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NATIONALISM AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN THE  
AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

by

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### *Abstract*

The research question seeks to determine the degree that nationalism played as a contributing factor in the American Civil War. The United States currently applies analytic and diagnostic frameworks to potential hotspots around the globe in order to determine their likelihood or potential for violence. Foreign policy and preventive measures are shaped by the predictions of these diagnostic tools. What prognosis would they bare if used in retrospect on the American Civil War? Would they indicate the war as being inevitable or unnecessary? The answer to these questions is based largely on the causal link between certain nationalism movements and their potential risk for violence. I propose to answer these questions and the “why civil war?” question using the analytic tool developed by Stephen Evera.

Many view the American Civil War as inevitable while others propose it was an unnecessary tragedy. How do we answer the question, “why a civil war?” We can answer this question subjectively or through a more scientific process. The debate over a more scientific study forms the problem background and significance of my study. It is my hypothesis that the issue of nationalism greatly impacted the risk of war. Stephen Van Evera, a political science teacher at M.I.T., makes a strong case for the causal link between nationalism and war. I will explain and use Evera’s two part analytic framework of ‘immediate/proximate causes’ and the three underlying catalytic factors of the immediate/proximate causes’ (structural, political/environmental and perceptual factors) as an assessment tool. I will apply this analytic framework or tool to the federal and the southern/Confederate nationalist movements. This

analysis will explain the conditions that cause certain nationalist movements to escalate to violence and it will offer judgement on the role nationalism played in the escalation between north and south. Finally, we'll address the question of how, if at all, can the war causing attributes of nationalism be suppressed or neutralized? Were these remedies attempted prior to violence erupting between north and south and what were the results? Could the American Civil War have been averted? We'll use Evera's framework to answer these concluding questions and come up with a 'scientific' conclusion.

My methodology involves research via the AU library, Internet and personal contacts with course instructors in the history departments of AWC and ACSC.

The structure of the paper will follow a diagnosis-solution pattern. The paper will be organized as follows. First, I'll introduce the hypothesis and raise the significant questions. Second, the main body will define and apply Stephen Evera's analytic checklist to the historical facts of the American Civil War. Third, the preventive measures will be introduced and explored as they relate to circumstances and actual efforts taken by northern and southern leadership prior to the outbreak of violence/war. Was the war avoidable or inevitable? Finally, there will be discussion and anticipated results followed by conclusions and possible lessons learned..

## Part 1

### Introduction

*Here was an event so complex, so deeply based in human emotions, so far-reaching in its final effects, that understanding it is likely to be a matter primarily for the emotions rather than for the cold analysis of facts.*

—Bruce Catton

Many view the American Civil War as inevitable while others propose it was an unnecessary tragedy. Civil War Historian Bruce Catton captured this dilemma best. But can analysis or explanation help in our understanding of “why an American Civil war?”

It is my hypothesis that the issue of nationalism greatly impacted the risk for war. Stephen Van Evera, a political science teacher at M.I.T., makes a strong case for the causal link between nationalism and war. I will explain and use Evera’s two part analytic framework of ‘immediate/proximate causes’ and the three underlying catalytic factors of the immediate/proximate causes’ as an assessment tool and apply it to both the northern and southern nationalist movements. This analysis will explain the conditions that cause certain nationalist movements to escalate to violence and it will offer judgement on the role nationalism played in the escalation between north and south in the American Civil War. Finally, we’ll address the question of how, if at all, the war causing attributes of 1860’s nationalism might have been suppressed or neutralized. Were any of these remedies attempted? What were the results? Could the American Civil War have been averted? We’ll use Evera’s framework to answer these concluding questions and come up with a ‘scientific’ conclusion.

## **Part 2**

### **Nationalism and War: Immediate Causes**

The ‘immediate or proximate causes’ form the first part of Evera’s two part analytic framework and the ‘immediate causes’ are grouped under four attributes: political status, national diaspora, other nationalities and treatment of minorities. An examination of these attributes is important because they “determine whether a nationalist movement has a large or small potential to produce violence.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **Stateless or Statehood Attained**

Political status is the first attribute and it poses the question, “is statehood attained or unattained”?<sup>2</sup> Prior to the secession of six southern states from the union and even after the formalization of the CSA government, the Federal government and the international community did not recognize the seceding states or their government. International legitimacy is a key component of Evera’s definition of ‘attained statehood.’ In the case of the seceding states and the newly formed Confederacy, statehood was never attained.

The central issue was diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy, a move that would have legitimized the secession and undermined the Constitution. Despite the strong efforts of the British foreign secretary, Lord John Russell, and the chancellor of the exchequer, William E. Gladstone, Great Britain did not intercede. The prime minister, Lord Palmerston, who bore the ultimate responsibility for any decision to intervene, insisted that Great Britain wait until a decisive Southern victory occurred, one that would convince the North that the Southern independence was a *fait accompli*. But the pivotal victory never came.<sup>3</sup>

Nationalist causes without a state pose a higher risk of war because the establishment of their objectives involves greater disruptive change.<sup>4</sup> The south therefore poses the greater risk for violence and current events confirm this prediction.

### **National Diaspora**

The attitude toward the national diaspora is the second attribute and it poses the question, “is national unity pursued and if so, by immigrationist or expansionist tactics?”<sup>5</sup> Southern nationalism, based more on sectionalism or culture than ethnic reunion, was at best a nation state in its infancy with a diaspora concern. The confederacy pursued partial or total unity with slave holding counterparts in the border state region between the CSA and the USA. Ironically, it was Lincoln’s call for troops that led to the second phase of secession.

Virginia had gone out of the Union with considered speed, a gun in each hand. Maryland had been kept in place only by careful handling and the use of force. Kentucky and Missouri were lurching unsteadily, might to anything stood at the moment in perilous equilibrium, unpredictably explosive. North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas peeled off without delay and went with the Confederacy, giving it eleven states in place of its original seven; giving it, also, a very substantial portion of the continental mass of the original nation..<sup>6</sup>

The effort to recover some of the border states would drive Lincoln’s strategy in Tennessee and it would play a part in Lee’s first invasion of Maryland. Evera categorizes this group as “diaspora-annexing” and most troublesome due to its pursuit of unity through expansionistic tactics. Thus this attribute identified the great potential for violence between north and south.

### **Hegemonic Goals**

The third attribute involves attitude toward other independent nationalities and asks, “is it tolerant or hegemonistic?”<sup>7</sup> In regard to the seceding southern states, the federalist union

government was hegemonistic in dismantling southern sectionalism. We see this first in Lincoln's speech before the 1858 Republican State Convention of Illinois.

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or the other.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the southerners were tolerant of coexisting with a northern neighbor.

### **Oppression of Minorities**

The degree of national respect for minority rights is the fourth and last attribute. Respect for minority rights needs to be viewed at two distinct levels. First, at the national level, southern states felt an “economic minority-oppressing” nationalism exercised by abolitionist and growing industrialist influences expressed politically by elements in the northern states. Jefferson Davis best expressed these sentiments.

Nor was this the only cause that operated to disappoint the reasonable hopes and to blight the fair prospects under which the original compact was formed. The effects of discriminating duties upon imports have been referred to in a former chapter—favoring the manufacturing region, which was the North; burdening the exporting region, which was the South; and so imposing upon the later a double tax; one, by the increased price of articles of consumption, which so far as they were of home production, went in to the pockets of the manufacturer; the other, by the diminished value of articles of export, which was so much withheld from the pockets of the agriculturist. In like manner the power of the majority section was employed to appropriate to itself an unequal share of the public disbursements. These combined causes—the possession of more territory, more money, and a wider field for the employment of special labor—all served to attract immigration; and, with increasing population, the greed grew by what it fed on..<sup>9</sup>

Second, many independent northern groups sought minority-respecting rights for black slaves in the south. Harriet Beecher Stowe articulated and enflamed these sentiments such that even President Lincoln commented that her writings caused the war. Her aim is laid out in the author's preface to her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The hand of benevolence is everywhere stretched out, searching into abuses, righting of wrongs, alleviating distresses, and bring to the knowledge and sympathies of the world the lowly, the oppressed, and the forgotten.

The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feelings for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust as to defeat and do away the good effects of all that can be attempted for them, by their best friends, under it.<sup>10</sup>

On the one hand, the north was clearly a “minority-respecting” nationalism from a human rights perspective. On the other hand, elements in the civilian and national political system could be seen as “minority-oppressing” from a state’s rights perspective. Thus, history demonstrates that all four of the nationalistic immediate/proximate causes indicate a high probability for war. In conclusion, all four ‘immediate causes’ apply to the southern nationalist movement: unattained statehood; annexing attitude toward the national diaspora; hegemonistic northern attitude toward the south and low respect for minority rights by both northern and southern sectionalism. The second half of Evera’s framework, the causes of the immediate causes required for their operation, will further shed light on the possible role nationalism played in sparking violence.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Michael E. Brown, and others, *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998), 262.

<sup>2</sup> Michael E. Brown, and others, *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998), 262.

<sup>3</sup> Howard Jones, *Union in Peril* (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), inside jacket.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 262.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 262.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Catton, *The Coming Fury* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1961), pp 362-63.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 265.

<sup>8</sup> John G Hunt, *The Essential Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1993), 115.

<sup>9</sup> J. WM. Jones, *The Davis Memorial Volume* (Richmond, VA: B.F. Johnson & Co., Publishers, 1890), 198.

<sup>10</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: S.W. Partridge & Co., 1860?), v-vi.

## **Part 3**

### **Catalysts of Immediate Causes and Conditions for their Operation**

The second aspect of Evera's two part analytic framework identifies three factors (Structural, political/environmental and perceptual) as causes of the immediate causes.<sup>1</sup> This second part of the analytic framework asks "what factors determine whether these four variables (part one: 'immediate causes') will be benign or malignant values"?<sup>2</sup> They spark the explosive potential identified in the immediate causes.

#### **Structural Factors**

The first influential factor or condition is structural: those issues arising from the "geographic (balance of power and will), demographic (national populations) and military setting (borders)" of a nation's people.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Plausibility for Statehood and Freedom**

The first aspect of structuralism, possibly becoming the match that lights the fire for civil war, is "geographic" or the balance between power and will. The domestic balance of power between southern stateless nationalism and the Federal central state attempting to retain their membership in the union is critical. The southern secessionist movement had sufficient strength to reach plausibility for statehood:

The Confederacy began the war with many military advantages. The development of the rifle and other equipment for use by the contending armies markedly

enhanced the power of the tactical defensive. The Confederacy's vast extent and the hostility of most of her people to the invader gave her an advantage which the numerically superior Union armies had little chance of overcoming. Nor did supply for southern armies present any serious obstacle because a rifle for each man and an artillery piece for each two or three thousand provided most of the weapons needed. A sievelike blockade, an effective mobilization, and successful creation of the needed establishments for manufacturing war material ensured an adequate, if not ample, supply for the Confederate forces..<sup>4</sup>

In addition, southern nationalism had the will to secede. Their 'will' is linked with acute societal uncertainty and a fear of what the future might bring. In contrast, the Union had the will and power to resist this attempt. This stance was clearly communicated by the Lincoln administration to the international community through Seward.

You cannot be too decided or too explicit in making known to the French government that there is not now, nor has there been, nor will there be any—the least—idea existing in this Government of suffering a dissolution of this Union to take place in any way whatever. There will be here only one nation and one government, and there will be the same republic and the same Constitutional Union that have already survived a dozen national changes and changes of government in almost every other country. There will stand hereafter, as they are now, objects of human wonder and human affection..<sup>5</sup>

In spite of northern resolve, the successful secession and permanent creation of a Confederate Nation was a very real possibility. Therefore as predicted by the framework, the risk was high for violence.

### **Intermingling of Nationalities**

The second aspect of structuralism, adding fuel to the fire for possible violence, is “demographics” or aspects of national populations. The demographic arrangement of national populations is clearly applicable to southern sectionalism. Evera's framework works with issues of ethnicity which aren't applicable to tensions between the north and the south; however, the questions are particularly relevant if we modify the diagnostic model from issues of ethnicity to issues of culture and political affiliation. Populations in both national movements (Federal and

secession minded regions) were not politically homogenous. President Lincoln struggled with pro-secession minded elements (i.e. political/state's rights & cultural) in crucial northern states such as Maryland that enclosed Washington on three sides.

Like the lower South, Maryland had voted for Breckinridge in the presidential election. Southern-Rights Democrats controlled the legislature; only the stubborn refusal of unionist Governor Thomas Hicks to call the legislature into session forestalled action by that body. The tobacco counties of southern Maryland and the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay were secessionist. The grain growing counties of northern and western Maryland, containing few slaves, were safe for the Union. But the loyalty of Baltimore, with a third of the state's population, was suspect.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, President Davis combated pro-union groups in the dissatisfied south.

Each of the four upper South states that seceded contained a large area with little more commitment to slavery and the Confederacy than Delaware—western Virginia, western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and northern Arkansas. The economy and society of two of these upland regions were so distinct from the remainder of their states as to produce wartime movements for separate statehood. West Virginia managed to secede from the Confederacy and rejoin the Union. A similar effort in east Tennessee failed, leaving a legacy of bitterness that persisted long after the war<sup>7</sup>

This tension took on an added volatility in the remaining border states. Both north and south faced having culturally friendly regions trapped outside the boundary of its nation-state where the political loyalties failed to follow sectional boundaries. Kentucky is a prime example of the internal struggle between pro-Union and pro-secessionists loyalties. Significant military supplies were flooding to the Confederacy in Tennessee through Kentucky. Many pro-Union elements both within and outside of Kentucky denounced the trade and called for immediate response from the Lincoln administration to cut the hemorrhage of supplies. Even so, Lincoln honored Kentucky's "neutrality" and this sensitivity drove his decision to hold off on imposing a land blockade. The bigger strategic objective for Lincoln was the retention of the state as a whole and not allowing resentment of federal involvement to tip the state into the hands of the Confederacy.

Lincoln's forbearance toward Kentucky paid off. Unionists became more outspoken, and fence-sitters jumped down onto the Union side. The legacy of Henry Clay began to assert itself. Unionist "home guard" regiments sprang up to counter the pro-southern "state guard" militia organized by Governor Magoffin. ...At a special election on June 20, unionists won more than 70% of the votes and gained control of five of Kentucky's six congressional seats. This balloting understated pro-Confederate sentiment, for many southern-rights voters refused to participate in an election held under the auspices of a government they rejected. Nevertheless, the regular election of the state legislature on August 5 resulted in an even more conclusive Union victory: the next legislature would have a Union majority of 76 to 24 in the House and 27 to 11 in the Senate.

This legislative election marked the beginning of the end of neutrality in Kentucky.<sup>8</sup>

This dispersion of pro-north loyalties in the south (border states and the middle south) would lead to the creation of a new state – W. Virginia. It accounted for Lincoln's desire for the Army of the Cumberland to empower pro-unionist strength in TN. Likewise, the Confederacy also tried to influence pro-Confederacy support within the border states. This strategy would ultimately provide partial justification in General Lee's first military raid into the northern territory of Maryland by the Army of Northern Virginia.

General Lee had announced to the people of Maryland that he came to enable them to overthrow a "foreign yoke," but he had admitted to Jefferson Davis that he did not "anticipate any general rising of the people in our behalf," although he hoped to gather a few recruits and some subsistence. Nevertheless, Lee had used the opportunity to play the politician, proclaiming to Marylanders as Davis had commended<sup>9</sup>

So at first glance, the historically uneducated might conclude that the danger was reduced due to the North's and the South's homogenous national population. But this clearly wasn't the case. The modification to the diagnostic and a closer look at the historical evidence indicates intensified danger because sectional loyalties were dispersed abroad.

## **Defensibility and Legitimacy of Borders**

Borders (their defensibility, legitimacy and border/ethnic correspondence) is the third and final issue under structural factors contributing to the immediate causes and risk of civil war. Borders were important for both the north and the south. First, the soon realized CSA was a broad geographic area and CSA's lack of natural barriers made southern states vulnerable to northern attack.

The vast area of the Confederacy west of the Appalachian Mountains presented the most difficult problem in command to the Richmond authorities, by reason of its great extent and its remoteness from the capitol.<sup>10</sup>

The model predicts that since the south was accessible to conquer, and hence less secure, that the centralized state of the Union was more likely to try and subdue them. "If the new borders are indefensible, the net impact of the creation of new states will be warlike".<sup>11</sup> The Federal interest in retaining union at all costs adds validity to this prediction. Furthermore, the border issue involved a low correspondence between political borders and sectional/cultural boundaries. This fact, according to the model, influenced southern nationalism toward violence. In sum, I believe the structural elements for both national movements indicated a high potential toward violence and presented a 'malignant value' for the operation of 'immediate causes.'

## **Political/Environmental Factors**

The second of the three 'causes of the immediate causes' involves political/environmental factors: "the greater the past crimes committed by nationalities toward one another, the greater risk of war."<sup>12</sup> Leadership and civilian sections of both the south and north experienced a perceived past history in which crimes were committed.

## Past Crimes

First we'll examine southern perceptions of northern crimes. Southerners felt that crimes were committed by abolitionists in collusion with the industrialists (representing the central state) in a political power play against them. The abolitionists illegally aided and abetted fugitive slaves. The Fugitive Slave Act and other political compromises were intended to define the rules of engagement in regard to many of the controversial issues that created feelings of criminal action committed by either northern or southern sectional elements. The political heat generated by the Fugitive Slave Act reached a critical level in 1854 with the capture of the Virginia escaped slave Anthony Burns in Boston. Although Anthony Burns was sent by ship back to Virginia, he was the last slave returned to the south from any New England state. The John Brown incident was a prime example of crimes committed against slave supporting states. These incidents led to a "we" versus "they" kind of mentality between the north and the south with an accompanying perception of crimes against southern culture and values.

In both 1831 and 1859, passing doubts about whether whites could control blacks quickly gave way to these masters' greater worry: whether slave holders could count on non-slaveholders, especially non-slaveholders two mountain ranges removed.<sup>13</sup>

Southern nationalism was quick to realize that the north could not credibly commit itself to uphold agreements they had reached. These problems of credible commitment from northerners to support southern legal rights provided the circumstances under which violence would arise. 'Bleeding Kansas' and a 'civil war' within the state of Missouri led to murder, ruffian raids and mindless acts of revenge perpetrated by both sides. While this falls into the "mass murder" category of crimes, the blood-letting incidents were isolated, localized and unsanctioned by the federal government. The northern industrialists and radical republicans committed the greatest economic crimes against the agrarian south by its political coercion as evidenced in its stand on

tariffs. But the issue went beyond tariffs. It was the perceived and identifiable chain of events by which the southern states felt they were being subjugated by northern culture, economics and politics.

It was not the passage of the “personal liberty laws,” it was not the circulation of incendiary documents, it was not the raid of John Brown, it was not the operation of unjust and unequal tariff laws, nor all combined, that constituted the intolerable grievance, but it was the systematic and persistent struggle to deprive the Southern States of equality in the Union—generally to discriminate in legislation against the interests of their people; culminating in their exclusion from the Territories, the common property of the States, as well as by the infraction of their compact to promote domestic tranquility.....<sup>14</sup>

### **Oppression of Minorities**

Next we’ll examine northern perceptions of southern crimes. Crimes in the recent past against the north were considered moral crimes against humanity (i.e. the issue of slavery). Although the antislavery sentiment was nowhere near unanimous in the north, it took deeply religious overtones in much of its rhetoric.

The important fact remains, however, that in both spirit and principle northern evangelical Protestantism clashed with slavery. Finney detested the peculiar institution, bracketing it with war and “licentiousness” as “evil and abominations.” The true Christian, he said, “longs for their complete and final overthrow”.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, news agencies from both the north and the south reported misconduct against each other. While southern nationalism might have taken the ‘long view’ in struggling against these issues individually, the combination led to a greater potential (as forecasted by the framework) for violent conflict toward the north.<sup>16</sup> Even though both perceived crimes against each other, these crimes do not fall into the category of crimes that matter most: mass murder, land theft and population expulsions. These past crimes, such as exterminations, foster diaspora-recovering ideologies that are justified by self-protection logic.<sup>17</sup> This would indicate that independence or state’s rights are more the issues for the south than retribution for past crimes.

Past crimes are more a symptom than a cause of greater issues polarizing and driving the sections apart. The issue of slavery is a major exception. Although slavery became the rallying cry for both southern and northern struggles, the rally cry was for different reasons. It was unavoidable that slavery would become the match that set the tensions between sections on fire. To sum up, political/environmental factors demonstrate another ‘malignant value’ toward the ‘immediate causes’ of violence and war between north and south.

### **Perceptual Factors**

Perception (nationalist self-images and images of others) is the third and final background condition that may catalyze or dampen the immediate causes of war identified in part one. The effects of nationalism depend heavily on the beliefs of nationalist movements: “The more divergent are the beliefs of nationalities about their mutual history and their current conduct and character, the greater risk of war”.<sup>18</sup> The principle component of perception, according to Evera, is the process of mythmaking. Myth making occurs when nationalism’s “embrace self-justifying historical myths or adopt distorted pictures of their own and others current conduct and character that exaggerate the legitimacy of their own cause”.<sup>19</sup> Prior to the war, the self-images and the images of each other converged enough through the compromise efforts of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. North and south could manageably co-exist. After all, north and south shared common historical roots in the American Revolution. All states in the union, including secessionist leaders of the southern states, honored the fathers of the union and the government documents they ratified. However this convergence was damaged by numerous factors (i.e. economic sectional policies and slavery) with the result that relations worsened and northern/southern images diverged in self-justifying directions. Over the decades, zealots

from both north and south eventually caused the previously balanced union to separate along sectional lines.

Four questions govern the level of infection by national myth in Evera's diagnostic: the legitimacy of governments and leaders, state demands on its citizens, economic conditions and the health of independent evaluative institutions.

### **Legitimacy of the Government or its Leaders**

The first aspect of perception deals with the legitimacy of regime or if the nationalism movement remains stateless, the legitimacy of the movement's leaders.<sup>20</sup> The significance lies in Evera's hypothesis that the less legitimate the governments or leaders of nationalist movements, the greater their propensity to purvey mythical national beliefs, hence the greater the risk for war".<sup>21</sup> How does this shake out with southern and northern sectionalism? We could define southern sectionalism as a "stateless" nationalism while northern sectionalism represents attained "statehood." First we'll look at southern views of legitimacy in regard to the Federal government and then toward its own "stateless" leadership. Evera's model contends that the less legitimate a nationalism movement's regime or movement, then the greater it's incentive to make myths. The political representatives of southern states advocating "state's rights" held fast to a United States with the power and authority invested in states over federal government. Thus, when the federal government took to imposing tariffs and taking other disadvantageous actions toward southern "state's rights" regions, their state representatives saw this as a violation of their agreed union.

"Secession," he said, "is not intended to break up the present union but to perpetuate it. We do not propose to go out by way of breaking up or destroying the Union as our fathers gave it to us, but we go out for the purpose of getting further guarantees and security for our rights...Our plan is for the Southern states to withdraw from the Union, for the present, to allow amendments to the Constitution to be made, guaranteeing our just rights; and if the Northern States

will not make those amendments, by which these rights shall be secured to us, then we must secure them the best way we can. This question of slavery must be settled now or never”.<sup>22</sup>

These same representatives then sought to create a union of government where individual states could determine the extent and breadth of power wielded by the federal institutions as secondary to their own state self-determination. The southern myth making took form in a “revisionist” view of the founding Fathers. It advocated a strong state’s rights stance and it highlighted the Constitutional legal basis for slavery. This view ‘justified’ the cause of secession in opposition to the “wrong” federalist spin on the same. In so doing, the “state’s rights” representatives decried the federal government as illegitimate. But what about the perceptions by “state’s rights” advocates in terms of the legitimacy of its own movement’s leadership? The leadership (leaders being the focus since the secessionist minded representatives and people fall into Evera’s category of a “stateless” nationalism) was held in the highest of esteem. This was evidenced by the “cane” incident occurring in congress when Congressman Preston Brooks ‘beat’ Congressman Sumner for inflaming rhetoric against the south and South Carolina’s Andrew Butler. The incident was shocking to northerners but incredibly popular amongst southerners.

Adding insult to injury, the South lionized Brooks as a hero. Although some southerners regretted the affair for its galvanizing effect on the North, public approval of Brook’s act far outweighed qualms. Newspapers in his own state expressed pride that Brooks had “stood forth so nobly in defense of...the honor of South Carolinians.” ...From all over the South, Brooks received dozens of new canes, some inscribed with such mottoes as “Hit Him Again” and “Use Knock-Down Arguments.”<sup>23</sup>

The southern secessionist feelings were representative of southern elite’s consensus on “state’s rights” although the support of the average person was questionable. Second, we’ll look at northern views of legitimacy in regard to its own ‘attained statehood’ leadership and the resultant mythmaking. Parts of northern nationalism (i.e. Radical Republicans and the Abolitionists), without the support of the Lincoln administration, involved themselves in significant

mythmaking. The Abolitionists for example trumped up the atrocities committed against slaves and painted the entire system as corrupt where as the reality wasn't as destructive.

Partisan propaganda is not noted for its accuracy, and the propaganda disseminated by sectional leaders before the Civil War was no exception. Northern abolitionists probably exaggerated the physical cruelties that Southern masters inflicted upon their slaves. Southern 'fire-eaters' doubtless distorted the true character of Northern 'Yankees.' Politicians in both sections kept the country in constant turmoil and whipped up popular emotions for the selfish purpose of winning elections. Irresponsible agitators generated hatreds and passions that made the rational settlement of sectional differences almost impossible, and thus encouraged an appeal to arms.<sup>24</sup>

The mythmaking resulted in part due to frustration that Lincoln's leadership and gradualist approach were not legitimate in their eyes. The mythmaking placed even greater pressure on Lincoln to act and it contributed in part to the announcement of the emancipation proclamation after the battle of Antietam in September 1862. In conclusion, the legitimacy of the federal government as viewed by secessionist minded peoples as well as by many federal supporters seriously eroded over time due to a declining economy, bankrupt budgets, dropping political support for the government and lack of progress on the military front for both sides. Eventually, the culmination of these factors threatened the vulnerable Lincoln administration as never before. The first aspect of perception, the legitimacy of regime or leadership, points out significant divergent sectional beliefs as identified by myth resulting in a greater risk for war.

### **State Demands on its Citizens**

The second aspect of perception deals with the scope of demands posed by the state on its citizenry and according to Evera, "the more the state must demand of its citizens, the greater its propensity to purvey mythical nationalist beliefs, hence the greater the risk of war".<sup>25</sup> In other words, the more the Lincoln administration asked of its northern and secessionist minded citizens, the harder it must work to persuade its citizens to fulfill these demands. Lincoln offered

a fat carrot through compensation to slave holders, voluntary state participation and a generous timeline for compliance. He trumped up the ideals of God, democracy and union in selling his cause. After the war started, Lincoln used these same national myths for the purposes of mobilization. He waved the patriotic stars and stripes in order to motivate sacrifice by American citizens and to justify the cruelties of war against their southern secessionist brothers. Unfortunately for Lincoln, his call to arms drove pro-union and secession minded moderates out of power and provoked the second phase of secession.

In the eyes of southern unionists, this tragic war was mainly Lincoln's fault. What the president described in his proclamation of April 15 calling out the militia as a necessary measure to "maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our National Union" was transmuted south of the Potomac into an unconstitutional coercion of sovereign states. "In North Carolina the Union sentiment was largely in the ascendant and gaining strength until Lincoln prostrated us," wrote a bitter unionist. "He could have adopted no policy so effectual to destroy the Union...."<sup>26</sup>

The myths for cause and country could leave no room for ambiguity. Either you were on the side of God or of evil. The polarization effect that resulted from the myth making of both sides would in the end pit brother against brother. The real miracle is that these myths didn't live on after the war to poison north/south relations in later years. This is due in large part to legendary military leaders like Lee and Grant who sowed the seeds of reconciliation and peace rather than bitterness and hatred after the war ended. In sum both north and south demanded tremendous sacrifice from its citizenry. The propensity of both sides to purvey mythical nationalist beliefs in support of required sacrifices indicates a greater risk for war as Evera's model predicts.

### **Economic Condition**

The third aspect of perception deals with domestic economic crisis whereby Evera's model proposes that "if economic conditions deteriorate, publics become more receptive to scapegoat myths, hence such myths are more widely believed, hence war is more likely".<sup>27</sup>

Although neither society was suffering from economic collapse, both southern and northern sectionalism perceived a win-lose zero sum formula for sustained and continued growth. Any attempt by northern industry to secure the tariff threatened southern prosperity. And attempts by southern leadership pushing agrarian open market economic policies threatened to undermine the fledgling northern industrial economic growth. A further example of zero sum thinking is seen in the voting down of extending the Missouri Compromise across the new territories.

It was the Missouri debates in which intersectional comity was first violated; and it was the political leaders of the East, particularly the New Englanders and those of New England origin, who did it when they denounced in unmeasured terms slavery, the slaveholder, and Southern society in general.<sup>28</sup>

The compromise represented voting power in congress. Congress made the decisions on economic policy. So the south railed against the tariffs and the 'big brother' attitude of the federal government toward the southern states; the north focused on the morals of holding slaves for economic advantage and joined with the industrialists in a political power play against the south. Both sides adopted distorted pictures of their own and others current conduct and character that exaggerated the legitimacy of their own cause. These myths and distortions expanded both the northern and southern sectionalist sense of right and its need to oppress its minorities and its need to annex border states (diaspora equivalent). This ultimately transformed the northern nationalism movement from a purely self-preservation enterprise into a hegemonistic enterprise. Other-maligning myth, for example, involved northern claims of moral superiority over southern culture. Such myths support arguments for the rightness and necessity of denying equal rights (i.e. right to own slaves) to slave holders practicing slavery within federal territory. We are especially virtuous, so our dire actions benefits those we conquer. And we white wash our own northern problems (i.e. anti-black fear due to perceived labor competition).

With this kind of rhetoric from their leaders, it was little wonder that some white workingmen took their prejudices into the streets. In a half-dozen or more

cities, anti-black riots broke out during the summer of 1862. Some of the worst violence occurred in Cincinnati, where the replacement of striking Irish dockworkers by Negroes set off a wave of attacks on black neighborhoods. In Brooklyn a mob of Irish-Americans tried to burn down a tobacco factory where two dozen black women and children were working. The nightmare vision of blacks invading the North seemed to be coming true in southern Illinois, where the War Department transported several carloads of contrabands to help with the harvest. Despite the desperate need for hands to gather crops, riots forced the government to return most of the blacks to contraband camps south of the Ohio River.<sup>29</sup>

These economic disagreements played a significant part in the mythmaking of both the north and south. In sum, the third aspect of perception which deals with economic crisis reveals myth making by both north and south in attempts to buttress their own economic policies. This fact contributes toward a higher risk of war.

### **Health of Independent Evaluative Institutions**

The fourth and last aspect of perception deals with the strength and competence of independent evaluative institutions whereby Evera's model proposes that "if independent evaluative institutions are weak or incompetent, myths will more often prevail, hence war is more likely".<sup>30</sup> Both nationalism movements had competent free speech and free press traditions with a strong trend toward working democracies. This would function as a retardant to myth making according to Evera and therefore a lessening of the likelihood of war. However, the fair representation in national government as perceived by the south and based upon free press in the north only reinforced the growing southern perception that secession was the only alternative. The northern political power base would crush southern interests and remove the systems of government that advocated their causes. Such was what the free press (the Chicago Tribune) insisted:

The Republican victory would be incomplete if it did not promise sooner or later to reform the United States Supreme Court. That bench full of Southern lawyers, which gentlemen of a political temperament call an "august tribunal," is

the last entrenchment behind which despotism is sheltered; and until a national convention amends the Constitution so as to defeat the usurpations of that body, or until the Court itself is reconstructed by the dropping off of a few of its members and the appointment of better men in their places, we have little hope for Congressional action in the way of restricting slavery.<sup>31</sup>

This in turn left a sense of helplessness on the part of southern statesmen in being unable to control their own destiny. Senator John Calhoun of South Carolina summed up these feelings best in 1850 on the Senate floor. They were vulnerable as long as they stayed in the Union.

This is to be found in the fact that the equilibrium between the two sections, in the Government as it stood when the constitution was ratified and the Government put in action, has been destroyed. At that time there was nearly a perfect equilibrium between the two, which afforded ample means of each to protect itself against the aggression of the other; but, as it now stands, one section has the exclusive power of controlling the Government, which leaves the other without any adequate means of protecting itself against its encroachment and oppression.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, southern sectionalism was losing its voice in government. The consequence of this perceived loss was an even greater reliance on an independent and open free press. Yet instead of mitigating the need for myth, the press and northern voices in government used it to fan their specific causes. In the end, the effect of myth in both the north and the south was a polarization and drawing of lines that widened the gulf between them. These feelings were summarized in northern politics and the free press as ‘the slave power.’

During the years of bitter sectional conflict that preceded the Civil War, Northern abolitionists, editors, and Republican politicians repeatedly charged that the South—in fact, the entire country—was ruled by a ruthless “Slave Power.” This Slave Power, well organized and conspiratorial in its methods, consisted of the Southern slaveholding planters and political leaders who were determined to convert the whole United States into a nation of masters and slaves. Advancing from one conquest to another, they imperiled the rights and liberties of every freeman. They shaped national policy to serve only their own selfish ends.<sup>33</sup>

The rally cry against the north by southern sectionalism and free press was a charge against the “Black Republicans.”

Southern leaders interpreted the events that culminated in secession in quite another way. Far from the South being aggressive, they insisted that the aggression was all on the other side. It was Northern violation of Southern rights—the aggressions of “Black Republicans”—that endangered the Union.<sup>34</sup>

Although the strength and competence of independent evaluative instruments were high, myth in this fourth aspect of perception prevailed. Hence the model indicates a higher likelihood for war. In sum, perceptual factors for both south and north are overwhelmingly unhealthy thereby enflaming the ‘immediate causes’ and ultimately leading to violence in the American Civil War.

### **Framework Analysis Conclusions**

We have completed the explanation of Evera’s two-part framework and we’ve applied it to the current nationalist movements in the war of the rebellion. The first part (description of ‘immediate causes’) indicates that both nationalist movements, by fitting all four immediate causes, belonged to the high-risk group for escalation to violence. The second part (three influencing factors) also indicate issues within each movement that make their potential for violence very high. Southern and northern nationalism fit all three sparking factors of the immediate/proximate causes. My predictions/judgements based upon the results of the framework (assuming the absence of any preventative measures) are that violence was inevitable. This tool identifies the conditions that cause certain nationalist movements to escalate to violence and Evera ‘s model clearly makes the case for the causal link between nationalism and violence in the war of the Rebellion.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 267.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 268.

<sup>4</sup> Richard E. Beringer, and others, *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), 37.

## Notes

- <sup>5</sup> Catton, *The Centennial History of the Civil War*, 362.
- <sup>6</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 285.
- <sup>7</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 297.
- <sup>8</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 295.
- <sup>9</sup> Beringer, and others, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 168.
- <sup>10</sup> Archer Jones, *Civil War Command and Strategy* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 51.
- <sup>11</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 273.
- <sup>12</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 275.
- <sup>13</sup> William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 178.
- <sup>14</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 49.
- <sup>15</sup> Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 93.
- <sup>16</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 275.
- <sup>17</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 275.
- <sup>18</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 261.
- <sup>19</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 278.
- <sup>20</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 282.
- <sup>21</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 261.
- <sup>22</sup> Catton, *The Centennial History of the Civil War*, 139.
- <sup>23</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 151.
- <sup>24</sup> Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War*, 107.
- <sup>25</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 261.
- <sup>26</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 277.
- <sup>27</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 261.
- <sup>28</sup> Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War*, 56-57.
- <sup>29</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 507.
- <sup>30</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 261.
- <sup>31</sup> Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 432.
- <sup>32</sup> Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War*, 41.
- <sup>33</sup> Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War*, 19.
- <sup>34</sup> Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War*, 19.

## **Part IV**

### **Policy Prescriptions/Confidence Building Measures**

Evera provides a diagnostic framework in order to identify the role nationalism plays in the cause of war. Not all nationalism movements are high risk as a cause of war. Thus far we've concluded that the war of rebellion in the United States clearly belongs in Evera's typology of nationalism's that cause war. We now move to answer the third question in his framework: how might such wars be prevented? To overcome the sectional rift between north and south, these remedies need to be appropriate to the needs of southern nationalism that feels vulnerable to the northern backed federals. Evera provides a prescription derived from his identification of proximate and underlying causes. After reviewing his prescriptions for peace, we will then apply them in retrospect to the American Civil War. Our conclusions will help us answer the question, was the American Civil War inevitable? They also assume a sympathetic concern on the part of those in majority power (northern nationalism) to the fears and uncertainties of the minority (southern nationalism). As we shall see, such were not the case.

Evera believes that one might channel pliable aspects of nationalism in benign directions and thereby move to dampen the risks that nationalism poses for war. Two factors limit our ability to do so. We must recognize that some aspects of northern and southern nationalism are inalterable (i.e. borders, intermingling and the history of past crimes). In addition, his prescriptions assume two important factors. First, it assumes the existence of a hegemonic

state or united international community with the vital interest, power and will to use it. Second it assumes a carrot of sufficient appeal that it would solicit participation by northern and southern warring nationalism. Nationalism movements are not susceptible to a ‘change of heart’ without this outside influence, pressure or persuasion. Neither condition existed during the time of the American Civil War. Taking into account the limiting factors, Evera’s model would prescribe five actions or policy decisions in an attempt to reverse or remedy the underlying causes leading to war: (1) renounce the threat or use of force; (2) guarantee the rights of minorities, to include under some stringent conditions, a legal right to secession; (3) restrict propagation of hateful myth; (4) guarantee fair and equal representation in the democratic governmental process; and (5) adopt market economic policies that wouldn’t damage international trade or southern economic growth. We’ll now look at how specific war causing attributes might have been suppressed or neutralized before the war. Were similar measures utilized prior to 1861? If attempted, what were the results? If attempted but they didn’t work, why did they fail? If they weren’t attempted, would they have worked? And if they would have worked, could the American Civil War have been averted?

### **Renunciation of Force**

The first action or policy decision attempting to channel the underlying causes in benign directions involves the renunciation of the threat or use of force. This is based upon the premise of Evera’s model that “peaceful conduct” requires this renunciation. Issues are resolved through the mechanisms of government and not through means of violence. Just prior to Lincoln’s election, President James Buchanan struggled to retain peace and the union. However, when southern states began to secede following Lincoln’s election and when South Carolinians took over Fort Sumter, President Buchanan’s approach was one of inaction. He didn’t want to

provoke the southern states into violence nor did he desire violence as the federal means to remedy the situation. His conclusion, as voiced during his retirement speech before congress on 3 December 1860, was that nothing could be done to stop secession even though he thought it deplorable and illegal.<sup>1</sup> Southern state representatives, such as Congressman Hon. A. R. Boteler of Virginia, also sought a peaceful and political means to end the crisis. Congressman Boteler asked for President Lincoln's support in defeating the Force Bill. He believed its passage would force Virginia's secession from the union and bring about war. On behalf of the border states, he advocated for a peaceful political settlement of the issues.

‘It’s meaning, ‘ I answered, ‘is obvious. It has nothing hidden in it – nothing more than meets the eye. We do for ‘the Union’ as our fathers made it—to be a shield of protection over our heads, and not a sword of subjugation at our hearts; for ‘the Constitution’ as they designed it, to be equally binding on both sections, North as well as South, in all its compromises, and in all its requirements; and for ‘the enforcement of the laws’ by peaceable and constitutional means, not by bayonets—Federal bayonets, especially, Mr. Lincoln’ {Cane: 14}.

As a result, Lincoln delayed the enactment of the Force Bill in an effort to find diplomatic and peaceful means of settlement. However, the extreme elements within both northern and southern sectionalism sparked the violence and the voice of reason was unable to contain it. The abolitionists resorted to violent means as seen in the John Brown incident. Both north and south went to war in “bleeding Kansas.” Lincoln eventually called forth the militia as a means of restoring order during the crisis. His request for troops prompted the second phase of secession and a very clear indication that all means necessary, including violence, would soon follow. Following the secession of the final states, diplomatic or political means of resolving the split were significantly hampered. There no longer existed the structures for communication and political negotiation. Southern leaders no longer chose to represent themselves in the Union and the federal government very clearly rejected negotiation with southern representatives due to their policy of non-recognition. Ultimately this led to an information failure. The opposing

nationalisms were no longer able to share the information necessary to bridge the bargaining gap between them. Under these circumstances, violence and war as a means of settlement became a more viable option. The first prescription, renouncing the threat of violence, was tried and it came up short.

### **Guarantee of Minority Rights**

The second action guarantee's the rights of minorities, to include under some stringent conditions, a legal right to secession. Evera doesn't list the criteria for justifying secession however it is fair to say that the legal right to secede ought to be considered given the sectional differences between the north and the south. Evera's model warns that the risk for war rises when nationalism movements oppress their minorities; hence the code requires respect for minority rights. This would entail an effort by the federal government to respect the minority sectional rights (cultural, political and economic) of the southern states and it would mean an effort by the southern states to make progress in the direction of emancipation for slaves. Were any attempts made by either the north or south to move in these directions? The answer is yes. First we'll look at the federalist perspective. Abraham Lincoln represented the moderate republican's who sought to protect southern culture while implementing a 'gradualist' approach to the emancipation of slaves. The abolition of slavery would result over a period decades where by slave holders after voluntarily participating in the program would be fairly compensated for the freeing of their slaves.

The only concrete result of the entire effort was a bill for compensated emancipation in the District of Columbia. It met some of Lincoln's specifications as a blueprint for freedom in that it provided for paying up to \$300 to masters for every slave emancipated and appropriated \$100,000 for colonizing 'such of the slaves as desired to emigrate'.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of slavery was inextricably linked to southern culture and economics. The immediate eradication of slavery would entail a traumatic rending and destruction of southern culture while a slow process of change would allow southern sectionalism to slowly evolve into a new state of existence. Lincoln sought a voluntary participation rather than a federal enforcement of the issue due to his overall goal of seeking commitment and loyalty by individual states in maintaining a harmonious union. Unfortunately, the northern effort to guarantee the rights of southern cultural minorities failed. The slave holding states were not ready to support or participate in this program and the abolitionists along with the radical republicans wouldn't tolerate any delay or negotiation on the emancipation of slaves. The combination of the two groups hamstrung Lincoln's efforts. The voluntary participation and compensations policy, in retrospect, would have offered a much more effective protection of southern culture than the devastation and total loss resulting from the war. Lastly, the Lincoln administration rejected the southern act of secession as illegal. We'll now examine the southern perspective on addressing minority rights as deemed necessary by northern sectionalism. The southern states eventually discontinued the slave trade thereby limiting some slave trade abuses and implicitly acknowledging its need for eventual eradication. However, in spite of a few token acts by southern states, the southern states in general (including the border states) were unwilling to participate in any plan for abolition of slavery. Perhaps an international economic coalition could have supported Lincoln's efforts. It could have influenced southern policies more toward abolition. In sum, the only serious efforts to guarantee the rights of minorities came from Lincoln's gradualist policy that attempted to accommodate southern sectionalist sensitivities. Even so, only a few political initiatives were offered by northern or southern sectionalism to guarantee the rights of minorities but the efforts from neither side, regardless of their sincerity, stood any chance of bridging the

gulf between sectionalist concerns over minority rights. The second prescription, guaranteeing the rights of minorities, as attempted by both sectionalism movements failed.

### **Restriction of Hateful Myth Propagation**

The third action or policy decision attempting to channel the underlying causes in benign directions involves the restriction hateful myth propagation. Evera's model warns that divergent beliefs about mutual history and current conduct and character raise the risk of war; hence the code asks for historical honesty and curbs on official hate propaganda.<sup>3</sup> The requirements of the model are best satisfied through a free and open press. A free and open press also allows for the rebuttal to adversarial points of view offering the ordinary citizen the opportunity to choose his own point of view. This countered the inflated myth making of both north and south. Although it added to the complexity of perspectives, it also ensured a prolific and lively presentation of historical honesty. The democratic process allowed the airing of disagreements and a vehicle for peaceful political resolution. The sensitivities of southern and northern political representatives curbed any official hate propaganda. The northern and southern nationalism each exercised its open and free press. Unfortunately, there were few voices of moderation and the preponderance of voices expressed extremism. In sum, American history shows that our political institutions along with our open and free press aided as much as exacerbated hateful myth propagation. Unfortunately, the result was a more polarized American society rather than an American society moving toward understanding and compromise. The third prescription of restricting hateful myth propagation was undone by the very mechanisms Evera offers as a "dampening" vehicle—a free and open press. The requirements for the third prescription were in place but the third prescription also failed.

## **Guarantee of Fair and Equal Representation in the Democratic Process**

The fourth action seeks to guarantee fair and equal representation in the democratic governmental process. Evera's model warns that the more severely nationalities oppress sectional minorities politically, the greater the risk for war; hence the code requires respect and protection of the political process and fair representation. This would entail an effort by the federal government to move competing political identities into a 'win-win' paradigm and away from a 'win-lose'/'winner take all' paradigm. This would include the enforcement of contracts and power sharing arrangements that would prevent one nationalism from setting government policy unilaterally. Reciprocal trust could be developed by initiating nationalist political checks and balances so as to stabilize relations between north and south. This would help ensure that no one nationalism would be exploited by the other. Were any attempts made by either the north or south to move in these directions? Southern politicians recognized a political power swing in favor of the northern states and they sought parity in all their political initiatives. Southerners simply wanted to maintain that parity. Northern politicians also recognized the political power shift but operated out of a 'winner take all' paradigm. Their growing political power allowed them legislative access to increase the welfare of northern sectionalism. The only hope of balance came with the inclusion of new states into the union. The inclusion of new states could also threaten or forever end the 'political' power parity between north and south. The north chose the later. Rather than extending the Missouri compromise and maintaining sectional parity, as offered and represented by slave states, northern politicians voted down the parity compromise and sought advantage.

California and New Mexico would tip the Senate balance against the South, perhaps irrevocably. "For the first time," said Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, "we are about to permanently to destroy the balance of power between the sections".<sup>4</sup>

Political parity would have eased the tension between sections. Political imbalance would lead to secession and greater risk of war.

A southern caucus asked Calhoun to draft an “Address” setting forth the section’s position on these inequities. The South Carolinian readily complied, sensing a renewed opportunity to create the Southern Rights party he had long hoped for. Rehearsing a long list of northern “aggressions”—including the Northwest Ordinance, the Missouri Compromise, state personal liberty laws that blocked recovery of fugitive slaves, and the Wilmot Proviso—the Address reiterated Calhoun’s doctrine of constitutional right to take slaves into all territories, reminded southerners that their “property, prosperity, equality, liberty, and safety” were at stake, and warned that the South might secede if her rights were not protected.<sup>5</sup>

Southern interest certainly joined the political combat in an effort to retain balance and continued union. Hence the efforts of militant partisans backing both sides eventually led to a shooting match in Kansas. But with the unsuccessful resolution of this crisis in favor of northern sectionalism, the extreme options of secession and violence became more acceptable. When southern nationalism lost its ability to arbitrate with the north in order to guarantee protection of southern culture, then I believe their fear led them to accept desperate measures. In conclusion, the fourth prescription sought to guarantee fair and equal representation in the democratic governmental process. Evera’s model warns that the more severely nationalities oppress sectional minorities politically, the greater the risk for war; hence the code required respect and protection of the political process and fair representation. Could anything else have been done? Only a hegemon or an international economic and political coalition would have enough leverage (diplomatic, economic or military) to pressure northern politicians toward a more conciliatory stance in regard to southern sectionalism. Such an international coalition didn’t exist and true to history, the sovereign government of the United States was free to set its own rules on how it handled internal political dissent. But if it did exist, an international coalition’s efforts to channel northern political ambitions into more benign directions may have

put a cap on the crisis in order for common sense and time to bring resolution and healing. Perhaps Lincoln would have gotten the support needed to realize a more gradualist approach and perhaps the southerners may have felt other options existed in protecting their culture with the intervention of a third party. The combination of these forces may have meant that a civil war could be delayed or avoided altogether. Our history could have spun in two directions. Either the secession would have received international recognition and support thereby creating two sovereign nations or the international efforts could have empowered both the northern and southern moderates to such a degree that we could have remained a union with sectional parity. The conclusion of this last scenario could occur only if state's rights efforts were victorious in gaining power and authority over a weakened and redefined federal government. However, given the realities of the nineteenth century, the prescription lacked any authority or power for the level of intervention necessary to make a difference in averting the war of rebellion.

### **Adoption of Market Economic Policies**

The fifth action seeks to adopt market economic policies and disavowal of protectionist or other beggar-thy-neighbor economic policies toward southern sectional growth.<sup>6</sup> Evera's model warns that economic decline or collapse promotes chauvinist mythmaking; hence the code asks that movements adopt market reforms, on the grounds that prosperity requires marketization. This would entail an effort by the federal government to rescind its pro-north industrial tariff policy in favor of a more 'win-win' approach more supportive of the southern agrarian/cash crop economy. Southern congressional representatives initiated pro-southern economic policies but they were no match for the dominant voting block of the pro-industry northerners. Unfortunately, northern congressmen initiated tariffs in order to protect its growing industrial base with no regard for its consequences on southern economic growth. Instead of a

cooperative effort seeking assistance for its southern counterparts, the largely dominant industrial political support marched forward with its own economic agenda at great cost and concern to southern interests. Due to southern dependence upon northern economic connections, southerners felt helpless in bringing about changes.

Southern self-condemnation of this ‘degrading vassalage’ to Yankees became almost a litany during the sectional crisis from 1846 to 1851. “Our whole commerce except a small fraction is in the hands of Northern men,” complained a prominent Alabamian in 1847...Financially we are more enslaved than our negroes”.<sup>7</sup>

This economic dependence and loss of political control led southerners down the road of economic separation rather than economic integration. This was seen in the recommendation of the young southern champion of economic diversification James B. D. De Bow after evoking the vision of a southern commercial empire at a southern economic convention in Memphis in 1845.

This meeting renewed a tradition of southern conclaves that had begun in the 1830’s with a vow “to throw off the degrading shackles of our commercial dependence”.<sup>8</sup>

Somewhere along the way, political and economic interests polarized along sectional lines. It would have required either an internal ‘meeting of the minds’ between north and south to bridge the economic divisions along sectional lines or it would again require a powerful international economic coalition with the leverage, interest and will to intervene. The intervention could channel northern industrialist economic policy in directions less harmful to the southern economy. This assumes that the accomplished American economic stability would somehow benefit the international community in such a significant way as to warrant such involvement. History shows that no such coalition or benefit existed. As a consequence, southerners were at the mercy of their own devices to somehow combat the overwhelming pro-north industrial political lobby. In sum, attempts were made by southerners to regain economic parity with northern industry and protect southern economic interests. They were not successful. Northern

congressional leaders instead pursued favorable northern economic policies at the expense of southern economic requirements. Northern politicians, industrialists and abolitionists enlisted enough political support in government to outbid moderate politicians. Their success mobilized radical elements, polarized society and magnified tensions between northern and southern nationalism. As a consequence, the unsuccessful attempts at resolution made the risk greater for southern secession and sectional violence.

### **Policy Prescription Conclusions**

We've now looked at how specific war causing attributes might have been suppressed or neutralized before the war. Many of these actions were actually attempted. Unfortunately, the channeling of these pliable aspects of nationalism in benign directions and thereby dampening the risks that nationalism poses for war require a cooperative rather than a competitive stance toward each other. In the absence of cooperation, only the intervention by a united international community with the interest, power and will could offer hope for delay or avoidance of war. Due to the lack of either of these conditions, it is my conclusion that the prescriptive policies attempted were doomed to fail. Had either of these conditions been met, then I believe the attempted policies would have worked and the American Civil War could have been averted. Had the war of rebellion occurred at a different time in history and had a strong international community existed with a significant benefit and interest in American stability, then our nation might have looked very different than it does today.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> David F. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 267.

<sup>2</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 348.

## Notes

- <sup>3</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 289.
- <sup>4</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 66.
- <sup>5</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 65.
- <sup>6</sup> Brown, and others, *An International Security Reader*, 289.
- <sup>7</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 92.
- <sup>8</sup> McPherson, *The Civil War Era*, 93.

## **Part V**

### **Conclusions**

It is my hypothesis that the issue of nationalism greatly impacted the risk for violence in the American Civil War. Stephen Van Evera's two part analytic framework of 'immediate/proximate causes' and the three underlying catalytic factors of the immediate/proximate causes' (structural, political/environmental and perceptual factors) demonstrate that northern and southern nationalism were on a violent collision course. Finally, we addressed the questions of how, if at all, the war causing attributes of 1860's nationalism might have been suppressed or neutralized.

To tell the story of war, by itself, is not enough. It is necessary to understand what it grew out of—what emotions, antagonisms, and moving currents in the spirits of men brought it forth; how the different viewpoints, North and South, became irreconcilable so that the men of the two sections felt moved to go out and fight and die in defense of their own beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

History shows that many of these remedies were attempted prior to violence erupting between north and south. Unfortunately, the results of these measures clearly failed. I believe that the most widely discussed explanations for the causes of the Civil War such as state's rights or slavery are, at best, incomplete. I don't believe the Civil War was caused by slavery, states rights, economic tariffs, or sectional differences. I would argue instead, on the basis of Evera's model, that the American Civil War was caused by southern nationalism/sectionalism collective fears of the future. Due to all the above issues, they thought that what the southern culture could offer future generations was in jeopardy of disappearing forever. The lack of promise and

eventual loss of hope to preserve their culture eventually led its leaders to adopt drastic measures with devastating results. This underlying uncertainty about the future is what I believe drove the southern states to secede. Could the American Civil War have been averted? Using Evera's framework to answer this concluding question, I don't believe the war was avoidable. I believe historian Barbara Fields is right when she hints that civil war was rooted in the very beginnings of our nation.

It is the event in American history in that it is the moment that made the United States as a nation. And I mean that in different ways. The united states was obviously a nation when it adopted a constitution but it adopted a constitution that required a war to be sorted out and therefore required a war to make a real nation out of what was a theoretical nation as it was designed at the constitutional convention.<sup>2</sup>

The only prescription that offered the chance of suppressing the violent tendencies entailed the presence and interest of a late twentieth century international landscape and a powerful international open market economic system. Should these later day realities have existed at the time of our American Civil War, perhaps the war might have been avoided. However, our country would certainly have looked much different. We would have had deeply divided nationalism movements alive and well that either would have coexisted peacefully or would have eventually erupted with much more devastating effects due to the advances in modern warfare. If the American Civil War was unavoidable, then what did it accomplish? First a contemporary of the 1860's, Walt Wittman, give's an answer: "Strange is it not; that battles, martyrs, blood, even assassination, should so condense a nationality".<sup>3</sup> And finally, perhaps historian Shelby Foote has the best and final answer.

Before the war it was said, the United States "are." Grammatically it was spoken that way and thought of as a collection of independent states and after the war it was always the United States "is" as we say today without being self conscious at all. And that sums up what the war accomplished. It made us an "is".<sup>4</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Catton, *Reflections on the Civil War* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey C. Ward, Ric Burns, and Ken Burns, *The Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), volume 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ward, Burns, and Burns, *An Illustrated History*, volume 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ward, Burns, and Burns, *An Illustrated History*, volume 9.

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