

The Irrepressible Conflict

Southern Secession & Northern Reaction

Westward Expansion = Slavery Debate

- ⊗ Many thought MO Compromise had settled matter of slavery in West; however,
 - ⊕ All but California & Oregon suited to slavery & plantation agriculture;
 - ⊕ Presidential elections of 1844 & 1848 both decided based on candidates' support for TX annexation & Mexican War in relation to expansion of slavery.
- ⊗ Spirit of Manifest Destiny tempered by fears of slavery's expansion.
 - ⊕ Whigs, traditionally a party of the West, opposed many plans for expansion;
 - ⊕ Fears of a Conspiracy of Slavocracy often justified, eg. Ostend Manifesto to take Cuba & invasion of Nicaragua.

Texas, Mexican War & Slavery

- ⊗ Texas Revolution spurred primarily by American landowners lured to TX by Mexican government.
 - ⊕ Angered by Santa Anna's tightening of political, economic & cultural control;
 - ⊕ But also brought on by settlers opposition to abolition of slavery by the Mexican government.
- ⊗ Annexation of TX & waging of Mexican War tied with slavery.
 - ⊕ Strongest proponents were Southern "Fire Eaters" though some Whigs did support declaration of War;
 - ⊕ "Conscience Whigs" opposed, including Abraham Lincoln who challenged Polk's justifications for war with the "Spot Resolutions."

The Chaotic 1850s & Compromise?

- ⊗ Biggest issue of Mexican War was what to do with new territories:
 - ⊕ Including TX, Mexican Cession was larger than Louisiana Purchase, increasing US by 1/3;
 - ⊕ Wilmot Proviso passed the House twice, but never the Senate.
- ⊗ CA admission was key since sectional balance was at 15 Slave & 15 Free states
 - ⊕ Pro-slavery forces knew 1849 CA Constitution had already banned slavery & feared expedited

admission--due largely to discovery of gold--would be a precedent for NM & UT territories;

- ⊕ Anti-slavery forces feared the expansion of TX, a slave state, into disputed territories (NM, CO, OK, KS).

“Compromise” of 1850

- ⊗ Transition in political leadership
 - ⊕ End of the “Great Triumvirate” & the genius of compromise: Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun & Daniel Webster;
 - ⊕ Rise of more extreme interests (William Seward & “Higher Law”) & lesser statesmen (Stephen Douglas, the “Little Giant”).
- ⊗ Major elements of the “Compromise”
 - ⊕ Anti-slavery: CA as a free state & end of the slave trade in Washington, D.C.;
 - ⊕ Pro-slavery: More stringent Fugitive Slave Law & payment to TX for disputed territory;
 - ⊕ Undetermined: Popular Sovereignty in the Mexican cession but no formal repeal of MO Compromise.

No Compromise on Slavery

- ⊗ Fugitive Slave Act was most controversial element of Compromise of 1850:
 - ⊕ Pro-slavery Southerners saw it as uncontroversial, a logical compromise to guarantee Constitutionally protected property rights;
 - ⊕ Anti-slavery forces saw the “Bloodhound Bill” as a rigged process;
 - ⊕ Independent Commissioners paid more for finding against the accused slave who could not testify in court
 - ⊕ Punishments for anyone who hindered the process.
 - ⊕ Most significant, Northerners saw it as forcing them to participate in the immoral institution.
- ⊗ Many historians see the Fugitive Slave Act as the **proximate** cause of the Civil War.

Northern Nullification?

- ⊗ Fugitive Slave Act led to extreme action in the North
 - ⊕ Passage of Personal Liberty Laws in 9 states:
 - ⊕ Forbade local officials from assisting in recapture of fugitives;
 - ⊕ Provided fugitive slaves with right to habeas corpus;

- ⊕ Punished false testimony with fines & imprisonment.
- ⊕ Mob actions in MA, NY, PA & "Booth War" in WI.
- ⊛ Supreme Court ruled Nullification of Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional in *Prigg v. PA* (1842) & *Ableman v. Booth* (1859).
- ⊛ Personal Liberty Laws cited specifically in SC's Declaration of Secession.

Perverting Popular Sovereignty

- ⊛ Popular Sovereignty had been considered the most legitimate concept introduced by the Compromise of 1850
 - ⊕ Allowed the will of the people to determine, in line with growth of democracy nationally;
 - ⊕ Aligned with nature of participatory democracy in the West;
- ⊛ KS-NE Act & Bleeding Kansas (1854)
 - ⊕ Northerners angered by repeal of MO Compromise;
 - ⊕ Southerners thought compromise would be similar to MO Compromise: one free state (NE) & one slave state (KS)
- ⊛ Both sides manipulated the process:
 - ⊕ MO "Border Ruffians" flooded in to support pro-slavery legislature & New England Emigrant Aid Society helped anti-slavery settlers;
 - ⊕ Violence on both sides, including "Beechers Bibles," Sack of Lawrence & Pottawatomie Massacre;
 - ⊕ Lecompton Constitution guaranteed protection of slavery regardless of popular sovereignty.
- ⊛ Led to creation of Republican Party
 - ⊕ Intended as an anti-slavery party;
 - ⊕ Banned south of the Mason-Dixon Line;
 - ⊕ Transition from national parties to sectional parties to single-issue parties.

Northern & Southern Perception

Seeing the Same Events through Sectional Lenses

- ⊛ Publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)
 - ⊕ Northerners saw it as a window into the South, an indictment of slavery.
 - ⊕ Southerners saw it as Northern abolitionist propaganda.

- ⊗ Caning of Sumner by Brooks (1856)
 - ⊕ Southerners saw Sumner's speech "Crime Against Kansas" a challenge to Southern Honor.
 - ⊕ Northerners saw the fact the lack of punishment of Brooks & his re-election as a sign that the South would go to any lengths to control Congress.

- ⊗ *Dred Scott Case (1857)*
 - ⊕ Southerners saw as vindication of their views of slavery and property rights, slavery in the territories, and the rights of African Americans.
 - ⊕ Northerners saw it as proof that any American institution could be corrupted by slavery and that they could no longer avoid the "Peculiar Institution."

- ⊗ John Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry (1859)
 - ⊕ Southerners saw it as vindication of their fears of slave revolts and the influence of radical abolitionists.
 - ⊕ Northerners saw it as an extreme act but justified given failed attempts to isolate slavery.

Did Lincoln = Secession?

- ⊗ What did Lincoln really think about slavery?
 - ⊕ "My paramount object in the struggle is to save the Union; and it is not either to save or destroy slavery."
 - ⊕ Had long been a proponent within the Republican of putting slavery on a "course of ultimate extinction."
 - ⊕ At the very least supported restricting slavery in territories.

- ⊗ Lincoln & the Crittenden Compromise
 - ⊕ Plan to re-establish the Missouri Compromise;
 - ⊕ Southern senators conditionally accepted;
 - ⊕ But Lincoln refused to compromise, arguing that it set the "minority over the majority."

- ⊗ Manufacturing Secession
 - ⊕ Though seven states seceded before Lincoln's Inauguration, the Confederacy was not spontaneous;
 - ⊕ South Carolina was chosen as the target by radical secessionists;
 - ⊕ Once South Carolina set the precedent, other states followed and the movement gained momentum.

✿ Border State Reaction

- ⊕ Waited to see what Lincoln would say in his inauguration;
- ⊕ Calmed by Lincoln's assertions of Union and his refusal to inflame the situation;
- ⊕ Also influence by the troops Lincoln sent to Maryland & Missouri.

Fort Sumter--Simply an Excuse to Begin Hostilities?

- ✿ Most Northerners opposed forcing the seceded states back into the Union
- ✿ Fort Sumter not unique--Attack on federal supply ship in January 1861 in Charleston Harbor did not lead to hostilities
- ✿ Lincoln sought a middle-ground approach
 - ⊕ Moderate approach to Southern seizure of Union assets despite their value to the Confederacy as it prepared for war;
 - ⊕ Lincoln emphasized that he would Resupply the fort but not Reinforce it.