

From *Pluribus* to *Unum*?
The Civil War and Imagined Sovereignty in 19th
Century America*

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Abstract

Contestation over the structure and location of final sovereign authority – the right to make and enforce binding rules – occupies a central role in political development. Historically, war often settled these debates and resulted in the institutionalization of the victor’s vision of sovereignty. Yet sovereign authority requires more than a set of institutions; it ultimately rests on the recognition and acceptance of the governed. How does war shape the popular imagination of sovereignty? We explore the effect of warfare on imagined sovereignty in the United States, a case where the debate over two competing visions of sovereignty culminated in violence during the American Civil War. We exploit the grammatical shift in the “United States” from a plural to a singular noun as a measure of how sovereignty is imagined, drawing upon two large textual corpuses: newspapers between 1800–1899 and all Congressional speeches between 1851–1899. We demonstrate that war shapes the popular imagination of sovereignty, but for the North only. Our results suggest that Northern Republicans played an important role as ideological entrepreneurs in bringing about this shift.

One of the most important developments in the history of European state formation is the emergence of sovereignty: the idea that there exists a final political authority over the territorial state.¹ Sovereignty is the organizing principle of all modern states. Indeed, alternatives to sovereignty, once common outside the Western world, have fallen away.² What remains contested is not heteronomy as an alternative to sovereignty but rather the configuration of sovereign authority within the polity: where or in whom sovereign authority is located and how that authority is to be structured.³ Is final sovereign authority found in the king or the parliament? What are the rights of subordinate political units, such as colonies, autonomous territories, and the constituent parts of federal states, vis-à-vis the superordinate unit?

Historically, violence played a central role in settling these debates. The English Civil War was fought over the location of sovereign authority and, together with the Glorious Revolution, eradicated the absolute sovereignty of the monarchy.⁴ On the Continent, the Napoleonic Wars spread the idea that sovereignty was vested in the nation.⁵ In the American Civil War, the Union's victory reinforced the U.S. federal government's claim to sovereign authority over the individual states.⁶ The principle of national self-determination, in which the nation has the right to choose its sovereignty, emerged victorious in World War I and the Yugoslav wars of secession.⁷ In each of these wars, one vision of how sovereign authority was to be organized triumphed over an alternative ideal, and the victor's institutional arrangements prevailed over those of the loser. Yet institutional change or preservation does not automatically imply ideational acceptance among those subject to the victor's sovereign authority.

¹Acharya and Lee 2018; Philpott 2001; Spruyt 1996; Krasner 1993, 261; Hinsley 1986; Strayer 1970, 108.

²Butcher and Griffiths 2017; Phillips and Sharman 2015; Philpott 2001; Ruggie 1998; Spruyt 1996; Krasner 1988, 89.

³Deudney 1995; Hinsley 1986, 3, 8.

⁴Malcolm 1999a,b; Sommerville 1999.

⁵Porter 1994.

⁶Wilentz 2005, 790; Ward 1990, 273; McPherson 1988, 859.

⁷Thomas 2003.

This paper investigates how warfare shapes the popular imagination of sovereignty. Sovereign authority ultimately rests on the recognition and acceptance of the governed. As Weber’s classical definition of the state suggests, sovereignty is not merely a material fact on the ground; it is fundamentally ideational.⁸ Similarly, Krasner describes sovereign authority as involving “a mutually recognized right for an actor to engage in specific kinds of activities.”⁹ Put differently, sovereign authority exists when those that the state purports to govern actually think of the state as sovereign.

We identify three potential effects of warfare on imagined sovereignty. One perspective holds that, by imposing a set of institutional arrangements, decisive military victory closes off possibilities for political action. In defeat, the losers may conclude their ideal cannot be achieved and thus reconcile themselves to the winning side’s vision of sovereignty. In contrast, a second perspective suggests that war may instead harden attachments to competing visions of sovereignty. In particular, due to the need to justify the costs of war, competing ideals may acquire a heightened normative valence as each side becomes (more) convinced of the moral superiority of their position. Finally, a third perspective emphasizes the role of ideological entrepreneurs who take advantage of the shock and uncertainty of wartime to promote their own ideal of sovereignty.

We explore the effect of warfare on imagined sovereignty in the context of 19th century America. The United States is a theoretically appropriate case because there existed two clear visions about how sovereign authority was to be structured. From the establishment of the Constitution in 1789, the sovereignty of the United States was explicitly divided between the national government and the several states.¹⁰ This constitutional arrangement provoked considerable debate among Americans about the nature of U.S. sovereignty¹¹ that culminated in a violent war of secession.¹² We bring evidence to bear on how the Civil War shaped the subsequent imagination of sovereignty for those on both sides of the conflict.

⁸[Loveman 2005](#), 1652-53.

⁹[Krasner 1999](#), 10.

¹⁰[Hamilton 1788](#).

¹¹[Holt 2019](#), 24.

¹²[Wilentz 2005](#), 790; [Ward 1990](#); [McPherson 1988](#), 859.

In addition, the U.S. context provides a unique opportunity to overcome a significant barrier in past research on sovereignty. While historical settings provide a long period to observe contestation and transformation in imagined sovereignty, they predate the advent of public opinion data that directly capture whether and to what extent individuals accept a particular vision of sovereign authority. We circumvent this problem in the U.S. case by developing a novel measure of imagined sovereignty based on the shared civic language of Americans. As other scholars have shown, language reflects how one sees the world: how we speak reveals something about what we think and how we behave.¹³ Our measure builds on this insight.

Specifically, we exploit a grammatical change in which the “United States” shifts from being a plural noun to a singular noun.¹⁴ Whereas Americans at the start of the 19th century once said, “the United States are,” by the start of the 20th they were much more likely to say “the United States is.” We treat this change in speech as indicative of a change in how Americans understand U.S. sovereignty, from the multiple and equal sovereignties embedded in the several states to the single final sovereignty of the United States as a national entity.

We construct our measure of imagined sovereignty by drawing upon two large textual corpuses: letters and editorials appearing in newspapers between 1800–1899 and all Congressional speeches made between 1851–1899. Our analysis reveals a powerful – but selective – effect of the Civil War on the imagination of sovereignty. In particular, evidence from our newspaper corpus demonstrates that the experience of the war accelerated adoption of the grammatical singular in the North but had no effect on the South. Moreover, this acceleration appears most pronounced in Republican-leaning counties. Finally, evidence from our Congressional corpus points to a rapid, discontinuous increase in singular usage among Northern Republicans. In contrast, we find no evidence that Northern Democrats, who fought with the North but had a much weaker ideological commitment to the vision of national sovereignty, thought about U.S. sovereignty differently after the war.

¹³Liu 2021; Pérez and Tavits 2019; Tavits and Pérez 2019.

¹⁴Santin, Murphy, and Wilkens 2016; Myers 2008.

Taken together, our results highlight the role of ideological entrepreneurs as the key mechanism in driving normative change during periods of conflict.

This paper makes several contributions to the literature on sovereignty and state development. From a theoretical standpoint, we highlight the importance of the ideational aspects of stateness. In contrast, the bulk of prior scholarship has emphasized how war affects the physical manifestations of the state: war expands the state's territory, enhances administrative and fiscal capacity, and promotes political representation,¹⁵ – at least in early modern Europe and among populations able to effectively bargain with the state.¹⁶ While some studies have linked warfare to nationalism and identity formation,¹⁷ to our knowledge we are the first to examine how war shapes the imagination of sovereignty – perhaps the most foundational characteristic of the state.

We also make an empirical contribution to the literature by introducing an innovative, text-based measure of imagined sovereignty. Although we are not the first scholars to observe the grammatical shift of the “United States” from plural to singular, our contribution is to illustrate the promise of utilizing this specific change to advance our understanding about the politics of sovereign centralization in American political development.¹⁸ More generally, by introducing the idea that civic language serves as a window into the popular imagination of sovereignty, we open up new avenues for scholarly inquiry into facets of state development for which measurement challenges have impeded previous work. In doing so, we offer a new text-as-data approach that goes beyond existing techniques for operationalizing difficult-to-measure political phenomena.¹⁹

¹⁵Cederman, Galano Toro, Girardin et al. 2021; Queralt 2019; Dincecco and Wang 2018; Gennaioli and Voth 2015; Stasavage 2011; Thies 2005; Tilly 1992; Bensel 1990; Levi 1988; Rasler and Thompson 1985.

¹⁶Koehler-Derrick and Lee 2021; Centeno 2002; Herbst 2000.

¹⁷Mazumder 2019; Mann 1993.

¹⁸Santin, Murphy, and Wilkens 2016; Myers 2008; McPherson 1988.

¹⁹Liu 2021; Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Taddy 2019; Proksch, Lowe, Wäckerle et al. 2019; Spirling 2012.

War and Imagined Sovereignty

How does war shape the popular imagination of sovereignty? Given the novelty of this research question, there unfortunately exists little in the way of established theory to guide our reasoning. In this section, we begin to fill this gap by drawing upon disparate literatures to formulate three broad conjectures about the potential ideological effects of war. The following section then applies these general ideas to the particulars of the U.S. case in order to derive specific testable hypotheses.

Our first conjecture builds from the observation that military victory in warfare often results in the institutionalization (or preservation) of the victor's vision of sovereignty, while closing off possibilities for political action by the losing side. Given the new "facts on the ground," the vanquished may abandon their prior ideological commitments as practically unattainable, and instead come to accept – however begrudgingly – the legitimacy of new institutional arrangements. The logic behind this mechanism bears strong parallels to the concept of adaptive preferences²⁰ whereby individuals adjust their aspirations to suit their circumstances. Under this view, for example, the total defeat of the Axis Powers and the Allied occupation of Germany and Japan not only made the return of fascism impossible in an institutional sense, but also downgraded fascism's ideational appeal while increasing attachments to democracy as the only possible system of governance. We term this effect the ABANDONMENT mechanism.

Our second conjecture begins with the observation that wars in the era of mass mobilization demand tremendous sacrifice on the part of citizens.²¹ In order to justify this expense of blood and treasure, wartime leaders often invoke normative and moral appeals to kindle popular support.²² Along these lines, research finds that citizens are more likely to accept the human costs of war

²⁰[Elster 2010](#).

²¹[Koehler-Derrick and Lee 2021](#); [Scheve and Stasavage 2010](#); [Tilly 1992](#).

²²[Lee and Prather 2020](#); [Maxey 2020](#); [Chong and Druckman 2007](#); [Widmaier, Blyth, and Seabrooke 2007](#); [Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997](#).

when they believe in the rightness of the war and expect to win.²³ Importantly, as a result of these processes of framing, persuasion and justification, wars increase the **NORMATIVE VALENCE** of ideological issues, thereby leading to durable shifts in beliefs, preferences and identities. To illustrate, Mazumder documents how the experience of World War I military service shaped the national identities of European immigrants, pushing foreign-born veterans towards cultural integration into the American mainstream.²⁴

Our final conjecture concerns not so much wartime outcomes or experiences, but focuses instead on the opportunities that wars provide for ideological entrepreneurs to change normative structures and understandings. It begins from the observation that the crisis of conflict injects uncertainty into social and political life, disrupting the status quo and calling into question what was previously taken for granted. This uncertainty and disorientation opens individuals to conversion to new ideas.²⁵ Further, knowing that such opportunities are rare and fleeting, ideological entrepreneurs are newly energized and galvanized into action. In other words, war serves as a permissive condition, one that creates a context in which change is possible.²⁶ Importantly, unlike the previous mechanisms which treat the sides in a conflict as monolithic blocs, the **ENTREPRENEURIAL** mechanism focuses on normative change amongst a subset of the population: namely, the ideological vanguard and their followers.

Sovereign Authority in the United States

We next apply these conjectures about the ideological effects of warfare to the particular context of 19th century America. The U.S. case is attractive in that it features two clear, competing visions about how sovereign authority was to be organized. Further, historians frequently cite the Civil

²³Maxey 2020; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005.

²⁴Mazumder 2019.

²⁵Skocpol 2015, 12.

²⁶Soifer 2012.

War as a critical turning point in the ideological settlement of this debate. Here, we briefly lay out the historical narrative before deriving testable implications of our theoretical conjectures.

Constitutional debates about the location of final sovereign authority are as old as the United States itself. In designing the Constitution, the founders set up a system whereby sovereignty was “neither wholly national nor wholly federal,” an arrangement that reflected the uneasy union of two visions about how sovereign authority in the United States was to be structured.²⁷ Importantly, questions revolved around whether the United States was a union of multiple sovereign states, or rather a single nation where final authority rested in the hands of the federal government.

This ambiguity in the constitutional construction generated periodic controversies throughout the first decades of the country’s history. During the Adams Administration, Jefferson and Madison secretly wrote the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions that argued that the states could nullify unconstitutional federal laws. When the federal government accumulated power under the Madison Administration during the War of 1812, extremist Federalists in New England toyed with the idea of secession as a proper response. Nullification reared its head again during the Presidency of Andrew Jackson when South Carolina threatened to nullify the Tariffs of 1828 and 1832.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, sectional divisions lent new intensity and urgency to debates over sovereign authority.²⁸ To be sure, the sectional conflict revolved primarily around the future of slavery – a point on which the South’s secession declarations were unambiguous.²⁹ But the South also couched its position on slavery within a particular view of states’ rights vis-à-vis the federal government and justified the legality of secession as a means of defending those rights. Further, the *act* of secession and the North’s decision to fight to preserve the Union turned the Civil War into an armed conflict over a constitutional issue. At stake were the very questions that

²⁷Holt 2019, 24; Madison 1788.

²⁸Morison 1968, 48–52.

²⁹Bonekemper 2015; Loewen 2010; Bensel 1990; McPherson 1988, 241.

had dogged the United States from its birth: the configuration of sovereign authority in the United States and the kind of nation the United State was supposed to be.³⁰

A central tenet of the Southern position was the belief that the Union was created as a compact of equal sovereign states, and thus its sovereignty was derivative of its constituent parts. Jefferson Davis aptly summed up this position when he stated that “I am a citizen of the United States, it is true, because I am the citizen of a State.”³¹ McPherson further elaborates the Southern view that “State sovereignty...preceded national sovereignty. When they had ratified the Constitution, states delegated some of the functions of sovereignty to a federal government but did not yield its fundamental attributes.”³² And since the Union was voluntary compact of sovereign states, these states, as sovereign authorities, could resume their original independence.

Northerners, in contrast, believed in a more organic, national conception of sovereignty. The Union was more than a compact, and also more essential than the sum of its parts. Rather, the United States was an “unbreakable, perpetual national community” created by the American people.³³ Or, New York Whig Elbridge Spaulding proclaimed, “We are...one people, one country, having mutual interests, reciprocal duties, and a common destiny.”³⁴ Sovereign authority in such a national community was naturally located in a “consolidated government of one people.”³⁵

At heart, the Northern position privileged the sovereignty of a national popular majority over the sovereignty of state’s rights. Amongst Northerners, the key proponents of this position were

³⁰Oakes 2013, 50, 451–452.

³¹North Carolina Democrat Abraham Venable made almost the same declaration: “I am an American citizen because I am a citizen of North Carolina.” Quoted in Maizlish 2018, 101. The preamble to the Confederate Constitution drove this point home; the preamble added the clause “each state acting in its sovereign and independent character” after “We the people.” This preamble also omitted the original’s reference to creating “a more perfect Union” – a line that suggested that the Union was older than the Constitution. Wilentz 2005, 778.

³²McPherson 1988, 239–240.

³³Maizlish 2018, 125. Contrast this view to that of Mississippi Democrat Albert Gallatin Brown, who declared that “There is no such political body as the people of the United States; they can do nothing, have done nothing, have in fact no existence.” Quoted in Maizlish 2018, 96.

³⁴Maizlish 2018, 126.

³⁵Maizlish 2018, 96.

members of the Radical wing of the Republican Party.³⁶ Before the war, Republicans and their Whig predecessors had supported economic policies that would have exercised or even increased national power at the expense of the states.³⁷ For Radicals, moreover, the question of federal authority became deeply bound up with the slavery issue. Indeed, “the driving force of Radical ideology was the utopian vision of a nation whose citizens enjoyed equality of civil and political rights, secured by a powerful and beneficent national state.”³⁸

The South’s secessionist challenge lent renewed vitality to these ideas. Indeed, for Northern reformers of all stripes, “as never before, the war mobilized [their] energies... imbuing their lives with a renewed sense of purpose.”³⁹ Radicals in particular viewed the Civil War as “a ‘golden moment,’ an opportunity for far-reaching change that, if allowed to pass, ‘will have escaped for years, if not forever.’”⁴⁰ Northern victory further propelled optimism at the prospects of far-reaching changes. In the aftermath of the war, Republicans resolved to make the nation a “‘custodian of freedom,’ and some [reformers] questioned whether the states deserved continued existence at all.”⁴¹

In combination with the general theoretical arguments introduced in the previous section, this historical narrative yields three case-specific hypotheses about the effects of the Civil War on imagined sovereignty. These hypotheses involve predictions concerning the (a) timing, (b) targets, and (c) direction of ideological change.

³⁶Bensel 1990, 11, 18–19. In contrast, Northern Democrats exhibited little of the Republican appetite for national government or national sovereignty. In the 1850s, their ideological appeals cast the Republicans as agents of political centralization and Democrats as defenders of limited government. Foner 1988, 31. Their ambivalence, even hostility, toward national sovereignty split the party into War Democrats, who supported Lincoln’s policies, and Peace Democrats, who were suspicious of national power and who wanted to sue for peace with the South. Weber 2006, 4. Despite this internal crisis, the party emerged from the war relatively intact and built upon the same ideology that they espoused before the war. Foner 1988, 31.

³⁷Foner 1970, 36.

³⁸Foner 1988, 230.

³⁹Foner 1988, 25.

⁴⁰Foner 1988, 230.

⁴¹Foner 1988, 24.

The ABANDONMENT hypothesis links ideational change to outcomes on the battlefield and the subsequent institutionalization of sovereignty structures. Given the North's total victory in the Civil War, Southerners by necessity recognized that they would remain part of the Union, and that there would be no separate country founded on the principles of states' rights. We therefore expect to observe that the South abandon its commitment to state-based sovereignty after the war and instead move towards greater acceptance of the ideal of a popular national sovereignty.

In contrast, the VALENCE hypothesis focuses on the ideological justifications for war, and their entrenchment through the processes of framing and justification. Given the distinct sectional positions on the sovereignty question, we expect that the outbreak of war will have diverging effects in the North and the South, strengthening attachments to the ideas of "perpetual union" and states' rights, respectively. Further, to the extent that normative appeals durably shape beliefs, preferences and identities, the ideational changes wrought by the war should outlive the actual conflict itself.

In addition, we also formulate a "weak" version of the VALENCE hypothesis for the North only, while making no predictions about the South. Our reasoning draws from the contention amongst some historians that, for Southerners, the war was never really about states' rights at all⁴², but rather centered around the future of slavery. The perhaps most striking illustration of this view can be found in a speech delivered by Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens two weeks prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. In this famous "cornerstone speech," Stephens explicitly pronounced that "African slavery...was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution," and goes on to explain that "Our new government is founded upon..the great [moral] truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery...is his natural and normal condition."⁴³ Taking Stephens at his word, we would expect that Southern justifications for war would serve to increase popular attachments to the "moral truth" of African subordination, but have little effect on the normative valence of states' rights.

⁴²For example, in pushing stronger enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, it appears that Southern slaveholders were all-too-happy to call upon federal power when it suited their interests.

⁴³[Bonekemper 2015](#), XXX.

Finally, the ENTREPRENEURIAL hypothesis emphasizes the opportunities that war provide for ideological entrepreneurs to advance their normative agenda. In the U.S. case, as we describe above, the ideological entrepreneurs were located within the Republican Party, which seized upon the secession crisis and its aftermath to decisively advance its vision of an expanded national authority.⁴⁴ Therefore, we expect to observe the ideological movement toward national sovereignty to be concentrated within Republican circles.

In summary, our hypotheses concern different predictions about the timing, targets, and direction of normative shifts. The ABANDONMENT hypothesis focuses on the losing side and expects shift to occur after war ends. The VALENCE and ENTREPRENEURIAL hypotheses suggest instead that ideational shift occurs with the outbreak of war itself. However, these latter two mechanisms differ in that they emphasize different actors: the North and South as sectional blocs versus ideological entrepreneurs within the North. Table 1 summarizes our hypotheses.

Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses

Mechanism	Timing	Target	Direction
Abandonment	Post-war	South	National sovereignty
Valence			
Strong and weak versions:	War outbreak	North	National sovereignty
Strong version only:	War outbreak	South	State's rights
Entrepreneurial	War outbreak	Republicans	National sovereignty

Imagining Sovereignty: From Plural to Singular

The ideational nature of sovereignty poses significant measurement challenges. Ideally, we would construct a measure of the popular imagination of sovereignty using public opinion surveys in

⁴⁴In this vein, it is noteworthy that Southerners thought of themselves as conservatives who were defending the Constitution from Republican's efforts to disregard and override it. [Maizlish 2018](#), 98–100, 103.

which pollsters ask individuals what they think about the United States. However, our period of study, the 19th century, predates the advent of scientific public opinion polling. Because we cannot observe how people think about U.S. sovereignty, we instead observe how they write or talk about the United States. Our approach assumes that individuals' language patterns reveal important information about what they think.⁴⁵ We therefore surmount the measurement challenge by studying the shared civic language as a window into the popular imagination of sovereignty.

Specifically, our measurement strategy leverages a grammatical change in the civic language in which the term "United States" shifted from being a plural to a singular noun. Whereas at the beginning of the 19th century Americans said "the United States are," by the end of the century they were much more likely to say "the United States is."⁴⁶ We treat plural/singular usage as a proxy for the popular imagination of sovereignty. Specifically, we take plural usage as indicating that Americans view the U.S. as having multiple sovereignties embodied in the several states and singular usage as indicating Americans conceive of the U.S. as possessing a single national sovereignty.

We are not the first scholars to attribute sovereign meaning in the usage of the plural and singular forms of the United States. For example, Civil War historian Shelby Foote linked sovereignty and speech in his observation that "Before the war, it was said 'the United States are.' Grammatically, it was spoken that way and thought of as a collection of independent states."⁴⁷ Similarly, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning account of the Civil War, James McPherson noted that the Civil War

⁴⁵[Liu 2021](#); [Pérez and Tavits 2019](#); [Tavits and Pérez 2019](#).

⁴⁶We are not the first scholars to document this transformation in shared civic language. Indeed, historians, linguists, literary scholars, and specialists in American studies have also traced this grammatical evolution in plural to singular usage over the course of the 19th century. However, although these scholars agree that a transformation takes place, they disagree about its speed and causes. For example, some historians attach special significance to the U.S. Civil War as a watershed moment in settling questions over grammar. [Wilentz 2005](#), 790; [Ward 1990](#), 273; [McPherson 1988](#), 859. In contrast, recent research in the humanities that draws on textual sources such as presidential speeches, international treaties, Supreme Court opinions, and newspapers point to a much more gradual shift over the course of the 19th century. [Santin, Murphy, and Wilkens 2016](#); [Rostrom 2009](#); [Myers 2008](#); [Zimmer 2005](#).

⁴⁷Quoted in [Ward 1990](#), 273.

“marked a transition of the United States to a singular noun” and that “the ‘Union’ also became the nation.”⁴⁸

Contemporary observers in the 19th century also treated language as laden with sovereign meaning. The *Washington Post* editorial board’s defense of its use of the grammatical singular is illustrative:

Before the first Bull Run we generally said “the United States are” – are a Confederacy, for instance; after Appomattox we learned to say “the United States is” – is a Nation, for instance. The war settled permanently the question of grammar, *and all that that implies – behind the sentiment was the syntax...* Whatever we may have thought once, however we may have felt once, it is now seen to be better for us all to say “the United States is” – is a Nation.⁴⁹

Thirty years later, a prominent former Texas legislator, newspaper editor, and columnist at the *Rusk County News*⁵⁰ linked speech and sovereignty in his criticism blasting a rival newspaper’s grammatical choices:

We had a right to think that the Houston Post would remain with us to the last for state rights... Just the other day we observed the Post referring with approval to the United States in the singular number. No, sir; no Jeffersonian ever said ‘this United States’ or ‘that United States’ or ‘the United States is.’ An advocate of state rights referring to these United States in the singular number is a mockery... Our government is composed of separate states with reserved rights and, therefore the United States are plural, and should never be used in the singular number.⁵¹

Perhaps most tellingly, neither Southerners nor Northerners considered the Confederate States of America to be a singular noun, much less a singular entity. For example, in his inaugural address, Jefferson Davis referred to the Confederate States in plural terms when describing “their” militias.⁵² In our own analysis of rhetoric in newspapers and Congressional speeches, we find 95

⁴⁸McPherson 1988, 859.

⁴⁹The *Washington Post* 1887, emphasis ours.

⁵⁰Langston 1941.

⁵¹Quoted in Bryan *Daily Eagle* 1917.

⁵²Davis 1861.

instances in which the “Confederate States (of America)” appeared as a grammatical subject and was treated as a plural noun, and exactly two instances in which the singular was used.⁵³

Methods and Data

We follow existing scholarship in the humanities by identifying singular usage in our textual sources through subject-verb agreement.⁵⁴ If the subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if the subject is plural, its verb must also be plural. This approach requires the term “United States” to appear as a grammatical subject, as in the statement “...the United States are unwilling to pay,”⁵⁵ rather than as a grammatical object, as in the statement “the commissioners who represented the United States are now dead.”⁵⁶ Conditional on the “United States” appearing as a grammatical subject, we further restrict our search to three common verb pairs that are unambiguously singular or plural: is/are, has/have, and was/were.

We use automated text mining processes to capture plural/singular usage in our textual sources. However, our approach goes beyond conducting simple keyword searches for phrases such as “the United States [is/are/has/have/was/were].” In particular, we confront two methodological challenges. First, we must isolate mentions of the United States as a grammatical subject, which are relatively uncommon. This task requires excluding object mentions, nouns such as the “Supreme Court of the United States,” and compound subjects such as “Mexico and the United States.” Second, our corpuses vary considerably in terms of OCR quality, a problem known to computer scientists and digital humanities scholars.⁵⁷

To address the first issue, we discard all hits in which a preposition follows the search phrase; the words “of the” precede the search phrase; or the search phrase appears as part of pre-defined list

⁵³See the appendix for methodological details.

⁵⁴Santin, Murphy, and Wilkens 2016; Myers 2008.

⁵⁵Congressional Globe 1864, 2929.

⁵⁶Congressional Record 1914, 7715.

⁵⁷van Strien, Beelen, Ardanuy et al. 2020; Hill and Hengchen 2019.

of titles, names, and compound subjects. To address the second issue, we program flexible search patterns using regular expressions to allow for common typographic errors in the OCR conversion process. As an additional check, we manually review all remaining results and discarded mentions that were not in the grammatical subject position. Full details about our search algorithms appear in the online appendix. The resulting measure of our dependent variable is an indicator taking 1 if when the mention treats the U.S. as a SINGULAR noun and 0 otherwise.

We conduct these searches using two types of textual sources: American newspapers and Congressional speeches. Our newspaper data cover the period 1800–1899 and are drawn from *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers* and *America’s Historical Newspapers*; both are proprietary databases containing OCR text.⁵⁸ Because we are interested in examining geographic differences in language use, we impose the additional restriction that newspaper content must be generated locally. The practice of reprinting material from other publications, including wire service content after the founding of the *Associated Press*, violates this restriction. Because there is no consistent way to track wire service and reprinted content across the multiplicity of publications in our dataset, we limit our attention to singular and plural mentions from content that is likely to be locally-generated: editorials and letters to the editor.

Congressional speech data come from OCR text conversions of the *Congressional Globe*, a private journal founded in 1833 to report on the daily proceedings of Congress, and the *Congressional Record*, which succeeded the *Globe* in 1873 and carried official status.⁵⁹ By 1850, improvements in stenographic technology and the professionalization of the reporting corps these publications to provide verbatim accounts of Congressional speech.⁶⁰ We are therefore able to link speeches to individual members of Congress from the 32nd Congress (1851–1853) and all meetings thereafter until 1899.

⁵⁸Gale 2021; Readex 2021.

⁵⁹Phillips 2015 and Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Taddy 2018, respectively.

⁶⁰McKinney 2002, 17; Byrd 1988, 314; McPherson 1942, 147.

Each textual source offers distinct advantages for our analysis. The newspaper corpus covers the entirety of the 19th century and contains both political and non-political content authored by non-elite (or at least less elite) writers, thereby allowing us examine how the war shaped popular patterns of language use. The newspaper corpus thus serves as the main focus of our analysis. In contrast, the Congressional speech corpus provides additional analytical depth. In particular, since we can link statements to specific (elite) individuals and factors such as party identification, we can directly examine the responses of ideological entrepreneurs to the war.

Given that two of our hypotheses concern the sectional effects of the Civil War, we restrict our attention to newspapers headquartered in U.S. states and territories that (eventually) participated in the conflict. For consistency, our Congressional speech sample includes mentions from Congressmembers and delegates from the same set of states and territories. In both cases, we omit mentions from the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. All four were slave states that did not (or were prevented from) joining the Confederacy. As such, we do not consider their participation in the war to be comparable to other members of the Union. For similar reasons, we exclude all mentions from West Virginia, which seceded from Virginia after Virginia seceded from the Union.

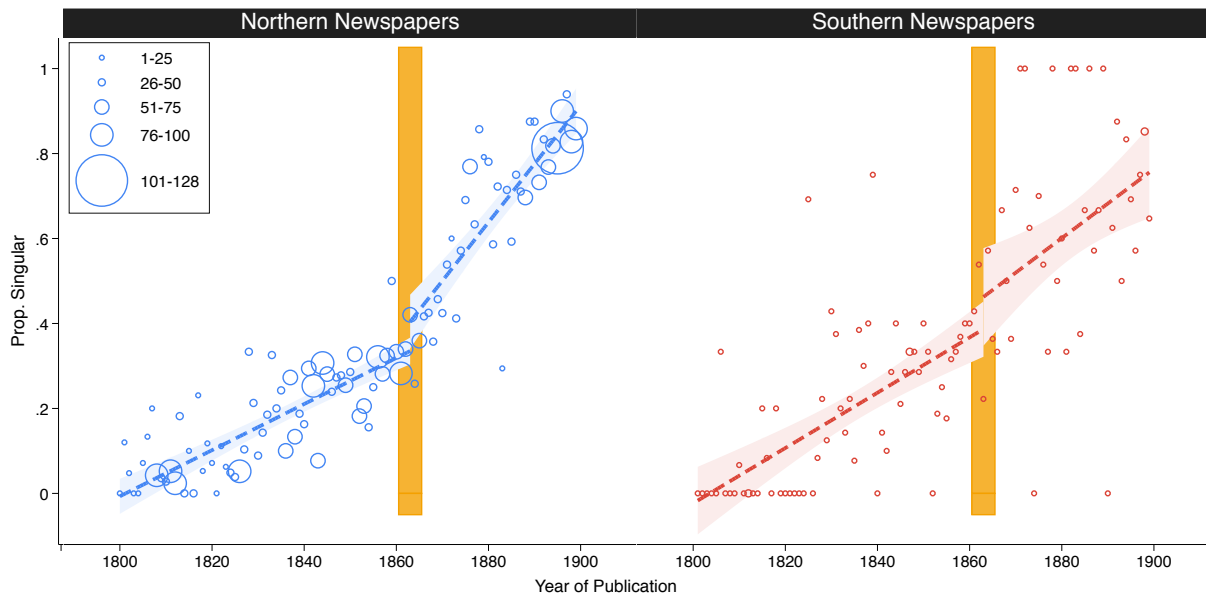
Evidence

Sectional Patterns

As two of our three hypotheses concern linguistic developments in the North and South, we begin by graphically examining sectional patterns language usage. We focus on the newspaper corpus since, for reasons outlined above, these data more closely approach a measure of “popular” speech. Figure 1 depicts singular usage as a proportion of all grammatical subject mentions by year, separately for the North and the South. In general, we observe a consistent movement towards singular

usage throughout the course of the 19th century. Our data thus replicate the broad temporal patterns that prior studies have documented using different textual corpuses.⁶¹ However, our data also yield some novel sectional patterns. In particular, before the war, trends for the North and the South appear strikingly similar: both sections use the singular at comparable levels and both move away from the plural over time. After the war, however, singular usage appears to accelerate in the North, but not in the South.⁶²

Figure 1: Singular Usage in Northern and Southern Newspapers



Note: The trend lines show the rate of singular usage in editorials and letters to the editor (n=5,292). Size of the bubbles indicates the number of publications in each year. The orange bar shows the years of the Civil War.

Although Figure 1 provides some suggestive evidence with respect to some of our hypotheses, we move to more formal tests within a regression framework. Doing so allows us to account for potentially confounding variables that are plausibly correlated with political geography, time, and the adoption of the grammatical singular.

⁶¹ Santin, Murphy, and Wilkens 2016; Myers 2008.

⁶² Appendix Figure S1 provides further evidence that the accelerated trend towards singular usage in the North does indeed occur around the time of the Civil War.

In the 19th century, the most likely confounders relate to processes of economic and political modernization. From a temporal perspective, scholars have argued that modernization plays a critical role in weakening local ties and paving the way for citizens to “imagine” a larger, nationally-based political community. For example, industrialization and urbanization brought individuals out of their agrarian milieu and exposed them to the homogenizing forces of the city.⁶³ Similarly, the advent and spread of print capitalism helped to create a sense of shared national community,⁶⁴ while infrastructure – often federally-provided – served a similar purpose by fostering physical access and connectedness on a national scale.⁶⁵ Finally, the increased contact with central (as opposed to local) institutions that comes with political modernization may facilitate an ideational reorientation of the citizen toward a larger political unit.⁶⁶ In these also ways, the “experience” of modernization may shape how individuals view the proper locus of sovereign authority.⁶⁷

In the American context, approaches towards modernization also frequently took on sectional dimensions. For example, one of the most contentious issues of the time was national tariff policy: protectionism benefited the manufacturing interests concentrated in the East at the expense of agrarian interests in the South and Midwest. Similarly, Americans fiercely debated whether the federal government should fund and construct “internal improvements” (i.e., transportation infrastructure), which advanced the interests of eastern capitalism and western yeoman agriculture.⁶⁸ These issues were intimately bound up in questions about the authority of the national government to regulate policies and override the individual interests of the several states. These debates also frequently pitted the the more nationally-oriented Whigs and Republicans against their Democratic rivals.

⁶³Gellner 1983.

⁶⁴Holt 2019; Loughran 2007; Anderson 1983.

⁶⁵Cermeño, Enflo, and Lindvall 2021; Herbst 2000.

⁶⁶Zhang and Lee 2020; Englebert 2009; Gennaioli and Rainer 2007; Bockstette, Chanda, and Puttermann 2002; Hechter 2000.

⁶⁷Bensel 1990.

⁶⁸Bensel 1990, 66.

We operationalize modernization in several different ways using historical and geospatial data, aggregated to the county level.⁶⁹ URBANIZATION measures the percentage of the urban population in the county using census data.⁷⁰ To capture variation in support for internal improvements, we code variables using geospatial data that capture whether the county contains a steamboat-navigated RIVER or a CANAL as well as the county’s RUGGEDNESS as a proxy for physical accessibility.⁷¹ Because the presence of state administrative infrastructure increases state power, we combine archival data with data from [Acemoglu, Moscona, and Robinson \(2016\)](#) to capture the density of POST OFFICES, the government agency Americans were most likely to encounter in their daily lives.⁷² The online appendix provides full bibliographic and coding details.

To evaluate the abandonment and valence hypotheses, we incorporate these covariates into the following general regression model that we estimate on the newspaper corpus:

$$\begin{aligned}
S_{ij} = & \alpha + \beta_1 Y_{ij} + \beta_2 P_{ij} + \beta_3 N_{ij} \\
& + \beta_4 Y \cdot P_{ij} + \beta_5 Y \cdot N_{ij} + \beta_6 P \cdot N_{ij} \\
& + \beta_7 Y \cdot P \cdot N_{ij} \\
& + \delta W_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}
\end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

⁶⁹Many of our covariates come from the U.S. census. For our period, counties are the smallest geographic unit for which census data are reported. Regarding our newspaper data, we expect that the individuals contributing content to newspapers reside either in the headquarters city or in the surrounding locality, and that singular usage therefore reflects the characteristics of that locality. Although we lack information on the precise spatial extent of each publication’s readership, we believe that counties offer a reasonable approximation. We therefore code newspaper content to the county that existed at the time of publication, based on the city in which the newspaper is headquartered. In our robustness checks, we also aggregate newspaper data and covariates to the state level (Appendix Section S4). Results are unchanged.

⁷⁰[Manson, Schroeder, Van Riper et al. 2020](#).

⁷¹[Atack 2015](#), [Atack 2017](#), [Shaver, Carter, and Shawa 2019](#), respectively. Although we would prefer to account for manufacturing directly (it is correlated with urbanization), the U.S. census did not start collecting this information in a comparable format until 1850.

⁷²[Blevins 2021](#); [Rogowski, Gerring, Maguire et al. 2021](#); [Jensen and Ramey 2020](#); [Acemoglu, Moscona, and Robinson 2016](#).

where S is a dummy variable indicating a an instance i of singular usage in letter/editorial j , Y represents the YEAR of publication and captures time trends in the data, P is a PERIOD indicator (either post-1860 or post-1865, depending on the specific hypothesis tested), N indicates that the newspaper was published in the NORTH, and W represents a vector of covariates. We estimate Equation 1 using a linear probability model with standard errors clustered within counties.

We begin by examining the abandonment hypothesis, which predicts an increase in singular usage in the South following the Civil War. We therefore estimate Equation 1, centering Y at the year 1865 for ease of interpretation, and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$. Our primary interest lies with β_2 , representing a intercept shift in singular usage in Southern newspapers following the Civil War, as well as β_4 , representing the difference in post-war and pre-war trends in singular usage in the South. To facilitate presentation, we display condensed estimates of these quantities in Table 2. Full results, including estimates for the control variables, are reported in Appendix Table S1. In general, we detect few significant associations between singular usage and our control variables.

Table 2: Singular Usage in Southern Newspapers before and after 1865

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>Southern Newspapers:</i>				
Singular Usage in 1865	α	0.399	0.047	0.000
1866 - 1865 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	0.111	0.070	0.116
Pre-1866 Time Trend	β_1	0.007	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1866 Trend	β_4	-0.000	0.003	0.946

Linear probability model with standard errors clustered by headquarter city. Observations: 5,292. Full results are available in Appendix Table S1. Quantities refer to Equation 1, centering Y at the year 1865 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

Table 2 shows that singular usage in the South was increasing by about 0.7% per year, and had attained a level of around 40% by 1865. However, these underlying patterns appear to be unaffected by Southern defeat in the war, as we observe neither a statistically-significant one-time increase in singular usage, not a significant steepening of the post-war time trend. Taken together, these results cast doubt on the abandonment hypothesis.

We turn next to the valence hypothesis, and in particular its strong version that predicts that the outbreak of conflict would coincide with an increase in singular usage in the North and a corresponding decrease in the South. To test this proposition, we re-estimate Equation 1, only now centering Y at the year 1860 and again setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$. Table 3 presents relevant coefficients, and full results appear in Appendix Table S2.

Table 3: Singular Usage in Newspapers before and after 1860

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>Southern Newspapers:</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	α	0.351	0.041	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	0.091	0.061	0.140
Pre-1861 Time Trend	β_1	0.006	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	β_4	0.001	0.003	0.681
<i>Northern Newspapers:</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	$\alpha + \beta_3$	0.314	0.031	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	$\beta_2 + \beta_6$	0.023	0.039	0.561
Pre-1861 Time Trend	$\beta_1 + \beta_5$	0.005	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	$\beta_4 + \beta_7$	0.009	0.002	0.000

Linear probability model with standard errors clustered by headquarter city. Observations: 5,292. Full results are available in Appendix Table S2. Quantities refer to Equation 1, centering Y at the year 1860 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

We begin with the Southern results shown in the top panel of Table 3. Our findings here look substantively similar to the patterns reported in Table 2: a minority of Southern newspaper content employed the singular on the eve of the war, and singular usage had been increasing by about 0.6% per year. However, we find no effect of the outbreak of the war itself on either of these quantities. In other words, our data does not seem to support the strong version of the valence hypothesis.

The bottom panel of Table 3 displays corresponding estimates for the north. In general, the North looks similar to the South in terms of both the pre-war level of singular usage and its time trend.⁷³ Importantly however, we observe that the trend in singular usage in the North becomes sig-

⁷³In fact, neither the pre-war levels of singular usage nor the pre-war time trends differ significantly between the North and the South. See Appendix Table S2.

nificantly steeper following the onset of war, approximately tripling from a 0.5% to a 0.5% + 0.9% = 1.4% rate of yearly increase. These results thus suggest that the war did promote greater adoption of national sovereignty in the popular imagination, but only amongst the Northern population.

Distinguishing Between the Valence and Entrepreneurial Mechanisms

The Northern results so far are consistent with the weak version of the valence hypothesis. However, they might also reflect the entrepreneurial influence of the Republican Party. To distinguish these two possibilities, we next examine potential partisan heterogeneity in the North.

We begin by turning our attention to the Congressional speech data, which allow us to link an individual’s language patterns to his partisan identity. We argue above that Republicans, much more so than Democrats, were most committed to the ideal of a sovereignty embodied in the national government. As an empirical implication of our argument, we should observe that Northern Republicans adopt the singular at higher rates than Northern Democrats at the onset of the conflict.

To examine this conjecture, we create categorical variables for DEMOCRATS (*DEM*) and WHIGS+REPUBLICANS (*REP*)⁷⁴ and estimate the following model (treating *DEM* as the reference category and excluding members of third parties):

$$\begin{aligned}
 S_{isc} = & \alpha + \beta_1 Y_{isc} + \beta_2 P_{isc} + \beta_3 REP_{isc} \\
 & + \beta_4 Y \cdot P_{isc} + \beta_5 Y \cdot REP_{isc} + \beta_6 P \cdot REP_{isc} \\
 & + \beta_7 Y \cdot P \cdot REP_{isc} \\
 & + \delta W_{isc} + \zeta_s + \eta_c + \epsilon_{isc}
 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Equation 2 largely resembles Equation 1 except in some small respects. First, since each statement *i* is located within a Congressional session which spans two years, our YEAR variable is

⁷⁴Party data from [Lewis, Poole, Rosenthal et al. 2021](#).

now defined as the midpoint of each Congressional session.⁷⁵ Converting Congressional meetings to years facilitates comparisons with our previous analyses. As before, we center YEAR around 1860. Second, grammatical subject mentions i are not only nested within individual speakers s but, to the extent that Congressmen may be influenced by how their counterparts speak, may also be nested within sessions of Congress c . Because of this cross-nested data structure, we estimate a hierarchical linear probability model with crossed speaker (ζ_s) and Congress (η_c) random effects.

To draw valid inferences from our speech corpus, we must address another issue with our data: the entry and exit of individual speakers from our dataset. This issue arises from the high level of turnover in Congress during this period in combination with our need to restrict attention to U.S. mentions in the grammatical subject position.⁷⁶ One may worry that Congressmembers elected prior to the Civil War are not comparable to the more professionalized, careerist Congressmembers in office during the late 19th century. In order to pool mentions from individuals who appear in only one Congress with those from individuals who contribute mentions in multiple Congresses, we must account for differences that could influence their usage of the singular.

We focus in particular on variables related to a Congressmember's life experiences and the social milieu of the area where he was born. We identify each Congressmember's place and year of birth using the official biographies contained in the *Biographical Directory of Congress* and use this information to assign birthplaces to the counties that existed at the time of birth.⁷⁷ We then code the same set of variables from the newspaper analysis at the county-decade level (matching birth year to the nearest decennial census year).⁷⁸ To be clear, these variables reflect birthplace characteristics, not contemporaneous characteristics at the time a statement is observed. In addition, we also account for biographical experiences that could influence imagined sovereignty

⁷⁵For example, if a statement occurred during the 48th Congress, which met from March 1883–March 1885, we code the year as 1884.

⁷⁶Swain, Borrelli, Reed et al. 2000; Kernell 1977.

⁷⁷United States Congress 2020.

⁷⁸Unfortunately, we lack county-level information on individuals born outside the United States. These are excluded from the analysis.

by coding individual-level controls to account for whether the Congressman was COLLEGE EDUCATED; whether he served in the U.S. MILITARY, defined as military service other than Confederate service; and his BIRTH YEAR.⁷⁹

Table 4: Singular Usage among Northern Congressmen, by Party

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>Northern Whigs / Republicans:</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	$\alpha + \beta_3$	0.237	0.106	0.024
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	$\beta_2 + \beta_6$	0.235	0.104	0.024
Pre-War Time Trend	$\beta_1 + \beta_5$	0.015	0.019	0.447
Post- minus Pre-War Trend	$\beta_4 + \beta_7$	-0.014	0.019	0.445
<i>Northern Democrats:</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	α	0.395	0.116	0.001
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	0.030	0.132	0.818
Pre-War Time Trend	β_1	0.026	0.019	0.156
Post- minus Pre-War Trend	β_4	-0.014	0.019	0.445

Hierarchical linear model with cross-nested random effects (congress and speaker). Observations: 2,727. Full results are available in Appendix Table S3. Quantities refer to Equation 2, centering Y at the year 1860 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

Table 4 displays results for the relevant β s and their linear combinations. We note that, in contrast to our newspaper corpus, our Congressional speech corpus begins in year 1851 only, and include data at only 5 time points (1852, 1854, 1856, 1858 and 1860) before the Civil War. Thus, the pre-war time trends, as well as coefficients for the change in time trend pre- vs. post-war, are noisily estimated.

In contrast, our data are more informative with respect to changes in the level of singular usage coinciding with the outbreak of war. We find a discontinuous jump in singular usage of almost 24% among Northern Whigs/Republicans ($p < 0.05$), but a small and non-significant increase for Northern Democrats. Critical readers might be concerned that this difference is an artifact of our noisy estimates of the level of singular usage in 1860 itself. In particular, we observe that

⁷⁹United States Congress 2020; Swift, Brookshire, Canon et al. 2009.

Democrats were more likely than Whigs/Republicans to use singular in 1860 (39% vs. 24%). However, this apparent partisan difference is not statistically significant (diff = 0.16, se = 0.15, $p = 0.29$; see Appendix Table S3.). In addition, if we restrict our attention solely to the post-war period, we find that Northern Republicans use the singular at significantly higher rates than Northern Democrats (see Appendix Table S16).

Taken together, although our Congressional speech data are somewhat noisy, our analyses point to an increase in singular usage among Northern Republicans but not Northern Democrats. These partisan patterns are consistent with historians' arguments that Republicans seized upon the Civil War as an opportunity to advance their own vision of a singular national sovereignty.⁸⁰

To complete the empirical picture, we return to the newspaper data and examine whether the North's accelerated shift towards singular usage was more concentrated in areas of Republican influence. Given the role of the Civil War as a watershed moment in the entrepreneurial narrative, we define areas of Republican influence based on voting results in the Presidential election of 1864. In particular, we test whether we observe a more rapid adoption of the grammatical singular in counties voting for Abraham Lincoln as opposed to his Democratic challenger George McClellan.

To do so, we restrict our attention to newspapers headquartered in the North, and modify Equation 1 by replacing the section indicator with an indicator (*LINCOLN*) for whether Lincoln won the county:

⁸⁰In Appendix Section S5.3, we also examine partisan patterns among Southern members of Congress. Our results here are much more tentative, since Southern members of Congress resigned with the secession of their states, and were not readmitted until 1866–1870. We therefore have significant periods of missing data. However, even given these limitations, the data are suggestive of similar partisan differences among Southern Congressmen, in which post-war Southern Republicans were much more likely to adopt the singular than their Democrat counterparts.

$$\begin{aligned}
S_{ij} = & \alpha + \beta_1 Y_{ij} + \beta_2 P_{ij} + \beta_3 LINCOLN_{ij} \\
& + \beta_4 Y \cdot P_{ij} + \beta_5 Y \cdot LINCOLN_{ij} + \beta_6 P \cdot LINCOLN_{ij} \\
& + \beta_7 Y \cdot P \cdot N_{ij} \\
& + \delta W_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}
\end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

Table S4 summarizes the results for the β s and the linear combinations of interest. These results corroborate the findings from the Congressional partisanship analysis. Both Lincoln and McClellan counties look similar in terms of the adoption of the grammatic singular before the war.⁸¹ However, in line with the ENTREPRENEURIAL hypothesis, we find that the postwar slope shift was twice as large among counties that voted for Lincoln than for counties that voted for McClellan. Reading these results in combination with our Congressional speech analysis, these results suggest that the war further strengthened ideational commitments to the vision of a national sovereignty in the places that were most subject to the Republicans' ideological influence.

Table 5: Singular Usage in Northern Newspapers, by 1864 Election Results

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>McClellan Counties</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	α	0.367	0.023	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	-0.006	0.027	0.824
Pre-1861 Time Trend	β_1	0.007	0.000	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	β_4	0.005	0.001	0.000
<i>Lincoln Counties</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	$\alpha + \beta_3$	0.341	0.034	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	$\beta_2 + \beta_6$	0.003	0.038	0.929
Pre-1861 Time Trend	$\beta_1 + \beta_5$	0.006	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	$\beta_4 + \beta_7$	0.010	0.002	0.000

Linear probability model with standard errors clustered by headquarter city. Observations: 3,616. Full results are available in S4. Quantities refer to Equation 3, centering Y at the year 1860 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

⁸¹We tested for the difference in pre-war intercepts and pre-war slopes. Neither was statistically significant. See Appendix Table S4.

Discussion

How does war shape the popular imagination of sovereignty? In the case of the United States, converging lines of evidence demonstrate that war reinforced and strengthened commitments to the North's vision of sovereign authority resident in the national government. In our newspaper analysis, this effect manifested as an acceleration in the adoption of the grammatical singular; in our speech analysis, this effect appeared in the form of a discontinuous increase in the use of the singular. That we observe a rapid increase in the level of singular usage in our speech corpus is perhaps unsurprising. Members of Congress are elites and their speech is inherently political. For them, the debate over the location and structure of sovereign authority was more urgent and more salient than for ordinary Americans, some of whom may have taken cues on the issue from their political representatives.⁸²

Our evidence also shows that the reinforcing effect of warfare on imagined sovereignty was concentrated among the ideological entrepreneurs who already supported that ideal: Northern Republicans. We therefore find support for the entrepreneurial hypothesis and no support for the convergence and valence hypotheses.

Why do we observe no effect of warfare on imagined sovereignty in the South? A first possibility concerns the relationship between slavery and states' rights in the pre-war period. Some historians have argued that the South's attachment to states' rights was narrow and linked to the South's fundamental interest in preserving the institution of slavery.⁸³ Moreover, Southerners did not object the national government's exercise of authority as long as that authority served their interests.⁸⁴ Only after the Civil War did the South develop an overriding fixation with states' rights

⁸²[Guisinger and Saunders 2017](#); [Berinsky 2009](#); [Zaller 1992](#).

⁸³[Maizlish 2018](#), 79; [Freehling 2007](#), 349.

⁸⁴[Woods 2020](#), 9; [Freehling 2007](#), 349.

as part of the myth of the lost cause.⁸⁵ This postwar myth-making may have cancelled out any abandonment effect.

A second possibility concerns the lack of Southern ideological entrepreneurs pushing the states' rights issue as a more general principle rather than a narrow and instrumental defense for slavery and secession. To be sure, some Southerners such as John C. Calhoun did regard the sovereignty question as a matter of principle. However, these individuals saw themselves as conservatives. Prominent Democratic leaders from the South regarded secession as a legal right, one to be exercised only if the North continued to violate and deny the the South's Constitutional rights.⁸⁶ After New York Whig Senator William Seward delivered his 1850 "higher law" speech in which he declared the existence of a law above the Constitution, Southerners became convinced that the North had abandoned its commitment to the Constitution and republican government.⁸⁷ The South's inherent conservatism is perhaps most evident in the Confederate Constitution, a document that scholars have noted as being virtually identical to the U.S. Constitution.⁸⁸

Even the most vehement supporters of secessionism, a group of individuals known as the Fire-Eaters, opportunistically treated states' rights as a means to an end – that end being the protection of slavery.⁸⁹ Yet the Fire-Eaters were not particularly organized nor politically skilled. Their extreme views alienated moderates, particularly in the Border South.⁹⁰ David Stephen Heidler, a historian of the Fire-Eaters, portrays them as inept and self-defeating in their quest for secession, concluding that "in not one single instance did fire-eaters shape those events."⁹¹ If, as our evidence shows, that ideological entrepreneurs are the mechanism through which war affects imagined sovereignty, it could well be the case that we observe a continuation of pre-existing trends in the South because

⁸⁵ Bonekemper 2015.

⁸⁶ McCardell 1979, 309.

⁸⁷ Maizlish 2018, 98-99.

⁸⁸ Walther 1992, 79; Bensel 1990, 99.

⁸⁹ Heidler and Heidler 2014.

⁹⁰ Robinson 2017, 88,94.

⁹¹ Heidler 1994, XXX.

the South lacked these entrepreneurs. Indeed, evidence in Appendix Section [S5.3.2](#) suggests that the war did not shift patterns of singular usage among Southern Democrats.

Conclusion

A central contribution of this paper for political scientists is to recenter the study of sovereign authority around its ideational foundations and to point to the limits of violence in settling debates over sovereignty. Sovereign authority requires institutionalization for the effective exercise of state power. Yet it fundamentally rests on the recognition and acceptance of those subject to that authority. Our results imply that victory on the battlefield alone will not elicit that acceptance from the vanquished. The North won the Civil War, but the South's ideal of sovereignty vested in the states did not die at Appomattox. Looking only at the institutional manifestations of sovereignty and ignoring its ideational foundations will lead to misleading conclusions about the nature and existence of sovereign authority after war.

An important finding of our paper is that ideological entrepreneurs play an important role in mediating the ideational impact of warfare on debates over sovereignty. This result implies that scholars studying the transformative effects of war on aspects of statehood such as sovereignty must be attentive to the question of *for whom* those changes occur. Such inquiries must go beyond the dichotomy of victors and vanquished and instead recognize that victors may not be ideologically monolithic.

Focusing scholarly attention on ideological entrepreneurs also helps to resolve a debate about the effects of the Civil War on conceptions of American sovereignty within and between the disciplines of American studies and history. We show that, in line with research in American studies, the linguistic transformation of the term "United States" unfolded slowly over the course of the 19th century; although the Civil War was a watershed moment, it did not eradicate the plural among

non-ideologues.⁹² To the extent that the Civil War reinforced the idea of America as a single sovereign nation as some historians have argued,⁹³ our evidence suggests that this claim is most applicable to Northern Republicans.

For this reason, our paper has sober implications for governance and national solidarity in the aftermath of war. The acceptance of the state's authority renders that authority as legitimate.⁹⁴ In turn, legitimacy increases the state's ability to elicit compliance from the population without costly monitoring and coercion.⁹⁵ When the vanquished do not recognize the authority of the victors or accept their vision of sovereignty, the victors will struggle to govern the vanquished. Radical Republican efforts to engineer social transformation during Reconstruction were met with violent backlash from the South that left the revolutionary project incomplete and continue to structure political attitudes today.⁹⁶ Following the departure of federal troops, Southern elites successfully hollowed out the bureaucratic capacity of the state, and Southern Democrats overwhelmingly elected unrepentant former Confederates to the U.S. Congress.⁹⁷

The violence of the Civil War and the victory of the North rendered the many into the one in an institutional sense. Yet the ideational transformation remained incomplete. Several more decades would pass before the United States truly “was” in the popular imagination.

⁹²Santin, Murphy, and Wilkens 2016; Myers 2008.

⁹³Wilentz 2005; Ward 1990; McPherson 1988.

⁹⁴Weber 1978, 214.

⁹⁵Levi and Sacks 2009; Tyler 2006.

⁹⁶Stewart and Kitchens 2021; Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2016; Foner 1988.

⁹⁷Suryanarayan and White 2021.

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S1 Details on Variable Coding

THIS STILL NEEDS TO BE ADDED

S2 Full Regression Results for Tables in the Main Text

S2.1 Full Table for Results Reported in Table 2

Table S1: Full Table for Results Reported in Table 2

	(1)		(2)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.007***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)
Before Southern Defeat	(ref.)		(ref.)	
After Southern Defeat	0.108	(0.070)	0.111	(0.070)
South	(ref.)		(ref.)	
North	-0.066	(0.047)	-0.056	(0.057)
Year \times After Southern Defeat	-0.000	(0.004)	-0.000	(0.003)
Year \times North	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
After Southern Defeat \times North	0.007	(0.079)	0.000	(0.079)
Year \times After Southern Defeat \times North	0.008*	(0.004)	0.007+	(0.004)
County % Urban (std)			0.005	(0.009)
Post Office Density (std)			-0.001	(0.011)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)			0.009	(0.010)
County on River			0.025	(0.024)
County on Canal			0.001	(0.026)
Constant	0.411***	(0.036)	0.399***	(0.047)
<i>N</i>	5292		5292	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered within headquarter city. Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1865.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S2.2 Full Table for Results Reported in Table 3

Table S2: Full Table for Results Reported in Table 3

	(1)		(2)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.006***	(0.001)	0.006***	(0.001)
Before War Onset	(ref.)		(ref.)	
After War Onset	0.093	(0.060)	0.091	(0.061)
South	(ref.)		(ref.)	
North	-0.047	(0.039)	-0.037	(0.051)
Year \times After War Onset	0.001	(0.003)	0.001	(0.003)
Year \times North	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
After War Onset \times North	-0.067	(0.072)	-0.068	(0.073)
Year \times After War Onset \times North	0.008*	(0.004)	0.008*	(0.004)
County % Urban (std)			0.005	(0.009)
Post Office Density (std)			-0.001	(0.010)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)			0.009	(0.010)
County on River			0.025	(0.024)
County on Canal			0.001	(0.027)
Constant	0.362***	(0.029)	0.351***	(0.041)
<i>N</i>	5292		5292	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered within headquarter city. Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S2.3 Full Table for Results Reported in Table 4

Table S3: Full Table for Results Reported in Table 4

	(1)		(2)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year of Speech	0.026	(0.019)	0.026	(0.019)
Before War Onset	(ref.)		(ref.)	
After War Onset	0.030	(0.132)	0.030	(0.132)
Democrat	(ref.)		(ref.)	
Whig / Republican	-0.172	(0.151)	-0.158	(0.150)
Year \times After War Onset	-0.015	(0.019)	-0.014	(0.019)
Year \times Whig / Republican	-0.011	(0.027)	-0.012	(0.026)
After War Onset \times Whig / Republican	0.203	(0.167)	0.205	(0.167)
Year \times After War Onset \times Whig / Republican	0.012	(0.027)	0.012	(0.027)
County of Birth: % Urban (std)			-0.021	(0.015)
County of Birth: Post Office Density (std)			-0.011	(0.016)
County of Birth: Terrain Ruggedness (std)			-0.020	(0.013)
Born on River			0.040	(0.028)
Born on Canal			0.028	(0.029)
Year of Birth (std)			-0.002	(0.016)
Attended College			-0.046+	(0.025)
Served in US Military			0.008	(0.026)
Constant	0.405***	(0.113)	0.395***	(0.116)
sd(Congress)	0.018***	(0.017)	0.016***	(0.018)
sd(Bioguide)	0.125***	(0.015)	0.120***	(0.015)
sd(Residual)	0.417***	(0.006)	0.416***	(0.006)
<i>N</i>	2727		2727	

Note: HLM with cross-nested random effects (year and speaker). Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S2.4 Full Table for Results Reported in Table 5

Table S4: Full Table for Results Reported in Table 5

	(1)		(2)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.006***	(0.000)	0.007***	(0.000)
Before War Onset	(ref.)		(ref.)	
After War Onset	-0.003	(0.030)	-0.006	(0.027)
McClellan County	(ref.)		(ref.)	
Lincoln County	-0.013	(0.032)	-0.026	(0.035)
Year \times After War Onset	0.006***	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)
Year \times Lincoln County	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
After War Onset \times Lincoln County	0.012	(0.050)	0.009	(0.046)
Year \times After War Onset \times Lincoln County	0.004	(0.003)	0.005+	(0.003)
County % Urban (std)			0.014	(0.010)
Post Office Density (std)			-0.015	(0.009)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)			0.011	(0.010)
County on River			-0.026	(0.031)
County on Canal			-0.001	(0.028)
Constant	0.346***	(0.019)	0.367***	(0.023)
<i>N</i>	3616		3616	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered within headquarter city. Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S3 Robustness: Clustering Choice

S3.1 Replication of Table S1 with Different Clustering Choices

Table S5: Replication of Table S1 with Different Clustering Choices

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.007***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.001)
Before Southern Defeat	(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
After Southern Defeat	0.111	(0.070)	0.111	(0.073)	0.111	(0.070)	0.111	(0.082)
South	(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
North	-0.056	(0.057)	-0.056	(0.042)	-0.056	(0.056)	-0.056	(0.060)
Year \times After Southern Defeat	-0.000	(0.003)	-0.000	(0.003)	-0.000	(0.003)	-0.000	(0.003)
Year \times North	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
After Southern Defeat \times North	0.000	(0.079)	0.000	(0.080)	0.000	(0.080)	0.000	(0.088)
Year \times After Southern Defeat \times North	0.007+	(0.004)	0.007*	(0.003)	0.007+	(0.004)	0.007+	(0.004)
County % Urban (std)	0.005	(0.009)	0.005	(0.007)	0.005	(0.009)	0.005	(0.011)
Post Office Density (std)	-0.001	(0.011)	-0.001	(0.009)	-0.001	(0.010)	-0.001	(0.011)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)	0.009	(0.010)	0.009	(0.006)	0.009	(0.010)	0.009	(0.011)
County on River	0.025	(0.024)	0.025	(0.017)	0.025	(0.024)	0.025	(0.021)
County on Canal	0.001	(0.026)	0.001	(0.016)	0.001	(0.027)	0.001	(0.027)
Constant	0.399***	(0.047)	0.399***	(0.038)	0.399***	(0.047)	0.399***	(0.051)
<i>N</i>	5292		5292		5292		5292	
Clustering	City		Document		County		State	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered as indicated. Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1865.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S3.2 Replication of Table S2 with Different Clustering Choices

Table S6: Replication of Table S2 with Different Clustering Choices

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.006***	(0.001)	0.006***	(0.001)	0.006***	(0.001)	0.006***	(0.001)
Before War Onset	(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
After War Onset	0.091	(0.061)	0.091	(0.066)	0.091	(0.061)	0.091	(0.070)
South	(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
North	-0.037	(0.051)	-0.037	(0.041)	-0.037	(0.050)	-0.037	(0.055)
Year \times After War Onset	0.001	(0.003)	0.001	(0.002)	0.001	(0.003)	0.001	(0.003)
Year \times North	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
After War Onset \times North	-0.068	(0.073)	-0.068	(0.072)	-0.068	(0.074)	-0.068	(0.079)
Year \times After War Onset \times North	0.008*	(0.004)	0.008**	(0.003)	0.008*	(0.004)	0.008*	(0.004)
County % Urban (std)	0.005	(0.009)	0.005	(0.007)	0.005	(0.009)	0.005	(0.011)
Post Office Density (std)	-0.001	(0.010)	-0.001	(0.008)	-0.001	(0.010)	-0.001	(0.010)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)	0.009	(0.010)	0.009	(0.006)	0.009	(0.010)	0.009	(0.011)
County on River	0.025	(0.024)	0.025	(0.017)	0.025	(0.025)	0.025	(0.022)
County on Canal	0.001	(0.027)	0.001	(0.016)	0.001	(0.027)	0.001	(0.027)
Constant	0.351***	(0.041)	0.351***	(0.037)	0.351***	(0.040)	0.351***	(0.045)
<i>N</i>	5292		5292		5292		5292	
Clustering	City		Document		County		State	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered as indicated. Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S3.3 Replication of Table S4 with Different Clustering Choices

Table S7: Replication of Table S4 with Different Clustering Choices

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.007***	(0.000)	0.007***	(0.001)	0.007***	(0.000)	0.007***	(0.000)
Before War Onset	(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
After War Onset	-0.006	(0.027)	-0.006	(0.050)	-0.006	(0.027)	-0.006	(0.020)
McClellan County	(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
Lincoln County	-0.026	(0.035)	-0.026	(0.038)	-0.026	(0.036)	-0.026	(0.032)
Year \times After War Onset	0.005***	(0.001)	0.005**	(0.002)	0.005***	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)
Year \times Lincoln County	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
After War Onset \times Lincoln County	0.009	(0.046)	0.009	(0.063)	0.009	(0.046)	0.009	(0.033)
Year \times After War Onset \times Lincoln County	0.005+	(0.003)	0.005*	(0.002)	0.005+	(0.003)	0.005*	(0.002)
County % Urban (std)	0.014	(0.010)	0.014	(0.010)	0.014	(0.010)	0.014	(0.010)
Post Office Density (std)	-0.015	(0.009)	-0.015	(0.011)	-0.015	(0.009)	-0.015	(0.009)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)	0.011	(0.010)	0.011	(0.007)	0.011	(0.010)	0.011	(0.012)
County on River	-0.026	(0.031)	-0.026	(0.022)	-0.026	(0.031)	-0.026	(0.035)
County on Canal	-0.001	(0.028)	-0.001	(0.020)	-0.001	(0.028)	-0.001	(0.026)
Constant	0.367***	(0.023)	0.367***	(0.031)	0.367***	(0.022)	0.367***	(0.016)
<i>N</i>	3616		3616		3616		3616	
Clustering	City		Document		County		State	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered as indicated. Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S4 Robustness: States as Areal Units

S4.1 Linear Combinations

S4.1.1 Replication of Abandonment Results

Table S8: Singular Usage in Southern Newspapers before and after 1865

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>Southern Newspapers</i>				
Singular Usage in 1865	α	0.398	0.050	0.000
1866 - 1865 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	0.091	0.069	0.194
Pre-1866 Time Trend	β_1	0.007	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1866 Trend	β_4	0.001	0.003	0.810

Full results are available in Appendix Table [S12](#).

S4.1.2 Replication of Valence Results

Table S9: Singular Usage in Newspapers before and after 1860

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>Southern Newspapers</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	α	0.346	0.043	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	0.085	0.060	0.158
Pre-1861 Time Trend	β_1	0.006	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	β_4	0.002	0.003	0.523
<i>Northern Newspapers</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	$\alpha + \beta_3$	0.370	0.049	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	$\beta_2 + \beta_6$	0.003	0.033	0.926
Pre-1861 Time Trend	$\beta_1 + \beta_5$	0.006	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	$\beta_4 + \beta_7$	0.009	0.002	0.000

Full results are available in Appendix Table [S13](#).

S4.1.3 Replication of Congressional Results

Table S10: Singular Usage among Northern Congressmen, by 1864 Party

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>Northern Whigs / Republicans</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	$\alpha + \beta_3$	0.236	0.112	0.035
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	$\beta_2 + \beta_6$	0.213	0.105	0.042
Pre-1861 Time Trend	$\beta_1 + \beta_5$	0.019	0.019	0.318
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	$\beta_4 + \beta_7$	-0.007	0.019	0.714
<i>Northern Democrats</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	α	0.371	0.123	0.003
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	0.031	0.132	0.815
Pre-1861 Time Trend	β_1	0.025	0.019	0.181
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	β_4	-0.013	0.019	0.485

Full results are available in Appendix Table [S14](#).

S4.1.4 Replication of Lincoln vs McClellan Results

Table S11: Singular Usage in Northern Newspapers, by 1864 Election Results

Description	Quantity	Estimate	se	p
<i>McClellan Counties</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	α	0.407	0.039	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	β_2	-0.016	0.032	0.625
Pre-1861 Time Trend	β_1	0.008	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	β_4	0.005	0.001	0.000
<i>Lincoln Counties</i>				
Singular Usage in 1860	$\alpha + \beta_3$	0.402	0.043	0.000
1861 - 1860 Change in Singular Usage	$\beta_2 + \beta_6$	-0.016	0.032	0.605
Pre-1861 Time Trend	$\beta_1 + \beta_5$	0.007	0.001	0.000
Post- minus Pre-1861 Trend	$\beta_4 + \beta_7$	0.009	0.002	0.000

Full results are available in Appendix Table [S15](#).

S4.2 Full Tables with State-level Covariates

S4.2.1 Full Table for Results Reported in Table S8

Table S12: Full Table for Results Reported in Table S8

	(1)	
Year	0.007***	(0.001)
Before Southern Defeat		(ref.)
After Southern Defeat	0.091	(0.069)
South		(ref.)
North	-0.004	(0.057)
Year \times After Southern Defeat	0.001	(0.003)
Year \times North	-0.001	(0.001)
After Southern Defeat \times North	0.012	(0.077)
Year \times After Southern Defeat \times North	0.006	(0.004)
State % Urban (std)	-0.017**	(0.006)
Post Office Density (std)	-0.019	(0.012)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)	0.001	(0.010)
State on River	-0.009	(0.024)
State on Canal	-0.031+	(0.017)
Constant	0.398***	(0.050)
N	5301	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered within headquarter city. Quantities refer to Equation 1, centering Y at the year 1865 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S4.2.2 Full Table for Results Reported in Table S9

Table S13: Full Table for Results Reported in Table S9

	(1)	
Year	0.006***	(0.001)
Before War Onset		(ref.)
After War Onset	0.085	(0.060)
South		(ref.)
North	0.024	(0.052)
Year × After War Onset	0.002	(0.003)
Year × North	0.000	(0.001)
After War Onset × North	-0.082	(0.067)
Year × After War Onset × North	0.007+	(0.004)
State % Urban (std)	-0.017**	(0.006)
Post Office Density (std)	-0.020	(0.012)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)	-0.000	(0.010)
State on River	-0.008	(0.024)
State on Canal	-0.034*	(0.016)
Constant	0.346***	(0.043)
<i>N</i>	5301	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered within head-quarter city. Quantities refer to Equation 1, centering Y at the year 1860 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S4.2.3 Full Table for Results Reported in Table S10

Table S14: Full Table for Results Reported in Table S10

	(1)	
Year of Speech	0.025	(0.019)
Before War Onset		(ref.)
After War Onset	0.031	(0.132)
Democrat		(ref.)
Whig / Republican	-0.135	(0.150)
Year × After War Onset	-0.013	(0.019)
Year × Whig / Republican	-0.006	(0.027)
After War Onset × Whig / Republican	0.182	(0.166)
Year × After War Onset × Whig / Republican	0.006	(0.027)
State of Birth: % Urban (std)	0.009	(0.021)
State of Birth: Post Office Density (std)	-0.008	(0.023)
State of Birth: Terrain Ruggedness (std)	-0.024	(0.015)
Born on River	0.047	(0.051)
Born on Canal	-0.003	(0.031)
Year of Birth (std)	-0.006	(0.018)
Attended College	-0.050*	(0.025)
Served in US Military	0.018	(0.027)
Constant	0.371**	(0.123)
sd(Congress)	0.017***	(0.017)
sd(Bioguide)	0.119***	(0.015)
sd(Residual)	0.417***	(0.006)
<i>N</i>	2727	

Note: HLM with cross-nested random effects (year and speaker). Quantities refer to Equation 2, centering Y at the year 1860 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S4.2.4 Full Table for Results Reported in Table S11

Table S15: Full Table for Results Reported in Table S11

	(1)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year	0.008***	(0.001)
Before War Onset	(ref.)	
After War Onset	-0.016	(0.032)
McClellan County	(ref.)	
Lincoln County	-0.006	(0.031)
Year \times After War Onset	0.005***	(0.001)
Year \times Lincoln County	-0.000	(0.001)
After War Onset \times Lincoln County	-0.001	(0.046)
Year \times After War Onset \times Lincoln County	0.004+	(0.002)
State % Urban (std)	-0.007	(0.021)
Post Office Density (std)	-0.037*	(0.016)
Terrain Ruggedness (std)	-0.001	(0.008)
State on River	-0.031	(0.025)
State on Canal	-0.019	(0.022)
Constant	0.407***	(0.039)
<i>N</i>	3625	

Note: LPM with standard errors clustered within headquarter city. Quantities refer to Equation 3, centering Y at the year 1860 and setting $P = 1$ if $Y > 0$.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S5 Additional Results

S5.1 Acceleration in Singular Usage in the North around 1860

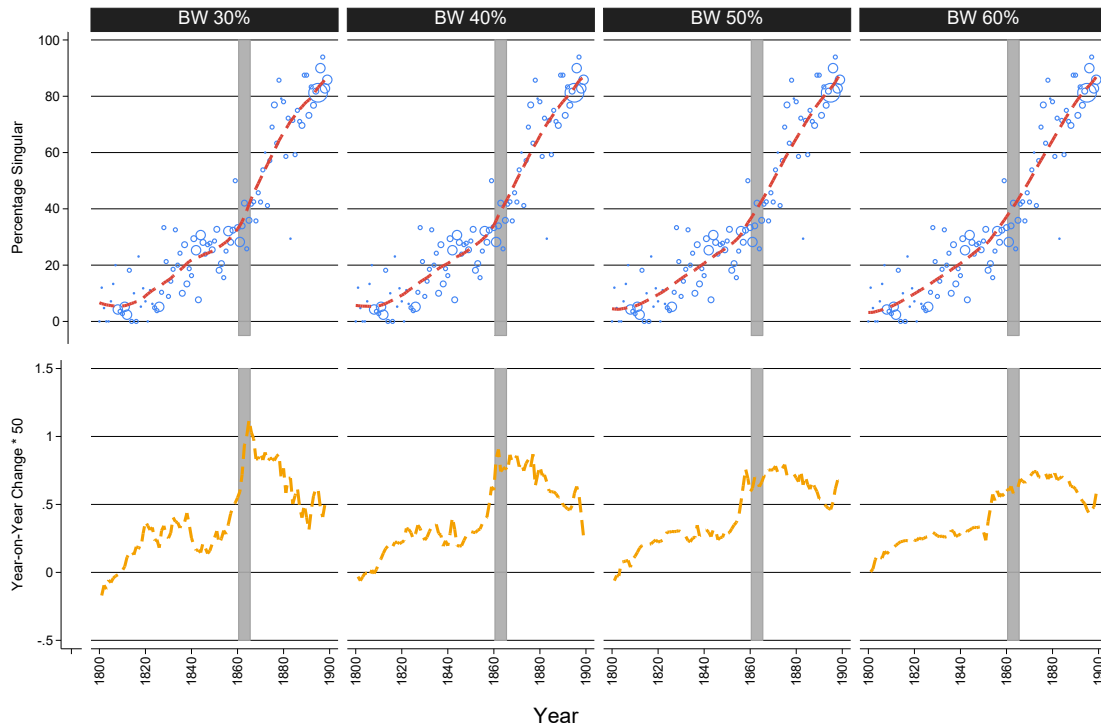


Figure S1: The data are from northern newspapers. The top panel shows fitted lowess lines using different bandwidths (e.g. line fit using a moving window comprising 30% of the data). The bottom panel shows the first differences of the lowess lines (i.e. estimated singular in year t - estimated singular in year $t-1$). We see that, no matter what bandwidth used, the first-differences become starkly more positive around the time of the civil war, indicating an acceleration of singular usage around this date.

S5.2 Northern Congressmen: Post-1860 Only

Appendix Fig. S2 displays the number of statements made per Congress, by Northern Whigs / Republicans and Northern Democrats. We observe that, as reported in the main text, there is relatively little data available for the pre-war period.

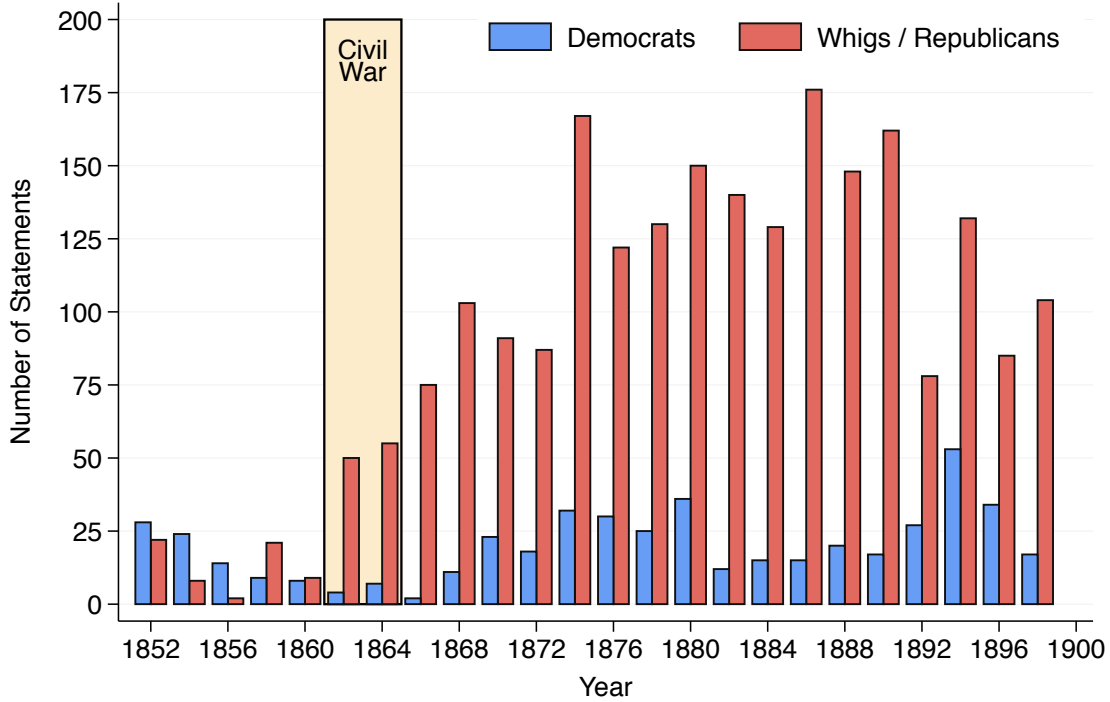


Figure S2: The Figure displays the number of statements made by Northern Democrats and Northern Whigs / Republicans in the Congressional Corpus, divided between statements made before vs. after 1860.

To more robustly examine partisan differences amongst Northern Congressmen, we focus on the period after 1860 only and estimate the following model:

$$S_{isc} = \alpha + \beta_1 Y_{isc} + \beta_2 REP_{isc} + \delta W_{isc} + \zeta_{1s} + \zeta_{2c} + \epsilon_{isc} \quad (4)$$

This allows us to look for partisan differences in the level of singular usage, without relying on the (noisy) pre-war data. Results are presented in Appendix Table S16. Even restricting our attention to the post-1860 period, we observe that Northern Republicans use the grammatical singular at higher rates than Northern Democrats.

Table S16: Singular Usage among Northern Congressmen

	(1)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year of Speech	0.013***	(0.001)
Democrat	(ref.)	
Whig / Republican	0.058+	(0.031)
County of Birth: % Urban (std)	-0.018	(0.015)
County of Birth: Post Office Density (std)	-0.011	(0.016)
County of Birth: Terrain Ruggedness (std)	-0.022+	(0.013)
Born on River	0.043	(0.030)
Born on Canal	0.032	(0.029)
Year of Birth (std)	-0.007	(0.017)
Attended College	-0.035	(0.026)
Served in US Military	0.009	(0.027)
Constant	0.402***	(0.045)
sd(Congress)	0.017***	(0.018)
sd(Bioguide)	0.120***	(0.016)
sd(Residual)	0.418***	(0.006)
<i>N</i>	2582	

Note: Hierarchical linear model with cross-nested random effects (year and speaker). Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

S5.3 Southern Congressmen

Here we provide some suggestive evidence that the partisan patterns we uncover amongst Northern Congressmen are also present amongst Southern Congressmen.

Our analysis here is necessarily suggestive because of two features of the data. First, as shown in Fig. S3, we have very few statements from Southern Congressmen during Civil War and Reconstruction.

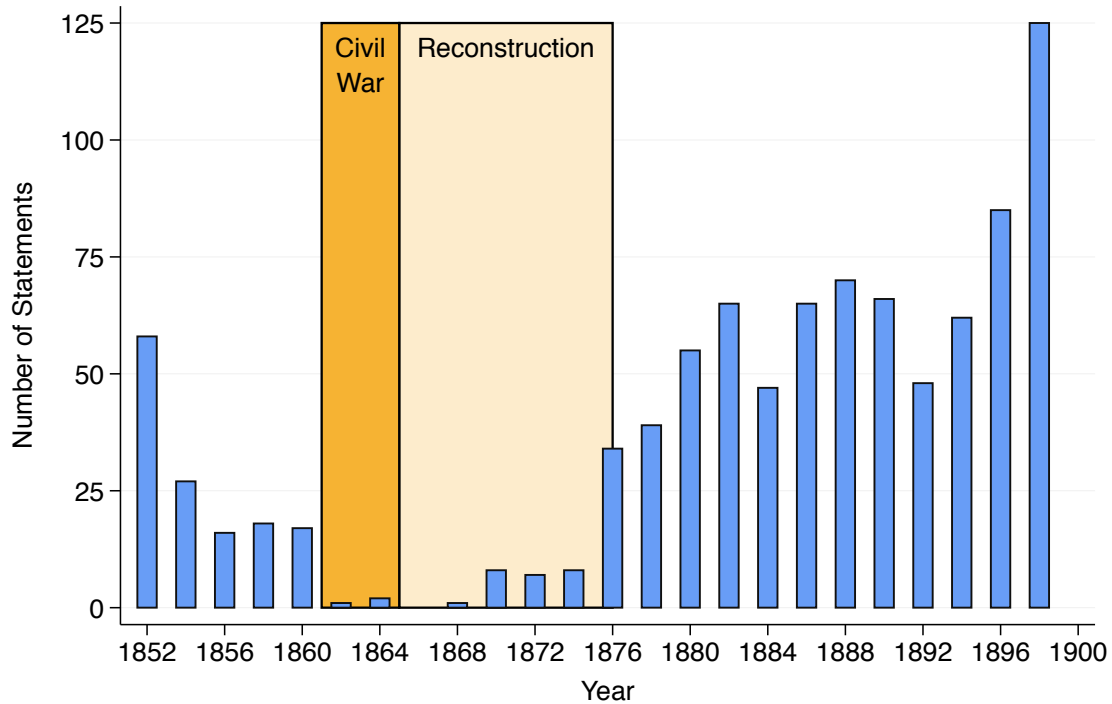


Figure S3: The Figure displays the number of statements made by Southern members of Congress during the Pre-War, Civil-War, Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction Periods.

Second, as shown in Fig. S4, the vast majority of our Southern sample comprises statements made by Southern Democrats. Further, in the post-war period, Southern Democrats also tended to be former Confederate soldiers / officials.

With these two caveats in mind, we examine singular usage amongst Southern Republicans (Section S5.3.1) and Southern Democrats (Section S5.3.2). Briefly, our results suggest that (i) Southern Republicans, particularly those appearing during Reconstruction, were even prone to singular usage than other Congressmen, and (ii) the Civil War had little effect on the speech patterns of Southern Democrats.

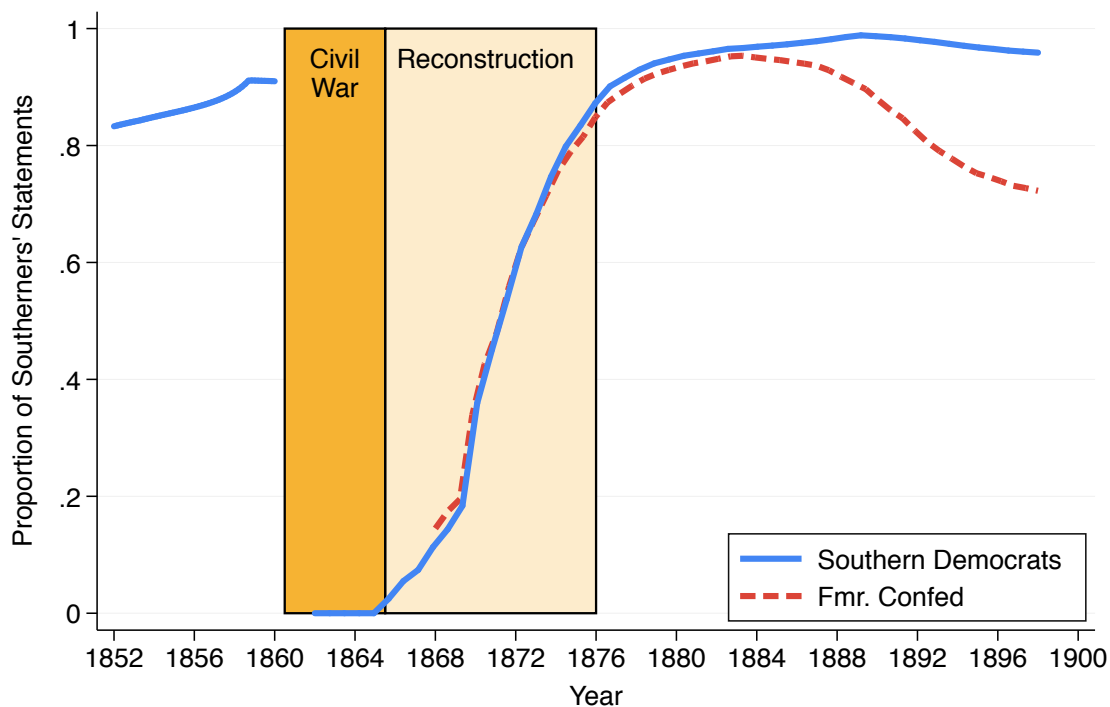


Figure S4: The figure display the percentage of statements made by Southern Democrats and former Confederate soldiers / officials, as a percentage of the total number of statements made by Southern Congressmen in a particular session of Congress. Statements made by Southern Democrats predominate through our study period, except during the Civil War and early Reconstruction period. However, from the end of Reconstruction onward, Southern statements were made almost exclusively by individuals who were *both* former Confederates and members of the Democratic party, although the proportion of statements made by former Confederates begins to decline with the passing of the Civil War generation.

S5.3.1 Southern Whigs and Reconstruction Republicans

Our entire sample contains only 49 statements made by Southern Whigs / Republicans. Of these, 13 statements were made before the War, 22 were made during Reconstruction, and 14 statements were made in the post-Reconstruction period.

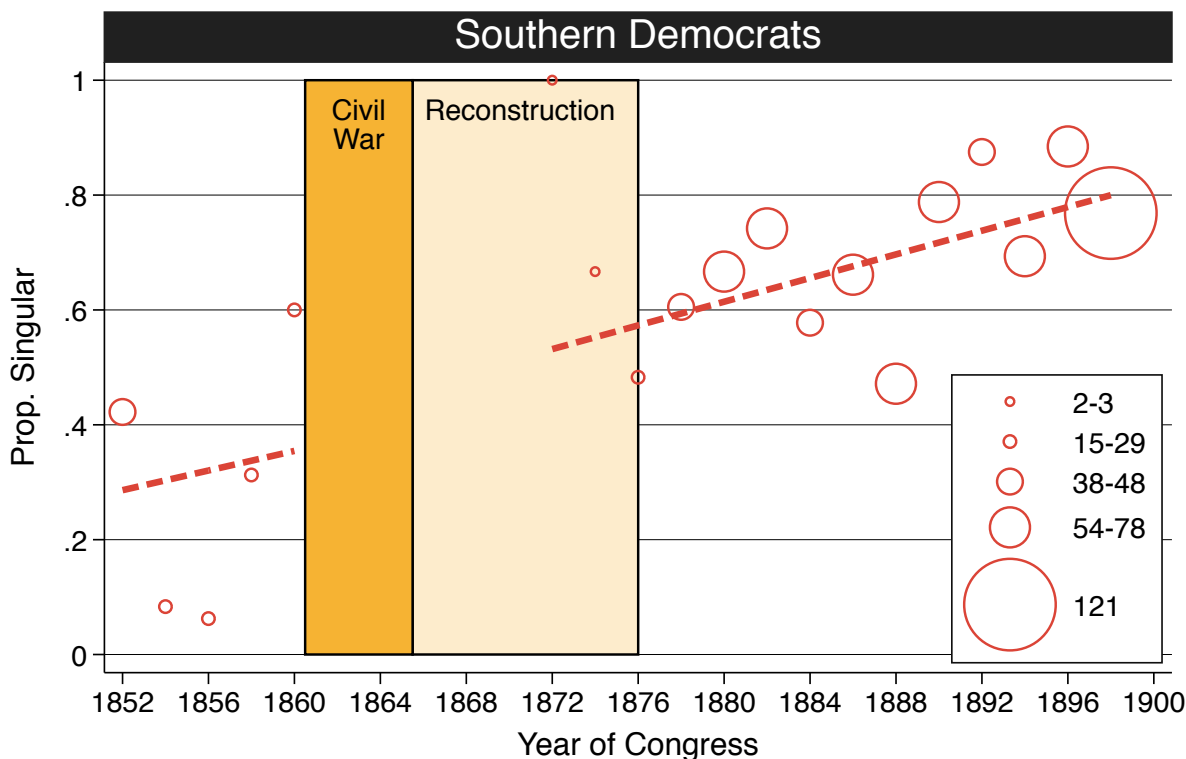
Not a single statement in the pre-War period used the grammatical singular. In contrast, 15 out of the 22 statements (68%) made during Reconstruction used the grammatical singular. This is almost the same rate of singular usage as for the post-Reconstruction statements (10 out of 14, of 71%), although the mean year of Reconstruction statements is 1872, compared to 1891 for post-Reconstruction statements.

For comparison, the rate of singular usage among Northern Congressmen during the years 1866 - 1876 was only around 60%.

In other words, it appears that Reconstruction Republicans were outliers in their tendency to prefer singular over plural.

S5.3.2 Southern Democrats

Figure S5: Singular Usage among Southern Democrats



Note: The trend lines show the rate of singular usage among Southern Democrats (n=863). Size of the bubbles indicates the number of statements in each session of Congress. The gray bars show the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Appendix Figure S5 shows patterns of singular usage among Southern Democrats. Visually, despite the gap in coverage, it appears that a single time trend explains the data, and that the Civil War had no effect on the speech patterns of Southern Democrats.

To assess this impression, we begin by estimating the following model, dropping statements made between the years 1860 – 1876:

$$S_{isc} = \alpha + \beta_1 Y_{isc} + \beta_2 P_{isc} + \beta_3 Y \cdot P_{isc} + \delta W_{isc} + \zeta_{1s} + \zeta_{2c} + \epsilon_{isc} \quad (5)$$

Results are shown in Column 1 of Appendix Table S17.

Table S17: Singular Usage among Southern Democrats

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Year of Speech	0.015	(0.023)	0.006	(0.005)	0.009**	(0.003)
Pre-War	(ref.)		(ref.)			
Post-Reconstruction	0.077	(0.186)	0.104	(0.173)		
Year \times Post-Reconstruction	-0.009	(0.023)				
County of Birth: % Urban (std)	0.001	(0.018)	0.001	(0.018)	0.001	(0.018)
County of Birth: Post Office Density (std)	0.042*	(0.021)	0.042*	(0.021)	0.042*	(0.021)
County of Birth: Terrain Ruggedness (std)	0.028	(0.022)	0.029	(0.022)	0.031	(0.022)
Born on River	0.114*	(0.053)	0.113*	(0.053)	0.113*	(0.053)
Born on Canal	-0.049	(0.121)	-0.050	(0.121)	-0.052	(0.120)
Year of Birth (std)	0.053+	(0.031)	0.054+	(0.031)	0.056+	(0.031)
Attended College	0.031	(0.047)	0.032	(0.046)	0.034	(0.046)
Served in US Military	0.161+	(0.096)	0.162+	(0.097)	0.159+	(0.096)
Constant	0.402**	(0.134)	0.362***	(0.089)	0.390***	(0.075)
sd(Congress)	0.107***	(0.028)	0.107***	(0.028)	0.108***	(0.028)
sd(Bioguide)	0.116***	(0.027)	0.116***	(0.027)	0.115***	(0.027)
sd(Residual)	0.417***	(0.011)	0.417***	(0.011)	0.418***	(0.011)
<i>N</i>	856		856		856	

Note: Hierarchical linear model with cross-nested random effects (year and speaker). Year is centered such that 0 corresponds to the year 1860.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Notice that neither the coefficient on *Post – Reconstruction* nor the interaction term $Year \times Post – Reconstruction$ are statistically significant in Column 1.

We also re-estimate the model after dropping the interaction term. We thus ask whether, assuming a linear time trend for the entire period, there is any evidence of an intercept shift? Results presented in Column 2 of Appendix Table S17 show that, again, the estimate for *Post – Reconstruction* is not significant.

Finally, we also drop the *Post – Reconstruction* dummy and estimate a simple model with only a single *Year* trend and *W*. Results in Column 3 show that the single time trend does indeed capture the pattern we observe in Appendix Figure S5: the rate of singular usage among Southern Congressmen appears to increase by about 1% per year.

Overall, these results suggest that, consistent with our visual impression from Appendix Fig. S5, the Civil War had little effect on the speech patterns of Southern Republicans.