

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING
THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:
JANUARY 1860 TO SEPTEMBER 1862

Steven Siegel

Introduction

Within months of seceding from the United States, the newly independent southern states joined to create the Confederate States of America.¹ Naturally, out of a need for military and economic support, the Confederacy sought recognition from foreign countries, particularly European.² Due to its sizeable market for cotton,³ a Southern staple crop, and its substantial influence and military strength, Great Britain was a prime target of the Confederate attempts at foreign recognition. However, within the nation and within Parliament, Britain was divided, with some favoring and some opposing recognizing the Confederacy or providing more concrete aid to it.⁴ Even when public opinion was coalesced against the Union, as it was immediately following the *Trent* Affair,⁵ government leaders realized the futility, from a military and economic perspective, of supporting the Confederacy. Internally split, the British could not openly take either side in the American Civil War. By favoring neither, the British, by

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default, favored the Union, still strong even without foreign aid. The British decision was made only easier by certain Confederate missteps and assumptions, in conjunction with the Union's ability to effectively mitigate potential foreign relations disasters with the British and even take advantage of British sentiments and traditions. Regardless, the British government made its own decision, and for its own reasons.

British governmental policy became even more firmly entrenched in favor of the Union following the conclusion of the Battle of Antietam. Lincoln released the Emancipation Proclamation, turning a war over states rights into a war about slavery, or at least presenting such an image to Europe.⁶ Even more importantly, it became clear that the Confederacy had little chance of winning the war, having failed to win on Union soil.⁷ The impact of this turning point on the war militarily and diplomatically was so great that an examination of British foreign policy after the Battle of Antietam inevitably returns to the Battle and its effects. A far more complex subject is the rationale behind British decisions prior to the decisive moment that was Antietam.

Great Britain supported the Union before September 1862, even if only by refusing to openly support the Confederacy, primarily out of internal political expediency and a desire for self-preservation.

Early Confederate Desires

Any state that comes to be independent soon seeks recognition, for a variety of reasons. In the Confederacy's case, the stimuli for such a quest ranged from a need for legitimacy to a need for military power, a need to counter Union naval strength, and a need to maintain the viability of the Confederate economy.⁸ To meet all these needs, Europe was the most obvious choice. Furthermore, France and Great Britain were the prime targets of Confederate efforts. French diplomacy falls mostly outside the purview of this paper, though the reasons why the Confederacy

looked to France for aid are similar to those referring to Great Britain.⁹ Initially, both nations recognized the Confederacy's status as a belligerent nation, yet both remained neutral on the war, and on the issue of Confederate recognition.¹⁰

However, mere neutrality was by no means enough to please Confederate demands.¹¹ The Union had superior naval, military, and industrial strength on its own, and European assistance would be unnecessary to a Union victory.¹² In contrast, the Confederacy could not stand alone.¹³ By securing European recognition and backing, the Confederacy could obtain ships,¹⁴ money in exchange for cotton, and governmental support.¹⁵ The latter would not be needed merely to boost morale, but was vital for the nascent nation's ultimate goal of independence, as it was engaged in a war over its right to secede from a prior union.¹⁶

Early Union Desires

A week after the April 12, 1861, Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, President Lincoln declared a blockade of the South.¹⁷ Concurrent was a mobilization of 75,000 volunteers Lincoln called for.¹⁸ Yet, it was the navy that would be the key to early Union successes at this stage in the war.¹⁹ This strong point was, nonetheless, only strong in relative terms. With an initially small navy and few trained sailors and officers, the Union navy responsible for the blockade—over time encompassing approximately 500 ships—was lacking in capacity effectively to seal off the South.²⁰ As a result, the blockade was somewhat porous. However, dispute remains to this day over just how weak the blockade was; opinions range from it being a sham of even a so-called paper blockade, completely devoid of enforcement power, to a highly effective tool of war that some contend led directly to the Union victory.²¹ Regardless of its efficacy in hindsight, the degree to which the blockade at first was considered “effective” was debated.²² This uncertainty harmed not the actual success of the blockade or the military success of the Union, but rather the diplomatic attempts to isolate the Confederacy.

Once Britain recognized the Confederate's belligerent status on May 13, 1861, by a proclamation of neutrality,²³ Union diplomatic overtures were aimed at preventing further Confederate gains.²⁴ To this end, the Union attempted to minimize the impact of Confederate belligerent status. Recognized as a belligerent, the Confederacy was, by international law, able to seek loans and buy military weapons, in addition to having a legal navy, in place of privateers.²⁵ However, maintaining the blockade prevented these Confederate gains from becoming anything meaningful, by preventing access to Southern ports. Therefore, Union diplomacy focused on keeping the blockade legal under international law, thereby preventing Britain from remaining neutral if it tried to oppose the blockade that contained the South directly.

Even more important among Union diplomatic goals was keeping Britain from officially recognizing Confederate independence, a measure that would be far more painful to the Union that had proclaimed the war to be one of insurrection, not of two "countries" fighting each other.²⁶ In fact, Union opinion was so strong on this matter that Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, threatened that should Britain recognize Confederate independence, "we from that hour, shall cease to be friends and become once more, as we have twice before been forced to be, enemies of Great Britain."²⁷ Seward's threat cannot be seen as indicative of the opinion of the entire State Department, much less that of the entire government or official governmental policy. Nonetheless, it is useful as an indicator of how emphatically at least some Union officials, including at least one with a significant amount of power, viewed any potential British recognition of Confederate independence.

Confederate Blunders

The Confederacy was naturally weak diplomatically from the start, having to create an entirely new State Department. To make matters worse, Confederate administration and control were both marred by inadequate leadership. This weakness was

unsurprising considering the context of how the Confederate government was formed. Each state that seceded from the United States did so on its own, not as a whole group.²⁸ The name of the new nation provides additional insight. A confederacy is, by definition, a decentralized government. Yet, the basic formation of the government alone was not a major factor in the Confederate diplomatic failure; although the constituent states of the Confederacy bickered over certain issues, general agreement could be reached as to the primary foreign policy goal of the Confederacy: recognition. Even so, whereas the U.S. government under the Constitution was formed over the course of two years, the Confederate government was created in merely a month and replaced with another within months.²⁹ Even worse, some appointed Secretaries of State were not chosen for any potential abilities to woo British opinion to the Confederate side, but rather for irrelevant reasons.³⁰ For example, Jefferson Davis selected R.M.T. Hunter specifically because he was a Virginian; he accepted only because the position appeared important, possibly launching him towards the Presidency.³¹ This error in personnel selection continued with the front-line diplomats as well. The Confederate mission to Europe, proposed one month before the attack on Fort Sumter, was led by William L. Yancey, a fervent defender of slavery who once even told Europe: "To get cotton you must swallow slavery," ignoring Europe's predilection for abolitionism.³² That such an extremist would be selected to lead an important delegation is unsurprising given that Confederate leaders expected Europe to support the Confederacy immediately and without question.³³

The Confederacy also blundered through its inconsistency. On the one hand, it blamed whatever shortage of cotton Britain may have been experiencing on the Union blockade in order to sway the British to intervene on their own behalf.³⁴ Yet, at the same time, the Confederacy argued that the Union blockade was a "paper" one, not enforced and thereby invalid under international law.³⁵ Such a blockade would prompt British intervention to protect British trade that would be therefore illegally stopped, clearly to the Confederacy's advantage.³⁶ In trying to hedge their bets, the Confederates blundered by attempting to

argue completely opposite positions, resulting in Britain accepting neither in full.

By far the greatest Confederate diplomatic blunder was its early reliance on “King Cotton.” For much of the early part of the war, until it was too late, the Confederacy assumed that Europe’s need for cotton would lead directly to recognition and its associated support and intervention.³⁷ However, this strategy was based on a false premise. In fact, there was no cotton shortage in Britain due to two particularly bountiful seasons in 1859 and 1860.³⁸ There was so much extra cotton in Britain that the British was able to sell ever larger amounts of unprocessed cotton—exactly what the South exported—to France.³⁹ Had there been a shortage, the Confederacy would still have been unnecessary to Britain.⁴⁰ Britain and France obtained cotton from various other sources, including India, Egypt, and Turkey.⁴¹ If anything, British factories were facing problems of “overproduction instead of scarcity.”⁴² Relying on the power of cotton shortages, the Confederates were left with few other avenues of diplomacy when these shortages never materialized.

Union Successes

Union diplomatic successes reflected the skill and experience of the State Department and its representatives, including that of U.S. Ambassador to Britain Charles Francis Adams, who thwarted many potential problems with his “steady performance.”⁴³ One particularly telling example of the Union’s ability to evade what should have been opportunities for Confederate advancement is the *Trent* Affair. This imbroglio erupted after U.S. Captain Charles Wilkes of the *USS San Jacinto*, on November 8, 1861,⁴⁴ fired on a British mail steamer, the *Trent*, and seized two Confederate commissioners, James M. Mason and John Slidell, bound for Europe.⁴⁵ In addition to breaking international law by violating British neutrality, this action was, and was viewed as, a “direct” threat to Britain.⁴⁶ Lord John Russell, Foreign Secretary under Lord Palmerston’s government,⁴⁷ issued an “ultimatum” to the

United States, insisting that they release Mason and Slidell and that they issue an immediate apology, in conjunction with “reparations” for the damage inflicted.⁴⁸ Palmerston himself, outraged at the seizure, ordered 8,000 to 11,000 troops (depending on which account is to be believed) to be sent to Canada, a threatening act.⁴⁹ At the same time, British public opinion united temporarily against the United States, as newspapers, including the *Times* of London, advocated war.⁵⁰ Following this frenzy, Britain did in fact put the fleet on alert and deployed troops to Canada in preparation for a potential war.⁵¹ Clearly, this situation did not bode well for the Union.

However, in a testament to their skill, American diplomats were able to defuse the situation. Without apologizing, Seward and the rest of the government noted that Wilkes “had acted ‘without orders’” and that the Confederate Commissioners “would be ‘cheerfully surrendered.’”⁵² Satisfied, the British accepted the American response.⁵³ When Mason finally arrived in London on January 29, 1862, he was greeted with disdain, remembered for writing the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, particularly offensive to solidly abolitionist Britain.⁵⁴ So complete was this shift of opinion that the *Times* of London wrote of Mason and Slidell’s arrival with what can only be called distaste, noting that Britain should “not give these fellows anything in the shape of an ovation.”⁵⁵ Clearly, the British public was no longer outraged by the *Trent* incident, a product of American diplomatic prowess, though the natural inclinations of the British cannot be ignored.⁵⁶

Yet, even in a Union triumph, it was the British themselves who helped maintain neutrality. For although the United States response was suitable for the British, it was itself a response to a weakened formal British protest. Though tempers may have flared among the British, Prince Albert, acting on Queen Victoria’s behalf, reduced the outrage in the British demands of the Union.⁵⁷ Prince Albert suggested the very argument the United States would make, that Wilkes had strayed from his orders.⁵⁸ It was Britain that decided to withhold British intervention, for the conciliatory Union response was merely an echo of the conciliatory British one.

British Public Opinion

Stratified within every social class and along nearly every possible axis of contention, British public opinion muddled the waters of British foreign policy. First, it is important to note that Lord Palmerston's Liberal government⁵⁹ was in power, though with a weak hold on control, having to compromise often.⁶⁰ In fact, the Liberal Party itself was composed of two major factions, split between more liberal and more conservative wings,⁶¹ originating from the former Whig and Tory parties.⁶² This tension manifested itself in spirited debates in the House of Commons that dragged questions along, preventing any action from taking place in favor of the Confederacy, thereby benefiting the Union that could succeed without explicit British support.⁶³ As a result of the parliamentary system, Palmerston needed to act in the most popular way possible, so as to offend the fewest people and thereby remain in power. Since only the most extreme on either side advocated intervention on behalf of either the Union or the Confederacy, inaction was the least divisive action.

Among members of the British establishment, the governing classes, opinions varied. Some Conservatives did feel a connection to the aristocratic traditions of the South.⁶⁴ Powerful Liberals felt the opposite, associating themselves with the traditions of liberal democracy the Union represented.⁶⁵ Even within the Liberal Party there was dissension, as others supported the right of self-determination the South advocated.⁶⁶ Those with nationalist tendencies added to the mix, noting that a split United States would show the superiority of the British system instead of the American system created less than a century before.⁶⁷ However, they also harbored a "vague, though influential, pride," as Ephraim Douglass Adams called it, in the success of the United States, a product and former colony of Britain, therefore wanting the Union to succeed.⁶⁸ Among the governing classes, most of those who supported or would support the Confederacy still were unwilling to simply grant the Confederacy recognition.⁶⁹ Rather,

they generally advocated mediation between the warring parties.⁷⁰ One Liberal Party member, George Gower, Lord President of the Queen's Council and the Second Earl of Granville, experienced in diplomacy, best summed up the conflicts within the governing classes, and within individuals.⁷¹ In a letter dated September 29, 1862, Granville wrote to Russell regarding the issue of Confederate recognition.⁷² He noted, "It would not be a good moment to recognize the South just before a great Federal success," showing remarkable foresight considering news of the Union victory at Antietam would not reach Britain until September 30.⁷³ He believed that intervention would be desirable should the "Confederates continue Victorious [sic] as is to be hoped," indicative of the pragmatic approach taken by many in Parliament, supporting Confederate ideals in theory, but not in practice.⁷⁴ One writer, Bagehot, described this dichotomy in *The Economist*, observing that there was an important distinction between "English opinion" and "English action on American questions."⁷⁵ A further example of this split is when Chancellor of the Exchequer William E. Gladstone gave a speech in October, 1862, supporting Jefferson Davis.⁷⁶ However, it was interpreted as supporting Confederate recognition, and Secretary of War Sir G. Cornwall Lewis, a member of the same government as Gladstone, announced in public that Britain did not plan to recognize the Confederacy.⁷⁷

Economic concerns of the middle and upper-middle classes also contributed to the stratified public opinion. Some "free traders" advocated a pro-Southern position, detesting the Union blockade that prevented their manufactured goods from reaching the Confederacy.⁷⁸ Many others were in favor of the Union position. Mill owners and managers faced no shortage of cotton that would come from the South, but rather had a surplus of cotton cloth.⁷⁹ This group would not want a war that would destabilize the world markets.⁸⁰ Other members of the commercial class benefited from an increase in the demand for wheat, a Northern crop.⁸¹ As a result, they were unwilling to support any action that could jeopardize trade with the United States.⁸² British neutrality, a *de facto* support of the Union, benefited those manufacturers who sold goods, ranging from woolen goods to iron and steel, to

both sides, though particularly to the Union side, with whom trade was not blockaded.⁸³ Furthermore, Britain had substantial investments in the infrastructure of the American Industrial Revolution, and many did not want to see their investments go to waste.⁸⁴ Economically, the middle and upper-middle classes generally, though not entirely, supported the Union, or at least the status quo.

The lower-middle and working classes held other motivations. Disenfranchised, they advocated the liberal democratic views espoused by the North.⁸⁵ Palmerston would not be inclined to grant workers the right to vote, nor to stir up dissent and bring the issue up at all.⁸⁶ Therefore, Palmerston had another motive to support the Union. Additionally, the Union's wealth and success attracted many in the lower classes.⁸⁷ However, these lower and working classes also supported the South. Cloth production in Britain had stopped, in actuality due to increased costs from buying raw cotton and decreased profits in selling finished cotton products, though the unemployed saw their situation as a result of the Union blockade.⁸⁸ In fact, in November 1862, there were an estimated 330,000 unemployed mill workers in Britain, people who shared mixed feelings regarding the North and the South.

Generally, it would be expected that the lower classes, particularly those without a vote, would have little influence, if any, on the decision-making process regarding foreign policy. Yet, in Britain, tradition dictated that diplomatic actions be considered in the light of their effects on the "popular will."⁸⁹ As a result, the mixed opinions of the lower classes did factor into Palmerston's decisions. For example, Palmerston and Russell discussed the situation in October, 1861, and decided, "the cotton question may become serious by the end of the year...We cannot allow some millions of our people to perish to please the Northern States,"⁹⁰ indicating a respect for the lives of his citizens, even though most of them had no power to vote his party out of power.

The single issue that was least polarizing was the one that helped the Union, not the Confederacy. Put simply, slavery was "detested by the public of Great Britain."⁹¹ Since 1814, Britain had

been engaged in a “world crusade” against the African Slave Trade.⁹² Though the official interest in this endeavor had diminished,⁹³ abolitionist movements were still very popular.⁹⁴ Here, the working class showed their contempt for the South.⁹⁵ Overall, the issue of slavery galvanized disapproval of the Confederacy, and would possibly have led to more overt support of the Union, had the Union not waited to engage itself in the issue until the Emancipation Proclamation.⁹⁶

In every social category, and regarding most issues, British public opinion was completely stratified, covering the entire spectrum of opinions. As a result, Palmerston did not take actions to antagonize any broad category of the public.

British Self-Interest

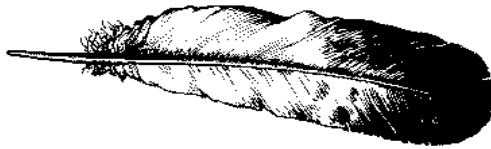
Britain acted in the manner in which it did, supporting the Confederacy’s belligerent rights, but remaining officially neutral, in part out of its own interests. Economic matters have already been discussed within the section on British public opinion. However, an additional subject matter is Britain’s national security. Britain had for centuries been the premiere naval force in the world.⁹⁷ As such, Britain often shaped international law to suit its own military needs.⁹⁸ Therefore, any challenge to the Union blockade would be dangerous, as it would harm Britain’s own abilities to wage naval warfare unimpeded. Should Britain agree with Confederate assertions that the Union blockade was illegal because it was not enforced enough, any future British blockade could be held to the same standard, a dangerous precedent for a navy that, though powerful, was spread very thinly around the world.⁹⁹ Britain could not recognize the Confederacy, nor formally support the Union, for fear of war with other European countries.¹⁰⁰ Any overture to either side would endanger the status quo and upset the already tenuous balance of power in Europe, strained by the looming possibility of Italian unification, the potential for German unification through Prussia, and a Polish

uprising against Russia.¹⁰¹ In this situation, Britain could not give up whatever flexibility in diplomacy it had by supporting one side.¹⁰² Britain could not commit the huge resources in men, materiel, money, and ships a war with the United States would cost, or even provide more substantial aid to the United States against the Confederacy.¹⁰³ Such commitments would weaken the already comparatively weak British army and remove the counterweight to Russian expansion in the Middle East, towards India, and the Balkans, while the British navy guarded the Dardanelles.¹⁰⁴ Instead, neutrality allowed Britain to reap the benefits of selling arms and manufactured goods to both sides. Military needs led to a British policy of neutrality, and one of certainly not supporting Confederate recognition.

Conclusion

Even as late as August 1862, some participants saw British intervention as “inevitable.”¹⁰⁵ However, in the words of Foreign Secretary Russell, on December 26, 1860, to Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador to the United States, British policy was: “not to seem to favour one party rather than the other...nor express opinions or give advice, unless asked for by the State Governments, in which case the advice should be against all violent action as tending toward civil war.”¹⁰⁶ His words, though written even before the formation of the Confederate States of America, much less the outbreak of war, mirror the essence of British foreign policy towards both the Union and Confederacy during the Civil War: attempting to prevent the situation from getting out of hand, but without intervening. This passive, rather than active, involvement was largely of Britain’s own making. True, Confederate missteps and Union successes played some role, but they alone would not have led to such a British policy. Without varying support for cotton importation to either decrease production or increase employment, the Confederate attempts to blackmail Britain into submission through cotton shortages would not have faced such staunch opposition, and may not have failed. Had the

Union failed during the *Trent* Affair, there were still too many domestic reasons for Britain to remain unengaged in war with the United States. Before Antietam, there were no compelling reasons that stood out above all else to signal to which direction Britain should turn. As a result, before October 1862, Palmerston, mired in a sea of mixed opinions at home and a need to protect Britain's future as a naval and diplomatic power, simply could not support the Confederacy, and, therefore, supported the Union by default through neutrality.



Notes

¹ James D. Bulloch, The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe (New York: Modern Library, 2001) p. xxix

² Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865 (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) p. 170

³ *Ibid.*, p. 170

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-172

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 174

⁶ James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 567

⁷ Thomas, p. 180

⁸ Howard Jones, Union in Peril: The Crisis Over British Intervention in the Civil War (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) p. 3

⁹ Thomas, p. 170

¹⁰ McPherson, p. 388

¹¹ Thomas, p. 170

¹² James F. Rhodes, History of the United States From the Compromise of 1850 to the McKinley-Bryan Campaign of 1896 (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1967 [original copyrights 1895, 1899]) p. 302

¹³ McPherson, pp. 314, 317-318

¹⁴ Jefferson Davis, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government II (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Publisher, 1958) p. 245

¹⁵ Bulloch, p. 3

¹⁶ McPherson, p. 387

¹⁷ Bulloch, p. xxx

¹⁸ McPherson, p. 318

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 369

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 313, 378

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 380-382

²² *Ibid.*, p. 382

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 388

²⁴ Robert Cruden, The War that Never Ended (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p. 72

²⁵ McPherson, p. 388

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 389

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 389 quoting: Brian Jenkins, Britain and the War for the Union I (1974) p. 104

²⁸ Bulloch, p. 72

²⁹ Cruden, p. 77

- ³⁰ Thomas, p. 169
- ³¹ Dean B. Mahin, One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1999) p. 17
- ³² Shelby Foote, The Civil War: A Narrative (New York: Random House, 1958) pp. 134-135
- ³³ Ibid., p. 134
- ³⁴ Thomas, p. 175
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 175
- ³⁶ McPherson, p. 383
- ³⁷ Cruden, p. 76
- ³⁸ Jones, p. 45
- ³⁹ Mahin, p. 89
- ⁴⁰ Jones, p. 75
- ⁴¹ Mahin, p. 88
- ⁴² Thomas, p. 176
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 172
- ⁴⁴ Bulloch, p. xxxi
- ⁴⁵ Cruden, p. 74
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 74
- ⁴⁷ Thomas, p. 171
- ⁴⁸ Philip Van Doren Stern, When the Guns Roared: World Aspects of the American Civil War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965) p. 91
- ⁴⁹ Foote, p. 157; Geoffrey C. Ward, The Civil War: An Illustrated History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) p. 81
- ⁵⁰ Jones, p. 74
- ⁵¹ Cruden, p. 74
- ⁵² Jones, p. 92
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 93
- ⁵⁴ Cruden, pp. 77-78
- ⁵⁵ Foote, p. 220
- ⁵⁶ Thomas, p. 174
- ⁵⁷ Jones, p. 85
- ⁵⁸ Van Doren Stern, p. 92
- ⁵⁹ Bulloch, p. 320
- ⁶⁰ Thomas, p. 171
- ⁶¹ Bulloch, p. 328
- ⁶² Cruden, p. 80
- ⁶³ Bulloch, p. 329
- ⁶⁴ Mahin, p. 26
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 26
- ⁶⁶ Thomas, p. 180

- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 180
- ⁶⁸ Ephraim Douglass Adams, Great Britain and the American Civil War Volume I (New York: Russell & Russell, 1925) p. 31
- ⁶⁹ Thomas, p. 180
- ⁷⁰ Mahin, p. 129
- ⁷¹ Thomas, p. 180
- ⁷² Ibid., p. 181
- ⁷³ Ibid., p. 181
- ⁷⁴ Mahin, p. 129
- ⁷⁵ Harold Hyman, ed., Heard Round the World: The Impact Abroad of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968) p. 8
- ⁷⁶ Cruden, p. 81
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 81
- ⁷⁸ Thomas, p. 180
- ⁷⁹ Jones, p. 104
- ⁸⁰ Cruden, p. 81
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 81
- ⁸² Mahin, p. 87
- ⁸³ Cruden, p. 81
- ⁸⁴ Thomas, p. 172
- ⁸⁵ Cruden, p. 82
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 82
- ⁸⁷ Adams, p. 30
- ⁸⁸ Thomas, p. 175
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 172
- ⁹⁰ McPherson, p. 384
- ⁹¹ Adams, p. 13
- ⁹² Ibid., p. 8
- ⁹³ Ibid., p. 32
- ⁹⁴ Thomas, p. 172
- ⁹⁵ R.J.M. Blackett, Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) p. 2
- ⁹⁶ Cruden, pp. 72-73
- ⁹⁷ Adams, p. 5
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 5
- ⁹⁹ Cruden, p. 80
- ¹⁰⁰ Thomas, p. 170
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 184
- ¹⁰² Ibid., p. 184
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 184

¹⁰⁴ Cruden, p. 80

¹⁰⁵ United States Department of War, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: GPO, 1887) Series I, Vol. 17, Part I, p. 671

¹⁰⁶ Belle Becker Sideman and Lillian Friedman, eds., Europe Looks at the Civil War (New York: The Orion Press, 1960) p. 19

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Primary Sources

Bulloch, James D., The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe New York: Modern Library, 2001

Bulloch was in a unique position to comment on the Confederate activities in Europe as he was one of the Confederacy's London representatives. Bulloch aims to elaborate on the Confederate goals and means of attaining them in general, with more specificity towards his own work. The author's experiences with Britain and what he learned of Confederate relations with the Union are quite valuable. Though there is great potential for bias, as Bulloch was personally involved (and thus has a vested interest in a particular version of the facts) in many of the events he describes, he is clear when he is making commentary versus reporting facts.

United States Dept. of War, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Series I, Vol. 17, Part II, Washington: GPO, 1887

A collection of primary source correspondence and orders, this book focuses mainly on military issues. Nevertheless, foreign policy is at times covered by the authors of the letters, usually as ancillary topics mentioned for background and as a report on the status of the entire conflict.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Ephraim Douglass, Great Britain and the American Civil War Vols. 1, 2 (bound as one) New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1925

A comprehensive discussion of the impact of the Civil War on Britain and vice versa. Adams had access to private letters and correspondence through a connection with Charles Francis Adams, son of Charles Francis Adams, the minister to Britain from the United States during the Civil War. The book is well-footnoted, with explanations and citations to primary and secondary sources.

Blackett, R.J.M., Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001

A detailed description of the wide array of public opinion in Great Britain during the Civil War. The author quotes many primary sources, from newspapers to diplomatic communiqués to lectures and meeting transcripts.

Cruden, Robert, The War that Never Ended Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973

An explanation of a variety of issues surrounding the Civil War, it includes a detailed chapter on the political battles that created the various governments' foreign policies. Attributes more of the British decision to Union successes and Confederate failures than other sources do, though it still gives much credit to Palmerston's lack of enthusiasm for war. Emphasizes the actions of leaders as political decisions.

Davis, Jefferson, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government Vol. 2, New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Publisher, 1958

The first and only President of the Confederate States of America wrote this book, though it is not an autobiography, but rather an attempt to prove that the Confederacy was justified in seceding and to describe the course of events that led to its downfall. The work, or at least the sections relevant to foreign policy, is not told from a first-person perspective. However, there are no citations and there is no indication that all of the information presented came from Davis's personal knowledge. The relevant sections include descriptions of meetings between Confederate and British officials, as well as descriptions of

Confederate policies towards or involving Britain, all with a heavy bias towards justifying the Confederate actions and attributing success to them.

Foote, Shelby, The Civil War: A Narrative New York: Random House, 1958

Another attempt to catalog the entire course of the war, this book does not focus on foreign policy, but still includes detailed accounts of the political machinations on the part of the Union and Confederate governments. Discussions of relations with Britain are from the American and Confederate perspective, but do not harbor any overt bias towards any one side. Instead, it attributes success to thoughtful consideration on all sides.

Hyman, Harold, ed., Heard Round the World: The Impact Abroad of the Civil War New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968

An anthology of six distinct chapters, with an introduction by Hyman. The most relevant chapter is that on Britain. It focuses on the British perspective of events, rather than Union or Confederate reactions and opinions. Written by a British historian, W.C. Allen, it concludes that British actions most contributed to the British reactions.

Jones, Howard, Union in Peril: The Crisis Over British Intervention in the Civil War Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1992

Focuses on the British perspective and involvement (or lack thereof) in the American Civil War. Cites a stunning array of primary and secondary sources, and coalesces their information well. Concludes that British nonintervention was a result of Palmerston's initial reluctance, bolstered by sentiments within Britain. Regards both the Union and the Confederacy as at times obstacles to neutrality.

Mahin, Dean B., One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1999

References all foreign policy issues in the Civil War, not just with Britain, though the emphasis is on Britain. Includes many block quotes from primary sources. Attributes neutrality to British concerns, but adds economic and military factors to simply political ones as British motives for inaction.

McPherson, James M., Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era New York: Oxford University Press, 1988

This book is a seminal work on the Civil War, recognized by many historians. Much of the work is not relevant to foreign policy, as the intent of the book is to provide a one-volume, though a very large volume, history of the Civil War. However, there are important sections that include examinations of the effects of various events on the diplomatic course of the war. He focuses on the impact of “freedom” on both sides.

Rhodes, James Ford, History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to the McKinley-Bryan Campaign of 1896 Vol. 3, Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1967 (original copyright 1895)

Foreign policy, including during the Civil War, is an ancillary topic to the book. Even so, there are a number of significant passages that focus on Civil War foreign policy. Many citations and quotes ground the research in primary sources, including letters. Rhodes’s lack of formal historical training (he was a businessman) must be taken into account when assessing the validity of his claims.

Sideman, Belle Becker, and Lillian Friedman, eds., Europe Looks at the Civil War New York: The Orion Press, 1960

Sideman, managing editor for some years at Random House, and Friedman, a vice president at Brentano’s, edited this anthology of hundreds, specifically 307 pages, of quotes, articles, speeches, letters, and excerpts from books. The varied opinions included cover a wide array of topics, from commentary on the impending war, to opinions supporting one side, to reactions to Lincoln’s assassination. Official responses from American and European diplomatic officials are also included. Beyond simply bias, caution must be taken when using this book to examine certain topics. The editors themselves admit that they “are neither scholars nor historians,” and chose pieces based on their “human-interest appeal” (p. xix). As a result, while the actual selections are true representations of their authors’ beliefs, using this book to find a comprehensive view of the opinions in Europe or even one country or class of people regarding a specific topic is impossible, as sources were not selected specifically for the range of ideas they portray.

Stern, Philip Van Doren, When the Guns Roared: World Aspects of the American Civil War Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965

Sets out to examine the effect of the U.S. Civil War on the rest of the world, and the influence of the world on the War. Interestingly, and portending a bias regarding the importance of slavery in European eyes, Stern dismisses the notion that the war was, at its core, not truly about slavery. Emphasizes social reactions to Union and Confederate actions.

Thomas, Emory M., The Confederate Nation 1861-1865 New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979

Examines the question of why the Confederacy failed, given certain advantages he also describes. Additionally, as the focus of the book is not on foreign relations, the effect of Confederate relations on the outcome of the war may be underestimated. There is a particularly extensive bibliography, with descriptions of recommended works to consult on multiple topics, including foreign relations, which will provide a starting point for consulting more detailed works.

Ward, Geoffrey C., The Civil War: An Illustrated History New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991

Not focused on foreign policy, this book still provides a detailed narrative of the course of the *Trent* affair. Furthermore, it provides good context for the rest of the broader conflict, not weighed down by the need to prove a particular thesis.

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