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1 Section A

This paper seeks to investigate the question: *«How did the Export of Southern Raw Cotton to Great Britain Influence Its Willingness to Recognize the Confederate States of America as a Sovereign Nation?»*. It is well-known that the southern United States is a largely agrarian region of the nation, and further that the economy of these states has, since the colonial era, been heavily dependent on the exportation of various «cash crops». Cotton, the crop with which the 19th century south is most associated, became the staple export of the region, and indeed may be argued to have kick-started or at least supported the lucrative textile industry of Great Britain. In this paper I examine the economic codependency of the Antebellum South (and subsequently the of the Confederate States of America [CSA]) with Great Britain, and the effects of this relationship on the prospect of the British Parliament's diplomatic recognition of the CSA as a sovereign nation. To do this, I shall rely on the vast contemporary records of exports and manufactures, the body of post- contemporary literature regarding the relations of both nations, and the large base of correspondences and personal records of those involved.

A source that shall be relied upon heavily in assessing the economic reliance of the Antebellum South on cotton in the decades leading up to the war is Douglass C. North's *The Economic Growth of the United States 1790 - 1860* (1966). In this book, North argues that the critical period of economic development in the United States, contrary to the accepted narrative at the time, which supposed it to have taken place in the reconstruction era or later, in fact occurred between the years 1790 and 1860. Though this argument is outside the scope of this paper, it should be noted that this source is far from modern, and is likely to include some outdated information or analysis, as is the nature of the field. The work has, however, maintained relevance into recent years through the fact that it provides vast quantities of data, compiled from various other sources, regarding the economic state of the nation, and specifically the South, which are readily available for analysis and interpretation.

For reference on the diplomatic affairs of the CSA with Great Britain during the Civil War, I have found the compilation *The Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy, Including Diplomatic Correspondence, 1861-1865* to be an excellent primary account of the Confederate perception of diplomatic prospects in Great Britain. This source provides a near-comprehensive record of the reports sent from the ambassadors of the CSA in Britain and received by the officials of the nation. The value of this source is difficult to understate, as it provides ample contemporary evidence for the state of affairs between the two parties on which this paper shall focus, and further contains much reference to the role of cotton in these

affairs. The obvious limitation of this source comes from the fact that, though skilled diplomats, the authors of the letters and reports contained within the source were heavily biased towards the Confederacy, and as such their perception of the prospect of British intervention often failed to reflect the truth of the matter.

2 Section B

¹ On the eve of the American Civil War, U.S. cotton accounted for over 88% of the cotton imported into Great Britain.² This cotton was, as noted by Joseph Inikori, the key to the English economy in the mid-19th century:

Indeed, «the Industrial Revolution» in England, in the strict sense of the phrase, is little more than a revolution in [...] cotton textile production.³

The importance of this economic relationship for the Confederate cause was not lost on the rebelling sates, and unquestionably played a significant role in their foreign policy towards England throughout the course of the war. However, the extent to which this was an effective diplomatic strategy is not comparably evident, and is the central focus of this investigation.

In the continental United States, in the time leading up to the war, the amount and value of exported goods skyrocketed, and, though by 1860 the

3 Section C

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House of Representatives, U.S. Congress. *H. Misc. Doc. no. 49*. 48th Cong., 1st. sess., 1884.

1. The data for figure 2 comes from: (Total Exports) Douglass Cecil North, *The Economic Growth of the United States 1790 - 1860*, The Norton Library 346 (New York: Norton, 1966), Table A-III, ISBN: 978-0-393-00346-8; (Cotton Exports) U.S. Congress House of Representatives, *H. Misc. Doc. no. 49* (48th Cong., 1st. sess., 1884), Part 2, Table 2.

2. Ronald Bailey, “The Other Side of Slavery: Black Labor, Cotton, and Textile Industrialization in Great Britain and the United States,” *Agricultural History* 68, no. 2 (1994): 40, ISSN: 00021482, 15338290, accessed November 1, 2024, JSTOR: [3744401](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3744401), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3744401>.

3. Joseph Inikori, The Slave Trade and Revolution in Cotton Textile Production in England, quoted in [Bailey](#), 40.

Nevins, Allan, and James D. Richardson, eds. *The Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy, Including Diplomatic Correspondence, 1861-1865*. New York, Chelsea House-R. Hector, 1966.

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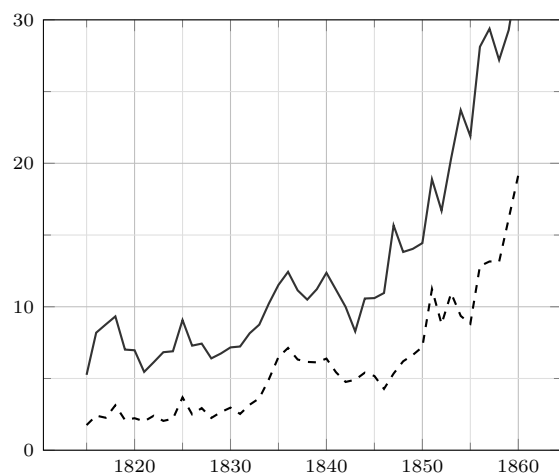


Figure 2.1: Value (hundreds of millions of dollars) of Total Exports (solid) and of Total Raw Cotton Exports (dashed) in the U.S.: 1815-1860