throughout the British Empire, where slaves could be sold neither overseas nor on British soil. However, this did not abolish the keeping of slaves—such emancipation would wait until the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 was passed, followed by the emancipation of every slave in British possession starting in 1834 and concluding in 1838[15]. According to Professor Ephraim Douglass Adams, it was from this point through the 1850s that the British anti-slavery advocates were at their most active, though they had begun to promote abolition outside their own empire as early as 1814.[16]

These advocates, coupled with abolitionists in the North, began to push the United States to abolish slavery, much to the annoyance and fear of the South. The battles that resulted in the American Congress ultimately led to the Compromise of 1850, in which the North and South reached an agreement limiting the spread of slavery, while at the same time eliminating the possibility of total abolition, at least for a time[17]. While the Compromise was met with varying degrees of favor in the United States, many abolitionists in Great Britain viewed the bill with despair. Many citizens observed that the legislature was mostly controlled by states in the North and were aghast at the level of protection the Compromise gave to Southern slaveholders, although they recognized the importance of how the bill limited the spread of slavery.[18] It was in this atmosphere that Lincoln was elected President of the United States, carrying the majority of

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[15] For a concise history of the British abolition movement, see Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor Versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapters 11 and 12. For statistical analysis, see also David Eltis and David Richardson, *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), chapter 10.

[16] Ephraim Douglass Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War: Vol. 1* (London, England: Russell & Russell, 1925), 31. See also Drescher, Seymour. *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 72-77.

[17] The Compromise of 1850 was a series of five bills that, among other issues, addressed the existence of Texas as a slave state. More importantly for this thesis, the Compromise created the "fugitive slave law," which required Northerners to assist in returning runaway slaves. For more information see Michael Green, *Politics and America in Crisis: The Coming of the Civil War* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2010), chapter 2.

[18] Green, *Politics*, 42-43.

the North, but not a single slaveholding state. In the months that followed, as state after state began to secede from the Union, many English citizens felt that it was Britain's duty either to stay neutral in the conflict or support the North in its fight against the rebellious states.

Due to the belief that Lincoln greatly favored abolition, many British citizens believed that the North would end slavery in the United States if victorious in the Civil War. Since the majority of British citizens favored the principle of abolition, many citizens stood by the North simply because of the assumption that the North stood for freedom. These Union supporters held that the Confederacy was a land of oppression and misery, the guardians of an evil status quo that needed to be eradicated. In a meeting to garner support for the Union, editorialists Peter Sinclair and W.A. Jackson stated "support of the South meant support of slavery, while Lincoln was the savior of Negroes."[19] Such claims often came on a much grander scale. Goldwin Smith[20], an economist living in Manchester, England, for instance once stated in 1862, "I look only at the moral of this great question, and I say that however the men who have engaged in this traffic may be under the shelter of international law, they are condemned by every man who has a right sense of what is just and honourable and right."[21] Such sponsorship would prove to be the quintessential rallying cry for Northern support throughout the war. Although support for the Confederacy did not necessarily prove to be an endorsement of the establishment of slavery, as this thesis will later show, the declaration that the North was the champion of freedom proved to be a very formidable assertion, often capable of swaying neutral parties to side with the Union.[22] As the historians Brougham Villiers and W.H. Chesson explained in 1920, "whatever the press

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[19] Peter Sinclair and W.A. Jackson, *Local Events in the District of Leigh: 1852-76* (Leigh, Lancashire: Chronicle Power Printing Office, 1877), 14. Speech occurred on May 7, 1862. The town-hall setting of this meeting is important in realizing the method in which many ordinary British civilians would receive news and different perspectives of the American Civil War.

[20] Smith was a member of the Union and Emancipation Society, the largest pro-Union society in Manchester.

[21] Goldwin Smith, *War Ships for the Southern Confederacy: Report of Public Meeting in the Free-Trade Hall* (Manchester, England: Union and Emancipation Society, 1863), 12.

[22] Lord Lyons to Lord Russell, April 15, 1861 in Parliament, *Correspondence 1862*, 27.

might say, one thing was clear, the South were slave-owners, while the cause of the North was in the hands of Free States; and whatever rhetorical cobwebs might be woven about it, that … was the central fact of the position."[23]

Out of necessity, proponents of the North, in addition to maintaining the importance of abolishing slavery, also attacked Confederate supporters on one of their strongest issues—the importance of cotton to the British economy. The issue of cotton was indisputably the other major consideration that many British citizens had to face when deciding whether they should intervene in the American conflict and often seemed to favor pro-Confederates who wanted Britain to immediately join the Civil War. Prior to the commencement of the American Civil War, both the United States and Great Britain had reaped benefits from the Industrial Revolution, basing entire sectors of their economy on textiles. In Great Britain in particular, the areas of Manchester and Lancashire were dependent almost exclusively on the textile industry as a means of survival. Much of the cotton that these workers used came from the Southern states that would later constitute the Confederacy. According to the economist Goldwin Smith, by the start of the Civil War, when a blockade was established that prevented all Southern cotton from entering Britain, the textile industry was "losing in wages…from nine to ten million [pounds] a year." Additionally, Smith theorized that the lack of cotton being imported from the United States was directly affecting the employment of thirty to forty thousand people as early as the beginning of 1862.[24] Due to the indescribable importance of cotton on the British economy, many Lancashire citizens were sympathetic to the Confederacy merely to retain their livelihood.

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[23] Villiers and Chesson, *Anglo-American Relations*, 98-99. English free labor principles mirrored those of Northern commerce in that it was a competitive labor market. For more information, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1944), chapters 8-9.
[24] Smith, *War Ships*, 8.

Thus, pro-Union activists had to answer what seemed to be an irrefutable strength of pro-Southern groups.

Strangely enough, not only were these Northern sympathizers able to answer the question of losing resources, but they were able to show that supporting the Confederacy did not make logical sense for their textile industry. Two of the primary arguments used by anti-Confederacy advocates dealt with the supply of imported cotton to Britain. These Union supporters often argued that the amount of cotton that could be imported from the Confederacy during the war would be insufficient for their needs, thus giving them no reason to join the remote struggle.[25] Furthermore, British internationalists stressed the importance of developing cotton facilities in India—thereby allowing the British Empire to cut its dependency on American cotton. Both of these arguments would provide a wrinkle in the traditional argument that Britain needed American cotton.

The first argument, that the Confederacy could not adequately supply Britain's cotton needs, was a simple calculation. Due to the amount of destruction that was occurring in the South during the conflict, as well as the shortage of farmers present, many cotton farms were unable to be planted. For those plantations that were not destroyed, the Confederacy still needed to farm the fields. During the time when the fighting was most intense, most men had left their homes to fight, making farming generally unrealistic[26]. To further complicate matters, the Union instituted a naval blockade on Southern ports as early as April 19, 1861, thus forcing Great Britain to decide if they were going to remain neutral or fully commit to the Confederacy at the

[25] Ibid.
[26] Those plantations that relied on slaves to farm for cotton ran into difficulty, as the foremen and masters of many plantations went to war. There were numerous examples of slaves refusing to work once the head of the household left for the War. See Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery*, chapter 5.

expense of direct conflict with the Union. To combat advocates of war, pro-Unionists established facts about the quantity of cotton available in the South.

By calculating the amount of cotton believed to be destroyed by the fighting, never grown for lack of manpower, and confiscated by the North from ships caught trying to smuggle it past the Union blockade, pro-Union advocates claimed that the South could not sufficiently provide for British industrial needs, and thus Britain should not join the Civil War for the sake of cotton[27]. According to these statistics, in early 1862, "under the most favourable circumstances, as far as America was concerned, [the British] could not expect more than forty-six weeks' supply of cotton for the next 113 weeks. From what [the British] have heard since, this calculation ceases to express the future deficit."[28] Based on these statistics, anti-Confederates argued, it would be sensible to remain neutral during the conflict and not join the Southern cause. Furthermore these same people also advocated an increase in the cultivation of cotton found in India. These activists believed that India could replace the Confederacy in supplying Lancashire and Manchester with cotton, while at the same time keeping Britain from engaging in a foreign war, one that, according to this point of view, did not need to influence the British people.

The plan to rely on India for cotton would serve two purposes. According to anti-Confederates, a large percentage of textile workers were willing to surrender a temporary portion of their profit for the eradication of slavery. In one abolitionist's speech to a rally, later presented to Parliament in 1863, the speaker declared that he "hate[d] slavery with a perfect hatred…[and] would not hesitate to make any personal sacrifice to aid in destroying so gigantic a

[27] These advocates assumed that the damage to the cotton supply was too severe to simply fix with intervention. See Unknown Author, *How Shall We Supply our Cotton Market: A Letter Addressed to the Right Hon. Thomas Milner Gibson, President of the Board of Trade* (London, England: John Henry and James Parker, 1862), 6.
[28] Unknown Author, *How Shall We Supply*, 4-5.

system of crime against humanity,"[29] especially if these sacrifices could be compensated by another source. By taking this speech and others like it into account, Parliament realized that it could not conduct trade with the Confederate states without morally offending a myriad of different people, including textile workers—those people they had thought most likely to favor joining the Confederacy.[30] As such, pro-Unionists urged the British government to begin cultivating cotton in India, one of Great Britain's colonies. In addition to supplying Manchester and Lancashire with the cotton that would be needed to supplant Confederate cotton, this new cotton industry would serve a moral function as well. In the same address to Thomas Gibson, the President of the Board of Trade under Lord Palmerson's[31] cabinet, the author called for Britain to form a committee to oversee the cotton production. This committee, in addition to creating the infrastructure necessary to facilitate growth, would serve as a public relations council. With Britain supplying its own cotton, "the public may feel assured that the company is in earnest, and in earnest in the proper direction."[32] By producing cotton in a way that was not "foreign to [them] and revolting to humanity,"[33] supporters of India-developed cotton sought to supply Manchester and Lancashire with the needed cotton, while at the same time avoiding a war that would be bloody both to British troops and British morality[34].

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[29] Parliament, *Shall We Recognize the Confederate States?* in *Correspondence,* 1863), 15.
[30] Lord Russell to Lord Lyons, November 22, 1861 in Parliament, *Correspondence 1862*, 21.
[31] British Prime Minister, 1859-1865.
[32] Unknown, *How Shall*, 12.
[33] Rev. E.L. Blackman, *Our Relations with America: A Reply to the Arguments of Mr. Cobden, in the House of Commons as to the Supply of Ammunition of War to the Belligerents* (Manchester, England: Committee of the Manchester Southern Club, 1862), 15.
[34] This line of thought was akin to the British sugar boycotts that occurred starting in the 1790s. See Mintz, Sidney W. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985), 57, 58, 61, 62 68, 69. Ironically, Reverend Blackman was generally pro-Confederate, in that he believed that a Confederate victory would hold a better future for Southern slaves, and as such was published in the Committee of the Manchester Southern Club, a pro-Southern organization in which James Spence was highly influential. However, Blackman did not believe that Britain should be profiting from slavery, and as such was against the importation of Southern cotton.

In sum then, pro-Union activists promoted relatively simple arguments for why Great Britain needed to remain neutral and not officially recognize the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War. The crux of their argument centered on the issue of morality. Virtually all citizens of Great Britain were reported as being repulsed by the idea of slavery, an aversion that anti-Confederate campaigners utilized to the fullest extent.[35] These pro-Northern advocates, however, also addressed the issue of cotton, one of the major thrusts of pro-Confederates. In dealing with the necessity for cotton for the British textile industry in England, these Unionists insisted that the Confederacy could not in any case supply Britain with the necessary quantities of cotton, and in trying to procure the supplies, Britain would be declaring war on the United States. To solve the issue of dependency on Southern cotton, these speakers proclaimed that the solution lay in India. By cultivating a cotton crop in British-controlled India, the workers in Manchester and Lancashire could remain employed, while simultaneously knowing that they were not promoting the repugnant practice of slavery. With these arguments, anti-Confederate supporters believed that they could convince Parliament and citizens alike that remaining neutral during the foreign conflict was the only rational choice available. However, they would have to contend with Confederate backers. Although these advocates did not support any notion of slavery, they would argue that, for a variety of reasons, and not always involving cotton, the real logical action was to enter the fray and join the Confederate States as they battled the Union in the American Civil War.

[35] Adams, *Great Britain Vol. I*, 87.

Section III: Skepticism of Lincoln

One striking example of the way that interpretations relating to the United States Civil War have differed between generations is the popular view of Abraham Lincoln. In modern times, the lay public often views Lincoln as a benefactor of slaves, a resolute abolitionist, and a fighter for equality, while the South is seen as a land of discrimination, oppression, and bigotry, whose residents, or at least ruling elements, were focused above all on maintaining slavery.[36] However, during the 1860s, British citizens interpreted the events and situations from across the ocean very differently. After hearing various reports from Confederate emissaries, Southern supporters, and eyewitness accounts of life in the Southern states, many British denizens came to the conclusion that they could not trust Abraham Lincoln. Acknowledging everything from flaws in Lincoln's initial plans for emancipation to the belief that the President was using the issue of slavery as a political tool, many British believed that the North, if victorious, would not resolve the issue of slavery.[37] Amid the constant debate within academia regarding whether Lincoln was a resolute or slow-moving emancipationist, Lerone Bennett echoes such misgivings, writing, "the most persuasive argument against Lincoln's effectiveness as a leader is the failure of his only two presidential initiatives on race—compensated emancipation and colonization—which were so wildly impractical that one has to question the political rationality of the man who advanced them."[38] Rather, because of the way that slaves were treated in the South and because

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[36] Richard Striner, *Father Abraham: Lincoln's Relentless Struggle to End Slavery* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[37] A third opinion is one discounting Lincoln's role as being relatively small and unwilling in the struggle for abolition. Bennett claims that Lincoln nearly always ignored what was best for African Americans, instead concentrating on bettering his own position politically so as not to alienate his white constituents. While this thesis does not go to this extreme, it does establish the concern many British citizens had regarding Lincoln's abolitionist position. For more information, see Bennett, *Forced into Glory*.

[38] Bennett, *Forced into Glory*, 50-51. Academics often take a more nuanced approach toward dealing with Lincoln. For example, Eric Foner illustrates how Lincoln's views of slavery evolved as his term as president progressed, noting Lincoln's hesitation at the idea of equality, yet believing in the ideal of abolition. For more information, see Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2010).

of the proposed reason for Confederates supporting the institution of slavery, British observers often felt that the South was the side that truly wanted to end slavery.

Although it initially might seem odd, many British citizens began to support the Confederacy only once Lincoln began to discuss his plans to emancipate Southern slaves. Although this appears to be counterintuitive, these British subjects, after analyzing Lincoln's initial campaign for freedom, found numerous fallacies and questionable tactics in Lincoln's plan. To these doubters, it appeared that, regardless of reasoning, Lincoln was concerned only with ending slavery in the South, and he did not concern himself with the consequences associated with such a drastic change.

Qualms about Lincoln's desire for emancipation stemmed from his plans for the slaves once they obtained their freedom. Although Lincoln stated that he strongly desired to free enslaved people and send them to a different continent, critics said that Lincoln, in fact, desired slaves' emigration from United States soil to appease the white citizenry in the North.[39] In a letter written to the *Liverpool Mercury* in July 1862, Joshua R. Balme, a clergyman, condemned the North for treating freed African Americans as inferior to whites. According to Balme, who staunchly fought slavery, "the plan [to send former slaves to] Liberia sprang from fear of close contact with blacks, and in the Northern states themselves, 'black laws' deny the freed slave elementary rights."[40] In an even more outspoken piece, an unknown author declared that many Northerners, including Lincoln, "would have rejoiced exceedingly if the whole race [of African Americans] could be transported to their native Africa, or shovelled(sic) into Central America, to

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While academic debate about Lincoln is informative, what is more important for this thesis is comparing public perceptions of Lincoln, which are often overly simplified.

[39] Although freed slaves in Britain did not have total equality, they were integrated to some extent into British society. These authors are claiming that Northern leaders did not want African Americans to be included in Northern society.

[40] Joshua R. Balme, *Letters on the American Republic, or, Common Fallacies and Monstrous Errors Refuted and Exposed* (London, England: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1865), 10.

live or die as chance might determine."[4142] The author later stated that the inhabitants of New York, the "only real metropolis of America," would "rejoice if not a negro(sic) were left among them."[43] Regardless of whether British readers believed that New Yorkers were truly that prejudiced against African Americans, or if this article took what might have been low levels of racism and raised its significance, is irrelevant. What is significant, however, is the notion that Northerners, including Lincoln, considered the idea of sending freed slaves back to Africa. This notion of deporting people of African descent from the Union, effectively establishing a White-only land, made many British civilians question whether Lincoln really desired freedom for slaves, or if he and his followers merely wanted abolition in order to deport ex-slaves out of America.[44]

Other students of Lincoln, those not as suspicious of his intentions of freeing slaves, still found a glaring flaw in his idea of sudden emancipation. Although abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean who took Lincoln's plan for emancipation at face value applauded his intentions, they could not help but notice that there was no discussion of freed slaves' conditions and education. After realizing these shortcomings, some of these observers became wary of Lincoln's ability to free Southern slaves in a successful manner. In a dispatch as early as 1861, Lord Lyons, the British ambassador in Washington, DC, expressed his concern that "the sudden emancipation of the Slaves by any means would be cruel in the extreme to themselves."[45] Rather than creating an atmosphere of sudden absolute freedom, many abolitionists from Britain "urge[d] Northern abolitionists to eschew sudden abolition so that it would be possible to have

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[41] Unknown Author, "The Negro and the Negrophilists," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Volume XCIX, May 1866, 582.
[42] Note that *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was a conservative journal.
[43] Ibid., 586.
[44] Hans L. Trefousse, *Lincoln's Decision for Emancipation* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975), 37.
[45] Lyons, as quoted in James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, *The American Civil War Through British Eyes: Dispatches from British Diplomats: Volume I: November 1860-April 1862* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2005), 193.

an educated as well as a free body of black citizens."[46] The concern felt by many of these commentators was simple. If slaves were uneducated and left to fend for themselves, they would not be able to lead a fully independent lifestyle immediately. Thus, they would face poverty, starvation, and ridicule from other United States citizens. To this end, these advocates believed that Lincoln's plan was fatally unsound and would create more harm than good. However, while many British subjects viewed Lincoln's goal for total absolute freedom as a noble, yet ill-planned and arguably bigoted venture, others did not grant Lincoln even that much credit. To these analysts, Lincoln was seen as a leviathan, only wanting to advance his agenda. His quest for the abolition of slavery, these critics argued, was merely a way for Lincoln to garner authority for the United States, with himself controlling a vast amount of power.

Detractors, for a large variety of reasons, echoed the sentiment that Lincoln was using the issue of slavery as a weapon to gain power during the Civil War. A man identified only as Anderson, who was a British agent sent to North America to ensure that British citizens were not being drafted into the Union Army, wrote about such a worry. In his letters, later read in Parliament in October 1862, Anderson expressed his belief that "emancipation was purely a war measure with no thought of ameliorating the condition of the slaves once freed."[47] Anderson's conviction in this notion could have stemmed from a variety of sources. Some writers were convinced that Lincoln's desire to eradicate slavery was merely a ploy to keep Europe from intervening, as they believed "emancipation had never been elevated to a principle held dear in the North."[48] Still others, such as John Jay[49], repeated Lincoln's own words when he stated that

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[46] Unknown Boltonian living in New York, as quoted in *Bolton Chronicle*, May 10, 1862, in Ellison, 72. According to Ellison, said writer had "liberal leanings."
[47] Anderson, as quoted in Parliament, *Correspondence No. 33*, October 13, 1862, 11.
[48] Oldham Standard, April 29, 1865, in Ellison, 73-74.
[49] Not the same John Jay as the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Adams only states that Jay was a Confederate sympathizer.

the War had not been about slavery, and highlighted the fact that the idea to abolish slavery as a weapon of war had been suggested by Lincoln's own Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.[50] All of these different motives eventually merged into one idea: Lincoln cared little about emancipation, using it only as a tool and weapon for his own tyranny.

Of the people who accepted this argument, those who were most mistrustful of Lincoln believed that he was addressing the issue of slavery solely to ensure that no European nations would enter the War on the side of the Confederacy. This line of thought echoes the reasoning many scholars today follow when determining why Great Britain never intervened in the Civil War.[51] Such an argument was generated shortly after Lincoln began to discuss the issue of slavery. After Lincoln's proclamation that the Union would act to end the practice of slavery, articles published in simultaneous newspapers declared skepticism of Lincoln's March announcement. One author claimed that "the proclamation [was] a devious act of diplomacy intended to conciliate public opinion in Europe and so lessen the danger of interference."[52] Such a tactic perfectly echoed the traditional line of study by Civil War scholars. With the vast majority of Europeans stating that they were against the institution and practice of slavery, they could not fight against a power that claimed to be fighting for emancipation. Rather, they would have no moral choice other than to remain neutral or even favor the Union. The author quoted above, uttering the sentiment of others, felt that Lincoln was playing a political game, and sought only to avoid confrontation with European nations, an altercation that he could ill-afford.[53]

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[50] John Jay in Charles Adams, *Slavery, Secession, & Civil War: Views from the United Kingdom and Europe, 1856-1865* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), 94.
[51] See Howard Jones, *Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom: The Union and Slavery in the Diplomacy of the Civil War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 154-156.
[52] Unknown author, *Oldham Chronicle*, March 22, 1862.
[53] See Jordan and Pratt's analysis in Jordan and Pratt, Europe, chapter 8.

Still other detractors wondered if Lincoln were attempting to further diminish the power of the South if the Union were victorious in the War with his emancipation rhetoric. As this investigation will analyze shortly, prior to the War, Southern states had been steadily losing influence in the legislature, as its percentage of representatives in Congress continued to plummet. Compounding this trend was the concern that many British citizens had when they learned that Lincoln was discussing abruptly ending slavery without any type of fiscal appropriation to the slaveholders. Moral questions of slavery aside, onlookers in Britain realized that this "property" had been held in families for generations—it was often inherited rather than bought by the present generation. When Lincoln and the Union began to talk about confiscating all Southern slaves without any sort of financial settlement, some among the British people began to realize the enormity of such an action. According to A.J. Beresford Hope, the total worth of all slaves found within the Southern states was equal to approximately £500,000,000.[54] With such a massive loss of "property," coupled with the immediate switch that Southern farmers would have had to recognize when they no longer had workers, the North's influence over the weakened South would be colossal.[55]

When anti-Lincolnists would challenge Unionists on these grounds, pro-Union sympathizers would often challenge Confederate supporters on the grounds that they were supporting a nation that embraced slavery. Aside from the fiscal arguments that slavery would soon be abolished in the Confederate States that this thesis will address shortly, these Confederate supporters were able to take an additional stance that further combated Unionist

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[54] A.J. Beresford Hope, *England, the North, and the South: Being a Popular View of the American Civil War* (London, England: James Ridgway, 1862), 62.. £1 in 1860 equaled approximately £63.10 today. This translates to £31,550,000,000 currently or approximately $51,044,745,000 currently using the rate of $1.6179 for £1.

[55] This fear stemmed from the theory that Lincoln was attacking private property, a fear that British citizens felt at home. Since domestic issues intersected foreign policy issues in this instance, these British observers felt strongly about the issue. See Bennett, *The London Confederates*, 43-47.

claims. Rather than claiming that Southerners kept slaves as a convenience or as a way to generate revenue, these Confederate activists instead insisted that Confederates held slaves out of political necessity, in order to hold more sway in Congress.[56] According to these Southern advocates, the reason for Southern lobbying for further slaves and slave states resulted from the continued decline in the influence that Southern States held in the United States legislature. Due to the Three-Fifths Compromise that was established in Philadelphia in 1787, the more slaves each Southern state held, the more influence it would have in the House of Representatives. Despite the seeming advantage that slave states would hold over free states, the exponential growth of the Northern population soon began to dictate the agenda and will of the House, and, perhaps most importantly, began to monopolize the presidency. According to census data, the number of electoral votes for Southern states steadily declined in the years leading up to the Civil War. In terms of numbers, in the decade leading up to the Civil War, the North controlled 147 seats in Congress to the South's 90. After the 1860 census, had the Confederacy not seceded, those numbers would have become even more differentiated, with 149 seats going to Northern states, and only 84 being controlled by Southern and Border states.[57] With such a disparity, many opponents argued, there was a necessity to own as many slaves as was feasible, as long as Confederate states remained a part of the United States.[58] However, these same critics argued, if these states were able to successfully separate from the Union, they would have no need for such an abundance of slaves, particularly when they held slaves in regions whose climate was not compatible with slavery. At this point, they would be free to examine the issue of slavery

[56] Beresford Hope, *England*, 61.
[57] Ibid., 60.
[58] See series of correspondences in Adams, *Slavery*, 63-67.

without fear of having their voices muted in Congress.[59] As this thesis will show, Confederate advocates in Britain argued that the Confederacy would realize that slavery would be unfeasible economically, and international pressure would create the final catalyst for the dissolution of slavery. This response, when coupled with the economic arguments that this research will look at shortly, was successful in influencing neutral individuals that the South did not hold slaves merely for racial reasons, but rather as a political necessity, a need that would not be required upon successfully seceding from the Union.[60]

These sentiments and suspicions would continue throughout much of the War, as British subjects doubted Lincoln's motives even after the Emancipation Proclamation. As late as 1864, the *Ashton Standard* published an article condemning Lincoln, declaring that they "saw no love of freedom but simply a desire to cripple [Lincoln's own] adversaries," a fact stated by Lincoln himself.[61] Part of the reason for such continued skepticism stemmed from the origin of the idea that emancipation could, in fact, be used as a political weapon. While Unionists would argue that this argument was merely a way for pro-Confederates to create anti-Union sentiments, other historians and politicians illustrated that this was not necessarily the case. Charles Sumner, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations was one of the earliest and greatest advocates of using abolition as a weapon in the War.[62] According to the historian Ephraim Douglass Adams, Sumner's strategy was for the North to release "a proclamation everywhere

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[59] An objection might be made that if the Confederacy was worried about votes in Congress, why did it not simply free its slaves prior to the Civil War, so as to give Southern states an entire vote rather than three-fifths of one. Aside from the cynical answer that maintaining them as slaves ensured that their masters would have a stronger voice, an economic reality must be examined. With a larger population, each state was forced to pay larger amounts of taxes. See Jeremy Pierce, "3/5 of a Person," *Parableman* (April, 2010) [online edition], 1.

[60] Successful in that it gave British civilians additional considerations to ponder when observing the conflict.

[61] Ellison, *Support for Secession*, 73. See also Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis Over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), chapter 7.

[62] Sumner was a well-known figure in Great Britain, having published numerous articles and editorials in British newspapers, corresponding to various Members of Parliament, and having pro-Union speeches read to British citizens during the War. See also Charles Sumner, *The Selected Letters of Charles Sumner Vols. 1 & 2* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1990).

emancipating the slaves [that] would give to the Northern cause a moral support hitherto denied in Europe and would at the same time strike a blow at Southern resistance."[63] Finding that Sumner had been publicly discussing such a strategy since October 1861, soon after the Civil War had commenced, Adams concluded that the idea of emancipation as a political tool had been established long before Lincoln began to publicly discuss his desire for national abolition.[64] With such well known plotting occurring within Lincoln's inner circle, many British observers began to question almost immediately Lincoln's true purpose in declaring his hatred of slavery, regardless of what he might claim.[65] The insistence of Lincoln that the Civil War was not a conflict over the institution of slavery merely compounded these onlooker's doubts about Lincoln's true intentions.

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, many politicians and commentators analyzing the social structures[66] of the Northern and Southern states believed that if war did occur, they would be morally forced to side with the Northern Union, or at the very least remain neutral.[67] Thus, it was to the great shock and consternation of British abolitionists that, once the War was initiated, Lincoln publicly proclaimed that the conflict was not over the institution of slavery. For more than a year during which the Civil War raged, Lincoln, although condemning the practices of slaveholding and slave trading, continually stressed that the conflict was not being fought over these issues. British abolitionists were further agitated when, in 1862, a "Confiscation Bill" was brought before America's Congress.[68] In this Bill, which discussed freeing any slaves who

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[63] Adams, *Great Britain: Vol. II*, 81.
[64] Refer back to discussion on pages 19-20.
[65] Ellison, *Support*, 60.
[66] Regarding free African Americans as opposed to enslaved individuals.
[67] Myers, *Caution*, 28.
[68] The two Confiscation Acts, passed in 1861 and 1862, stated that any slaves helping Confederate forces that were captured were to be freed. The second Act dealt with the sixty-day period in which Confederate forces would be permitted to surrender and retain their slaves. See Silvana R. Siddali, *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

escaped the South, there was an exemption clause stating that if the rebelling states would cease military operations within sixty days of the Bill's passage, they would be able to retain the use of their slaves.[69] This Bill, coupled with Lincoln's continued insistence that the Civil War was being fought "to maintain the Union," and so encompassing the practice of slavery,[70] caused Lincoln to lose additional British support. According to Adams, "before the opening of actual military operations…British opinion had been with the North on the alleged ground of sympathy with a free as against a slave-owning society….But with Lincoln's repeated declarations that the North had no intention of destroying slavery cause[d] an almost complete shift of British opinion. The abolitionists of the North and the extreme anti-slavery friends of England…still sounded the note of 'slavery the cause of the war,' but got little hearing."[71] From this Bill, and from Lincoln's own speeches, many initial sympathizers of the Union lost faith that Lincoln was truly a champion of abolition, and, even more so, might not even end slavery if the North were victorious.[72] With their faith shaken by these two instances of what they saw as wavering support for abolition, coupled with the rumors that Lincoln only talked about emancipation as a tool to keep European powers from intervening, many British citizens turned their sympathies away from the North, and either became neutral, or swung their approval to the Confederacy and began to actively campaign for intervention.[73] These instances work to counteract the popular opinion which even many historians today still support. Rather than viewing Lincoln as an altruistic abolitionist, increasing amounts of evidence have surfaced suggesting that Lincoln, rather than being a "Great Emancipator," was merely using the issue of slavery to further his

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[69] Henry J. Raymond, *The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln: Together with his State Papers, Including his Speeches, Addresses, Messages, Letters, and Proclamations, and the Closing Scenes Connected with his Life and Death* (New York, NY: Derby and Miller, 1865), 243. See also Adams, *Slavery*, 82.
[70] James Spence, *On the Recognition of the Southern Confederation* (London, England: Richard Bentley, 1862), 19-20.
[71] Adams, *Slavery*, 78.
[72] Prior to the Emancipation Proclamation.
[73] Mr. Seward to Mr. Adams, February 5, 1862 in Parliament, *Correspondence 1863*, 19.

own government and the Union. Whether or not such claims are true is irrelevant. What is relevant, however, is the substantive proof that various British citizens took issue with Lincoln's plans for emancipating the slaves prior to the Emancipation Proclamation. As this paper will analyze, the same people often felt that the Confederacy was the side that truly sought to help its slaves.

One of the most telling studies regarding emancipation questions is historian Mary Ellison's book, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War*, which examined numerous newspaper archives for opinions of the emancipation question.[74] Ellison concluded that the Manchester press was the most unbiased media in Lancashire, finding these news sources to have the least sensationalism or personal biases of any in the region, finding them to "show a rare ability to see all sides of the emancipation question".[75] After further exploring these sources, Ellison concluded that Manchester, being the most neutral of any major region, also rejected Lincoln's claims for abolition. In her investigation, Ellison found only two major newspapers out of ten published that offered any type of endorsement of the Union.[76] Furthermore, Ellison illustrated that many of the articles supporting Lincoln as a true emancipator came as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation—few articles were written backing Lincoln before the Proclamation was created.[77] For the first year and a half of the conflict, virtually no news editorials were printed praising Lincoln for his abolition ambitions. Quite the contrary, people in the most neutral site in what should have been one of the most pro-

[74] Ellison's book is a compilation of various topics that she has found relating to the American Civil War through the eyes of the British, such as the Confederate mission for official recognition and the Union blockade. Her findings are based primarily on newspaper editorials and publications. One brief chapter in her book deals with emancipation, which this thesis tries to expand upon.
[75] Ellison, *Support*, 79.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

Union regions of Britain[78] seemed to doubt Lincoln's motives. According to Ellison, eight of ten people writing to the media were skeptical of Lincoln's abolitionist desires.

After further analyzing the opinions of Lincoln held by citizens living in Great Britain, it becomes apparent that abolitionists did not universally champion Lincoln as the "Great Emancipator" prior to the creation of the Emancipation Proclamation. Many of the British subjects who examined the Civil War mistrusted Lincoln's abolitionist intentions, whether for the flaws in Lincoln's emancipation plans, or due to a personal mistrust of Lincoln himself. Such was the skepticism of Lincoln that in Manchester, the most unbiased city in the Lancashire region, only two of ten newspapers studied supported the Northern effort as genuine—the rest of the newspapers sided with the Confederacy, discussing both grievances against the North, as well as the assumption that the Confederacy would eventually eliminate slavery. If the South were able to successfully break away from the Union, Southern supporters claimed, an independent Confederate States of America would be able to finally end slavery in the beneficial, pragmatic way that Lincoln's Union could never hope to accomplish.

[78] According to Ellison.

Section IV: Dark Past

Aside from the worries that many British citizens felt when they analyzed Lincoln's platform for emancipation, what made these onlookers pause and wonder if the North were truly the right model for the Confederacy to follow in terms of abolition and should be allowed to fight the war unhindered was the Union's jaded history with African Americans, and the strained relationship they continued to experience up through the beginning of the Civil War. Although British subjects first had to confront their own past relationships with slave nations and slavery within their empire, what was more worrisome for them was the bleak history that the Union held for slaves and emancipated slaves. Whether it was sending ex-slaves to Southern states where they would be newly chained, or "exporting" to Cuba, the North showed perhaps more brutality toward African Americans than the South did.[79] Furthermore, the freed slaves who remained in the North were reportedly treated no better, or maybe worse than slaves in the South. For while there was general intermingling between Caucasians and African Americans in the Southern states, there were reports that there was almost total segregation in the Northern half of America. Between racially constructed, limiting laws in the Union, as well as a general sense of segregation, fueled by popular prejudice, it was perceived many residents in Great Britain that the Union was worse to their African Americans occupants than the Whites who constituted the Confederate States of America.[80]

The first measure that pro-Confederates had to take was to try to persuade the British government to officially recognize the Confederate States of America upon secession. Pro-Unionists often argued that since the Confederacy held slaves, the British Empire should not morally associate with a slaveholding country, much less aid them and conduct trade with them.

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[79] Readers should take note that the North had a practice of exporting freedmen to these places even after they ended slavery. See Bennett, *Forced into Glory*, chapter 10. See also Adams, *Slavery*, 89-96.
[80] Adams, *Slavery*, 94-96.

However, as Confederate backers retorted, such a practice had been present in English society for centuries, and still continued.[81] Even though Great Britain eliminated the slave trade in 1807, and finally abolished slavery in all its colonies in 1833, its present diplomatic position was far from clean. As a Northerner ironically pointed out, "England bargained with Spain for the exclusive supply of the Spanish colonies for thirty years…and the Queen boast[s] of it!"[82] Even as England abolished its slaving practices, it still held diplomatic and economic ties to countries that continued the practice of slavery.

Indeed, as one of the most adamant arguments for recognizing the Confederacy, pro-Southerners noted that Britain not only recognized other nations with slavery, they also conducted business with them. One such citizen who came to this realization was James Spence. A self-named "impartial British observer,"[83] Spence referenced the numerous diplomatic and economic relationships Britain had with Spain, Brazil, and Turkey, with Spain holding slave-trading rights, and Brazil and Turkey actually possessing and using slavery. Spence's final assertion that Britain "cannot deal with one country upon one principle and with another country on another"[84] rang true to many observers of the American conflict. The claim that Great Britain could not deal with the South because it held slaves was, to Spence and many others, completely hypocritical. In Southern supporters' minds, a relationship with the South would serve two purposes. First, they would be able to ensure that, with a Southern victory, the new Confederate States of America would, in fact, take the logical step of eradicating slavery, a series of stages that led to the true freedom of all slaves in the South, as this thesis will delve into later.

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[81] Readers should recall Britain's leading role in the slave trade with its West Indian Colonies and Spain.
[82] Joseph Willard, *Letter to an English Friend on the Rebellion in the U.S.* (Boston: MA, Ticknor & Fields, 1862), 25.
[83] It is interesting to note that although Spence claims he is "impartial," he hails from Liverpool, considered to be the most pro-Confederate city in Britain. Furthermore, historian John Bennett views Spence as an active Confederate sympathizer. See John Bennett, "The Confederate Bazaar in Liverpool," *Crossfire-The Magazine of the American Civil War Round Table* 61 (December 1999) [online edition]: 1.
[84] Spence, *On the Recognition*, 19.

Secondly, and perhaps just as importantly, with a Confederate victory, the Southern states would not be in danger of falling under the power of the Union.

The manner in which many Northern states treated its free African American population often made British onlookers pause when they considered remaining neutral, and thus giving the Union a better chance of victory. The number and severity of racially dividing stigmas found within Northern society was particularly striking to onlookers. In response to an address given by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Archbishop Whately was critical of having the North overlook the emancipation of Southern slaves. In his reply, Whately appears skeptical of the Union's ability and desire to help Southern slaves, due to the way in which "Negroes were badly treated."[85] Interestingly, French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville had raised the issue of racial divide years before the war. In his multi-volume work *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville devotes numerous sections to race relations in the North, as well as the likelihood that the Union would be able to remain intact.[86] In his studies, de Tocqueville found that although freed slaves might be legally free to pursue their ambitions, they would be unable to do so in practice due to the vast amount of segregation and prejudice in the Union. De Tocqueville gives the example that African Americans, "if oppressed, may bring an action at law, but they will find none but whites among their judges; and although they may legally serve as jurors, prejudice repels them from that office."[87] Although these laws individually limited what people of African descent were able to accomplish and practice in the North, of greater importance was the overall picture of society there. Despite being free, these ex-slaves were not able to intermingle with whites.

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[85] Archbishop Whately in Jordan and Pratt, *Europe* 157. See also Beresford Hope, *England*, 10.
[86] Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 343-446.
[87] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Vol. I*, rev. Francis Bowen (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1945), 373. See also *The Negro in the North*, Papers for the People, No.8 (January 1864), 2-4 in Ellison, *Support*, 65.

De Tocqueville chronicles the difference between the extreme segregation in the North and the relatively large amount of intermingling between races in the South. In his books, written in 1835 and 1840 and thus more than twenty years before the outbreak of war, the author blames the Northern strategy of rapid abolition as the cause of the Northern attitude that led to such a racial divide. De Tocqueville wrote "in the North the white no longer distinctly perceives the barrier that separates him from the degraded race, and he shuns the Negro with the more pertinacity since he fears lest they should some day be confounded together."[88] Meanwhile, de Tocqueville concludes, although the actual legislation in the South was harsher than in the North, "the habits of the people are more tolerant and compassionate."[89] Such claims can be seen by other writers as well. When a journalist for *Edinburgh's Blackwood Magazine* visited a Southern plantation, he was surprised to find the relatively pleasant lifestyle in which the slaves lived.[90] Noticing one slave wore a gold watch, the journalist asked him about the conditions, and whether having money was common for slaves. The slaves reported that they were "fed well…carefully attended to when sick…and on Sundays dress better than their masters. Many of them had six or seven hundred dollars of their own."[91] Southern supporters illustrated how numerous Confederate masters educated their slaves, with many of them becoming literate,[92] which was a stark contrast to the tales of de Tocqueville, who repeated tales of free African Americans being unable to attend schools in the North due to segregation, essentially ensuring

[88] De Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 374. Liberals and conservatives alike in Great Britain read De Tocqueville. See Hugh Brogan, "Alexis de Tocqueville and the Liberal Moment," *The Historical Journal* 14(2) (June 1971), 289-303.
[89] Ibid. See also Adams, *Great Britain Volume II*, 277.
[90] Readers should note that *Edinburgh's Blackwood Magazine* often looked favorably upon conservative politics, and as such would stereotypically look favorably upon the Confederacy. However, as this thesis tries to demonstrate, such political leanings do not uniformly dictate what side a person would support in the conflict, as maintained by Ellison's Manchester findings.
[91] Unknown Author, "A Month with 'The Rebels'," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Volume XC, December 1861, 757. It is worth mentioning that such tales of relative luxury might have been exaggerated or such instances might have been few in number.
[92] Beresford Hope, *England*, 11.

their illiteracy.[93] Many political observers believed that the North's storied history in the slave trade and in keeping slaves helped create the climate for these offenses. According to these commentators, the North was just as guilty as the South was in the institution of slavery. The difference, Southern advocates claimed, was that the North was already flawed, while the South could still be established in such a way that slaves could live normal lives once they obtained their freedom.[94] Partly as a result, pro-Confederates advocated entering the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy.

The reason why Northern attitudes seemed so misguided to the people living in Great Britain seemed to be partially due to the tainted history that was shared by all states in the Union. While the majority of British citizens understood that many countries, themselves included, held pasts full of the practice of slavery, what drew their ire was the unwillingness of Northerners to pay reparations to ex-slaves, or even treat free people of African descent equitably. Furthermore, British onlookers were shocked that Northerners simply did not seem to acknowledge any past transgressions, but merely criticized the Southern role in the practice of slavery. As Beresford Hope best phrased this sentiment, "the North cannot cast the stone of reproach till it has repented of the actively hypocritical part it plays on the slave question."[95] Although they did not actively hold slaves, as many people observed, the North profited from slavery, all while denouncing the South for upholding this institution.

Just as the British were suspicious of Lincoln, in the minds of many British analysts, if the Union were victorious, African Americans across America might get the chance to be free

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[93] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Tocqueville's America: The Great Quotations*, ed. Frederick Kershner, Jr. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1983), 56.
[94] Adams, *Slavery*, 107.
[95] A.J. Beresford Hope, *The Results of the American Disruption: The Substance of a Lecture Delivered by Request Before the Maidstone Literary & Mechanics' Institution, in Continuation of a Popular View of the American Civil War, and England, the North, and the South* (London, England: James Ridgway, 1862), 14.

instantly, but would be treated perhaps worse than if they were gradually freed by the South upon a Confederate victory. One of the most extreme examples of what the British saw as Northern insincerity was the continued fighting to keep slavery legal in the border states after slavery was considered abolished, particularly in the case of New York. In a dispatch from Lord Lyons to Lord Russell dated as late as February 4, 1861, Lyons complained that although slavery had been outlawed, in the twelve years since New Yorkers were supposed to free their slaves, "the Supreme Court and the Legislature, and the Administration have maintained, protected, defended, and guaranteed Slavery(sic) there," with strong urging from the public in New York.[96] This example was particularly destructive to onlookers because, as they viewed the Union, New York was the "largest of the old and fully developed states."[97] They also viewed such protection with such dismay, as the Union, which was supposedly eliminating slavery from its borders, was giving it governmental protection in the Border States and Confederacy. With such protection, many British writers felt that the Union was not truly ready to embrace the abolition of slavery.

Unionists often challenged this point made by Confederates. They wondered why the Union would abolish slavery if they did not care about slaves' conditions. However, as they had in assessing Lincoln's policies, observers quickly pointed out that the North likely abolished slavery for ulterior motives. As this thesis will examine shortly, when a climate is not suited for slavery, owning slaves tends to be unprofitable. Such was the case in the North. Rather than losing money by keeping slaves, Confederate supporters stated that slave-owners in the North simply abolished slavery, and, in a strategic move, sold their slaves to the South. In this manner, "the Negroes [were] transferred to one part of the Union as soon as slavery [was] abolished in the other. Thus the black population augment[ed] in the South, not only by its natural fecundity,

[96] Lyons in Barnes, *The American Civil War*, 28.
[97] Ibid. See also Barnes' commentary in Barnes, *The American Civil War*, 28-30.

but by the compulsory emigration of the Negroes from the North."[98] The final act in abolishing slavery in the North was not to educate their former servants or introduce them into mainstream society as many British abolitionists had hoped. Rather, it was to profit off of their slaves for one final time. Had Northerners stopped at shipping their soon-to-be freed slaves South, many British people might have forgiven this mistake and treated it as a fluke. However, with the Union's continual profiteering from slavery, all denouncing the South for holding slaves, many writers began to document the explicit role the North continued to have with slavery.[99]

Yet another blow against the Northern "moral position," was struck with the continued pumping of revenue into the slave trade and practice of slavery. Despite slavery being abandoned on Northern soil, many Northern businessmen continued to invest in the slave trade, often to immense profit.[100] One common practice was for Northerners to heavily invest their money in Southern agriculture. By providing money to Southern plantations and then either charging interest on such loans or taking a share of the profit reaped by the planters, Northern investors were able to directly contribute to the growth of slavery in the South. As one correspondent who had their letter read to Parliament in 1862 wrote, prior to the Civil War, the North became "fat upon slavery by lending its money upon mortgage to Southern slave-owners."[101] Many British therefore believed the North was perfectly happy to gain monetary benefits from slavery, even if they did not hold any actual enslaved individuals in the North.[102] Rather, the Union was free to criticize the South for maintaining slavery, while reaping blood money from the slave states. This hypocrisy did not go unnoticed in Great Britain, particularly

[98] De Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 386. See also Beresford Hope, *England*, 55.
[99] Barnes, *The American Civil War*, 28-30.
[100] Unknown Author, *Recognition of the Southern Confederacy, Indispensable for Resolving the American Question* (London, England: William Ridgway, 1863), 10
[101] Ibid. See also Beresford Hope, *England*, 12.
[102] Ibid.

when combined with the role of the North, particularly New York and Boston, in the continuation of the slave trade internationally.

Northerners did not stop at contributing money to Southern slaveholders, but additionally helped facilitate the slave trade internationally. One of the most shameful practices from the British point of view was the continued use of American vessels in bringing slaves from Africa to the Spanish-controlled island of Cuba. Despite the North outlawing the actual practice of slave trading, both within the United States and abroad, it did nothing to prevent American-owned ships from independently being contracted and used to ship slaves to Cuba. Additionally, once such slave ships had concluded their mission, they were allowed to return to Northern harbors. Beresford Hope cited accounts of "slavers [being allowed] to quit and re-enter New York harbour at their pleasure," apparently with no repercussions.[103] That Northerners allowed slaving ships to fully utilize their harbors was repulsive to many British citizens, and with Union officials seeming to overlook such an obvious manipulation of the North's pledge to abolish the slave trade, many British observers wondered if the North truly cared about ending slavery, or if they were simply intent on making money from the horrific practice without actually housing slaves on Union soil.[104] The continued practice of an independent slave trade operating out of the Union made British subjects pause before declaring unilaterally that the North would be a good role model for Southern abolition and should thus be allowed to fight the Confederacy unimpeded. Instead, many British abolitionists wondered if the North truly cared about the development of ex-slaves into full citizens, or if they merely abolished slavery because it was not profitable.[105] Many came to the conclusion that the latter was true, and for the sake of slaves in

[103] Beresford Hope, *England*, 9
[104] Ibid.
[105] Barnes, *The American Civil War*, 253.

the South, Great Britain should enter the war to ensure that the Confederacy would be victorious.[106]

In order to fully support the Confederacy in the Civil War, British supporters first had to realize the precedent that Great Britain in dealing with slave-holding nations. In addition to once boasting of its own slave trade, Britain continued to hold diplomatic relationships with slave-holding nations. After stressing that it would be morally allowable to associate with the Confederacy, these Southern advocates turned their attention to the myriad of wrongdoings associated with the Union. Much like their skepticism of Lincoln, these Confederate sympathizers argued that Northerners simply did not care about people of African descent, and often made free African Americans' lives worse than the enslaved population in the South. Even before the outbreak of the war, Alexis de Tocqueville noted the extreme level of segregation occurring in the North, a lifestyle that made it impossible for free African Americans to thrive on a level of exclusion that was seen in the South. Additionally, Northerners profited heavily from the institution of slavery. Whether it was from selling its newly-freed slaves South, financing plantations, or privately shipping slaves to Cuba, it became quite apparent to many British observers that the North did not truly care about establishing freed slaves in its society, but instead was interested in profit, and its outlawing of slavery was purely selfish. Instead of seeing the Union as a shining example of how to end slavery and favorable force to truly free slaves in the South, many British subjects began to believe that aiding the Confederacy would be the best way to help Southern slaves.[107] As the next section of this thesis will examine, pro-Southern discourse suggested that if the Confederacy were victorious, it would give up its slaves willingly.

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[106] Such sentiments were mainly expressed prior to 1863.
[107] Bennett, *The London Confederates*, 137.

To this end, these Confederate advocates pushed for Great Britain to immediately enter the Civil War on the Side of the Confederacy.

Section V: Slavery

Confederate supporters dwelling in Great Britain took issue with several arguments posed by Union advocates. Although they were able to address virtually every claim presented by Unionists, these sources will show that one of the most curious reasons why some British citizens claimed to support the South was the same motivating force that drove others to sympathize with the North. The topic of slavery, the evils of which virtually every member of British society detested, prompted a sizable portion of the British population to side with the Confederacy. Instead of seeing the South as accepting of bondage and oppression, some Southern supporters prior to 1863 at least claimed to believe that the institution of slavery would be eradicated much faster if the South prevailed over the North in its struggle for independence. Although many people advocated different reasons for this potential phenomenon, one thing remained clear: by promoting the Confederate cause, these Southern supporters believed that they would be forging freedom in a way in which supporting the North could never hope to accomplish.

One of the fundamental reasons why Southern supporters believed the Confederacy would eliminate slavery if they were victorious came from the South's newly created Constitution. In the Union's Constitution, there was no mention of the abolition of slavery, nor was there any reference to outlawing the slave trade. Although the slave trade was outlawed in an Act of Congress in 1808, such legislation was vulnerable to being repealed. By stark contrast, one of the primary clauses found within the Confederacy's Constitution, created eighty years after the Union's document, specifically addressed the prospects of ending slavery. A.J.

Beresford Hope, once and future MP and a member of the Roxburghe Club,[108] sought to expound upon this difference during several of his lectures. In one presentation to the Maidstone Literary & Mechanics' Institution in Kent, Beresford Hope noted "the Confederate States, sitting in constituent Congress in February, 1861…made the prohibition of the slave trade a corner-stone of their Constitution."[109] Although he acknowledged that the Confederate Constitution explicitly protected the right to own slaves, Beresford Hope, as well as a number of other British commentators, argued that slavery would be willingly abolished shortly after the conclusion of the Civil War. What is particularly noteworthy about this speech is that the man presenting, Beresford Hope, was very wealthy and supported the Church of England. In their studies of the British abolition movement, historians Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt established that the socioeconomic classes most likely to support abolition on foreign soil were religious, wealthy or middle-class individuals.[110] This study is notable because Beresford Hope, as a wealthy, religious man, would be a typical example of someone who truly believed in abolition, despite not taking a leadership role in abolitionist movements prior to the Civil War. The fact that he so appeared to adamantly favor the Confederacy in terms of potential abolition of slavery meant that established abolitionists could sincerely support the Southern cause as a way to end slavery in the Southern states.

Aside from arguing that the Confederacy would abolish the slave trade due to its constitution, there were many of Southern supporters who claimed that the South would end slavery for practical reasons, arguing that ending the enslavement of human beings would be the only way the Confederate States of American could possibly survive.

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[108] A club devoted to printing unpublished documents and rare texts. Membership is limited to members of the nobility and professional and academic classes. Members are generally wealthy and supported the Church of England. For more information, see the Roxburghe Club website at http://www.roxburgheclub.org.uk/history/

[109] Beresford Hope, *Results*, 15-16.

[110] Jordan and Pratt, *Europe*, 126.

One pragmatic issue that these advocates examined was that the South would abolish slavery because of rising populations of both slaves and free citizens in the Southern territories. First, the Confederate States of America, if victorious in its struggle against the North, would be unable to garner any more territory to add to the eleven states that had previously seceded from the Union. In his documentation of the political situation between the United States and Confederacy, modern commentator and historian Charles Adams noted that if the Confederacy would break free, it would be unable to add any land from surrounding areas to its new country. The Union would guard Mexico from the South, it would aid Spain in defending Cuba, and England would defend its own islands. In short, "the moment the independence of the South [was] effected and recognized…slavery [would be] hemmed in."[111] With no possible room to expand its nation territorially, the Confederate States would be left with a fixed amount of land and a rising free population caused by an increase in the birth rate. With the number of individuals hoping to obtain land rising and the amount of land available fixed, this imbalance of supply and demand would put increasing amounts of strain on those people keeping slaves. As a speaker in Parliament pointed out, it would follow logically that "slavery must die out by the increase of population in any given limits of territory, [and that] the narrower the space within which slavery can be confined, the sooner will it be extirpated."[112] As many abolitionists noted, the only logical action that could be taken to ensure that as little land as possible was available to the Confederacy would be to immediately recognize and aid the South. In this manner, British citizens could be certain that the Confederacy would not claim any Northern land, nor any territories outside the original eleven states, thus placing a limit on how much area the

[111] Adams, *Slavery*, 123-124.
[112] Parliament, *Shall We Recognize*, 18.

Confederacy would own.[113] With these strict limits in place, the Confederate States would have no choice but to abolish slavery, as its small territory would quickly be filled.

Other advocates took this line of reasoning a step further. In addition to slavery being limited to the land comprised of the eleven states, these supporters claimed that there would be no reason to further expand slavery, and even if other nations did not stop the South from expanding, the practice of slavery would limit itself. In a speech further expounding on this topic, the previously mentioned A.J. Beresford Hope delivered a historically interesting, albeit racially provocative remark. In his address, Beresford Hope observed the history of the original thirteen colonies that became the United States, and noted "those [states] with a temperate climate abandoned [slavery] because they found black to be less profitable than white labour—those retained [slavery] in which it was conceived the temperature was too hot and sweltering for Europeans."[114] Beresford Hope's quote seems to suggest that the North ended the practice of slavery not out of morality, but instead because its inhabitants favored European workers to African workers. Furthermore, if any new portions of land with moderate temperatures were added to the Confederacy, the Europeans in the South would prefer to hire workers rather than continue the practice of forcing slaves to toil. The only reason why slavery existed in the South was because of the climate.[115] Beresford Hope then continued to expound upon this idea. In the same speech, he noted that in the West, the area where the Confederacy had the greatest chance of claiming additional land, there was no need, indeed no logical reason for the expansion of slavery. In addition to there being no political motive for further expanding slavery (as this

[113] Adams, *Slavery*, 124.
[114] Beresford Hope, *England*, 10.
[115] Rev. William Arthur, T*he American Question: English Opinion on the American Rebellion* (London, England: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1861), 2-3.

thesis will discuss later), there was no climatic excuse.[116] The question of whether the Confederate States would be able to expand its physical size was irrelevant to many British abolitionists, however.

If the South did indeed win its war against the Union, they would be isolated, and would have to conduct business with European nations in order to remain solvent. It was due to this reality that many abolitionists believed that the South would quickly abolish slavery. In their minds, if the Confederates continued to keep human beings in bondage and were unwilling to give up the institution of slavery, they would be faced with the prospect of having every powerful country in the world hostile to their new nation.

The crux of this line of reasoning stemmed from the strong anti-slavery background present in many of the most powerful nations around the world, above all but not only Great Britain. The notion was that if the Confederacy were successful in seceding from the Union, both Union supporters and Confederate sympathizers believed that the South would be forced to relinquish its hold on slavery at the external pressure of foreign nations. Union supporters hoped that this demand for relinquishing slavery would be seen as a criterion for officially recognizing the South during the conflict, thus delaying British intervention in the conflict, as they believed the South would not or could meet that criterion to abolish slavery during the conflict. According to Charles Adams, pro-Unionists declared that the South could not hope for "any close alliance with [Great Britain], except on condition of their acceptance and renewal of anti-slave trade treaties."[117]

This expectation mirrored many of the sentiments expressed by supporters of the Confederacy who wanted to officially recognize the Confederate States of America before the

[116] Drescher, *Mighty*, 197. See also Beresford Hope, *England*, 38.
[117] Adams, *Slavery*, 109-110. This would not have been an issue regardless, as the Confederate Constitution specifically outlawed the slave trading

conflict had ended. However, these Confederate advocates were resolute in their belief that the South would strike a deal with Britain to end the slave trade and begin the process of abolition. Echoed in numerous sources, each of these advocates believed that if the South became independent, they would "find it [in] their interest, to prepare their coloured brethren for fulfilling the duties incumben(sic) upon them in a state of freedom."[118] Due to the political reality and international sentiment facing the new Confederacy, many Southern supporters believed that the South would be willing to abolish slavery in exchange for official recognition. In a letter published in the *Edinburgh Scotsman* and later read to Parliament, numerous sources within the British government believed that the Confederacy, "in consideration of immediate recognition and the disregard of the 'paper blockade,' would engage [in] these three things: a treaty of free trade, a prohibition of all *import* of slaves, and the *freedom of all blacks born hereafter*,"[119] which would equal gradual abolition over a few generations. Although Unionists and Confederates were arguing two different agendas, in this specific instance the outcome would be the same for the Confederacy. Whether they decided to abolish slavery to establish trade with nations following the conclusion of the war, or if they eliminated the slave trade to gain official recognition from the British government, the end result would be the same. The Confederacy simply would not be able to maintain its practice of slavery, or they would risk the isolation and contempt of the international community.

In the aforementioned matter, Confederate advocates further argued that Great Britain should enter the Civil War as quickly as possible to accelerate the conclusion of the conflict, arguing that such a hasty end would benefit not only free Southerners, but also the slaves that the

[118] Unknown, *Recognition*, 7. See also Adams, *Slavery*, 109-110, Beresford Hope, *England*, 63.
[119] Extract quoted from the Edinburgh Scotsman, as quoted in Parliament, *Shall We Recognize*, 14.

abolitionists wanted so desperately to liberate.[120] These Confederate abolitionists believed that slaves could never be liberated successfully during war, and that the enslaved populations in the South would benefit far more from a Confederate victory than any other outcome.

The path to creating pragmatic freedom for enslaved Southerners, these abolitionists argued, would come from a steady, measured movement, rather than sudden, absolute emancipation. In order to ensure that freed slaves would become productive members of a new society, numerous abolitionists preached for a transformative process, gradually giving slaves more freedoms and responsibilities, and simultaneously removing their shackles. One such spectator, James Spence, trusted that this process would proceed naturally. Spence proclaimed, "slavery would soon be altered into serfdom, and freedom eventually follow."[121] Staunch pro-Confederates also agreed. In a lecture, A.J. Beresford Hope insisted to his countrymen that "there are numerous stages of serfdom[122] between absolute freedom and absolute servitude,"[123] again reinforcing the notion that deliberate steps needed to be taken to ensure abolition occurred successfully. Part of the reason for the insistence on gradual emancipation stemmed from pro-Southerners considering the alternative. In their minds, sudden, absolute emancipation could not have been more disastrous. Rather than giving freed slaves opportunities to create new lives, this sudden departure from their previous lives would only create chaos.

The chaos that these abolitionists describe would be a detriment not just toward the ex-slaves, but also to the rest of the broader society who had freed them from their bondage. In a series of lectures, Beresford Hope outlined the cause of such chaos. If liberated "without any training for liberty, without education, without principles of self dependence…a state of things

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[120] Adams, *Great Britain Vol. II*, 90.
[121] Spence, *On the Recognition*, 22.
[122] Although Beresford Hope does not specifically define what "serfdom" is, from context he almost certainly means for ex-slaves to work in as "sharecroppers" for an undisclosed period of time.
[123] Beresford Hope, *England*, 69.

would result which tend to the advancement neither of humanity, civilization, nor to the good of the blacks themselves."[124] In short, because they were not trained for sudden freedom, the resulting thrust into mainstream society would be harmful to ex-slaves and the broader society alike, as a flood of unskilled, uneducated, and unprepared people would descend upon the unprepared community. Rather than this push to anarchy, activists believed that both slaves and free men would benefit if slaves, once freed, would first become serfs. This would allow them to experience freedom, responsibility, the ability to earn money, and self-dependence, all while having a support structure behind them.[125] As these newly freed citizens became more proficient at conducting daily matters and became adept at conducting personal affairs, they would gradually sever ties with their previous lives until they became completely independent. Due to the gradual nature of this transition and the uncertainty that many liberated slaves would be facing, pro-Confederates argued that the only way that any such transition could occur would be during a time of peace, where external fighting would not disrupt the newly freed slaves trying to create a new life for themselves. To expedite this process, pro-South advocates argued that Great Britain must join the war to hasten a Southern victory.[126] In this manner, the slaves of the South would be able to begin their transformation to free citizens of the Confederate States of America as soon as possible.

Some pro-Unionists took issue with this theory of gradual emancipation, arguing that slaveholders would be unwilling to cooperate with newly freed slaves and that as a result, they must begin abolishing slavery immediately.[127] However, pro-Confederate groups retorted that Southerners would have every reason to support such a transition. For although slave labor was

[124] Beresford Hope, *The Results*, 16. See also Beresford Hope, *England*, 67.
[125] Barnes, *The American Civil War*, 194.
[126] Adams, *Slavery*, 115.
[127] Villiers and Chesson, *Anglo-American Relations*, 42-44.

free for plantation owners, the practice of it not only stopped the process of modernization, but was also less productive and cost-efficient than work done by paid workers. Due to these factors, Southern groups argued, free Confederates would be glad to give up slavery in exchange for efficient labor and increased abilities to modernize their industry.[128]

One of the principle reasons why Southerners would give up the institution of slavery was due to a simple cost-benefit analysis. According to supporters of the South, keeping slaves cost as much money as hiring free labor, as well as creating more problems associated with holding another human being against their will. In a statement given to Parliament, a farmer in Suffolk, England claimed that even if it were legal, he would not buy numerous slaves, as he must "feed, and clothe him, and lodge him, with his wife and family for future use…it will cost [a farmer] as much money as [he] need to ay to [his] free labourer(sic), imposing on [him] besides the trouble of disbursing for [the slave]."[129] Other farmers agreed, as the idea had been around even before the war started. In an article published in the *Burnley Advertiser*, a Southern American Baptist predicted that since "free labor was more productive than slave labor, the Southerner would soon initiate emancipation of his own volition."[130] This argument makes sense from a monetary and efficiency standpoint. When Southerners kept slaves, the cost of housing and feeding them often equaled the cost of hiring free laborers. In addition, while hired helpers needed to work efficiently and be proficient at their jobs in order to remain employed, enslaved servants had little incentive to maximize their productivity. Thus, farmers could actually accomplish more with their money by hiring free employees than they could by using their

[128] Myers, *Caution and Cooperation*, 207.
[129] Parliament, *Shall We Recognize*, 16.
[130] Reverend J.R. Balme, as quoted in *Burnley Advertiser*, August 31, 1861, in Ellison, *Support*, 64.

income to perpetuate slavery.[131] From this argument stems the belief that as farmers understood this fiscal reality, they would have no logical reason to begrudge slaves from gaining freedom. In fact, both sides would benefit from such a phenomenon.

In addition to deriving labor benefits from freeing their slaves, Southerners would also be able to enjoy the modernization that was used in Northern industry, was not present in the South. Phillip Myers, a historian who studied the differences between the labor systems of the North and South formulated a conclusion that due to this waste of resources that slavery created, the South would never be able to modernize efficiently. In his book, Myers noted that "slavery had to be removed because expansion [of industry] needed domestic peace, rapid and efficient use of resources…[and] slavery prevented an efficient labor system and was an obstacle to modernization."[132] In short, because the institution of slavery drained resources from free farmers in the South, they would never have been able to successfully modernize to the extent that the North and Great Britain were able accomplish. This failure to renovate its economic system would prove to be deadly for an independent Confederacy. In order to benefit financially from its Northern neighbors and international allies, the Confederate States, being relatively weak and small, would be forced to abolish slavery, or they would wither and die from a weak economy, as the Confederacy would not have been self-sustaining.[133] Such was the argument presented by pro-Confederate activists in response to Union doubters. These Confederate sponsors exhibited this logic to show that Southerners would not resent freed slaves and, from a

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[131] For more discussion, see Drescher, *Econocide.* Drescher's book states that abolition in Britain occurred for emancipation reasons only, and not due to a noticeable decline of economy among slave-holding colonies. This book, however, came as a rebuttal to Eric William's 1944 thesis, which argued the point that paid-laborers were more economical than those of slave laborers, and is often assumed to reflect, at least partially, the British perspective of the 1830s. See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

[132] Myers, 218. See also Brauer, Kinley J. "The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War," *Pacific Historical Review* 46(3) (August 1977): 442-443.

[133] Spence in Bennett, *The London Confederates*, 137.

fiscal and modernization standpoint, would be willing to work together to ensure both parties experienced success.

In order to promote a healthy, stable society, British pro-Confederates argued that a gradual process needed to be taken for the emancipation of slaves. As slaves were slowly given more freedoms and responsibilities, they would develop skills that they could use without direct ownership of free Southerners. Conjointly, farmers would be willing to emancipate their slaves for several reasons. Financially, they were not maximizing their income by keeping slaves, and were further creating problems for themselves by having to work with inefficient workers who had no motive to maximize their effectiveness. Furthermore, this waste in labor meant that the South would not be able to modernize its industries. This would prove to be fatal if the Confederacy gained independence and needed to rely on trading with the Union and Great Britain to sustain its economy. For these reasons, it seemed logical that Southerners would want to emancipate their slaves in a gradual fashion, in order for both groups to prosper.

Section VI: Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to challenge previous assertions arrived at by traditional historians who analyzed factors associated with Great Britain and the American Civil War, a complex topic with far-reaching consequences. In the early years of the war, the Union was wary of the British becoming involved in the conflict, while Confederates placed an enormous amount of hope in such a prospect. As it turned out, Britain decided to remain neutral in the conflict, thus indirectly helping the North achieve victory. Yet even as Britain decided on a course of inaction, scholars, political thinkers, and historians alike all pondered the reason behind this move. From their analysis came a classical line of reasoning. Conventional historians believed that wealthy British conservatives supported the Confederacy, as did textile factory owners and people living in London. In their minds, the procurement of cotton trumped any other consideration in the conflict, as a large percentage of British textile factories relied on Southern cotton as a source of raw material. As a mirror opposite of these Southern supporters were Union advocates. According to traditional Civil War study, these Northern sponsors were typically of the working class and lived in the Lancashire region of Britain. From the classical standpoint, these citizens were very concerned with the issue of slavery, and as such, felt compelled to support the Northern effort, or at the very least remain neutral in the fighting, so as to ensure that the Southern slaves would realize freedom quickly. As easy as these theories are to understand, the findings of this study suggest that such views are overly simplistic and, in two central respects, simply incorrect.

By first analyzing the issue of cotton, this thesis found that not only was the claim that the pro-Confederate cry that Britain must obtain Southern cotton refutable, but it could in fact be turned into a pro-Union argument. First, looking at the Southern supply of cotton, primary

evidence given in the source of speeches to Parliament indicated that due to the mere outbreak of war, only a tiny fraction of what Britain was used to importing was actually available in the South. Both because of the need of the Confederacy to consume a greater share of its own cotton in a wartime atmosphere, as well as the quantity of cotton that was physically destroyed due to fighting, a simple calculation was made indicating that Britain could not hope for more than a partial supply of cotton from the South, even if the fighting were stopped immediately—the longer the conflict continued, meanwhile, the more this supply dwindled. The British also had to face the reality of the Northern naval blockade around Southern ports. If the British were to challenge the Northern ships around the Confederacy to move cotton from its borders, they would be openly declaring war on the Union, a serious matter worth careful consideration. Rather than create an atmosphere of hostility, pro-Unionists proposed an alternate plan, to increase cotton production in India. To do so would satisfy the need for cotton in Lancashire, while concurrently saving British citizens from making a choice between fighting for the freedom of slaves and fighting to attain cotton.

Yet while anti-slavery and pro-Union sentiments co-existed in this case in the way that fits usual views, as the rest of the discussion here has shown, the question of slavery in British attitudes towards the American Civil War was much more complex. While the vast majority of British subjects were revolted at the idea of enslavement, the matter of what side to support in freeing those enslaved individuals was not so easy to deduce.

Part of the confusion that many British observers felt originated from their uncertainty of Lincoln's motivations for combating the South. Although tradition dictates that Lincoln was a steadfast abolitionist, evidence has surfaced indicating that many Englishmen were wary of Lincoln. The British who took Lincoln at his word noticed several glaring flaws in Lincoln's

proposed plans for emancipation. Many observers rejected Lincoln's proposal to send freed slaves to Liberia, believing that Northerners simply did not want contact with African Americans. Moreover, they were puzzled with the lack of education Lincoln was prepared to offer slaves before they were freed. Rather than worrying about imparting knowledge and favorable conditions upon slaves before they were released, Lincoln's plan instead called for immediate freedom, which worried many British abolitionists, as it did not take the future of these African Americans into consideration.

Critics of Lincoln argued that these shortcomings were caused by Lincoln using abolition as a political weapon and nothing more. Given the original source of this idea was derived by Lincoln's political affairs advisor, Confederate advocates argued that Lincoln was merely using abolition to ward the British away from the Civil War. Meanwhile, the freedom of slaves in the South would further the gap between power in the North and the South if the Union were victorious and reunited both halves of the nation. Cynics claimed that Lincoln's desire was to gain complete control over the United States of America, and the sudden freedom of slaves in Southern states would cripple the South economically, as well as politically.

Possibly due to this skepticism, modern historians have begun to question the assumption that Lancashire was pro-Union. A study by Mary Ellison found that in Manchester, deemed the most neutral area in Lancashire, only two newspapers were favorable to the Northern cause—the rest favored the Confederacy. While this might have been a reflection on Lincoln, so, too, was it a reflection of the Northern attitude toward African Americans.

One of the first myths dispelled by Confederate supporters was that they could not possibly support the South, as doing so would be to condone slavery. These advocates noted historical examples of British diplomatic relations with other nations which held slaves, and that

such a distinction between those nations and the Confederacy would be hypocritical. What would be far more damaging, these supporters said, would be to remain neutral and allow the North to conquer the South, due to its past history of bigotry and continued intolerance toward the free African Americans living in its society. Even before the outbreak of the Civil War, philosophers such as Alexis de Tocqueville noted the poor conditions that freed slaves residing in the North faced. Living in a society of segregation, discrimination, and double standards ensured that African Americans living in the Union led a harsh life. Counter to this, Southern advocates found that while laws in the South were stricter regarding slaves, in practice African Americans living in the Confederacy had better lives than their Northern peers. Part of this discrepancy stemmed from the myriad of segregationist laws created by the Northern legislatures and enforced by the courts that created barriers between African Americans and their Caucasian brethren, but even more so by the tainted history of Northern slave practices. Confederate promoters cited examples of the Northern legislature fighting to keep forms of slavery legal even after it was banned in the Northern states, as well as extreme profiting from both slavery and the slave trade after such institutions had been outlawed. Whether it was selling soon-to-be freed slaves to the South or Cuba, or even sending freed African Americans to Cuba as slaves once more, the Northern association with slavery was damning to many British observers. Furthermore, British citizens continued to see Northern ships independently conducting slave trading and being allowed back into Northern harbors after their missions were complete. With such compounding evidence, many British abolitionists questioned if the North were truly the land of the free, or if slaves should work with the Confederacy to obtain their freedom. When these observers added in evidence that the South would likely free its slaves, many abolitionists decided that they should support the Confederacy in order to truly end the practice of slavery.

Such considerations are definitely not in line with the customary study of British attitudes, and reflect a new wrinkle in the debate about with which side British abolitionists sided.

The conclusion reached by this investigation is that many British abolitionists such as Blackman and Jay truly believed that the Confederates would end the practice of slavery if they were successful in their war against the North. Aside from its Constitution specifically prohibiting the slave trade, many observers believed that the South would realize that its only hope of conducting international relations with European countries would be to remove slavery from its borders. Without stamping out this institution, the Confederate States would be isolated with a very hostile neighbor, and thus would eliminate the institution out of necessity if for no other reason. Furthermore, due to the limited physical boundaries of the South, coupled with a constantly rising population, Southerners would release slaves due to the constricting amounts of land in Southern states. Any land that the Confederacy could hope to add to its borders, furthermore, would have a climate unsuited for slavery. De Tocqueville noted that slavery is only profitable in a land with extremely humid temperatures, and the only lands the South could add would have temperate climates, where paid labor was actually more profitable than slave labor.[134]

In order to facilitate the abolition of slavery, British advocates stressed a systematic approach rather than abrupt emancipation. If Britain were to aid the South in this process, the freed slaves in the Confederacy would not experience much of the chaos and discrimination that African Americans felt in the Union. In this manner, the South would be able to successfully modernize its industrial systems, create a process of emancipation, and establish diplomatic relations with Europe in a way that the Union was not able to accomplish. All of these gains,

[134] De Tocqueville, *Democracy*, chapter XVIII.

Confederate advocates stressed, would proceed from British intervention on the side of the Confederacy.

As this paper has examined, many of these thoughts and positions raised by Union and Confederate advocates run completely contrary to the usual line of reasoning placed by traditional scholars regarding the relationship between Great Britain and North America during the American Civil War. Although these positions are incredibly thought provoking and worth consideration, the fact remains that Britain ultimately did not join the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy. Whether British citizens and leaders could not see past the stereotype that Southerners were infatuated with slavery, whether they finally saw a Northern military victory in the form of Gettysburg, or whether they were convinced by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, by 1865 the fighting had concluded and British forces still remained on their side of the Atlantic Ocean. The Civil War remained a conflict between Union and Confederate forces and did not turn into a war between continents as well as a war between states.

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