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# Lincoln's Gamble: Fear of Intervention and the Onset of the American Civil War

PAUL POAST

*Few studies consider how civil war onset can be influenced by third parties and by the belligerents' perceptions of third party actions. I show that the American Civil War, a war largely ignored by civil war scholars, sheds insights into how anticipation of third party intervention influences the decision-making process within the target state and how the possibility of third party intervention can influence the onset and escalation of civil war. The American Civil War is an especially interesting case for exploring the role of third parties in civil war initiation since, unlike most cases considered by the existing civil war literature, the American Civil War is an instance of nonintervention: the third parties (the European powers in this case) mattered despite staying out of the conflict. Specifically, I argue that fear of foreign recognition (particularly by the British) played an underappreciated (if not the decisive) role in the earliest stages of the American Civil War by influencing Lincoln's decision to authorize the first major battle of the war at Manassas Junction, Virginia.*

## INTRODUCTION

*"Well, there is one way to convert us all—Win the battles, and we shall come round at once."*

—Member of British Parliament (later Prime Minister) Lord Robert Cecil to Mary Motley, wife of Union Diplomat John Lothrop Motley, July 5, 1861<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lily Motley to J. L. M. July 5, 1861 in John Lothrop Motley, *John Lothrop Motley and His Family: Further Letters and Records Edited by His Daughter and Herbert St John Mildmay* (London: John Lane Company, 1910), 112.

How does the fear of foreign intervention influence the behavior of civil war participants? Much of the intrastate war scholarship considers how outside parties can alter an ongoing civil war. But little of this work considers intervention's role in civil war onset. Drawing from the preventive war literature, I argue that the anticipation of foreign intervention can induce governments to initiate violence against rebel groups.

To support this claim, I consider the onset of major military violence during the American Civil War. Following the bombardment of Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, President Abraham Lincoln, hoping to reunite the country with minimal bloodshed, imposed a blockade and reaffirmed his policy of non-invasion.<sup>2</sup> By the end of June, however, Lincoln shifted course. On 25 and 29 June, Lincoln summoned two war council meetings to authorize an offensive strike against Southern forces at Manassas Junction, Virginia. The subsequent Northern defeat at the Battle of Manassas (or Bull Run) on 21 July 1861 compelled Lincoln to sign into law the raising of five hundred thousand additional soldiers and prompted Confederate President Jefferson Davis to call up four hundred thousand men of his own.<sup>3</sup> Both sides were now ready for a long war.

Why did Lincoln change his mind by authorizing the strike on Confederate forces at Manassas Junction? Exploring Lincoln's gamble shows that third parties can matter for a civil conflict even if they do not directly enter or offer to mediate a settlement to the conflict. While the European powers did not directly intervene in the conflict (with military force, economic pressure, or diplomatic recognition), the possibility of such direct intervention influenced the decision making of officials within the disputing parties. I show that concerns about British involvement were prevalent within Lincoln's cabinet at the time of Lincoln's decision. Lincoln and his cabinet feared that European recognition would bolster the South's resolve and open the door for foreign powers to supply the Confederacy with military aid, possibly shifting the balance of power in the South's favor. I also show that attacking the South was seen as a potentially effective means of preventing European recognition. This was for two reasons. First, and most obviously, defeating Confederate forces and capturing the Confederate capital of Richmond would presumably end the crisis (and, hence, no Confederacy for the Europeans to recognize). Second, and a reason more explicitly discussed by members of Lincoln's cabinet, an aggressive offensive strike would signal to the Europeans the

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<sup>2</sup> David M. Potter, "Why the Republicans Rejected Both Compromise and Secession," in *The Crisis of the Union, 1860–1861*, ed. George H. Knoles (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 105; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* (New York: Harper Collins, 1976); Emory M. Thomas, *The Dogs of War: 1861* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph L. Harsh, *Confederate Tide Rising: Robert E. Lee and the Making of Southern Strategy, 1861–1862* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998), 12, 30; David Detzer, *Donnybrook: The Battle of Bull Run, 1861* (New York: Harcourt, 2004): 408–27; Paul D. Escott, *Military Necessity: Civil-Military Relations in the Confederacy* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 42.

North's unwillingness to sit and do nothing. In contrast, failure to act might lead the Europeans to perceive de facto Southern independence.

By showing how the possibility of British recognition was important from the beginning of the war to Lincoln and his cabinet, this paper complements research by other international relations scholars on the American Civil War.<sup>4</sup> This other work either focuses on later events—such as Union, Confederate, and British actions following the battle of Antietam and the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation—or explores theories related to the relations between states, ranging from hegemonic stability to the role of identity in security.<sup>5</sup> My work shows how the American Civil War can also enhance our understanding of third parties' role in intrastate conflict, especially how third parties can influence the onset of such conflicts.

This paper also contributes to the historiography on the American Civil War. Debate lingers over Lincoln's decision to authorize the strike on Manassas Junction, which escalated both the stakes and the violence of the insurrection crisis.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln offered no candid statements providing a "smoking gun" rationale, his cabinet members were (at best) sporadic diarists in 1861, and John Hay, Lincoln's private secretary, had no diary entries from 12 May to 22 August 1861.<sup>7</sup> Lacking concrete evidence, historians turn to circumstantial evidence, positing explanations that range from public clamoring for action, the militarily soundness of the strategy, Lincoln's belief that victory would be easily acquired, the need to use the ninety-day militiamen before their terms expired, and the cabinet delaying the attack until the Union consolidated its position in Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky.<sup>8</sup> Space prohibits a full discussion and comparison of each explanation. Instead, I show that

<sup>4</sup> I thank a most helpful reviewer for highlighting this contribution of my work.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 44–79; James Lee Ray, "Wars Between Democracies: Rare, or Nonexistent?" *International Interactions* 18, no. 3 (February 1993): 251–76; David Spiro, "The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 50–86; Christopher Layne, "Kant or Can't: The Myth of the Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 5–49; John M. Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (New York: Routledge, 2008), chap. 4; Scott Wolford, Dan Reiter, and Clifford Carrubba, "Information, Commitment, and War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 4 (August 2012): 556–79.

<sup>6</sup> As Don Fehrenbacher acknowledges in his exploration of Lincoln's first hundred days in office, "By the time of his message to Congress on July 4, however, Lincoln had moved on to the point of projecting an all-out war." See Don Fehrenbacher, "Lincoln's Wartime Leadership: The First Hundred Days," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 9, no. 1 (1987): 14.

<sup>7</sup> The lack of a candid statement is further compounded by his assassination, as Lincoln might have at least offered post-hoc justification in the form of a presidential memoir. With respect to John Hay's failure to keep a diary during this crucial time, his only explanation is "a long hiatus. The nights have been too busy for jottings." See entry for 22 August 1861 in Hay, *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay*, ed. Tyler Dennett (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939), 25. The absence of diary entries is why William Safire laments how "not one of the Cabinet diarists was doing history's job at the time." See William Safire, *Freedom* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 981.

<sup>8</sup> For work emphasizing public clamoring, see Kenneth Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860–1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1950), 286; Louis M.

while preventing British recognition may not have been the *raison d'être* for Lincoln's decision, it is an important cause. Though historians have long acknowledged that British dependence on Southern cotton fed Northern concerns over (and Southern hope for) British recognition, that these concerns persisted throughout the war, and that Lincoln's administration feared possible British recognition in the spring of 1861, this literature largely treats the American Civil War's onset as unrelated to foreign diplomacy.<sup>9</sup>

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section offers a theory for how the anticipation of foreign intervention (be it diplomatic recognition or full material assistance) can induce a state to escalate violence against a rebel group. I then present the puzzle of Lincoln's policy change from imposing a blockade in April 1861 (and denying a desire to invade the South) to authorizing an invasion of the South in late June 1861.

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Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 36; James McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 207; Fehrenbacher, "Lincoln's Wartime Leadership"; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 370; Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); James McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 38; Edward G. Longacre, *The Early Morning of War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 92. For military soundness, see Collin Ballard, *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: World Publishing, 1952), 49–50; T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 20; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 306; Detzer, *Donnybrook*, 69. For the belief of easy victory, see Thomas, *Dogs of War*, 22. For the need to use the ninety-day volunteers, see James McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 38. For the need to first consolidate the border states, see William Davis, *Battle At Bull Run: A History of the First Major Campaign of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 42–48, 69–72.

<sup>9</sup> For recent work placing the American Civil War in a broader global context, particularly with respect to secessionist movements and views of democracy as a viable political system, see Don H. Doyle, ed., *Secession as An International Phenomenon* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2014). For discussion of British dependence on Southern cotton and fear of British recognition in the Spring of 1861, see Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918); Frank Lawrence Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Norman B. Ferris, *Desperate Diplomacy: William H. Seward's Foreign Policy, 1861* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976); Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union: War Becomes Revolution, 1862–1863*, vol. 2 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960); McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*; Fehrenbacher, "Lincoln's Wartime Leadership"; Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis Over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Howard Jones, *Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom: The Union and Slavery in the Diplomacy of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Dean B. Mahin, *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1999); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Donald, *Lincoln*; Howard Jones, *Blue & Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2011). This work largely emphasizes public pressure as an explanation for Lincoln's decision. For example, Foreman states that because "Northern newspapers were demanding a battle" Lincoln was compelled to authorize the attack. See Foreman, *World on Fire*, 124. Historians will also focus on the reaction, particularly within the British press, to the Northern defeat. As Mahin writes, "The latent sympathy of the British upper class with the Confederate cause... was brought into the open by news of the Union rout at Bull Run on July 21." See Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 52.

Drawing on primary and secondary sources, I argue that Lincoln authorized the strike at Bull Run in order to forestall foreign recognition of the Confederacy. The paper concludes by discussing the limitations of this study, directions for future scholarship, and the contemporary policy implications of this historic case.

## THEORY: USING VIOLENCE TO PREVENT CIVIL WAR INTERVENTION

How does the fear of foreign intervention influence the behavior of civil war participants? I argue that fear of third party intervention can induce governments to attack a rebel group. This claim stands in stark contrast to a large portion of the existing scholarship on intrastate wars. This is not because the current literature ignores the influence of intervention. Quite the contrary, much work has explored intervention's influence on civil war duration and how intervention induces the war to spill over into neighboring countries.<sup>10</sup>

But only a few scholars recognize that intervention can influence the actual onset of a civil war. Alan J. Kuperman discusses how anticipated intervention can motivate dissatisfied groups to initiate secessionist moves against a government, but he sets aside the government's response to the anticipation of intervention.<sup>11</sup> Arman Grigoryan offers conditions for when

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<sup>10</sup> For intervention's influence on civil war duration, see Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew J. Enteline, "Killing Time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820–1992," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (December 2000): 615–42; Paul Collier, Anke Hoefler, and Måns Söderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (May 2004): 253–73; Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Page Fortna, *Peace Time: Cease-Fire Agreements and the Durability of Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Patrick M. Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Interventions and Intrastate Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Patrick M. Regan, "Interventions into Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas," *Civil Wars* 12, no. 4 (December 2010): 456–76; Patrick M. Regan and Aysegul Aydin, "Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention: Coordinated Strategies and the Duration of Civil War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 5 (October 2006): 736–56; Patrick M. Regan and Aysegul Aydin, "Networks of Third-Party Interveners and Civil War Duration," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 3 (September 2012): 573–97; Aysegul Aydin, *Foreign Powers and Intervention in Armed Conflict* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012). On how intervention influences civil war diffusion into neighboring states, see Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War," *International Organization* 60, no. 2 (April 2006): 335–66; Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Transnational Dimensions of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 3 (May 2007): 293–99; Halvard Buhaug and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (June 2008): 215–33; Alex Braithwaite, "Resisting Infection: How State Capacity Conditions Conflict Contagion," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 3 (May 2010): 311–19; Jacob D. Kathman, "Civil War Diffusion and Regional Motivations for Intervention," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 6 (December 2011): 847–76.

<sup>11</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, "The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (March 2008): 49–80. Kuperman does briefly discuss the possible reaction of the government. See Kuperman, "Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention," 51. However,

an actual intervention induces government violence against a rebel group, but he does not consider anticipated intervention.<sup>12</sup> Atsu Amegashie shows that anticipated intervention drives a government to overinvest in arms, but he does not unpack the link between such arms and the decision to inflict violence.<sup>13</sup> Only R. Harrison Wagner offers an argument that approximates my claim.<sup>14</sup> If outside powers can make credible and specific promises of intervention, this will, by reducing inconsistent expectations between the rebel group and the government, increase the likelihood of the parties reaching an agreement that avoids war.<sup>15</sup> But Wagner recognizes that credible promises are unlikely in the international system, as the absence of global centralized enforcement generates uncertainty and conflicting expectations about the possible actions of third parties. With third parties unable to credibly commit themselves to intervene or not intervene, “expectations about possible interventions may play a role in motivating an internal conflict even if outsiders never intervene.”<sup>16</sup>

Wagner does not elaborate on exactly how expectations of intervention induce a government to initiate militarized violence against rebels. For this reason, I maintain that the government's actions can be understood by turning to preventive war arguments. Preventive war is “a strategy designed to forestall an adverse shift in the balance of power and driven by better-now-than-later logic.”<sup>17</sup> A leader deems it better to fight now rather than

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Kuperman's discussion relies on R. Harrison Wagner, “The Hazards of Thinking about Moral Hazard,” *Ethnopolitics* 4, no. 2 (June 2005): 237–46.

<sup>12</sup> Arman Grigoryan, “Third-Party Intervention and the Escalation of State-Minority Conflicts,” *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (December 2010): 1143–74. Grigoryan's formal model only addresses the government's expectation that the third party will escalate the intervention once intervention has begun. See also Ahsan Butt, *Goodbye or See You Later: Why States Fight Some Secessionists but Not Others* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Atsu Amegashie, “Asymmetric Information and Third-party Intervention in Civil Wars,” *Defence and Peace Economics* 25, no. 4 (2014): 381–400. Amegashie's formal model considers changes in the investment in arms. While more arms give a state the ability to inflict violence on the rebel group, the link between acquiring arms and the choice to use such arms is left unexplored by the model. Similarly, in his case of NATO intervention into Serbia, Grigoryan primarily explores the decision-making process within NATO and the United States (the third-party intervening power). Grigoryan does offer some reasons for why Milosevic decided to escalate violence after receiving an explicit NATO ultimatum, but he does not share insights from within the Serbian leadership itself.

<sup>14</sup> See Wagner, “The Hazards of Thinking about Moral Hazard”; R. Harrison Wagner, *The Theory of International Politics: War and the State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007). Some empirical work also considers the influence of expected intervention, but only as an identifying strategy in the face of endogeneity. See Seden Akcinaroglu and Elizabeth Radziszewski, “Expectations, Rivalries, and Civil War Duration,” *International Interactions* 31, no. 4 (October 2005): 349–74; Ibrahim A. Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, *External Interventions and the Duration of Civil Wars*, Policy Research Working Paper 2433, World Bank Development Research Group, Public Economics, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Wagner, “The Hazards of Thinking about Moral Hazard,” 244.

<sup>16</sup> Wagner, “The Theory of International Politics,” 229, emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Jack S. Levy, “Preventive War and Democratic Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (March 2008): 1. Preventive war is related but intellectually distinct from *preemptive* attack, a military strategy designed to seize the initiative upon receipt of strategic warning that the enemy is preparing an attack of its own.

risk the consequences of inaction, including diminished bargaining leverage and relative power, or war under less favorable circumstances.<sup>18</sup> Such motivations arise when the attacker recognizes (or assumes) before the victim that indefinite stalemate appears impossible.<sup>19</sup> This is commonly the product of shifts in military capabilities that will result in a new future distribution of power.<sup>20</sup> Thus, a currently weak actor will, in the future, seek to reverse or renegotiate any settlement reached today. Foreseeing this, the currently strong actor will attack the weak actor, thereby locking in today's bargain.<sup>21</sup> Hence, preventive logic is largely militarily driven—a party wishes to prevent a relative decline in military power.<sup>22</sup>

Stephen Van Evera writes that preventive logic is a “ubiquitous motive for war.”<sup>23</sup> Consider a few classic examples. In 1756, Frederick the Great, anticipating a coalition between Austria, Russia, and France (directed toward Prussia), attacked “before his opponents were ready” in order to disrupt the anticipated coalition.<sup>24</sup> On 20 May 1914, German Chief of Staff Helmut von Moltke shared his views that since “in two to three years Russia would have finished rearming” there was now “no alternative but to fight a preventive war so as to beat the enemy while we could still emerge fairly well from the struggle.”<sup>25</sup> Such logic also applied in December 1941, when Japan attacked the US Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese believed “that without a war Japan would decline so profoundly that it would become vulnerable to future attacks from either the United States or traditional enemies such as Russia.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See also Jack S. Levy, “Preventive War: Concept and Propositions,” *International Interactions* 37, no. 1 (January–March 2011): 87–96; Robert Axelrod, “The Rational Timing of Surprise,” *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979): 228–46; John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1982), 145. In many ways, preventive logic underpins what Mearsheimer calls “Offensive Realism”: “Given the difficulty of determining how much power is enough for today and tomorrow, great powers recognize that the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now, thus eliminating any possibility of a challenge by another great power.” See John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Woosang Kim and James D. Morrow, “When Do Power Shifts Lead to War?” *American Journal of Political Science* 36, no. 4 (November 1992): 896–922; James Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 379–414; Robert Powell, “War as a Commitment Problem,” *International Organization* 60, no. 1 (January 2006): 169–203; Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 123–233.

<sup>21</sup> Powell, “War as a Commitment Problem,” 181.

<sup>22</sup> Levy, “Preventive War”; Levy, “Preventive War and Domestic Politics.”

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 76.

<sup>24</sup> Historian M. S. Anderson calls this war “the most famous preventive war in history.” See Anderson, *18th Century Europe, 1713–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 34.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Powell, “Shadow of Power,” 130.

<sup>26</sup> Dale C. Copeland, “A Tragic Choice: Japanese Preventive Motivations and the Origins of the Pacific War,” *International Interactions* 37, no. 1 (January–March 2011): 116–25.

These are examples of interstate war. However, because direct military or economic assistance to either the government or the rebel group can directly alter the balance of military power, fear of intervention can also induce intrastate wars.<sup>27</sup> Two “lower” forms of intervention, diplomatic recognition and offers of mediation, might also motivate a government to engage in preventive war.<sup>28</sup> If a third-party state recognizes a rebel group as the legitimate governing body over a territory, it is obviously taking a stand against the established government. If a third-party state instead chooses to abstain from recognizing the rebel group, then that state is, in effect, encouraging the existing government. Either policy is a form of intervention, which is why, according to George Modelski, there is no such action as “non-intervention” in a civil war.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, recognition by a major power, even if it does not carry with it material support from that same recognizing power, could, by legitimating the rebel group to the international community, open the doors for other states to offer material support. A similar logic applies to third-party offers to facilitate conflict mediation talks. By offering a place at a negotiating table, mediation essentially legitimatizes the rebel group in the eyes of the international community, an outcome that the established government could find “unthinkable.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, rather than seeking third-party enforcement of a peace “contract,” actors in a civil conflict may purposely avoid interference by outside parties.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*, 20. How material intervention influences a civil war's length and duration is not obvious. Research finds that while intervention on the side of the rebels increases the probability of rebel victory, intervention on the side of governments appears to have little impact on the chances of government victory. Stephen E. Gent explains this by highlighting a selection effect: governments, which previously controlled the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in a territory, only require third-party material assistance when it faces a particularly strong rebel group. See Gent, “Going in When it Counts: Military Intervention and the Outcome of Civil Conflicts,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December 2008): 713–35. See also Dylan Balch-Lindsay, Andrew J. Enterline, and Kyle A. Joyce, “Third-Party Intervention and the Civil War Process,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 3 (May 2008): 345–63.

<sup>28</sup> See Regan and Aydin, “Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention.” Jonathan Renshon views preventive actions as having multiple motivations, including concerns over a loss of prestige. See Renshon, *Why Leaders Choose War: The Psychology of Prevention* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 145. Paul Schroeder argues that leaders will launch preventive wars to prevent a breakdown of international order, not necessarily to destroy an opponent's military power. See Schroeder, “Preventive Wars to Restore and Stabilize the International System,” *International Interactions* 37, no. 1 (January–March 2011): 96.

<sup>29</sup> George Modelski, “The International Relations of Internal War,” in *International Aspects of Civil Strife*, ed. James N. Rosenau (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 335.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Blattman and Edward Migel, in their review of the economics literature on civil war onset, highlight how “external interventions could also have the opposite effect, however, and prevent an ongoing war from reaching a credible peace agreement.” See Blattman and Miguel, “Civil War,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 48, no. 1 (March 2010): 14.

Attacking a rebel group can prevent intervention by raising the costs of intervention.<sup>32</sup> While troop deployments or economic aid carry obvious material costs (in the form of blood and treasure), diplomatic recognition is also costly. Alexis Heraclides acknowledges that it is tempting to label the act of recognition “cheap talk,” since “states may declare their support for a rebel movement but are unlikely to match their words with high-level tangible aid such as arms or funds.”<sup>33</sup> However, failing to back a diplomatic statement may carry reputational consequences. An intervener’s international prestige depends on realizing its promises, including promises to treat the rebel group as a sovereign.<sup>34</sup> As Jervis writes, “it is in a state’s interest to be believed, and an important determinant of whether it will be believed in any given situation is its reputation for telling the truth and doing what it says it will do. It is partly for this reason that states often avoid explicit statements of their intentions.”<sup>35</sup> In an effort to save face, a recognizing state may eventually offer material assistance to the recently recognized state. At the extreme, such assistance might take the form of an alliance pact. Stated differently, foreign recognition is a critical first step on the road to a formal alliance.<sup>36</sup>

Before moving to the case study, I should provide two clarifications. First, Levy emphasizes that preventive war is a *strategy* that might very well ignite a war, but it is not, in itself, a war classification. Wars result from a multitude of issues and causes and, thus, “to identify a war as ‘a preventive war’ privileges one cause over others.”<sup>37</sup> The American Civil War is no exception. The prevention of British recognition is irrelevant without secession. Disputes between the North and South over states’ rights and slavery remain the fundamental contributors to the American Civil War. Second, one might question the applicability of preventive war logic to civil wars. To argue that a quick and aggressive strike can forestall third-party intervention contrasts with Werner, who argues that lowering demands, rather than striking quickly, will dissuade third party intervention.<sup>38</sup> But Werner’s theory applies

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<sup>32</sup> Michael G. Findley and Tze Kwayng Teo, “Rethinking Third-Party Intervention into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach,” *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (November 2006): 828–37.

<sup>33</sup> Alexis Heraclides, “Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement,” *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 343.

<sup>34</sup> Aysgul Aydin, “Where Do States Go? Strategy in Civil War Intervention,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27, no. 1 (February 2010): 51.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press), 78.

<sup>36</sup> This echoes a comment by the historian James McPherson that “recognition is an important first step toward something more important.” McPherson, “The Whole Family of Man: Lincoln and the Last Best Hope Abroad,” in *The Union, The Confederacy, and the Atlantic Rim*, ed. Robert E. May (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1995), 147.

<sup>37</sup> Jack S. Levy, “Preventive War and Democratic Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (March 2008): 3.

<sup>38</sup> Suzanne Werner, “Deterring Intervention: The Stakes of War and Third-Party Involvement,” *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 4 (October 2000): 720–32.

to situations where the third party is explicitly a defender of the threatened actor (that is, has a formal alliance). I am addressing situations where the rebel group does not yet have foreign recognition, let alone a formal alliance with the outside power. The possibility of recognition could still induce the government to attack, since, as mentioned above, recognition can pave the way toward the formation of a formal alliance.

#### APPLICATION: LINCOLN'S DECISION TO ESCALATE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE SOUTH

The notion of launching war to prevent foreign intervention offers insight into Lincoln's decision to escalate violence against the South. As mentioned in the introduction, direct evidence for Lincoln's decision is lost to history. However, some prominent historians have conjectured that Lincoln's authorization of a strike at Bull Run, the war's first major military campaign, might have been influenced by concerns over British recognition of the Confederacy. Don Fehrenbacher writes how Bull Run "was the first opportunity" to take a bold stroke against the South, "and here, as in the case of Fort Sumter, there was probably more to be lost by inaction (a decline of public morale, for instance, and perhaps European recognition of the Confederacy) than by action, whatever its result."<sup>39</sup> In fact, Fehrenbacher argues that it is difficult to overstate the importance of foreign recognition to Lincoln and his administration when it entered office: "still another urgent problem at the beginning of the hundred days was the danger of foreign intervention in a manner favorable to the Confederacy."<sup>40</sup> Similarly, perhaps drawing from Fehrenbacher, Michael Burlingame writes, "[Lincoln] may also have believed that to postpone an attack would dispirit the North and perhaps even lead to European recognition of the Confederacy."<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, after making these brief statements, neither scholar attempts to explore the evidence that could support such an explanation.

To know if the threat of foreign recognition influenced Lincoln's decision, I must evaluate his cabinet's views toward the possible role of European powers in the lead-up to his 29 June 1861 authorization of the Manassas strike. I must find that Lincoln and his cabinet based the decision to use force, at least in part, on the likely actions of foreign actors. I cannot claim that the threat of intervention is the explanation, but I can show that it is an important explanation.

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<sup>39</sup> Fehrenbacher, "Lincoln's Wartime Leadership," 15, parenthetical comment in the original.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 2: 181.

Using overlooked passages in key correspondences (and widely acknowledged passages on concerns of foreign recognition), I will show that, in the lead-up to authorizing offensive force against the South, two facts are clear: (1) Lincoln and his cabinet considered the possibility of British recognition to be *the primary threat* facing the United States with respect to the secession crisis, and (2) key members of Lincoln's cabinet believed and/or received credible information that exercising force against the South could forestall such recognition. My evidence draws from volume IV of the *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, the US Department of State's *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Part II of the *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, series 2, volume II of the *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, archived letters, and a number of secondary sources.

I begin by discussing Lincoln's initial decision and the series of events leading to his change in policy. I then show how one can explain his decision by considering the need to prevent foreign recognition.

### Lincoln's Initial Policy

The secession crisis of 1860–61 began when the Southern states, fearing the sustainability of slavery, declared their right to leave the Union.<sup>42</sup> According to David Potter, both Lincoln and his Secretary of State, William Seward, were convinced that secessionism was a superficial phenomenon and that pro-Union sentiment could be rallied in the South.<sup>43</sup> As stated by Seward, “we shall keep the border states, and in three months or thereabouts, if we hold off, the Unionists and the disunionists will have their hands on each others throats in the cotton states.”<sup>44</sup> In line with this view, Lincoln, concerned with protecting federal property in the Southern states, asserted that “the power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, *there will be no invasion—no using of force against or among the people anywhere.*”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the decline of sectoral balance as an institution of stability between the Northern states and Southern states, see Barry Weingast, “Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy” in *Analytic Narratives*, ed., Robert Bates et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 186.

<sup>43</sup> Potter, “Why the Republicans Rejected both Compromise and Secession,” 99.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Potter, “Why the Republicans Rejected Both Compromise and Secession,” 101.

<sup>45</sup> First Inaugural Address, First Edition and Revisions, 4 March 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy Prentice Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 254, emphasis added. Also see Kenneth Stampp, “Comment on Why the Republicans Rejected Both Compromise and Secession,” in *The Crisis of the Union, 1860–1861*, ed. George H. Knoles (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1965), 111.

Lincoln dispatched on 10 April 1861 a supply expedition to Fort Sumter, South Carolina and notified the governor of South Carolina of the expedition's departure and mission. Since South Carolinian officials had informed Lincoln that they would oppose any attempt to resupply the fort, Lincoln knew that the likelihood of attack was high. As Lincoln expressed in his comments to Congress on 4 July 1861, "They knew—they were expressly notified—that the giving of bread to the few brave and hungry men of the garrison, was all which would on that occasion be attempted, unless themselves, by resisting so much, should provoke more."<sup>46</sup> As feared, South Carolinian forces attacked Fort Sumter on 12 April, prompting the Union forces inside to surrender.

While the popular view holds the attack on Fort Sumter as the "start" of the American Civil War, this is not the view of many notable historians. It is in no way apparent that an event such as Sumter—in which no casualties were incurred and both sides had complete information regarding the sequence of events—could be sufficient to induce a major conflagration between the two sides. As David Potter writes, "focus upon Fort Sumter can perhaps be intensified too much."<sup>47</sup> It is also why historian Emory Thomas refers to the three months following Sumter as a "phony war."<sup>48</sup>

The basis for such statements is the decision by Lincoln and his cabinet immediately following the Sumter attack. Lincoln quickly imposed a blockade on South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.<sup>49</sup> Next, between 22 April and 25 April, Lincoln held a series of cabinet meetings to discuss additional responses. At the meetings, Secretary of State William Seward, Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith, and Secretary of War Simon Cameron favored imposing a blockade, as did Lincoln's primary general, Winfield Scott.<sup>50</sup> Seward had called for a blockade even before the attack on Fort Sumter.<sup>51</sup> Scott argued that invading the Southern states would harden the insurgents' resolve and, as a result, "guarantee that at the end of the year you will be further from a settlement than you are now."<sup>52</sup> In opposition stood Attorney General Edward Bates, Secretary of the Treasury Solman Chase, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and Postmaster General

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<sup>46</sup> Message to Congress in Special Session, 4 July 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 425.

<sup>47</sup> Potter, "Why the Republicans," 103.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, *Dogs of War*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> Proclamation of a Blockade, 19 April 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 338.

<sup>50</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 351.

<sup>51</sup> Memo from Seward to Lincoln "Some thoughts for the President's consideration," 1 April 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 317.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Edward Davis Townsend, *Anecdotes of the Civil War in the United States* (New York: Appleton, 1884), 56. According to James McPherson, Townsend, a colonel, was Scott's chief of staff and, therefore, was present at this conversation between Scott and Lincoln. See McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire*, 278.

Montgomery Blair, who favored more aggressive measures, including closing Southern ports and possible invasion.<sup>53</sup> Bates argued against the more passive blockade policy by stating, “[the Southern states] think and in fact find it perfectly safe to defy the Government, and why? Because we hurt nobody; we frighten nobody; and do our utmost to offend nobody.”<sup>54</sup> Welles opposed a blockade because, with less than fifty available ships to interdict commerce, it would prove ineffective.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, closing the ports meant that any vessel entering a closed port could be seized in direct violation of municipal law and its crew subject to prosecution as smugglers.<sup>56</sup>

Seward argued that closing the ports, by effectively labeling the crews of foreign vessels as pirates, could antagonize foreign powers, thereby triggering recognition and even a war. Seward’s argument was based on earlier conversations with Sir Richard Lyons, the British minister to the United States.<sup>57</sup> Lyons conveyed to Seward the same sentiment he expressed to the French minister to the United States, Henri Mercier, namely that “an attempt to close the Ports of Entry in the South would, I conceived, force on the question of Recognition even more unavoidably than a regular blockade.”<sup>58</sup>

Upon hearing these arguments, Lincoln, according to the historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, “concluded that Seward’s position was stronger” and chose to reaffirm the defensive policy of blockade and non-invasion.<sup>59</sup> The blockade allowed Lincoln to respond to the insurrection crisis in a manner consistent with his promise to “avoid any devastation, any destruction of, or interference with, property, or any disturbance of peaceful citizens.”<sup>60</sup> Lincoln then extended the blockade on 27 April to include North Carolina and Virginia.<sup>61</sup> According to historian James McPherson, “[Lincoln’s initial] strategy of limited war—indeed, so limited that it was scarcely seen as a war at all... was a strategy founded on an assumption of residual loyalty

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<sup>53</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 351. See also Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward* (New York: Sheldon, 1874), 124.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Bates, “Diary entry for April 23, 1861,” in Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859–1866* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 185.

<sup>55</sup> John Niven, *Gideon Welles: Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 356.

<sup>56</sup> Niven, *Gideon Welles*, 356.

<sup>57</sup> Ivan Musicant, *Divided Waters: The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 51–52.

<sup>58</sup> Lyons to Russell, 30 March 1861, in James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, eds., *The American Civil War through British Eyes* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 1: 42–45.

<sup>59</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 351.

<sup>60</sup> Proclamation Calling Militia and Convening Congress, 15 April 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 332.

<sup>61</sup> Proclamation of Blockade, 27 April 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 346.

among the silent majority of Southerners.”<sup>62</sup> In fact, in a late April letter to Maryland Representative Reverdy Johnson, Lincoln reiterated his intention to avoid invasion: “I *do* say the sole purpose of bringing troops *here* is to defend the capital. I *do* say I have no purpose to *invade* Virginia, with them or any other troops, as I understand the word *invasion*.”<sup>63</sup>

### Lincoln's New Policy

Despite such statements, Lincoln did change his mind regarding invasion. This occurred in late June of 1861.<sup>64</sup> As described by the historian David Donald, “Up to this point Lincoln had favored delay, but he now ordered an advance against the Confederate army near Manassas, Virginia.”<sup>65</sup>

On 25 and 29 June, Lincoln summoned two war council meetings to authorize an invasion of the South. In attendance were General Scott, General Montgomery Meigs, and General Joseph Mansfield, along with Lincoln and his cabinet.<sup>66</sup> The meeting began with Scott reporting on the status of Union forces. Scott was reluctant to execute an immediate invasion because the inexperienced Union soldiers “were too much liable to panic. [But] given time the Federal soldiers could be turned into heroes.”<sup>67</sup> After a brief discussion between the generals over the necessary number of artillery to support the troops, the council adjourned until 29 June. During those four days, General Scott asked General Irvin McDowell to devise a campaign against Southern forces.<sup>68</sup> Plans for invasion had percolated throughout the military staff and cabinet in May, but none had been formally presented to the president.<sup>69</sup> While Scott had earlier queried McDowell about the feasibility of a “probe” into Virginia, this was the first time Scott asked for plans detailing a strong assault.<sup>70</sup> At the 29 June meeting, Lincoln asked to see McDowell’s plan, which entailed attacking Confederate forces at the Manassas Junction rail station in Virginia. Because McDowell expected Southern forces to know

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<sup>62</sup> James McPherson, “From Limited to Total War in America,” in *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871*, ed. Stig Förster and Jorg Nagler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 298–99.

<sup>63</sup> Lincoln to Johnson, 24 April 1861, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 343, emphasis in original.

<sup>64</sup> Detzer, *Donnybrook*, 75; Charles Winslow Elliott, *Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 727; Donald, *Lincoln*, 306.

<sup>65</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 306.

<sup>66</sup> Russell Weigley, *Quartermaster General of the Union Army: A Biography of M. C. Meigs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 169.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 169.

<sup>68</sup> For details on McDowell’s plans, see Russell Beatie, *The Army of the Potomac: Birth of Command, November 1860–September 1861* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002), 145–47, 202–9.

<sup>69</sup> Detzer, *Donnybrook*, 68–69.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

of the attack, he believed that victory required preventing Southern reinforcements.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, like Scott, the inexperience of Northern soldiers concerned McDowell: "I said that I went over there with everything green. That was admitted; but they said that the other side was equally green. I said that the chances of accident were much more with green troops than with veterans, and I could not undertake to meet all their forces together."<sup>72</sup> At this point, General Meigs rebutted Scott and McDowell by arguing, "it was better to whip them here than to go far into an unhealthy country to fight them, and to fight them far from our supplies, to spend our money among enemies instead of among friends. To make the fight in Virginia was cheaper and better as the case now stood."<sup>73</sup>

After listening to these arguments, Lincoln accepted McDowell's plan and authorized a strike on Manassas Junction. Lincoln addressed the concern over troop inexperience by admitting, "You are green, it is true. But they are green, also; you are all green alike."<sup>74</sup> Lincoln's acknowledgment of both sides being "green" does not suggest a flippant view about attacking Southern forces. It only indicates that Lincoln viewed Union inexperience as insufficient for postponing attack. Lincoln was fully aware of the risks involved in the strike and knew that the plan was far from guaranteed to succeed. Nevertheless, he took a gamble by authorizing the offensive against Southern troops at Manassas Junction rail station.

### The Threat of Recognition: British Interests

To explain how the fear of British intervention (even in the form of recognition) could influence Lincoln's decision, one must first understand why Lincoln and his cabinet thought intervention was a possibility and the consequences of such intervention. The basis of Northern decision-maker's belief in possible British intervention can be summarized in a single word: cotton. British reliance on Southern cotton gave the prospect of British recognition a high degree of perceived plausibility in both the North and the South. By 1858, 79 percent of British cotton imports came from the South.<sup>75</sup> Though British manufacturers sought alternatives (notably Surat yarn from India), the high quality of Southern cotton made it the economical and preferred choice. *The Economist* magazine observed in April of 1861 that "the workpeople must prefer the better, or American, quality. The yarn produced from it

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<sup>71</sup> Testimony of General Irvin McDowell, 26 December 1861, in *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Part II—Bull Run—Ball's Bluff (JCCW)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1865), 36.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Weigley, "Quartermaster General of the Union Army," 172.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in McPherson, *Tried by War*, 39.

<sup>75</sup> Owsley, *King Cotton*, 3.

'spins better'... it breaks less, and, consequently, the weaver can weave it with less interruption."<sup>76</sup> Additionally, though a bumper crop of cotton over the two previous years led to a surplus of cotton supplies in England, manufactures and spinners had begun speculating on cotton in anticipation of later disruptions.<sup>77</sup>

It was also not clear that the existence of slavery in the South would dissuade Britain from recognizing the Confederacy, despite Britain's global efforts to eliminate the practice. This is for three reasons. First, the British had and continued to recognize the United States throughout the early nineteenth century despite it being a slave state. Second and perhaps more importantly, during the first two years of the war, both the North and South maintained that the conflict was over the right of secession (for the South) or the right to maintain the Union (for the North), not over the status of slavery. Third, it seemed unlikely that Lord Palmerston, the British prime minister, would allow public moral opposition to slavery to impede the pursuit of a policy that he felt served Britain's broader interests. Consistent with this mindset, Palmerston stated in mid-1861 how "we do not like slavery, but we want cotton, and we dislike very much your Morrill tariff" (where the tariff raised duties on manufactured imports from Europe).<sup>78</sup> In early 1861, British Foreign Minister John Russell expressed how uncertainty of the situation (not an aversion to slavery) played a major role in preventing Britain from recognizing the Confederacy during the first year of the secession crisis and war. As Russell wrote to Lyons on 22 March 1861, "[while] her Majesty's Government [is] very reluctant to take any step which might encourage or sanction the separation: that, however, it was impossible to state, at the present moment, in what shape the question might present itself."<sup>79</sup>

Russell then informed US minister to Britain, George M. Dallas, that the British government regretted the secession and was "in no hurry to recognize the separation as complete and final; but it is impossible to tell how and when circumstances might arise which would make a decision necessary."<sup>80</sup> On 18 May, Russell elaborated that recognition was still an option: "I had, therefore,

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in A Practical Man, "Indian Versus American Cotton," *Economist*, 13 April 1861, 399.

<sup>77</sup> See R. J. M. Blackett, "Pressure from Without: African Americans, British Public Opinion, and Civil War Diplomacy," in *The Union, the Confederacy, and the Atlantic Rim*, ed. Robert E May (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1995), 91. See also H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), 476.

<sup>78</sup> Quote from account of a conversation between Palmerston and August Belmont, in Belmont to Seward, 30 July 1861, in August Belmont, *Letters, Speeches, and Addresses of August Belmont* (privately printed, 1890), 76-78. Also quoted in a number of historical works, including James Morton Callahan, *The Diplomatic History of the Southern Confederacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1901), 82; Frederic Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1900), 2: 330.

<sup>79</sup> Russell to Lyons, 22 March 1861 in Mountage Bernard, *A Historical Account of the Neutrality of Great Britain During the American Civil War* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), 124.

<sup>80</sup> Russell to Dallas, 8 April 1861, in Bernard, *Historical Account of the Neutrality of Great Britain*, 125.

thought it necessary to add that Great Britain must hold herself free to act according to the progress of events and as circumstance might require.”<sup>81</sup>

### The Threat of Recognition: The American Perception

Regardless of Britain’s actual interests, I am principally interested in how officials in America, especially members of Lincoln’s cabinet, perceived those interests. Southern officials believed that cotton would inevitably compel European recognition.<sup>82</sup> For instance, Georgia senator Alfred Iverson, in his 28 January 1861 Senate farewell speech, famously asserted: “You will have ships-of-war and we may have none. You may blockade our ports and lock up our commerce. We can live, if need be, without commerce. But when you shut out our cotton from the looms of Europe, we shall see whether other nations will not have something to do on that subject. ‘Cotton *is* king’ and it will find means to raise your blockade and disperse your ships.”<sup>83</sup>

Even prior to seceding, key officials within the Confederate states viewed active British support, perhaps even a formal alliance, as critical for securing their independence. In December 1860, Robert Barnwell Rhett, former South Carolina senator and a key member of the South Carolina Secession Convention of 1860, made clear to Robert Bunch, the British consul in Charleston, “the wishes and hopes of the Southern States centered in England” and that the Southern states “would prefer an Alliance with Her to one with any other Power.”<sup>84</sup> Most critically, this view was apparently echoed within the Confederate cabinet. Based on postwar interviews with Jefferson Davis, John Joseph Carver recounted how Davis regretted the Confederacy’s lack of naval development and how the Confederacy initially avoided naval construction because “the belief was common, if not natural, that the necessities of Europe would compel foreign nations to raise the blockade, and finally bring the naval resources of England and France to the aid of his people.”<sup>85</sup>

Such views also permeated Lincoln’s cabinet, thanks in no small part to statements by British officials. For example, British Minister Lyons informed Seward that serious consequences could follow if the United States disrupted the flow of cotton: “If the U.S. determined to stop by force so important a

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Bernard, *A Historical Account of the Neutrality of Great Britain*, 125.

<sup>82</sup> See, in particular, Owsley, *King Cotton*; Charles M. Hubbard, *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998).

<sup>83</sup> “Farewell Speech of Senator Alfred Iverson, US Senator from Georgia, on the Occasion of His Withdrawal,” 28 January 1861, in *The Great Parliamentary Battle and Farewell Addresses of the Southern Senators on the Eve of the Civil War*, ed. Thomas Ricaud Martin (New York: Neale Publishing, 1905), 212–13.

<sup>84</sup> Rhett to Bunch, correspondence recorded in Bunch to Russell, 15 December 1860 in *American Historical Review* 18, no. 4 (July 1913): 785. See also Schoen, *Fragile Fabric of Union*, 249.

<sup>85</sup> John J. Craven, *Prison Life of Jefferson Davis* (New York: Carleton, 1866), 174.

commerce as that of Great Britain with the cotton-growing States, I could not answer for what might happen."<sup>86</sup> While such statements built the perception of a British motive to intervene, what were the exact consequences of British intervention, even in the limited form of sovereign recognition of the Confederate States? Northern officials associated two consequences with recognition: (1) bolstering of Southern resolve and capabilities, and (2) loss of international prestige for the United States.

First, the administration thought Southern disunionists were sustained by the hope of foreign recognition. As Seward later told US minister to Britain, Charles Francis Adams, "the life of this insurrection is sustained by its hopes of recognition in Great Britain and in France... [the insurrection] would perish in ninety days if those hopes should cease."<sup>87</sup> According to Seward, Lincoln viewed as shortsighted any attempt by the British "to lend its aid to a revolution designed to overthrow the institutions of this country, and involving ultimately the destruction of the liberties of the American people."<sup>88</sup> The administration feared that success by Southern representatives to secure British recognition "would probably render their success easy elsewhere," thereby enabling any number of countries to recognize, align with, and offer assistance to the South.<sup>89</sup> Seward implored his diplomats to make clear to the British, "Her Britannic Majesty's government is at liberty to choose whether it will retain the friendship of this government by refusing all aid and comfort to [the Confederacy]... or whether the government of her Majesty will take the precarious benefits of a different course."<sup>90</sup>

Second, Lincoln's administration feared a loss of prestige and international status if other nations viewed the United States as permanently dissolved. For Lincoln, recognition would convert the insurrectionists into a hostile foreign power. Lincoln wrote, "British recognition would be British intervention to create within our own territory a hostile state by overthrowing this Republic itself."<sup>91</sup> Seward echoed this fear by writing, "it is clear that a recognition of the so-called Confederate nation must be deemed equivalent to a deliberate resolution by her Majesty's government that this American Union, which has so long constituted a sovereign nation, shall be now permanently dissolved and cease to exist forever."<sup>92</sup> Seward feared that recognition, by converting the Confederacy into an independent nation, would

<sup>86</sup> Lyons to Russell, 26 March 1861 in Thomas Newton, ed., *Lord Lyons: A Record of British Diplomacy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), 1: 31.

<sup>87</sup> Seward to Adams, 30 November 1861, in *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of Rebellion (OCURA)* ser. II, vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 1108. Though the letter is from November, the passage is in reference to sentiments during the spring.

<sup>88</sup> Seward to Dallas, 10 April 1861, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1861* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], 1861), 1: 79.

<sup>89</sup> Reported by Seward in Seward to Dallas, 10 April 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 75.

<sup>90</sup> Seward to Adams, 27 April 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 83.

<sup>91</sup> 21 May 1861 draft dispatch from Seward to C. F. Adams with revisions by Lincoln, in John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Century, 1890), 270–75.

<sup>92</sup> Seward to Dallas, 10 April 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 77.

provoke a hemisphere-wide war: "The new confederacy, which in that case Great Britain would have aided into existence, must, like any other new state, seek to expand itself northward, westward, and southward. What part of this continent or of the adjacent islands would be expected to remain in peace?"<sup>93</sup>

### Reinforcing the North's Perception: The Queen's Proclamation

Queen Victoria's 13 May 1861 proclamation of British neutrality marked a critical moment in the secession crisis. By granting belligerent status to Southern forces, Charles Sumner, chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, labeled the proclamation "the most hateful act of English history since the time of Charles 2nd."<sup>94</sup> From the North's perspective, the Queen's declaration turned an abstract fear of formal recognition into a true possibility. Upon receiving news of the neutrality proclamation, Charles Adams immediately met with Russell. Adams informed Russell that the American administration looked ill upon the neutrality declaration: "I must be permitted frankly to remark that the action taken seemed, at least to my mind, a little more rapid than was absolutely called for by the occasion. It might be recollected that the new [American] administration had scarcely had sixty days to develop its policy."<sup>95</sup>

Adams went on to state that the American administration "would inevitably infer the existence [on the part of the British] of an intention more or less marked to extend the struggle [between the North and South]," and, if this was indeed the case, then he would be bound "to acknowledge in all frankness that in that contingency I had nothing further left to do in Great Britain."<sup>96</sup> In response, Russell told Adams that the Americans had mistakenly attributed hidden meaning to the proclamation. Neutrality, Russell insisted, was necessary to bar the British people from participating in the American conflict. The proclamation was designed "to explain to British subjects their liabilities in case they should engage in war."<sup>97</sup> Adams rebutted Russell, saying that the proclamation appeared "designed to aid the insurgents by raising them to the rank of belligerent State."<sup>98</sup> In a final statement that did little to eliminate concern over eventual British recognition, Russell told Adams that

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Norman A. Graebner, "Northern Diplomacy and European Neutrality," in *Why the North Won the Civil War*, ed. David Donald (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 63. For more on the granting of belligerent status to the South, see Mahin, *One War at a Time*; Jones *Blue and Grey Diplomacy*; Philip E. Meyers, *Caution & Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008); Ferris, *Desperate Diplomacy*; Lynn M. Case and Warren F. Spencer, *The United States and France: Civil War Diplomacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970).

<sup>95</sup> Adams to Seward, 21 May 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 92–93.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Jones, *Blue & Gray Diplomacy*, 44.

<sup>98</sup> Adams to Seward, 14 June 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 103–5

while the American officials “ask on our part for a perpetual pledge that we would, under no circumstances, recognize the seceding State. . . . Great Britain must hold herself free to act according to the progress of events and as circumstances might require.”<sup>99</sup>

Following Queen Victoria's proclamation, Lincoln had Seward draft a dispatch to Adams. Because Lincoln revised the dispatch before it was sent, the dispatch reveals much about Lincoln's thinking on the matter. Lincoln, upset over a proposed unofficial meeting between British diplomats and Confederate emissaries, instructed Adams to “desist all intercourse” with the British government if a meeting takes place between the British and “the domestic enemies of this country.”<sup>100</sup> The memo, after briefly discussing the blockade, jumped directly to the issue of recognition: “As to the recognition of the so-called Southern Confederacy... [it will not] pass unquestioned by the United States in this case.”<sup>101</sup> It is notable that Lincoln removed the following language, feeling it too provocative: “When this act of intervention is distinctly performed, we from that hour shall cease to be friends and become once more, as we have twice before been forced, enemies of Great Britain.”<sup>102</sup>

Despite sending this dispatch, the possibility of recognition remained a great concern of the administration. This is evidenced by the continued discussion of recognition by Seward and members of the cabinet. In a July exchange with Adams, Seward claimed that recognition was an ever present concern of the administration: “on our part the possibility of foreign intervention, sooner or later, in this domestic disturbance *is never absent from the thoughts of this government.*”<sup>103</sup> In a 3 June 1861 note to Adams, Seward shared Lincoln's views regarding the importance and danger posed by recognition: “Every instruction you have received from this department is full of evidence of the fact that *the principal danger in the present insurrection* which the President has apprehended was that of foreign intervention, aid, or sympathy; and especially of such intervention, aid, or sympathy on the part of the government of Great Britain.”<sup>104</sup>

While Seward claimed to be sharing the views of the administration and of Lincoln, to what extent is this true? It is unlikely that Seward failed to continually inform Lincoln of his concerns over recognition or that his views on the possibility of recognition diverged markedly from Lincoln's. As historian Norman Ferris points out, “it was Seward's ‘ordinary habit’ to read his most

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<sup>99</sup> 18 May dispatch by Russell in Bernard, *A Historical Account of the Neutrality of Great Britain*, 125n1.

<sup>100</sup> 21 May draft dispatch from Seward to C. F. Adams with revisions by Lincoln, in Nicolay and Hay *Abraham Lincoln*, 270–75.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Seward to Adams, 21 July 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 117, emphasis added.

<sup>104</sup> Seward to Adams, 3 June 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 97, emphasis added.

important diplomatic instructions to the president before sending them. . . . Even as Lincoln frequently sought Seward's advice about the wording of such documents as his inaugural addresses and the emancipation proclamation, so Seward welcomed the President's concurrence before issuing important state papers."<sup>105</sup> Fehrenbacher mentions how "the two men discussed foreign policy frequently."<sup>106</sup> Seward himself, in a 5 June 1861 correspondence to his wife Frances, confided how Lincoln's "executive skill and vigor are rare qualities. The President is the best of us but *he needs constant and assiduous cooperation*."<sup>107</sup>

### The Northern Response: Attacking to Prevent Recognition

Since the threat of recognition was deemed the "principal danger" originating from the Southern insurrection, it likely played some role in Lincoln's decision to authorize the strike at Manassas Junction. I now present four pieces of evidence showing how members of the cabinet, and possibly Lincoln himself, held the view that staving off foreign recognition required using offensive force against Southern forces.

First, given his earlier recommendation of taking aggressive measures against the South, Attorney General Edward Bates fully supported the 29 June decision to attack Southern forces. Most importantly, Bates felt this would convince Europeans of the North's unwillingness to sit and allow the Confederacy to gain *de facto* independence. In a 13 July letter—one week before the planned attack on Manassas—Bates wrote to James Broadhead, "foreigners do not understand why we should allow a hostile army to remain so long almost in sight of the Capitol, if we were able to drive them off."<sup>108</sup> Bates recounted for Broadhead a conversation from that evening with a Prussian foreign diplomat. The diplomat informed Bates how Europeans viewed the presence of the hostile army as pointing to "the power of the insurgents and the comparative weakening of the government."<sup>109</sup> Bates's response to the diplomat was brief but very suggestive: "be patient a little—We'll disprove that before long."<sup>110</sup> One should note that during the April cabinet meetings,

<sup>105</sup> Norman B. Ferris, "Lincoln and Seward in Civil War Diplomacy: Their Relationship at the Outset Reexamined," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 12, no. 1 (1991): 35.

<sup>106</sup> Fehrenbacher, "Lincoln's Wartime Leadership," 16. It is also unlikely that Lincoln ignored Seward's concerns. The trust between Lincoln and Seward was high in June 1861, the time of Lincoln's decision to invade the South: "June had been a month of consolidation and reconciliation between the president and [Seward]." See Foreman, *World on Fire*, 122.

<sup>107</sup> William Seward to Frances Seward, 5 June 1861, in Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington as Senator and Secretary of State: A Memoir of His Life, With Selections From His Letters, 1846–1861* (New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), 590, emphasis added.

<sup>108</sup> Bates to Broadhead, 13 July 1861, James Overton Broadhead Papers, A0180, *Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center*, St. Louis.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

Bates argued for aggressive measures because “[The Southern states] warm up their friends and allies, by bold daring, and by the prestige of continued success—while we freeze the spirits of our friends everywhere, by our inaction and the gloomy presage of defeat.”<sup>111</sup>

Second, while Bates felt that failure to take military action could increase European support for the South, General Scott—who initially supported a cautious and defensive policy—came to believe that Confederate forces might themselves launch an offensive on Washington for the purpose of impressing the Europeans. As Scott wrote to General Patterson while preparing for the Manassas strike, “The [suspected Southern] plan supposes that this success will give the Confederate cause such prestige and inspire in it such faith as will insure the recognition of its Government abroad.”<sup>112</sup> He goes on to state that a Confederate victory will simultaneously impair the Union’s ability to secure the support (via loans) from Europe.<sup>113</sup>

Third, while the views of Bates and Scott are insightful, the key decision makers were Lincoln and Seward. To gain an insight into Seward’s views on force as a means of deterring foreign recognition, consider a 17 June letter between Lyons and Russell. Lyons wrote the letter immediately following a meeting with Seward. Lyons wrote that Seward appeared concerned with how European governments perceived the Union’s policies and actions: “Mr Seward also no doubt calculates upon the effect which may be produced upon the governments of Europe by the events of the Month.”<sup>114</sup> Lyons went on to state how a military strike by either side could greatly inform British policy: “The perseverance of neither side has yet been put to the test. No military engagement has taken place and consequently the effect of defeat or victory on the spirit of the two divisions of the Country, can only be conjectured.”<sup>115</sup> Lyons then shared how the British should be unimpressed with the North’s military movements: “the North has advanced gradually into Virginia without opposition—but if the advance is to go on at the same rate, it will take about half a century to get on to Florida.”<sup>116</sup> This statement is notable, as it reveals how the British were likely to be impressed by the North taking aggressive military action against the South. In fact, Lyons thought the Confederate troops could be quite successful if they chose to strike first: “no doubt if President Davis could move [his forces] such an attack would have a fair chance of success.”<sup>117</sup> Finally, in a statement that reveals how a decision by the North to escalate military operations could shift British policy

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<sup>111</sup> Bates diary entry for 23 April 1861, in Howard K. Beale, *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859–1866*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 186.

<sup>112</sup> Scott to Patterson, 9 July 1861, *OCURA* ser. 1, vol. 2, 164.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Lyons to Russell, 18 June 1861, Public Record Office (PRO) 30/22/35, British National Archives.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

favorably toward the Union, Lyons wrote, “Unless one side makes up their minds to a clash at Richmond or the other at Washington, we may go on in the present state of uncertainty all the summer and even much longer.”<sup>118</sup>

We do not know the extent to which Lyons informed Seward that Britain would view favorably an escalation of violence against the South. We can suppose that the 17 June meeting at least touched on this topic, since (1) Lyons wrote this letter immediately following the meeting and (2) Lyons remarked in the opening of the letter how Seward “no doubt calculates upon the effect which may be produced upon the governments of Europe.” We also know that the notion of using force to compel British respect was no secret amongst members of the British parliament and foreign dignitaries who interacted with those members of parliament. In a July 1861 correspondence between member of Parliament (MP) (and later Prime Minister) Lord Robert Cecil and the wife of Union diplomat John Lothrop Motley, Cecil wrote, “Well, there is one way to convert us all—Win the battles, and we shall come round at once.”<sup>119</sup> This view was also shared with Charles Adams, who, in turn, shared it with Seward.<sup>120</sup> Adams warned Seward that British “positive spirit” toward the United States will “depend far more upon the degree in which the arm of the government enforces obedience than upon any absolute affinity in sentiments.”<sup>121</sup> To drive home this point, Adams shared how members of the British government “after all, are much disposed to fall in with the opinion of Voltaire, that ‘*Dieu est toujours sur le coté des gros canon*’ (‘God is always on the side of the big guns’).”<sup>122</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most notably, is the view of Lincoln himself. As mentioned above, we lack direct statements from Lincoln on why he authorized the strike at Bull Run. Fortunately, we do know Lincoln’s reaction to the defeat at Bull Run. Immediately following the defeat, Senator Orville H. Browning, while hosting Lincoln at his home, observed Lincoln as “melancholy.” Though initially denying knowing the source of his depressed feelings, Lincoln eventually replied, “[Foreign powers] were determined to have the cotton crop as soon as it matured” and “[the British government] was now assuming the ground that a nation had no right, whilst a portion of its citizens were in revolt, to close its ports or any of them against foreign Nations.”<sup>123</sup> Indeed, the European reaction to the First Battle of Bull Run appears to have bothered Lincoln for at least another year. In August

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Lily Motley to J. L. M., 5 July 1861 in Motley, *John Lothrop Motley and His Family*, 112.

<sup>120</sup> The exact source from which Adams acquired this view is unclear. It may have been Lord John Russell or another member of Parliament. It might also have been a general observation based on various interactions in London. Regardless of the source, he shared the view with Seward.

<sup>121</sup> Adams to Seward, 21 June 1861, *FRUS 1861*, 1: 110.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., English translation not in the original.

<sup>123</sup> Browning diary entry from 28 July 1861 in Theodore Calvin Pease, *Diary of Senator Orville H. Browning* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1925), 489.

1862, Lincoln informed the French statesman Agénor Etienne de Gasparin, "it seems unreasonable that a series of successes, extending through half-a-year, and clearing more than a hundred thousand square miles of country, should help us so little, while a single half-defeat [at Bull Run] should hurt us so much."<sup>124</sup> This statement suggests that a primary concern of Lincoln following the failed strike at Manassas Junction was that the British and French might now become more aggressive in their efforts to recognize the South and impede the Union's ability to suppress the rebellion. Though the North's offensive strike failed to defeat Southern forces, it may have succeeded in forestalling recognition of the South. It is difficult to draw a direct causal arrow from the North's use of force to a subsequent nondecision by the British, but we know that immediately following Bull Run, Lyons wrote to Russell suggesting they wait and observe the course of events: "To judge from what has just occurred [at Bull Run], another defeat would depress the North and incline it to moderation, rather than rouse it to increased exertions. On the other hand it may be presumed that a victory would raise the war spirit again. If the North should show as much constancy as the South, its numbers and resources must, one would suppose, prevail at last."<sup>125</sup>

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR INTRA-STATE WAR SCHOLARSHIP

How does the fear of intervention influence the behavior of civil war participants? Drawing from the preventive war literature, I argue that the anticipation of foreign intervention can induce governments to initiate violence against rebel groups. This suggests that scholars of civil war intervention must take a broader view of how third parties influence conflict. While much of the intrastate war scholarship considers how outside parties can influence an ongoing civil war, few works consider how outside parties can influence civil war onset.

I illustrate this argument using the onset of major military operations during the American Civil War. Relying on just one case (albeit an important case) is the paper's strength and weakness. Focusing on a single case allows me to conduct careful qualitative historical counterfactual analysis, a core means of conducting causal inference.<sup>126</sup> Lincoln's authorization of the attack on Bull Run was a "critical juncture" in the secession crisis.<sup>127</sup> Absent

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<sup>124</sup> Lincoln to Agénor-Etienne de Gasparin, 4 August 1862 in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 355–56.

<sup>125</sup> Lyons to Russell, 30 July 1861 in Barnes and Barnes, *American Civil War through British Eyes*, 151.

<sup>126</sup> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>127</sup> Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism," *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (April 2007): 341–69.

the threat of British recognition, Lincoln may have continued to pursue a blockade-only policy. This counterfactual claim is plausible as it is both historically consistent and theoretically consistent.<sup>128</sup> By focusing on a switch between policies that were vigorously debated within Lincoln's cabinet, I considered only policy options that were available, discussed, and narrowly defeated by the relevant actors (historical consistency) and because preventive war logic provides an explanation for Lincoln's decision that is consistent with existing theories of war onset, the connecting principle follows from well-established theory (theoretical consistency).<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, given the magnitude of the American Civil War and the highly conventional means by which it was fought (large standing armies of defined political entities engaged in direct combat on battlefields), one might question this case's applicability to the many instances of civil war in which the combatants and tactics are unconventional. Therefore, scholars should explore other cases to see if the fear of outside intervention led to an escalation of violence. When doing so, scholars must consider if recognition alone is enough to spur an escalation of violence or if recognition must be coupled with a fear of material intervention.

Scholars should also make use of cases before and after 1945.<sup>130</sup> A notable (perhaps the most notable) pre-1945 example of intervention fears possibly inducing intrastate conflict is the French Revolution. Scholars have long acknowledged how concerns that foreign powers would intervene in support of the monarchy likely drove the onset of revolutionary violence in 1789. As the historian Georges Lefebvre wrote in his classic exploration of the French Revolution's onset:

Was not Louis XVI the brother-in-law both of the Emperor and the King of Naples, and in addition the cousin of Charles IV of Spain? Were not his two brothers sons-in-law of the King of Sardinia? Périsset-Duluc recalled having foreseen, before the opening of the Estates-General, that the French aristocracy might follow the example of the counterrevolutionaries in Holland, who had called in the Prussians to win a victory over their own countrymen. Collusion of the aristocracy with foreign interests, which was to weigh so heavily on the whole history of the

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<sup>128</sup> James Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 169–95; Jeffrey Chwieroth, "Counterfactuals and the Study of the American Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (June 2002): 293–327; James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (November 2004): 653–69.

<sup>129</sup> Historical consistency is also called the "minimal rewrite" rule.

<sup>130</sup> For a discussion of the civil war literature's pre-1945 bias, see Dan Reiter, *How Wars End* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). One small exception of a civil war study that does not completely ignore the American Civil War is by Stathis N. Kalyvas and Laia Balcells. They refer to the American Civil War as a classic example of a civil war that exhibits the traits of conventional warfare. This means "rebels are able to militarily confront states using heavy weaponry such as field artillery and armor." See Kalyvas and Balcells, "International Systems and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (August 2010): 415–29.

Revolution, was regarded as a fact from the beginning, and in July 1789 there was already fear of an invasion.<sup>131</sup>

With respect to a post-1945 case, scholars should reconsider, in light of any potential newly available evidence, the claim that Germany's decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia in December 1991 precipitated Belgrade's escalation of violence against the two regions.<sup>132</sup> Similar dynamics may have unfolded in Bosnia and Kosovo, which is why Kuperman and Grigoryan use these cases to test their theories linking intervention and civil war onset.<sup>133</sup>

In recent years, from Libya to Syria to Iraq to Afghanistan, the international community repeatedly faces the choice to intervene or not to intervene. My theoretical argument and evidence from the American Civil War suggests that policymakers must understand how the mere prospect of intervention can influence a government's actions. Since intervention can shift the balance of power to favor the rebels, a government might, like Lincoln, be willing to gamble on the prospect of quickly gaining victory in order to forestall such intervention. This can have the perverse effect—as it did during the American Civil War—of escalating and worsening the violence.

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<sup>131</sup> Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005 [1947]), 98–99.

<sup>132</sup> Carl Cavanagh Hodge, "Botching the Balkans: Germany's Recognition of Slovenia and Croatia," *Ethics and International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (March 1998): 1–18; Gale Stokes, John Lampe, Dennison Rusinow, and Julie Mostov, "Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 136–60.

<sup>133</sup> Kuperman, "The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention"; Grigoryan, "Third-Party Intervention."