



The War for Foreign Support

Civil War and foreign relations

- April 1, 1861: William Seward proposed to Lincoln that they needed to “change the question before the Public from one...about Slavery . . . to one of *Patriotism or Union.*”
- Proposed they should do this by declaring war on Spain and France!
- Lincoln dismissed the advice, but it reveals the connection between domestic and foreign politics.



International Stage

- Trade, history, immigration linked the U.S. to the world
 - By the war's end, Union recruiters will be recruiting men in Europe, promising to pay their passage if they signed up to fight
 - Both sides conducted what amounted to PR campaigns in Britain
- Americans on both sides saw themselves as part of a global struggle
 - Confederates had long expansionist aims
 - Wanted a vast, slave-holding empire encompassing parts of the Caribbean, Central America, and access to ports in California
 - Also saw themselves as part of the broader movement toward nation-building and self-determination
 - U.S. believed it the fate of democracy hinged on the outcome

Question of foreign involvement

- Absolutely critical—foreign allies could have changed the course of the war
 - Confederates could not manufacture all the war materiel they needed (weapons, ships, etc.); had to import it
- Confederacy was initially optimistic about getting British/French support
 - Strong feeling in 1861-62 that the Union was dead
 - Napoleon III inclined to recognize the Confederacy, but only if Britain did
 - Britain adopted a “wait and see” attitude

French in Mexico

- Mexico had attained independence in 1821
- But by 1861, it had acquired many debts to European nations
- Napoleon III used this, along with the U.S.'s preoccupation fighting the Confederates, as a pretext for attempting to topple Benito Juárez
- In 1864, France installed an Austria Hapsburg prince, Maximilian, as emperor of Mexico
 - Confederates welcome this development
 - Lincoln felt he could not act
 - Situation really irked U.S. Grant, who was prepared to go in with arms
 - But proved unnecessary; in 1867, Juárez retook Mexico City and France withdrew

Spanish involvement

- Spain granted belligerent rights to Confederacy
 - Both slaveholding states
 - Spanish ports, especially Havana, gave Confederate ships and blockade runners safe harbor for repairs and resupplying
- Spain willing to recognize the Confederacy, but only if France/Napoleon III did first
 - Recognition of Confederacy would have meant open conflict with the United States
 - But they made no real effort to challenge Union naval blockade
- Spain saw a divided U.S. as helpful for their aspirations—imperial revival
 - (Re)occupation of Santo Domingo/Dominican Republic (1861-65)
 - Spain very distrustful of Confederate motives re Cuba
 - Confederates had long coveted the island

Union Blockade (April 1861)

- One of Lincoln's first major strategic decisions
 - Understood the Confederacy's dependence on manufactured goods and their need to export cotton
- But the coastline was 3,500 miles long
 - And the US Navy only had around 40 usable ships at the war's outset
- U.S. quickly launched shipbuilding/purchasing efforts
 - Fleet grew to nearly 700 ships by war's end
- At first, the blockade was very ineffective
 - Only one out of every 9 ships stopped
 - Even in 1864, the US Navy captured only about 1 of every 3 Confederate vessels
 - Still, it prevented critical goods and equipment from getting through

The Federal Blockade 1861-1865

Blockading Squadrons:

1. North Atlantic: Cape Charles, VA to Cape Fear, NC
2. South Atlantic: Cape Fear, NC to Key West, FL
3. East Gulf: West Florida Coast
4. West Gulf: Remaining Gulf Coast to the Mexican Border



Implications of blockade

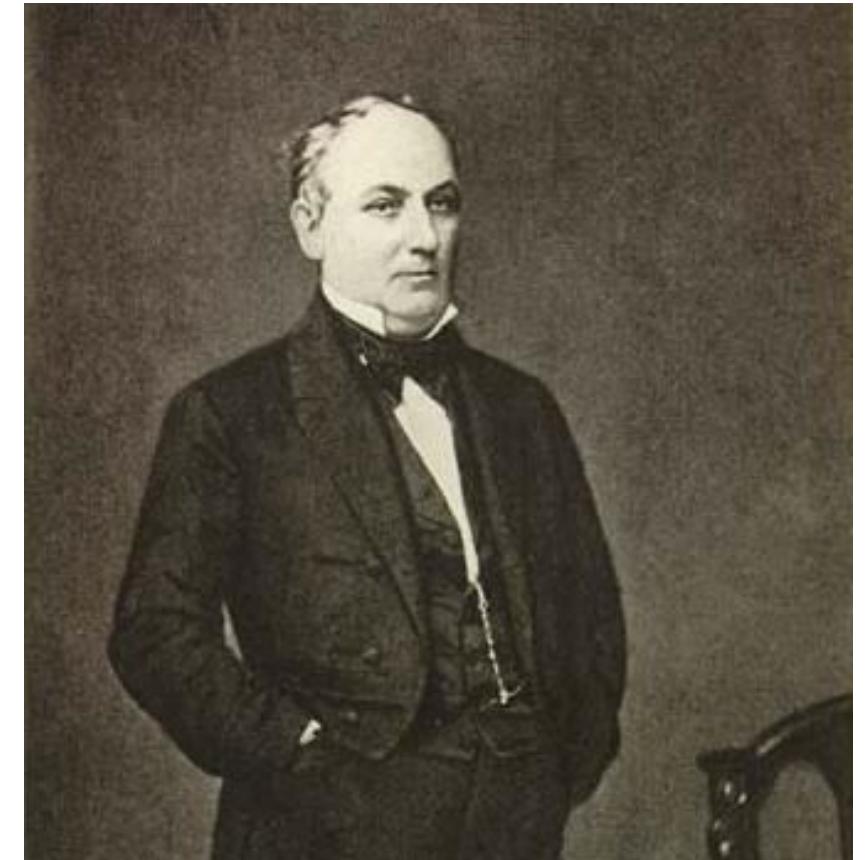
- Effects on European economy/textile mills?
- Question of international law
 - Imposing a blockade was an act of war between two belligerent nations
 - This meant, in effect, recognizing the Confederacy as a hostile nation
- European nations had to decide how to view the conflict
 - A war between nations, or a domestic uprising?
 - Moreover, international law said that you can't just declare a blockade; must enforce it
 - U.S. under pressure to show that the blockade was effective

Cotton Diplomacy

- By 1860, Britain was importing over a billion bales of cotton
 - 88% from the U.S.
 - French imported 93% of their cotton from the U.S.
- Cotton formed the basis of Britain's textile industry
 - Directly and indirectly sustained 1/5th of the British population
- Gave the Confederacy misplaced confidence

King Cotton

- James Henry Hammond, 1858:
 - *“What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years? . . . England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her, save the South.”*
- Alexander Stephens, July 1861:
 - *“...in some way or other [the blockade will] be [ended], or there will be revolution in Europe... Our cotton is...the tremendous lever by which we can work our destiny.”*

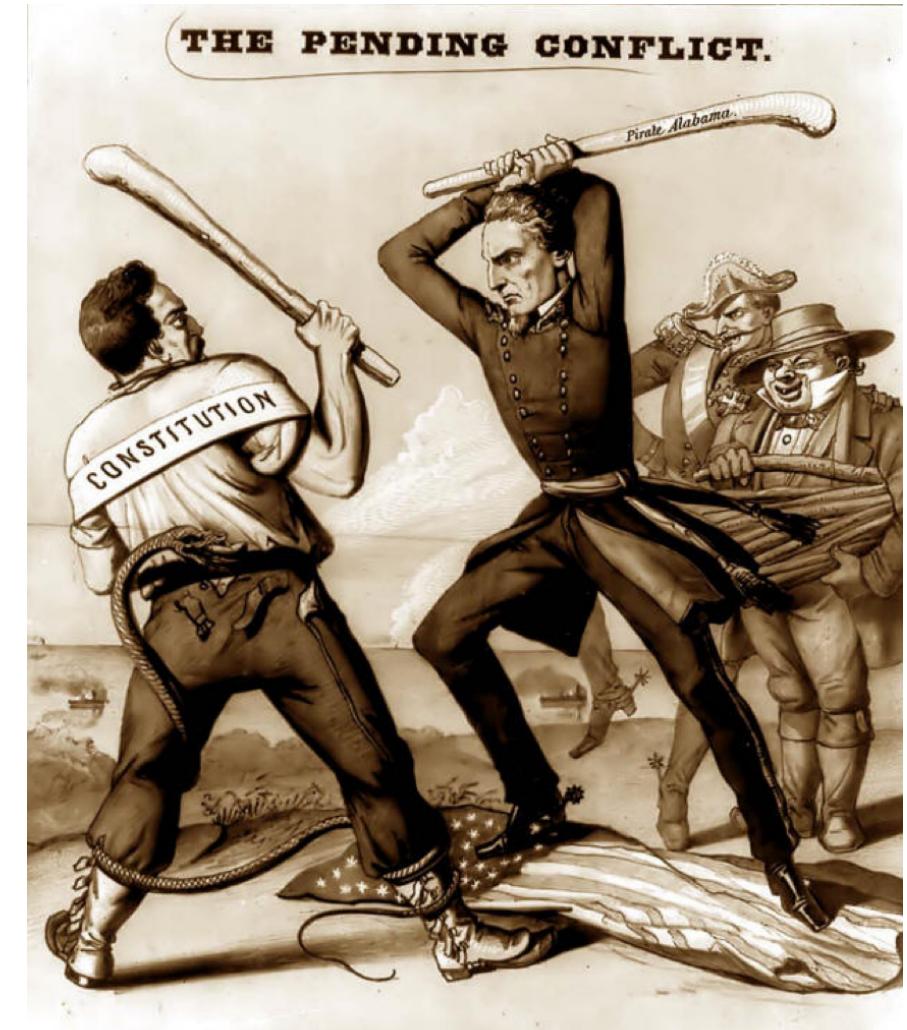


British “neutrality”

- May 1861: Britain declared its neutrality
 - Implication: viewed the war as one between two belligerent nations
 - Implicitly recognized the Confederacy as a nation with certain rights (such as the right to contract loans and purchase weapons)
- Other European nations followed suit
- U.S. furious
 - Saw as a first step toward formal recognition
- Anti-British sentiment surged

The Pending Conflict, 1863

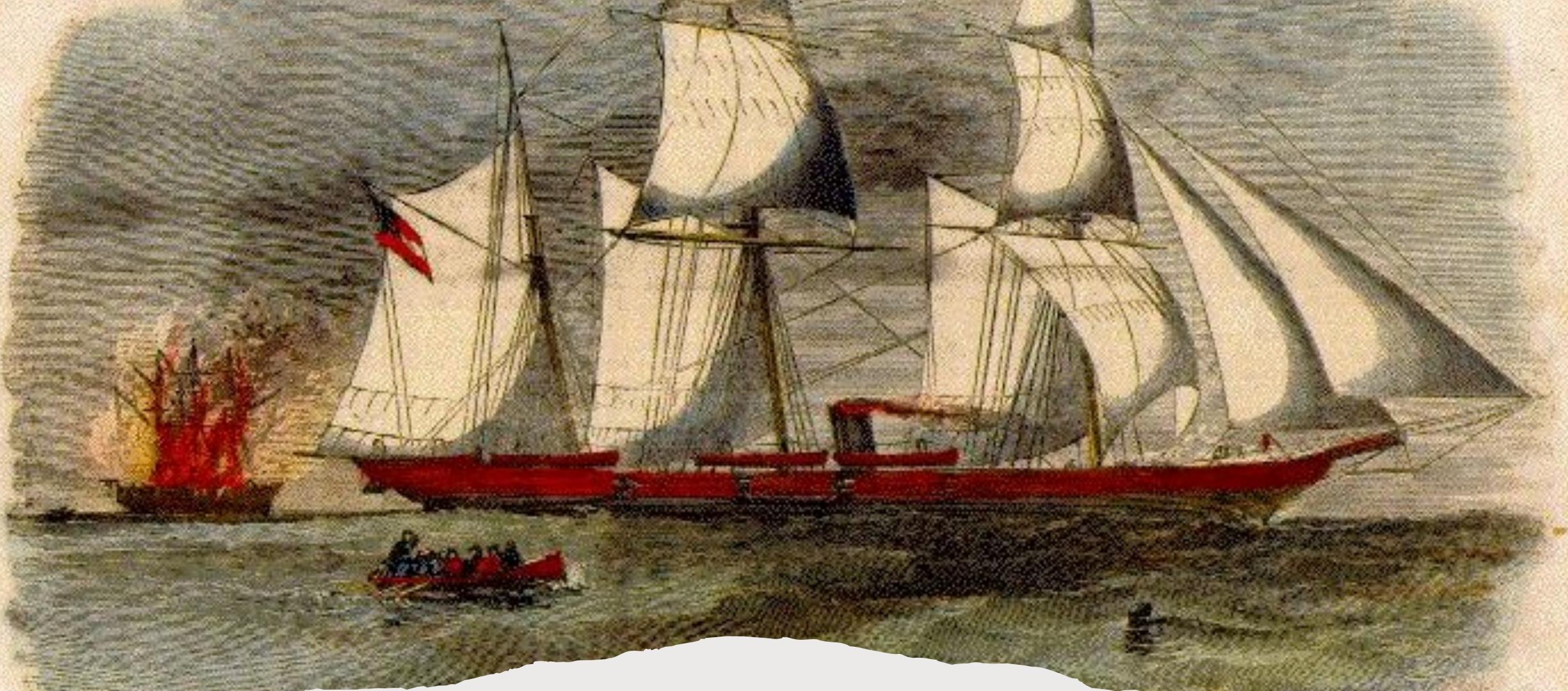
- Emp. Napoleon: Whip him Secesh, and when I get Mexico, I'll help you whip him again.
- John Bull: Down with him, Secesh—burn his Ships—destroy his Commerce—England has plenty more such clubs for you.
- Secesh: I'll fix him—I'll kill him.
- U.S. Soldier: The Flag of my country trampled under foot--the ships of my countrymen burning on the ocean--while I stand here entangled in the coils of this foul Copperhead, and so bound up by Constitutional restraints, that I am unable to put forth my true strength in their behalf.



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A steamer, the *Advance*, that ran between Dublin and Glasgow, purchased by the State of North Carolina to carry cotton and bring in arms and supplies of clothing and medicines for the North Carolina State Troops.



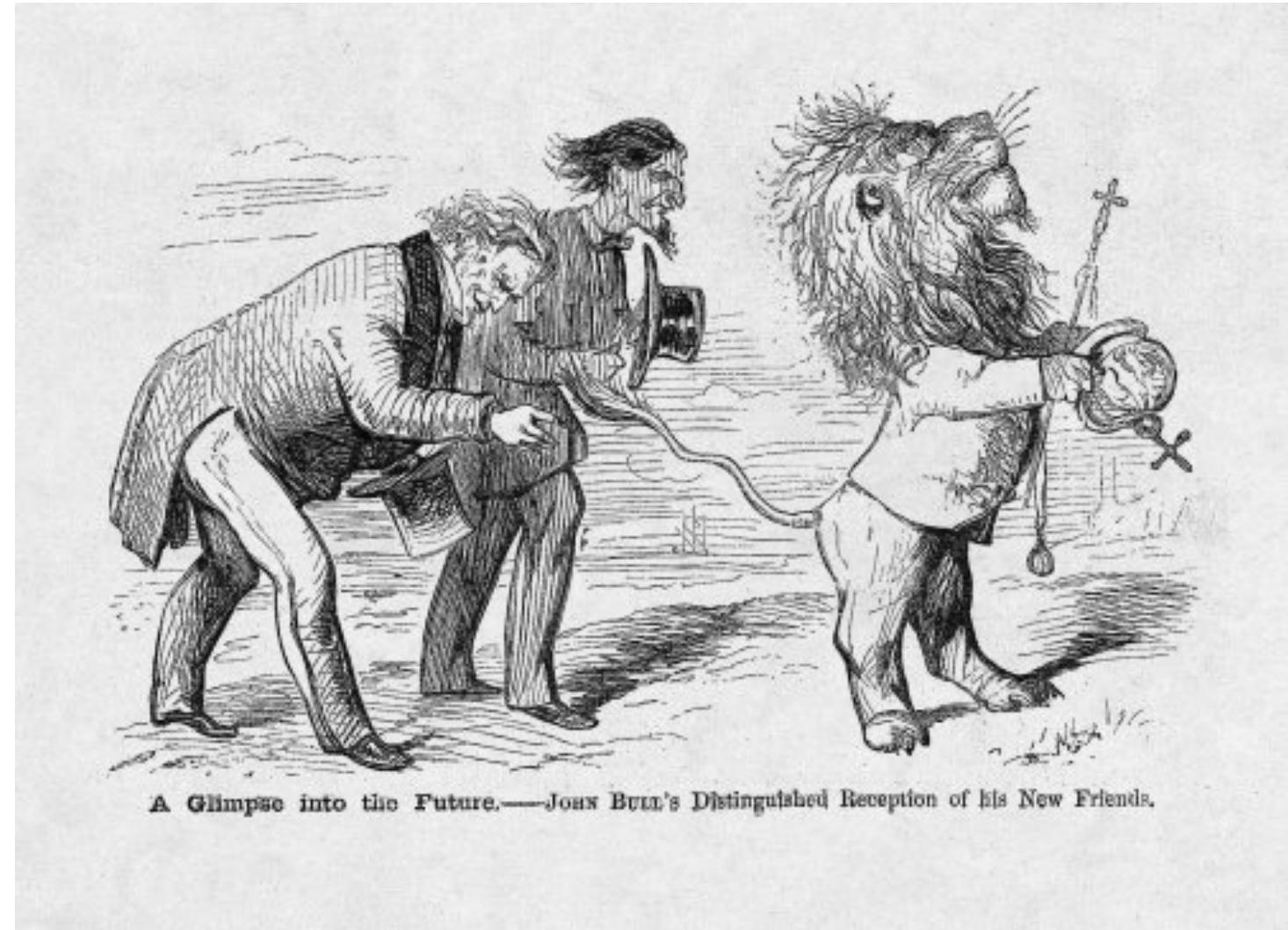
Alabama, 1862

Built in Birkenhead for the Confederates

Trent Affair (Nov. 1861)

- Capt. Charles Wilkes seized two Confederate envoys, James Mason and John Slidell, from a British ship
- He's hailed as a hero in the U.S.
- Brits were appalled; viewed as a violation of neutrality and began gearing up for war
 - 3,000 troops sent to Canada
 - Suspended trade relations
- Lincoln overruled popular sentiment and backed down
 - Released the Confederate envoys
 - “One war at a time”
- Closest the Confederacy got to winning British recognition

Anti-British cartoon
mocking Confederate
diplomats, *Harper's
Weekly*, Jan. 11, 1862



Diplomats

- U.S. had the upper hand
- Confederates initially sent William Yancy to London
 - Fire-eater, no diplomatic experience
- U.S. has Charles Francis Adams
 - Son and grandson of two presidents, both of whom served as ministers to Great Britain



Confederate propaganda efforts

- Paid to get favorable stories into newspapers
- Organized “Southern Clubs” in Manchester, Liverpool, other industrial towns
- Put forward two different arguments
 - Liberal appeal: It’s a war of self-determination
 - Confederates being victimized by the brutish and bullying U.S.
 - Conservative appeal: It’s a defense of a traditional way of life
 - Emphasized ties—of blood and ideology—that united the British aristocracy and Confederate gentry
 - Set them against rapacious industrialists and the U.S. federal government
- European aristocrats tended to sympathize with Confederacy
- British labor leaders and the working classes tended to side with the U.S.
 - Not universally so

Cotton embargo

- End of 1861, Confederates begin to refuse to attempt to get their cotton through the blockade
- Not a government policy; people did it on their own
 - Following calls of hotheaded newspaper editors
- Did not play out as they hoped
- Britain had significant amounts of cotton stored up
 - Cotton shortage did not immediately materialize
- Other nations moved to fill vacuum
 - Cotton production in India, Brazil, Egypt etc. quickly rose
- Cotton textiles were already begun to lose their dominant role in the British economy
 - U.S. relying heavily on trade with British
 - Purchasing ships, woolen goods, etc.
 - Relationship between the U.S. and Britain strengthened

	<i>1860</i>	<i>1861</i>	<i>1862</i>	<i>1863</i>	<i>1864</i>	<i>1865</i>	<i>1866</i>
India	346	381	395	473	550	525	803
Egypt	50.1	59.6	82	128.7	174	250.7	178.5
Brazil	27.4	21.6	30.8	38.3	47.6	60.7	102.3

Cotton production in India, Egypt and Brazil

Table 1: Cotton Exports from India, Egypt, and Brazil, 1860–1866, in million pounds. Sources: Government of India, *Annual Statement of the Trade and Navigation of British India and Foreign Countries* vol. 5 (Calcutta, 1872); vol. 9 (Calcutta, 1876); Roger Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820–1914* (Oxford, 1969), 90; *Estatísticas históricas do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1990), 346. From Sven Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire” *American Historical Review* 109:5 (2004)

INDIAN COTTON DEPOT

COTTON
STORES



OVER THE WAY.

Mr. Big, "Well, if you two like fighting better than business, I shall deal at the other shop."

“Corn is King,” *Continental Monthly*, Aug. 62

Wave the stars and stripes high o'er us,
Let every freeman sing,
In a loud and joyful chorus;
Brave young Corn is King!

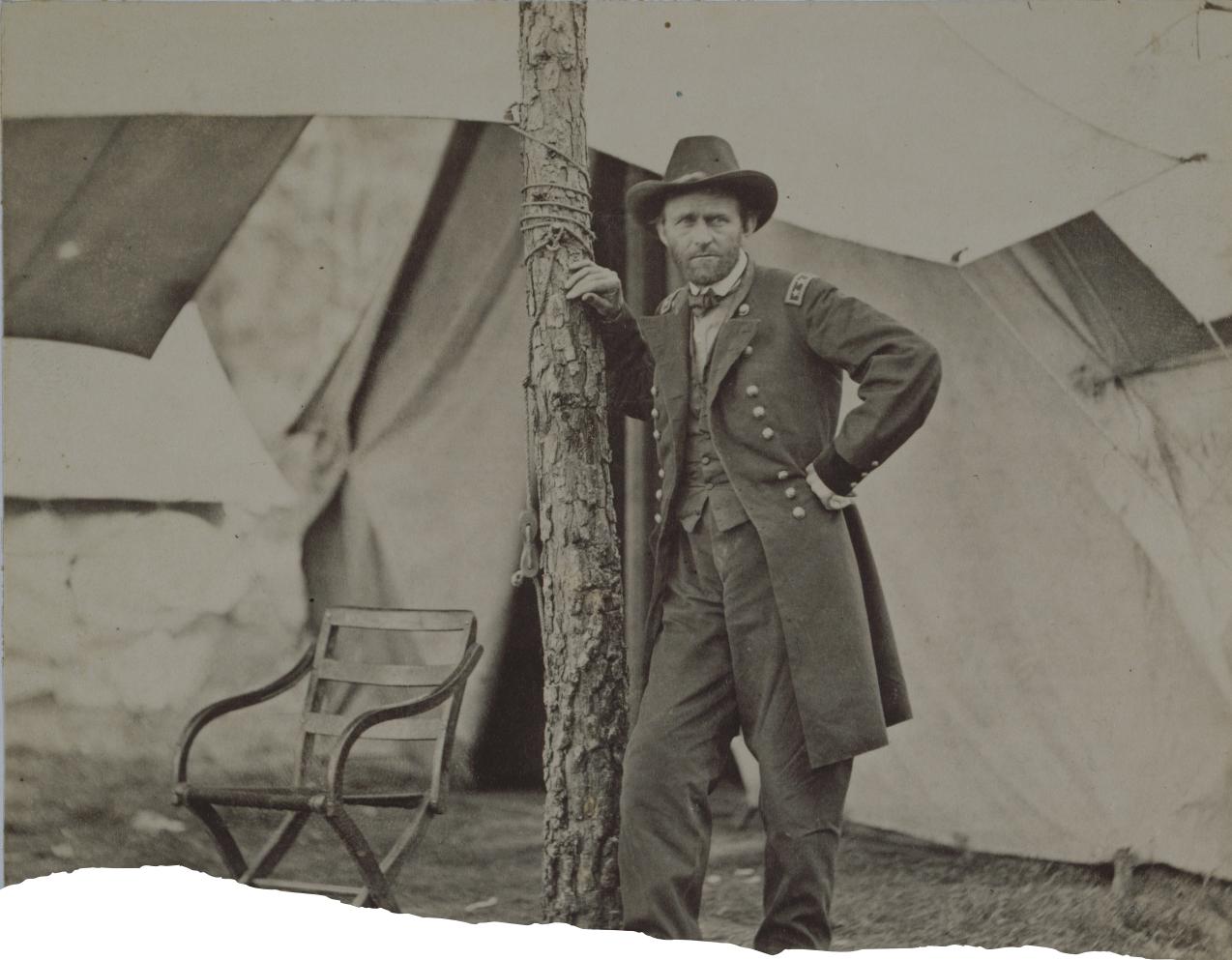
Join, join, for God and Freedom,
Sing Northmen, sing:
Old King Cotton's dead and buried:
brave Young Corn is King.

Let the tidings swell o'er ocean
To another shore,
Till proud England pales and trembles
Where she scoffed before!

Ne'er again shall serpent friendship
Rise to hiss and sting!
Cotton leagues no more with *Traitors*:
Honest Corn is King!

War in the Western Theater

- Forts Henry & Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers seized in February 1862
 - Union troops led by Ulysses S. Grant
 - This is where he got his nickname “Unconditional Surrender” Grant
 - Captured 15,000 Confederates
 - Press treated as a major victory
- Consequences
 - Kentucky lost to the Confederacy
 - Tennessee exposed
 - Nashville abandoned
- Elevated Grant to national attention



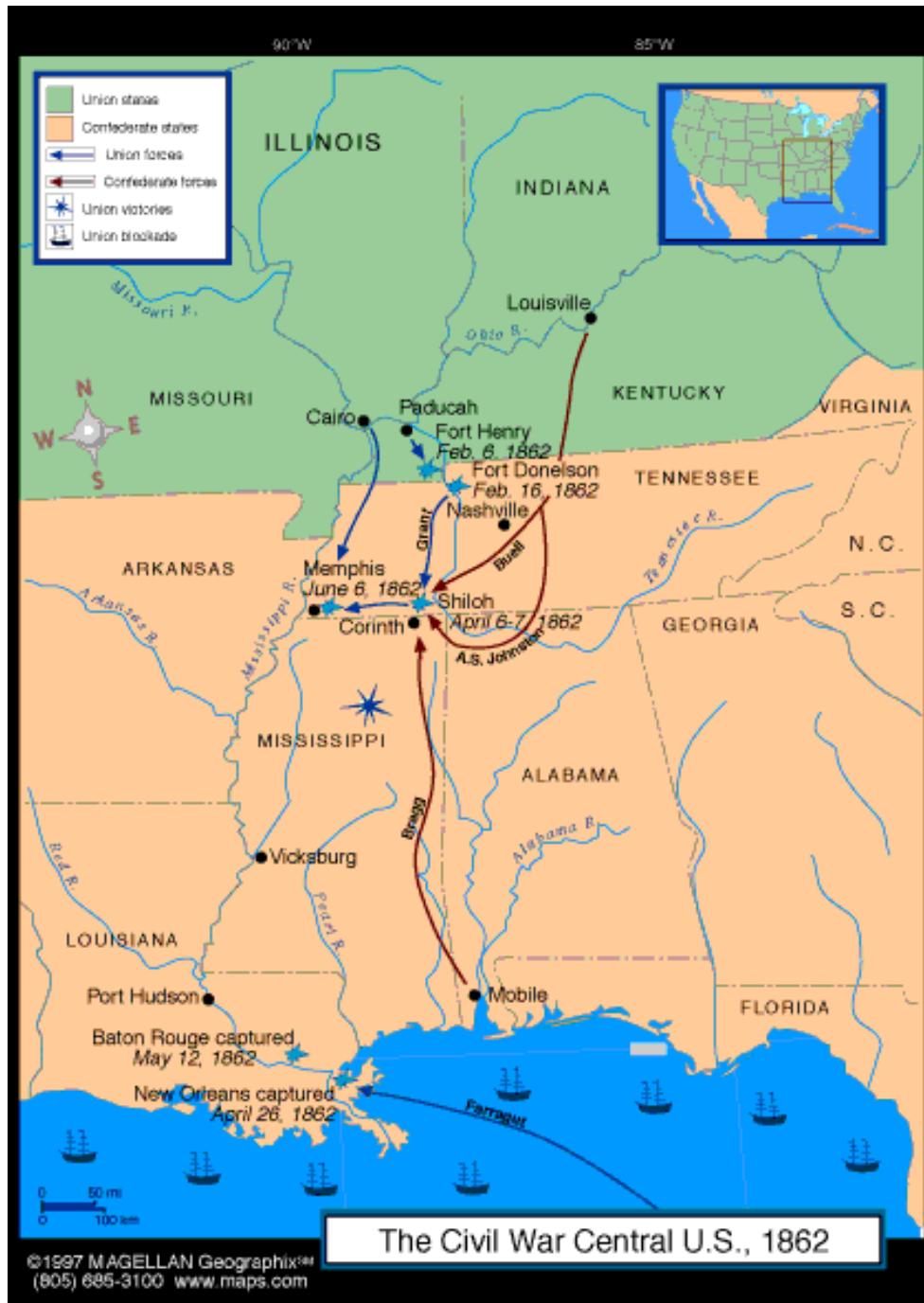
Ulysses S. Grant

Further Union victories in 1862

- After successes in taking the forts, Grant began moving toward Corinth, Mississippi
 - His supply lines were vulnerable
- Shiloh: Gen. Sidney Johnston attacked in April 1862
 - Caught Grant off-guard
 - Most fierce fighting so far in the Western theater
 - Men slaughtered in waves
 - Union victory (but with enormous losses)
 - Solidified Union dominance in the West
- Also hugely critical: US Navy gained control of New Orleans
 - Most important remaining Confederate port

Antietam (Sharpsburg), Sept. 17, 1862

- Robert E. Lee decided to take the war into Union territory
 - Raided Maryland
- Battle single bloodiest day of the war
 - Essentially a draw, even though the Union had more manpower
 - But when Lee withdrew, McClellan did not pursue him
 - Intense frustration in the North
 - Contributed to serious Republican losses in the 1862 midterm elections
- Still, Lincoln claimed it as a victory
 - Seized the moment to announce the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on Sept. 22, to go into effect Jan. 1
- Changed the calculation; more difficult for Britain to recognize the Confederacy



The Civil War in the Eastern U.S., 1861-1862



Confederate's failure to win recognition

- Crops failed in Europe
 - 1862: Britain imported a great deal of wheat and corn from the US
 - British *Economist* declared: “without these importations, our people could not exist at all”
- Britain resented Confederates’ high-handed policy; viewed as blackmail
- British *Realpolitick*
 - Concerned about balance of power in Western hemisphere
 - Not interested in another military engagement
 - Overstretched militarily; still smarting after the Crimean War
- Ultimately, they waited until for the Confederacy to establish itself in battle