

The Fears Of The Non-Slave States And How They Led To The Prosecution Of The Civil War

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Abstract:

The fundamental reason that the non-slave states prosecuted the Civil War was that they were scared of the domination that the slave states exhibited both economically and especially politically. Said political dominance led to fear that the slave states would overwhelm the non-slave states politically, even to the degree of totally eliminating them. The dread of the economic hegemony led to a desire to destroy it before it destroyed the economies of the non-slave states. The non-slave states additionally had a trepidation of slavery expansion. The total impact of the above was that the non-slave states went to war.

Key Word: Civil War, Political Dominance, Economic Dominance

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I. Introduction

The fundamental reason that the non-slave states prosecuted the Civil War was that they were scared of the domination that the slave states exhibited both economically and especially politically. The non-slave states additionally had a trepidation of slavery expansion the impact of which the non-slave states were willing to go to war to prevent.¹

The aforementioned political dominance led to fear that the slave states would overwhelm the non-slave states politically, even to the degree of totally eliminating them. This was explicitly articulated by a variety of people during a substantial range of time. For example in July 1848 Senator John Niles of Connecticut proclaimed twelve reasons, why slavery should be excluded from the territories. They included slavery there would give the slave states greater political control, change the government to an oligarchy with the slaveholders holding all of the power and Mexico may also become slave territory which would help the slave states politically.² In June 1858 Lincoln said “[e]ither the *opponents* of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it ... or its *advocates* will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in *all* the States.”³

The articulation continued in October 1858 with Senator William Seward of New York affirming that the plan of the slave states was to increase in number so that “the federal judiciary [will] nullify all state laws which shall interfere with ... commerce in slaves” hence eventually “slavery will be accepted by those states themselves.”⁴ In January 1861 Representative Ortis Ferry of Connecticut lamented that the goals of the leaders of the slave states was “the complete overthrow of democratic institutions, and the establishment of an aristocratic or even monarchical government.”⁵

The economic muscle of the slave states was likewise unambiguously elucidated by a diversity of people during a significant range of time. In 1838 politician William Harper of South Carolina asserted that “the products of slave labor furnish more than two-thirds of the materials of our foreign commerce” and “[t]he prosperity of those States, therefore, and the civilization of their cities, have been for the most part created by the existence of slavery.”⁶ Regarding the late 1850s political economist Thomas Kettell showed that the slave states had the bulk of the nation’s exports leading to their banks holding a majority of the country’s specie.⁷ Even Senator Salmon Chase of Ohio presented evidence demonstrating that in 1854 the per capita production the values of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee together was higher than that of the New England states by \$59.14 to \$33.82.⁸

II. The Political Power Of The Slave States

The greatest fear exhibited by the non-slave states was the political supremacy of their rivals. The anxiety stemmed from a perceived threat to their own freedoms and liberties, as opposed to having a problem with racism against and oppression of the slaves.⁹ The apprehension began with a series of legislative defeats and executive decisions in favor of the slave states after the move west in the mid-1840s, along with the role it was thought that the slavery interests played in them. Some instances were acquiring the potentially large

slaveholding area of Texas (either as one or more states), the war with Mexico and the result of the Oregon question which shut out the expansion of non-slave territory north of the forty-ninth parallel.¹⁰

In addition, the non-slave interests believed, the slave states had not lost a battle over slavery since the Constitutional Convention of 1787; an idea portrayed in 1847 by the Richmond *Whig*, “[w]henver the South shall be called upon to *act*, it will present an undivided, stern, inflexible front to its fanatical assailants.”¹¹ One historian has concluded that an unease in the non-slave states concerning the disproportionate political clout sprouted in the 1787 Constitutional Convention.¹²

An impact of said hegemony was an insistence by the slave states for slavery to be safeguarded by the federal government. In their 1860 party platform this was specifically castigated by Republicans as a “dangerous political heresy” ... “subversive to the peace and harmony of the country.” Further, the Republicans insisted that said insistence proved the Democratic party’s “measureless subserviency to the exactions of their sectional interest.”¹³

A gigantic and highly vital illustration of the dread that the non-slave states had of the slave states is epitomized in their expression and fear of the “Slave Power.” From the beginning the alarm was that it would destroy the rights and freedoms of white people just as it had done to Africans.¹⁴

The earliest reference specifically to the “Slave Power” seems to be in 1839 when at their Albany meeting the National Convention of Abolitionists resolved that “the events of the last five or six years leave no room for doubt that the SLAVE POWER is now waging a deliberate and determined war against the liberties of the free states.”¹⁵

In the 1840s Representative Joshua Giddings of Ohio listed ten proofs of the strength of the Slave Power namely 1) the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, 2) the Creek and Negro troubles in Florida in 1815 3) the Seminole War 4) the maintenance of slavery in DC, 5) the refusal to recognize Haiti, 6) trying to recapture runaways in Canada, 7) the suppression of petitions in the House after 1836, 8) attacks on free speech and press along with the controversy over the mails, 9) the extension of slavery to the Southwest and 10) the agitation for reopening the slave trade.¹⁶ In 1855 Seward added 1) the Missouri Compromise, 2) annexing Texas, 3) the war with Mexico, 4) the Kansas struggle and 5) the Compromise of 1850.¹⁷

Another fervent adherent of the concept of the “Slave Power” was Chase. He began expounding this notion as soon as 1844 in his speeches made as the leader of the Liberty Party in Ohio and 1847 with his national Liberty Party platforms by asserting that the Slave Power had converted the Constitution from the “safeguard of Liberty ... into a bulwark of slavery.”¹⁸ In March 1850 Chase perpetuated the idea by writing to Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts that 1) the original policy of the Government was that of slavery restriction, 2) under the Constitution Congress cannot establish or maintain slavery in the Territories and 3) the original policy of the Government had been subverted and the Constitution had been violated for the extension of slavery and the creation of the political omnipotence of the Slave Power.¹⁹ Chase carried on in 1855 when he declared that it was impossible to “fail to observe the immense, not to say overpowering, influence which slavery exerts over almost every act of the Government.”²⁰

Others conveyed the identical sentiment. Minister John Rankin of Ohio wrote in 1852 that “the Slave Power has already seized upon the General Government, and has overthrown the rights of the Free States.”²¹ Moreover in 1854 Senator William Fessenden of Maine lamented that there had not been a conflict between the slave and non-slave states where “the free States have not been obliged to yield in the end.”²² Indeed, in 1855 Seward related that the political might of the slave states was such that it seemed that the President was simply “a deputy of the privileged, emptying the treasury and marshalling battalions and ships of war” to force the non-slave states to accept the whims of their slave brethren.²³

Other non-politicians also bemoaned the Slave Power. In 1857 the Cincinnati *Daily Commercial* chimed in with “there is such a thing as the SLAVE POWER. It has marched over and annihilated the boundaries of the states. We are now one great homogenous slaveholding community.”²⁴ Later in 1857 the *Atlantic Monthly* wrote “[o]nce intrenched [sic] among the institutions of the country, this baleful power has advanced from one position to another ... establishing itself at each successive point more impregnably than before until it ... demand[s] the surrender of our rights, our self-respect, and our honor.”²⁵

The fear of the slave power continued up until the dawn of the War. In 1859 Representative Nehemiah Abbott of Maine remarked that “[t]he national Government, and every branch of the national Government, is as fully under control of these few extreme men of the South, as are slaves on their plantations.”²⁶ In 1860 Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts complained that the slave power had “achieved complete dominion” over the Federal Government and held it in “absolute subjugation” as well as held the President “in the hollow of its hand.”²⁷ In the same year Senator Kinsley Bingham of Michigan expressed the horror that each branch of the government, executive, legislative and judicial had come to be ruled by the slave power which had “wielded so despotically” its influence “over the whole country.”²⁸

One more important element of the trepidation of the political muscle of the slave states was how they dominated the Government, Judiciary and other similar facets. In 1850 Representative William Bissell of

Illinois pointed out that the President had been from the slave states for forty-eight of the previous sixty years, plus greater than half of foreign mission positions, almost half of all Cabinet positions and at least 60% of Army and Navy officers.²⁹ Additionally in 1850 Chase explained that the score at March 4, 1853 would be for Presidents fifty-two years to twelve for the slave states as well as, in numbers, fourteen versus five Secretaries of State, thirteen to twelve of Supreme Court Justices and twelve compared to eight Speakers of the House.³⁰ He further noted that the slave states then, and always had, a majority of Supreme Court Justices so that the slave states controlled each of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the government. Moreover, five of nine circuit (judge)s were within/from the slave states.³¹ Representative John Van Dyke of New Jersey additionally commented in 1850 that at March 4, 1853 the slave states would have had “entire control of the government” for fifty-two years as opposed to twelve for the non-slave states.³²

In later years others prolonged the theme. Representative George Julian of Indiana in a 1850 House speech re-iterated that a large preponderance of the Presidents, Secretaries of State, Chief Justices and Congressional Committee chairmen since 1789 had been Southerners. Julian cited that in the first sixty-one years slaveholders had been president about forty-nine with some having provided “decided assurances” to the slave states. As well, of nineteen Secretaries of State fourteen had been slaveholders, similarly the Speaker of the House thirty-eight years, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court forty-one.³³

In 1852 Representative Ephraim Smart of Maine affirmed that after Millard Fillmore’s term (i.e. March 4, 1853) Presidents would have been from slave states for 49 years and from the non-slave states for 15 years. Further, up until March 4, 1849 the score (in years) had been Chief Justices 48-11, Secretaries of State 40-20, Attorneys General 39-20 and Speakers of the House 37-23 all in favor of the slave states. Additionally the slave states had had a majority of Cabinet positions, Foreign Legations, Army and Navy officers, Presidents pro tempore of the Senate and members of the Judiciary. He then listed a plethora of minor positions that had also been dominated by the slave states.³⁴

In 1856 Representative Henry Bennett of New York said that 346000 slaveholders had ruled the American Republic for sixty years and that Presidents “bow[ed] down on [their] knees to it.” He continued by lamenting that in the Senate “the rule of slavery has long been absolute.”³⁵ Representative John Perry of Maine in 1860 concluded the slave states, with six million people, have over three fifths of the important offices, whereas the non-slave states, with thirteen million, less than two fifths. He listed nine of the most prominent and the number of years each had been occupied by people from the slave states versus the non-slave states. The key examples were President 48 to 26, President of the Senate pro tempore 62 to 11, Speaker of the House 45 to 25 and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court 57 to 9. He went on to state that the slave states had dominated lower offices and that in the Senate all fourteen principal committees had chairmen from the slave states. The latter was particularly crucial because the “committees shape the whole legislation of the country.”³⁶

As well, Perry stated, during the Buchanan administration (1857-61) all of the branches of the government were in virtually total command of the slave states.³⁷ Perry elucidated the specific case of the Thirty-Fifth Congress (1857-59) by complaining that despite their smaller population “[o]f the twenty-two important committees in the Senate, the slave States had the chairman upon sixteen, and the free States six. And of the twenty-five important committees of the House, the South had the chairman upon seventeen, and the North eight” Moreover, he grumbled, that this had always been the way in Congress.³⁸

A critical issue regarding the political influence of the slave states involved the new Territories that had been acquired from Mexico. The non-slave states were afraid that the slave states would increase their overall sway by forcing slavery into the Territories. In 1848 Sumner had protested that the “animating principle” of the Slave Power was “the perpetuation and extension of Slavery and the advancement of slaveholders” in a speech concerning the war with Mexico.³⁹ Another feature of the slave states campaign to expand slavery in the West was an effort to repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820. In January 1854 Chase along with Giddings wrote the “Appeal of the Independent Democrats in Congress to the People of the United States” which condemned any bill that would achieve this as “a criminal betrayal of precious rights; as part and parcel of an atrocious plot” to extend slavery into the West.⁴⁰

A further aspect with respect to territory was the ambition of the slave states to expand into foreign territory, especially Cuba and Mexico, an early manifestation of the accompanying fear was in 1854 when Representative Samuel Parker of Indiana listed what he dreaded was a set of goals of the slave states backed by the Administration. They included procuring Cuba, conquering St. Domingo (now Haiti) and the West Indies forcing slavery on the inhabitants, and reopening the Atlantic slave trade. Parker further added that if the Missouri Compromise were repealed slavery could expand into Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Utah, and New Mexico, in addition to Kansas and Nebraska.⁴¹

In 1855 Representative Lewis Campbell of Ohio deduced that “the slave States are seeking the acquisition of Cuba” as well as trying to repeal the Missouri Compromise in order to expand slavery into the “territories of Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, Utah and New Mexico.” The overall target was to “extend and strengthen” the omnipotence and reach of the slave states.⁴² Later in the same session Campbell griped that

“the free States had never asked for the acquisition of new territories” yet the Federal government had acquiesced to slave-state demands of annexing “Louisiana, Florida, Texas, California, Utah, and New Mexico, and the Mesilla valley.” It was all for “the purpose being to strengthen the political power of slavery.”⁴³

1859 saw Senator Jacob Collamer of Vermont also grumble that attaining Cuba would result in the immediate importation of four hundred thousand slaves⁴⁴ and that the slave states were trying to fool the other areas into believing that it would end the African slave trade.⁴⁵ On the contrary, Collamer continued, annexing Cuba would facilitate bringing all the slaves that the slave states needed.⁴⁶ He further protested that the slave states were (also) trying to obtain Mexico which would allow the slave states to return “to an equal position in the Senate with the free States.” Collamer additionally noted that John Calhoun expounded that the intent of procuring Texas was “officially announced” as being “to sustain and perpetuate the institution of slavery.”⁴⁷ He then summarized what he understood as the position of the slave states as taking Mexico to “make an equality of States” and Cuba as it was “already filled with slaves” with which to augment the slave state slave population.⁴⁸

Being more encompassing in 1859 Hale criticized that the entity of “manifest destiny” “was always traveling South” leading to the country “continually traveling south for acquisitions.” He also complained that this southward focus was so great that the Administration sold part of the non-slave state of Maine.⁴⁹ Hale was afraid enough of this apparent emphasis to concede that he “dissent[ed] from ... [the] American policy to be continually annexing foreign nations.”⁵⁰

Even just before the War Wilson in 1860 displayed the alarm that the slave states were “turning their lustful eyes to Cuba, Central America, and Mexico.” The objective was to expand slave territory which he demonstrated by conveying how Senator Albert Brown of Mississippi had declared “I want Cuba; I want Tamaulipas, Potosi, and one or two other Mexican States, and I want them all for the same reason, for the planting and spreading of slavery. And a footing in Central America will powerfully aid us in acquiring those other States. Yes, I want these countries for the spread of slavery I would spread the blessings of slavery.”⁵¹

Another component of the political control the slave states had was exemplified by the Supreme Court. An early lament was in 1856 when Representative Henry Bennett of New York bemoaned that the Supreme Court was dominated by pro-Slavery judges who ruled in favor of slavery.⁵² In 1860 Senator Nathan Hale of New Hampshire re-iterated this distress when he whined that every time “the rights of freemen of the free States are brought in collision with the requirements of slavery” the Supreme Court chose in favour of the slave states.⁵³ The same year Bingham concurred that the pro-slavery element had been able to “mold and fashion the Supreme Court, so as to bring it into complete subserviency to their interests.”⁵⁴

As well in 1860 Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts lamented that the Supreme Court “obey[ed] the imperative commands” of the slave power.⁵⁵ Hale confirmed this dread in 1860 by proclaiming that it seemed to him that for the “last thirty years” the justices were appointed more for their partisan leaning than their experience in the law.⁵⁶

A practical consequence of this hegemony manifested itself in some key verdicts. Probably the most crucial of these was the Dred Scott Decision of 1857 after which it looked like that the next step was that slavery would move into the non-slave states.⁵⁷ This conclusion was arrived at by many Republicans who said that as the Decision affirmed that the Constitution mandated that slavery could not be barred from the territories⁵⁸ hence it additionally protected slavery in the states - i.e. no state could bar slavery. This last piece would represent a complete, total, utter political victory of the slave states over the non-slave states.

The Dred Scott Decision further served slave state politicians who were instrumental in repealing the Missouri Compromise of 1820 when the Decision agreed with their position.⁵⁹ Another occasion of apparent slave state rule of the Supreme Court was voiced in 1860 when Hale bewailed about a trial relating to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Here a judge barred a juror apparently inclined to render a verdict with which the judge disagreed, an action sanctioned by the Supreme Court.⁶⁰

One more characteristic of the clout the slave states held politically was their control of the Senate where they could usually count on several non-slave state Senators for support.⁶¹ For example, leading non-slave state Democrats supported the cause of dismissing the Wilmot Proviso and the two California Senators supported the cause of slavery throughout the 1850s.⁶²

A prominent specific case was the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska bill. The vote passing the bill in the Senate shows how the slave states could dominate it. The vote was 37-14 with twenty-three of the yeas coming from the slave states and the additional fourteen from non-slave state Democrats.⁶³ Even in the House the voting followed the equivalent pattern with a total of 113-100 with fifty-six of the yeas coming from the slave state Democrats and the further forty-four from non-slave state Democrats.⁶⁴ The latter group is significant as the slave state Democrats controlled the party.⁶⁵ The hegemony was due to the rule instituted by the party in 1832 requiring a two-thirds majority of national convention delegates to pass resolutions and party platforms as well as to nominate a presidential candidate.⁶⁶ The rule gave the minority slave state delegates a virtual veto power in setting party platforms and in choosing the nominee. All eleven nays came from non-slave states. Moreover the slave state Democrat domination was enhanced by the three-fifths rule.⁶⁷

Another specific instance was a 1855 bill “to give protection to Federal officers in executing the laws of the United States” which was principally geared to protecting officers dealing with and/or endeavouring to return runaways.⁶⁸ Chase complained that the bill was “framed in the interest of the ruling class.”⁶⁹ He also grumbled that the bill was designed to overthrow states’ rights and create an omnipotent centralized Federal government that commanded the states.⁷⁰ Plus, Fessenden asserted, the law was geared to override state courts in favour of Federal courts.⁷¹ That nature of Federal government and Federal court system could possibly (or even probably) be controlled by the slave power.

The vote passing this bill in the Senate further illustrates how the slave states could dominate it. The vote was 29-9⁷² with eighteen of the yeas coming from the slave states and the other eleven from non-slave state Democrats.

III. The Economic Power Of The Slave States

As well as the political clout, the economic affluence of the slave states was a problem for the non-slave states. A lot of contemporary writers acknowledged that the financial muscle of the slave states was large and increasing. For instance in 1856 Baptist Pastor Thornton Stringfellow of Virginia compared six New England states to five slave States chosen as comparable as they are all on the Atlantic, were all settled (nearly) simultaneously and had a similar free population.⁷³ Among other things Stringfellow deduced “that these five agricultural States, with slavery, have accumulated an excess of aggregate wealth over the amount accumulated in New England in the same time,” by over four hundred million dollars. One more such case was Kettell who wrote that by 1858 in the official valuations the total abundance of the South was \$4,621 million contrasted with that of the North and West being \$3,426 million and \$2,111 million, respectively.⁷⁴ Kettell also calculated that in the decade of the 1850s the slave states had accumulated an enormous capital worth; a contention that was backed up with the capital assessments of banks increasing by greater than 7.5 times from 1830 to 1850.⁷⁵

Besides raw opulence numbers, there were other indications of the slave states being of higher affluence. Representative William Drayton of South Carolina determined that the non-slave states depended enough on slave labor that “should any disastrous occurrences disturb the institutions of the South” the outcome of which would be “decayed manufactures, shrunken commerce, and ruined prosperity of the North”⁷⁶ and the entire nation.⁷⁷ Indeed, the slave labor of the slave states was profitable enough that if there were a separation the slave section would “find her sources of prosperity undiminished” while the other “would be unable to supply the loss of the South” and “would shrink into poverty.”⁷⁸ In 1853 State Senator Edmund Ruffin of Virginia remarked that “Northern profits and wealth” came from the “tribute ... paid by Southern industry and capital, (and all derived from the products of negro slavery)” because “slave-labor is in our circumstances, more profitable to the employer and to agricultural interests, than could be any possible substituted labor.”⁷⁹ This dependence on the slave state economies enhanced the fear of the non-slave states.

Further to total affluence a telling factor of the larger prosperity of the slave states is exhibited by the regional per capita incomes. The values Stringfellow assessed in 1856 were that the per capita wealth of the slave states was \$520 versus \$367 for the New England states. Additionally Stringfellow displays how, when considering all of them, the individual slave states had much higher per capita prosperity scores than did all of the individual non-slave states. For example four slave states (SC, LA, MS, GA) had a higher score than the highest non-slave state (MA) and nine slave states had a higher score than the third highest non-slave state.

Plus, in 1858, according to Kettell, the slave states had a greater wealth per white person; around \$743 for the South as opposed to \$397 and \$431 for the North and West⁸⁰ and according to Fogel and Engerman, in 1860 the South had \$150 and the North \$142. As well the latter duo quantified that between 1840 and 1860 the South had the higher growth rate of per capita income; 1.7% to 1.3%.⁸¹ For the South about 40% of the latter was from their nonagricultural sector illustrating that the South was not completely dependent on its cotton production hence it was credible that overall they could very easily not be overwhelmed by the non-slave state manufacturing sector.⁸² Similarly other authors assessed that between 1840 and 1860 the average income of free southerners remained roughly equal to the average income of those living in the northern states.⁸³ Indeed, in the second half of the 1850s the South had a booming economy such that in 1860, if treated as a separate nation, it was more prosperous than all European countries except England.⁸⁴

Another indication that the slave section had greater affluence was both shown by and manifested itself in the export volumes of the country as a whole. This was demonstrated for thirty years. In 1832 professor Thomas Dew of Virginia wrote “that one-third of the states, and those slave-holding too, furnish[ed] two-thirds of the whole exports!”⁸⁵ Other writers continued with similar analyses in the 1830s, in 1839 the Southern Commercial Convention related that nearly 75% of exports were produced by the slave states but they received barely 10% of imports.⁸⁶

The declarations continued in the 1840s. James De Bow chided the slave states for furnishing the “great aggregate of the exports of the country” and John Calhoun explaining in 1848 that “[o]ur Customs Houses would afford us a revenue ample for every purpose.... The

South now exports to the Northern States more than all the exports of the North.”⁸⁷ In the 1850s Kettell recognized that in 1853 “the immense superstructure of wealth and power which is reared upon the foundation of American slave culture of cotton” and consequently “[t]he United States trade is almost altogether based upon that industry.”⁸⁸ In 1857 Senator James Hammond of South Carolina determined that 66.3% of the nation’s exports were from the slave states and that the South had an annual surplus of at least \$220 million compared to about \$60 million for the North.⁸⁹ The decade ended with E. N. Elliott conveying that the slave states were enriching the non-slave states by computing that the South exported greater than \$193 million in 1859 as distinguished from the North’s \$45 million.⁹⁰

One of the most telling occurrences exhibiting the economic supremacy of the slave states was the Panic of 1857. For commercial firms in general, a substantially higher proportion failed in the non-slave states than in the slave states. Looking at the averages for all of the states in each of the two sections, in the non-slave section 3.18% of all businesses failed, whereas in the slave states only 1.47% went under. Perhaps of greater prominence is that in the large urban areas of the non-slave states, Boston, Philadelphia and New York the percentage was 5.39% while in Baltimore it was only 3.38%.⁹¹

Upon a failure Calomiris & Schweikart calculated the loss rate for the creditors of the enterprise as 0.98% for the slave section with the equivalent being 1.94% for the non-slave section, virtually twice as much. For the urban areas the estimated loss amounts were 2.50% and 3.48%, i.e. again the non-slave states did not perform as well. Clearly such differences would have been noticed and motivating.⁹²

A further significant attribute of the financial muscle of the slave states was the value of the slaves. Rose quantified the 1860 capital value of all slaves as \$3.68 billion⁹³ with Goldin computing it as \$2.7 billion⁹⁴ This assessment was actually increasing extremely quickly as in 1850 the assessment was about \$1.3 billion.⁹⁵ Steven Deyle appraises the worth of slaves as \$3 billion⁹⁶ and points out that this is conservative as many contemporary evaluations usually came in at \$4 billion.⁹⁷ Additionally excluding land, Deyle determines, the capital value of the slaves was huge contrasted with to that of any other investment in the country. Even the largest such paled in comparison as in 1860 slave values were greater than 2.5 times that of each of the three next biggest, railroads, livestock and manufacturing.⁹⁸

Yet another feature of the economic structure of the Antebellum Period illustrating the superior position of the slave states was the tariffs. A lot of the wealth acquisition of the non-slave states arose from the tariffs which not only increased their prosperity but was also a drain on that of the slave states. High tariffs led to most of the revenue of the government being paid by the slave states however being spent in the non-slave states therefore winding up as a benefit for the latter rather than for those paying it.⁹⁹ In 1850 Kettell calculated that seventy four percent of the exports in that year were “articles from the South” demonstrating that non-slave states received profits from carrying the products of slave labor (i.e. exports) and moreover goods back to the slave states (i.e. imports).¹⁰⁰ Representative John Reagan of Texas observed in early 1861 that slave state taxpayers were paying to Northern businesses “vast millions of tribute” and in general “navigation laws and fishing bounties” but most of the money was spent building up Northern cities, railroads and canals.¹⁰¹ The conclusion to be reached from the above is that a substantial portion of the total production of the non-slave states came directly from the slave states. The non-slave states realized this adding fuel to the trepidation they had of the pecuniary command of the other section.

IV. The Result Is War

Overall it was their fear of both the economic and political power of the slave states, which led to the dread of a covert treachery on the part of the slave states to impose slavery on the whole nation, including the territories, and control the Federal Government.¹⁰² This alarm, not a remonstrance against racism and oppression,¹⁰³ forced the non-slave states to prosecute the Civil War.

The anxiety over the economic hegemony led to a desire to destroy it before it destroyed the economies of the non-slave states. One manner that the fear was expressed was the emergence of northern sectionalism due to an attempt to make property rights in slaves national which would have had the outcome of non-slave labor being in direct competition with slave labor.¹⁰⁴

Most inhabitants of the non-slave states were afraid of the political rule by the slaveholding interests because it could easily impinge of non-slave state economic interests. Educator Josiah Quincy,¹⁰⁵ in an address given June 5, 1856, exhibited this distress by declaring that the method utilized by the slave states was cunning and the goal of the slave states was “to exclude the Free States from any share of power, except in subserviency to their views.”¹⁰⁶

This political dominance of the slave states gave rise to an aspiration to eliminate it. As it was obvious that this could not be accomplished by standard political means the decision was made to do so by destroying via the avenue of war. One author postulates that it is necessary to acknowledge this to understand how and why the Civil War occurred.¹⁰⁷

An additional component was that the non-slave states wanted to nationalize their way of thinking and implementing their ideas. An example comes from Lincoln who insisted on boundless loyalty to the Declaration of Independence,¹⁰⁸ leading to the horror that the supremacy of the slave states would result in their loyalty being elsewhere. The consensus in the non-slave states became that, undoubtedly, the only possible process of achieving the aforesaid nationalization, implementation and loyalty was by engaging in war.¹⁰⁹

As well non-slave state workers and farmers thought in terms of self-interest¹¹⁰ and were afraid of what the slave system did (or threatened to do), for instance by impinging on or reducing their rights and liberties.¹¹¹ Even the strengthened Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was perceived as more of a threat to the rights and liberties of the non-slave states than anything else¹¹² as explained by Representative Orin Fowler of Massachusetts who complained that it was “unwise and unjust” since it was designed to make slavery a responsibility of the entire nation.¹¹³ Thus to protect themselves from the above the non-slave states were willing to go to war.

Another element was “Bleeding Kansas” which started due to the political liberties of anti-slavery advocates being threatened.¹¹⁴ Hence it is clear that they were enthusiastic about engaging in violent activities to prevent this threat.¹¹⁵ At the time it was written or said that “[the Abolitionists] are Seeking time within which to get control of the army and navy and the power of the government”¹¹⁶ in order to do so.

The activities in Kansas were easily extended to the Civil War. One fact supporting this idea was reaction of the people of the non-slave states to the attack on Fort Sumter which shows that the fear of the omnipotence of the slaveholders stimulated the violent and conclusive answer of war.¹¹⁷

V. Conclusion

The legislators and people of the non-slave states did everything they could think of to stop the expansion of slavery. The techniques used ranged from the written and oral up to and including armed conflict. This, along with their attempts to prevent the implementation of the Fugitive Slave Act, demonstrates that they were afraid of the enormous and growing influence of the slave states.

The predominant aspect of any willingness of the non-slave states to wage war against the slave states was the fact that the latter were incredibly well-off economically and omnipotent politically. Politically the slave states were winning almost every legislative pronouncement mostly thanks to, the non-slave state inhabitants believed, the hegemony of the Slave Power. As the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* wrote in 1857, the conviction was that the Slave Power first “subdued the Executive government, second, the Legislative; and [then] the Judiciary” to the point that “the oligarchs” had “*made Slavery National, Freedom Sectional.*”¹¹⁸ Additionally the numbers holding the most essential political positions such as President, Supreme Court Chief Justices and Cabinet members vastly favoured the non-slave states. This superiority manifested itself in highly crucial judgments e.g. the Dred Scott Decision.

Economically the slave states had greater wealth and higher per capita wealth. Moreover the non-slave state economies were vastly dependant on those of the slave states in terms of exports and tariffs. The consequences of the Panic of 1857 further revealed the command of slave state economies.

These supremacies led to the fear and dread of their opposite number by the non-slave states. The terror ended up being expressed by the prosecution of the Civil War. In 1860 Representative Charles Sedgwick of New York voiced it as “[y]our aggressions forced the North into this contest ... to prevent the acquisition of territory ... for no purpose other than ... extending and perpetuating slavery ... [and] to defend the Territories from the curse of slavery.”¹¹⁹ As was written about ten years after the “Slave Power, in their economical, social, moral, ecclesiastical, and political relations to the people and to the government ... finally culminated in a civil war”¹²⁰ to eliminate the resultant supremacies and the disadvantages in which they could potentially culminate.

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⁴ Seward "The Irrepressible Conflict," 294.

⁵ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Sixth Congress, Second Session, 551.

⁶ Harper, Harper's Memoir," 20.

⁷ Thomas Kettell, *Southern Wealth*, 73 for the South's proportions of the total exports (1857) 66.5% and (1859) 71.3% and p. 96 for the South's proportions of the specie values of (1857-60) 60.8%, 65.0%, 59.8%, 54.3%.

⁸ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, First Session, Appendix, 133. The evidence is in the form of a table labelled as "Avg amt per head (of all productions included in the census)."

⁹ Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power," 18.

¹⁰ Silbey, *The Transformation of American Politics*, 16.

¹¹ Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery*, 220; Richmond Whig February 14, 1847 as quoted in Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery*, p. 222. The emphasis is in the original.

¹² Richards, *The Slave Power*, 28-51.

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³³ George Julian, "The Slavery Question," 25.

³⁴ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Second Congress, First Session, Appendix, 467.

³⁵ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Fourth Congress, First Session, 700.

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³⁷ Foner, *Free Soil*, 100.

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³⁹ Charles Sumner, "Union Among Men," 77.

⁴⁰ Salmon Chase, "The Appeal of the Independent Democrats," 141. The chapter was partly from a draft of "Appeal of the Independent Democrats" prepared by Giddings.

⁴¹ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, First Session, Appendix, 794. Parker also listed the ultimate ambitions of acquiring the Gulf of Mexico and all adjacent tropical regions plus establishing slavery through all of North and South America.

⁴² *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix, 47.

⁴³ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix, 322. The Mesilla Valley is in modern-day southern New Mexico and far west Texas.

⁴⁴ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, 1181.

⁴⁵ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, 1182.

⁴⁶ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, 1183.

⁴⁷ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, 1183.

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⁵⁶ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Sixth Congress, First Session, 764.

⁵⁷ Richards, *The Slave Power*, 15.

⁵⁸ Foner, *Free Soil*, 97.

⁵⁹ Foner, *Free Soil*, 100.

⁶⁰ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Sixth Congress, First Session, 8.

⁶¹ Richards, *The Slave Power*, 88.

- ⁶² Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery*, 223-28; Richards, *The Slave Power*, 100.
- ⁶³ govtrack.us, "TO PASS S. 22."
- ⁶⁴ govtrack.us, "TO PASS H.R. 236. (P. 1254)."
- ⁶⁵ Landis, "The Hypocritical and Shameful History."
- ⁶⁶ Landis, "The Hypocritical and Shameful History."
- ⁶⁷ Woods, "What Twenty-First-Century Historians Have Said," 430; ENCYCLOPEDIA.com, "Conventions, Party Nominating."
- ⁶⁸ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix.
- ⁶⁹ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix, 211.
- ⁷⁰ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix, 211.
- ⁷¹ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix, 219.
- ⁷² *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Third Congress, Second Session, Appendix, 246. Additionally Senator Pratt of MD paired off with Senator Walker of WI.
- ⁷³ Stringfellow, *Scriptural and Statistical Views*, 111.
- ⁷⁴ Kettell, *Southern Wealth and Northern Profits*, 4. The values grew from the 1850 US Census values of \$2948 million, \$3096 million and \$1023 million. The 1858 values are from state censuses.
- ⁷⁵ Kettell, *Southern Wealth and Northern Profits*, 23. Kettell has the values of \$3756643, \$13214020 and \$28707841 for 1830, 1840 and 1850.
- ⁷⁶ Drayton, *The South Vindicated*, 67.
- ⁷⁷ Drayton, *The South Vindicated*, 283-84.
- ⁷⁸ Drayton, *The South Vindicated*, 284.
- ⁷⁹ Ruffin, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, 23; Ruffin, Appendix (to *The Political Economy of Slavery*), 25.
- ⁸⁰ Kettell, *Southern Wealth and Northern Profits*, 145 has the 1859 white populations as North: 8626852, West: 4900368, South: 6222418.
- ⁸¹ Fogel and Engerman, "The Economics of Slavery," 335. These values exclude both the population and incomes of slaves. The North consists of ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NJ, PA, NY, VT, ND, SD, NE, KS, MN, IA, MO, WI, MI, IL, IN and OH; the South of OK, AR, LA, TX, KY, TN, MS, AL, DC, DE, MD, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA and FL. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 88.
- ⁸² Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 101, 87.
- ⁸³ Ransom and Sutch, "Capitalists without Capital," 137.
- ⁸³ Silbey, *The Transformation*, 16.
- ⁸⁴ Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery*, 255.
- ⁸⁵ Dew, *Review of the Debate*, 36.
- ⁸⁶ Wender, ed., *Southern Commercial Conventions*, 31. Another example from the 1830s is William Drayton with "the South pays nearly one-third of the revenue of the government" and "nine-tenths [of the country's exports] are raised by the South." (Drayton, *The South Vindicated*, 67).
- ⁸⁷ De Bow, "The Progress of American Commerce," 407-8; Wilson and Cook, *The Papers of Calhoun*, 18. Another example from the 1840s is an Address to the Fair of the American Institute in New York in 1852 stating that for each of 1846 through 1849 the slave states provided about seventy percent of the nation's exports which paid for the imports (The South and the Union, 72. The export values quoted show that the slave states accounted for 73, 68, 74 and 75.5 percent of each year's total.)
- ⁸⁸ Kettell, "The Future of the South," 40.
- ⁸⁹ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Fifth Congress, First Session, Appendix, 961. The speech was given March 4, 1858, Hammond's export values were \$185 million for the South of a total of \$279 million.
- ⁹⁰ Elliott, *Cotton is King*, 267.
- ⁹¹ Calomiris and Schweikart, "The Panic of 1857: Origins," 814, Table 2. The non-slave states averaged are CT, IL, IA, IN, ME, MA, MI, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT and WI. The slave states averaged are AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, SC, TN, TX and VA.
- ⁹² Calomiris and Schweikart, "The Panic of 1857," 814, Table 2.
- ⁹³ Rose, "Capital Losses," 43. The value is in 1860 dollars so is about \$124 billion in 2023 dollars (all such estimates in this paper use the average of 1) the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis calculation and 2) [the](#) Political Science Department of Oregon State University calculation).
- ⁹⁴ Goldin, "The Economics of Emancipation," 73-74. The value is in 1860 dollars so is about \$91 billion in 2023 dollars.
- ⁹⁵ Goldin, "The Economics of Emancipation," 75; Schmitz and Schaefer, "Paradox Lost," 404. The value is in 1850 dollars so is about \$48 billion in 2023 dollars.
- ⁹⁶ Deyle, "An 'Abominable' New Trade," 840. The value is in 1860 dollars so is about \$101 billion in 2023 dollars.
- ⁹⁷ Deyle, "An 'Abominable' New Trade," 840 *fn* 12. The value is in 1860 dollars so is about \$135 billion in 2023 dollars.
- ⁹⁸ Deyle, "An 'Abominable' New Trade," 842, Table 1.
- ⁹⁹ DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln*, 63, 125-27.
- ¹⁰⁰ Kettell, "The Future of the South," 41. The profits came from "freights, insurance, exchange, commissions and wages."
- ¹⁰¹ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Sixth Congress, Second Session, 391. The speech was given January 15, 1861.
- ¹⁰² Kenneth Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War: Revised Edition* (Touchstone, 1992), 20.
- ¹⁰³ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 120.
- ¹⁰⁴ Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union*.
- ¹⁰⁵ Quincy was a politician and then President of Harvard University from 1829-45.
- ¹⁰⁶ Josiah Quincy, *Address Illustrative of the Nature and Power of the Slave States, Duties of the Free States; Delivered at the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Quincy, Mass., on Thursday, June 5, 1856 by Josiah Quincy (Altered and Enlarged since Delivery)* (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1856), 5, 17.
- ¹⁰⁷ Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power," 6, 17.
- ¹⁰⁸ Frank Towers, "Partisans, New History, and Modernization: The Historiography of the Civil War's Causes, 1861-2011," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 (June 2011): 255.
- ¹⁰⁹ Woods, "What Twenty-First-Century Historians Have Said," 429.
- ¹¹⁰ Carol Lasser, "Voyeuristic Abolitionism: Sex, Gender, and the Transformation of Antislavery Rhetoric," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (Spring 2008): 112-13.
- ¹¹¹ Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power," 10; Foner, *Free Soil*, 9, 100.
- ¹¹² Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power," 15-16.
- ¹¹³ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Second Congress, First Session, Appendix, 398.
- ¹¹⁴ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 8.

¹¹⁵ Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power," 9, 16.

¹¹⁶ Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 52.

¹¹⁷ Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 26-28.

¹¹⁸ "Shall Slavery Take Possession of This Nation, or Shall Freedom Rule?," *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, March 28, 1857, 1. The emphasis is in the original.

¹¹⁹ *Congressional Globe*: Thirty-Sixth Congress, First Session, Appendix, 180.

¹²⁰ Henry Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America: History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America, Volume I* (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), 2.