

Third Prize
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The Origins of the Second US Civil War

Mark Southern

From the Revolutionary period of the 1760s and 1770s to the Jacksonian uprising of the 1820s and 1830s, through the Progressive Era beginning in the 1890s, to the social-protest movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington observed that periods of abrupt change have stricken the United States (US), occurring roughly every sixty years.¹ These occasions shared certain features, including a contempt for established power, and a severe decline in trust – both in institutions and

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

in other Americans.² Huntington predicted that America's new moment of moral convulsion would occur in the second or third decade of the twenty-first century.³ The events of 2020, including the coronavirus pandemic, the killing of George Floyd and related urban unrest, and division of the political establishment, might contribute to proving Huntington right.

Given the foregoing, and given the conflicted political climate in the US, it is not difficult to imagine the situation deteriorating. Nearly half of Americans recently polled indicated that they felt a new civil war was likely,⁴ and that not only is violence against the government increasingly becoming viewed as acceptable,⁵ but sixteen percent of Republicans and twenty percent of Democrats are of the opinion that the US would be better off if "large numbers of the other party just died."⁶ Some Republicans believe it is simply a matter of time before states begin to secede.⁷

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate three factors that historians might look back on as being integral to the onset of the Second US Civil, which will be very different from the first.

#1: Donald Trump and a Weakened Democracy

During the recent 2022 midterm elections, Democratic strategists were successful in convincing voters that the integrity of American democracy was at stake.⁸ This was

² David Brooks, "America is Having a Moral Convulsion," *The Atlantic*, 5 October 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/10/collapsing-levels-trust-are-devastating-america/616581/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zogby Analytics, "Will the US have another Civil War?", *Zogby Analytics*, 4 February 2021, <https://zogbyanalytics.com/news/997-the-zogby-poll-will-the-us-have-another-civil-war>.

⁵ David Smith, "Is the US Really Heading for a Second Civil War?", *The Guardian*, 9 January 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jan/09/is-the-us-really-heading-for-a-second-civil-war>.

⁶ Scott Shay, "The End of the Great American Experiment," *Asia Times*, 1 July 2019, <https://asiatimes.com/2019/07/the-end-of-the-great-american-experiment/>.

⁷ Countercurrents Collective, "Following Raid in Trump's Home, the Far Right Calls for Civil War in the US," *Countercurrents*, 15 August 2022, <https://countercurrents.org/2022/08/following-raid-in-trumps-home-the-far-right-calls-for-civil-war-in-the-u-s/>.

⁸ Peggy Grande "US midterms are proof as if needed, the USA is more divided than ever," *Express*, 9 November 2022, <https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1694517/us-midterms-divided-america>.

crucial in countering the Republican-anticipated “Red Tsunami,” which never materialized. Nevertheless, a Stanford University study determined that the growing political divide is indeed making US democracy vulnerable.⁹ The Chinese foreign ministry also believes that the integrity of US democracy is deteriorating, and states that several issues are responsible.¹⁰ First, inequality in economic status has resulted in inequality in political status.¹¹ Noam Chomsky of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has stated that “control of government is narrowly concentrated at the peak of the income scale, while the large majority *down below* are virtually disenfranchised. The current political-economic system is a form of plutocracy that diverges sharply from democracy...”¹² This translates into many Americans being forgotten once their ballots are cast.¹³ Second, the flawed electoral rules impair fairness and justice – the ministry cites the 2016 election where Trump received nearly three million fewer votes than Hillary Clinton, yet won the election based on electoral votes.¹⁴ Thirdly, the above-noted, coupled with political infighting, have made it virtually impossible for “quality governance” to be delivered to the general public, and this has resulted in a severe loss of trust in the government.¹⁵

Americans have historically expressed high faith in their institutions for most of the twentieth century, up to 1964 when a vast majority said they “trusted the federal government to do the right thing most or all of the time”.¹⁶ The war in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal eroded much of this trust however, and by the time Bill Clinton took

⁹ Marietje Schaake et al, “Election 2020: Election Results, The Aftermath, and Tech Agendas,” *Stanford University Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies*, November 2020, https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/hai_cyberpolicy_election_7_v2.pdf.

¹⁰ People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The State of Democracy in the United States,” 5 December 2021,

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202112/t20211205_10462535.html#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20poll%20by,it%27s%20working%20only%20somewhat%20well.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Noam Chomsky, “Can Civilization Survive Really Existing Capitalism?” *International Socialist Review Issue Number 88*, accessed on 22 November 2022, <https://isreview.org/issue/88/can-civilization-survive-really-existing-capitalism/index.html>.

¹³ People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The State of Democracy in the United States.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ David Brooks, “America is Having a Moral Convulsion.”

office, only one in five Americans held the same opinion.¹⁷ While blame cannot entirely be placed at Trump's feet, therefore, he nevertheless made matters worse. The formal institutional guardrails of democracy – Congress, the federalist system, the courts, the bureaucracy, and the press – held firm against his presidency, but his refusal to accept the 2020 election results, and his disparaging of the electoral system, has resulted in nearly three in four Republicans believing not only that the election results were indeed false, but that the election itself was a “massive fraud”.¹⁸ More alarmingly, Trump's lawyers argued that the ambiguous nature of the 1887 Electoral Count Act was such that the slates of certified electors the states had sent to Washington could be ignored,¹⁹ raising concerns that, had the recommendation in fact been followed, “the election would have been thrown into chaos and the Constitution placed in jeopardy.”²⁰ These events have caused many Americans to lose faith in the ability of the government to conduct honest elections, and a wedge has been driven between Democrats and Republicans.²¹ The 6 January 2021 Capitol Hill riots not only drove it deeper but also illustrated that the gap separating peace from chaos may be narrowing.

Consider further the Freedom Caucus, the far-right wing of the Republican party in the House of Representatives. Many are Trump supporters, and their rhetoric is far more blatant.²² Freedom Caucus member Marjorie-Taylor Greene (Georgia) called for a “national divorce” between Democrats and Republicans, and Madison Cawthorn (North Carolina), who lost the Republican nomination in his North Carolina district in May 2022, previously stated, “If our election systems continue to be rigged, then it's going to lead to one place and that's bloodshed.”²³ Although he lost the nomination, it was only by a

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Benjamin L. Ginsberg, “Republicans in Congress Should Update the Electoral Count Act Before It's Too Late,” *National Review*, 5 December 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/12/republicans-in-congress-should-update-the-electoral-count-act-before-its-too-late/>.

²⁰ William A. Galston, “Is Democracy Failing and Putting Our Economic System at Risk.”

²¹ Brittany Shepherd, “Americas' Faith in Election Integrity Drops.” *ABC News*, 6 January 2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/americans-faith-election-integrity-drops-poll/story?id=82069876>.

²² Drew Desilver, “What is the Freedom Caucus, and Who's in it?” *Pew Research Center*, 20 October 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/20/house-freedom-caucus-what-is-it-and-whos-in-it/>.

²³ William Gale et al, “Is the US Headed for Another Civil War?” *The Brookings Institution*, 16 September 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2021/09/16/is-the-us-headed-for-another-civil-war/>

count of 29,411 to 28,092,²⁴ so consider that almost half of the voters were *not* put off by his views.

The rhetoric, the loss of trust, and the growing sense of discord are reflected in 2021 poll results wherein forty-two percent of Americans said they felt a second Civil War was inevitable.²⁵ Echoing that sentiment, the Brookings Institution observed that whether or not Trump receives the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, “the party’s base will insist on a nominee who shares [Trump’s] outlook,” and that potential adverse post-election consequences “could include an extended period of political and social instability and an outbreak of mass violence.”²⁶

#2: Appalachia and a Warrior Culture

What base might resort to mass violence?

Historian Walter Russell Mead states that Donald Trump was able to tap into a movement that “remains one of the most powerful forces in American politics, and one that has deep roots in American history.”²⁷ He elaborates in his book *Special Providence*,²⁸ describing this movement as a “folk community bound together by deep cultural and ethnic ties”, primarily Protestant Christians who descend from the first wave of Scots-Irish immigrants, who brought with them a history of hard-living and warfare.²⁹ They make up the populist vote, and many American intellectuals who believed that the future of US populism lay in a social democratic movement based on urban immigrants, were quite wrong. Mead describes the movement Trump was able to sway possesses a moral code, based on self-reliance, suspicion of large government, independence, honour, and

²⁴ Ballotpedia “Madison Cawthorn,” accessed 16 November 2022, https://ballotpedia.org/Madison_Cawthorn.

²⁵ Bridger Beal-Cvetko, “A Second Civil War in the U.S.? 43% of Americans Think it’s likely in the Next 10 Years”, *Deseret News*, 1 September 2022, <https://www.deseret.com/u-s-world/2022/9/1/23328699/is-a-second-civil-war-likely-in-america0>.

²⁶ William A. Galston et al, “Is Democracy Failing and Putting Our Economic System at Risk.”

²⁷ Walter Russell Mead, “Donald Trump’s Jacksonian Revolt.” *The Hudson Institute*, 13 November 2016, <https://www.hudson.org/domestic-policy/donald-trump-s-jacksonian-revolt>.

²⁸ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World*, (New York: Routledge, 2002).

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp.226-227.

courage.³⁰ When they view government intervention or overreach as having reached an unbearable point, “they look to a popular hero to restore government to its proper function”.³¹ Andrew Jackson was the first president to ride this vote to the White House,³² and indeed, Mead refers to them as the *Jacksonian* vote. The Washington Post called them the “Scots-Irish” vote, and despite the fact that recent census data suggests less than two percent of Americans identify as Scots-Irish, the historical imprint left by this culture is felt even today.³³ They have morphed into the hillbilly/redneck/cracker vote,³⁴ but they also consist of many conservative, pro-military, working-class, white Americans. They demand a strong military and believe that “the purpose of economic policy ought to be to improve the economic position of the middle class.”³⁵ Jackson notwithstanding, Ronald Reagan³⁶ and Donald Trump also relied heavily on this vote.

Mead relies on the work of historian David Hackett Fischer, and his voluminous ethno-historical study of British migration to the US, *Albion’s Seed*.³⁷ Through detailed research, Fischer’s book clearly demonstrates that four separate eras of Protestant British settlers – anti-establishment Puritans to Massachusetts between 1629 to 1640, an Anglican, pro-Royalist elite and a large number of their indentured servants to Virginia and the Chesapeake estuary between 1642 to 1675, a movement of pacifist Quakers to the Delaware Valley from 1675 to 1725, and a flow of poor, hardened Calvinist Scots and English who came from the borderlands between their countries, as well as Northern Irish, to Appalachia from 1718 to 1775 – brought four separate folkways, traditions, belief

³⁰ Ibid, pp.231-235.

³¹ Ibid, p.239.

³² Ibid, p.224.

³³ Frances Stead Sellers, “Why a Key to the 2016 Southern Vote Lies Centuries Ago on Another Continent,” *The Washington Post*, 10 September 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/why-a-key-to-the-2016-southern-vote-lies-centuries-ago-on-another-continent/2015/09/09/41308276-518a-11e5-933e-7d06c647a395_story.html.

³⁴ Cameron Joseph, “The Scots-Irish Vote,” *The Atlantic*, 6 October 2009, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2009/10/the-scots-irish-vote/27853/>.

³⁵ Mead, *Special Providence*, p.241.

³⁶ Ibid, p.230.

³⁷ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

systems, dialects, and conceptions of power, order, and freedom, which became the basis of regional cultures in the New World.³⁸

Descendants of the four cultures spread inland - the Puritans eventually through the northeast and Great Lakes, the Royalists from the Chesapeake down the southeastern coastline, and the Quakers into parts of New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania and central Ohio.³⁹ The Scots-Irish entered the US primarily through Quaker-dominated Philadelphia, then spread inland.⁴⁰ Due to their belligerent behaviour which included fighting, hard-drinking, and squatting on any available piece of land, they were cast off to the *backcountry* by wealthy Quaker elites, under the guise of good land opportunities, with the actual intent of using them as a barrier against native incursions.⁴¹ Notwithstanding such incursions, the Scots-Irish moved westward “into the rolling hills of the interior” and moved south and west along the mountains of Maryland, Virginia, and the interior Carolinas, and “gradually became the dominant English-speaking culture in a broad belt of territory that extended from the highlands of Appalachia through much of the Old Southwest.”⁴² The distribution of surnames from the first US census in 1790 showed that the Scots-Irish “found their way into every part of the American colonies, but by far the largest concentration was to be found in the backcountry region that included southwestern Pennsylvania, the western parts of Maryland and Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.”⁴³ In the nineteenth century “they moved across the Mississippi River to Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas” and by the twentieth Century their influences – their accents, their views on family, politics, and religion - would be felt as far as New Mexico, Arizona and southern California.”⁴⁴

Reagan administration Secretary of the Navy Jim Webb adds in his book *Born Fighting*⁴⁵ that Fischer’s fourth wave of Scots-Irish came from an area where centuries of

³⁸ Ibid, p.6.

³⁹ Ibid, p.812.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.653.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, pp.633-634.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 634.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jim Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America*, (New York: Broadway Books, 2004).

continuous warfare was the norm.⁴⁶ Hundreds of years of Scottish clans fighting each other, Scots fighting against English incursions, and Scots sent by London to assist the Protestant settlements in Northern Ireland, had imbued those who eventually migrated to the US with deeply held animosities towards government, strong beliefs towards retributive justice and the right of armed resistance to authority, and a virulent drive for liberty and freedom.⁴⁷

Interestingly, Fischer demonstrates that from 1789 to 1989, forty men have sat in the Oval Office, and of those forty, thirty-eight are descended from one of the four waves of British settlers, and of those thirty-eight, eighteen were descendants of the fourth wave of hardened, Scots-Irish.⁴⁸ The most prominent of these was Jackson. Born in the Waxhaws region of the Carolinas in 1767 to Scots-Irish parents, Jackson would be referred to as the iron man of his age, a military hero and authoritative figure who from 1829-1837 served as President, and was viewed by many as the champion of the common man.⁴⁹ Fischer states that Jackson was not only “deeply distrusted in greater New England and the Delaware Valley” and “...supported in central and western Pennsylvania, in the Mississippi Valley, the coastal south and the highland south”, but that these regional patterns were strong enough to have allowed him to carry the electoral votes of every southern and western state, and lose nearly all of New England.⁵⁰ This is remarkably similar to Trump and anti-Trump factions in both the 2016 and 2020 elections.

Fischer also demonstrates that multiple political coalitions of the four cultures have existed throughout US history,⁵¹ but the Scots-Irish have faced intense prejudice from the other three.⁵² No better example of this can be found than in the design of the US Constitution. The Scots-Irish were essentially discounted - Fischer states that although it was *developed* through a cohesive effort to balance the four cultures, “It was enacted by a coalition of cultural elites from New England, Virginia, and the Delaware Valley”.⁵³ The

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.9.

⁴⁷ Fischer, pp.770-782.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.834.

⁴⁹ The Smithsonian Institution, “Knowing the Presidents: Andrew Jackson,” accessed 20 October 2022, <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/knowning-the-presidents-andrew-jackson>.

⁵⁰ Fischer, p.849.

⁵¹ Ibid, pp.849-877.

⁵² Ibid, p.612.

⁵³ Ibid, p.830.

coalitions had other motives as well. Appalachia has over time been subject to imposed reform movements orchestrated by New Englanders and Quakers in areas concerning education, feminism, temperance, penology, and, abolitionism.⁵⁴ Here it is important to note that Scots-Irish owned very few slaves.⁵⁵ The vast majority of African slaves worked on the coastal plantations run by the Royalists – replacements for the white servants whose indentures had ended.⁵⁶ Many Scots-Irish did serve in the Confederate army during the (first) Civil War, but the fact that some served with the Union forces demonstrates that their choice of side likely had as much to do simply with where their home was situated, as their willingness to fight.⁵⁷

This willingness to fight has been seen throughout American history. The rugged, agrarian background from which they emigrated, the hardships they endured in the backcountry to which they had been banished, and their martial history all made them well-suited for military life – their marksmen contributed to every American victory in the Revolutionary War; Andrew Jackson rode his military successes in the War of 1812 to the Presidency; the Civil War was fought in the heart of their region, and they served with distinction on both sides; throughout Appalachia, many counties met their WWI and WWII quotas strictly by volunteers, and Alvin York from Tennessee and Willie Sandlin from Kentucky were each awarded the Medal of Honor, while another Kentuckian, Peter McCoy, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, all for acts of bravery not soon to be equalled; in both theatres men from the backcountry served honourably in WWII.⁵⁸

Research has demonstrated that the Congressional Medal of Honor (CMOH) was awarded at a higher rate to soldiers from Appalachia than anywhere else in the US during the Korean and Vietnam wars – nine percent of US soldiers in the Korean war were from Appalachia, although they received eighteen percent of CMOH's, while Appalachian soldiers comprised only eight percent of US soldiers in Vietnam, and were awarded

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.855.

⁵⁵ Webb, p.12.

⁵⁶ History.com, "Slavery in America", accessed 20 October 2022, <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>.

⁵⁷ Webb, p.10.

⁵⁸ Jim Gifford, "In Praise of Appalachian Soldiers," *Kentucky Monthly*, 29 October 2020, <http://www.kentuckymonthly.com/culture/history/in-praise-of-appalachian-soldiers/>

thirteen percent of the CMOHs.⁵⁹ Further, in descending order, soldiers from West Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina all saw higher Vietnam battle death rates than the national average.⁶⁰

Analysis conducted by the New York Times revealed that a significant number of pro-Trump votes came from Appalachia - from southern New York State, southward to northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, and covering significant portions of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, and the interior Carolinas.⁶¹ Figures 1 and 2 illustrate this relationship - Figure 1 outlines the Appalachian Region, and Figure 2 demonstrates how people from this same region voted in the 2020 election.

Figure 1: The Appalachian Region⁶²

⁵⁹ Bert Allen, *Then and Now*, edited by Pat Arnow 4, number 3, Fall 1987, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED313196.pdf>, p.7.

⁶⁰ Ed Price, *Then and Now*, edited by Pat Arnow 4, number 3, Fall 1987, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED313196.pdf>, pp.5-7.

⁶¹ Ford Fessenden et al, "Even in Defeat, Trump Found New Voters Across the U.S.," *New York Times*, 16 November 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/16/us/politics/election-turnout.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur>.

⁶² Anna Sokol, "Economic Redevelopment in Appalachia: The Appalachian Regional Commission," *University of Michigan*, 19 April 2005, <http://websites.umich.edu/~econdev/arc/index.html>.

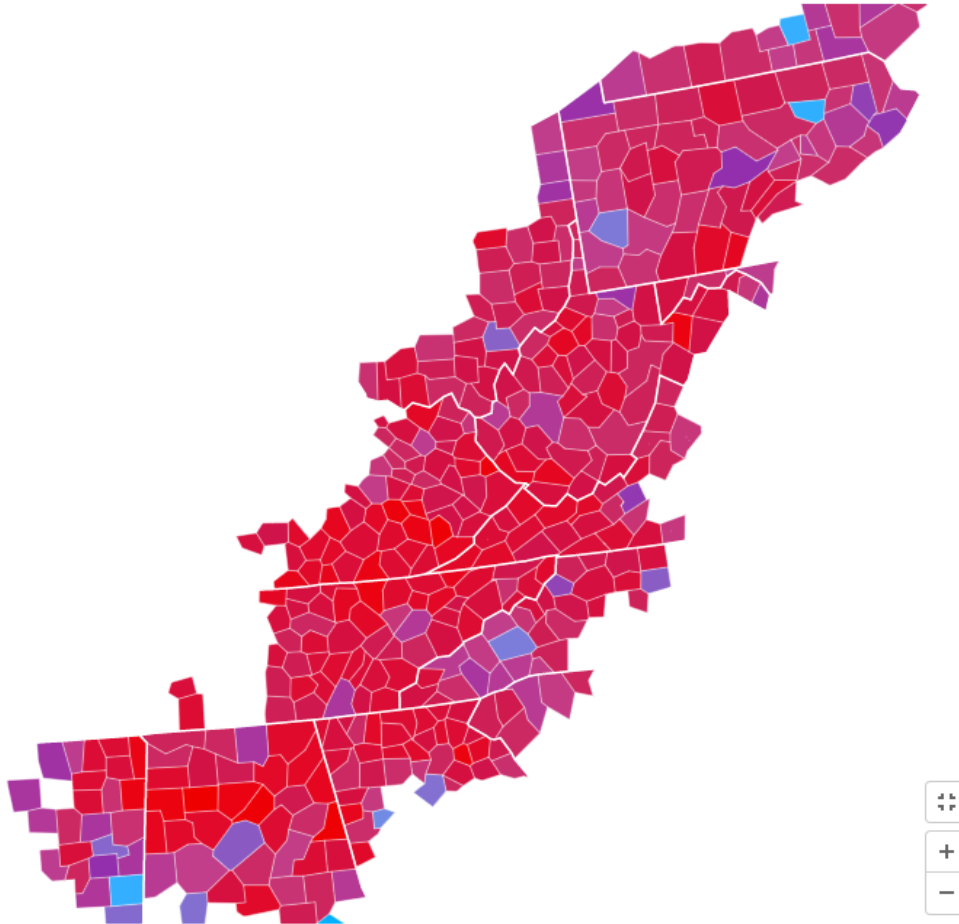


Figure 2: How Appalachia Voted for President in 2020⁶³

⁶³ Jesse Wright, "Explore How Appalachia Voted in 2020." *100 Days in Appalachia*, December 2, 2020, <https://www.100daysinappalachia.com/2020/12/explore-how-appalachia-voted-in-2020/>

How Appalachia Voted for President in 2020

Percentage of votes for **Donald Trump** in the general election



**Blue-spectrum shaded counties indicate counties where Joseph Biden won a majority of votes. Appalachia counties as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Vote totals retrieved Nov. 12, 2020.*

Map: Jesse Wright/Kristen Uppercue/Kayla Gagnon/100 Days in Appalachia • Source: [Associated Press via Politico](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

This remarkable similarity cannot be attributed to coincidence. Further evidence of this Appalachian/Jacksonian support for Trump can be found in the 2022 midterm results. The Freedom Caucus numbers then stood at forty-two, and of those just shy of half were from a line of states running from Pennsylvania and Ohio in the north, south

through West Virginia, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama.⁶⁴

The Scots-Irish who populated Appalachia are “one of the most important and impactful” groups in America,⁶⁵ but since 1989, their quality of life has been falling - their share of wealth, their levels of home ownership, their marriage rates, and their life expectancies have all decreased.⁶⁶

Of relevance to this paper, however, is the Jacksonian/Scots-Irish war doctrine. Wars in which US interests are not affected should be avoided – there is no point in losing American lives in a foreign land for little purpose, however, once the determination has been made to fight, losing is inexcusable, and worse, dishonourable.⁶⁷ War to this cultural group is seen “as a switch that is either on or off,” and the first rule is that wars must therefore be fought with all available force.⁶⁸ The second is that “the strategic and tactical objective of American forces is to impose our will on the enemy,” but to avoid as many American casualties as possible.⁶⁹ The third rule is that “the enemy’s will to fight is a legitimate target of war, even if this involves American forces in attacks on civilian lives, establishments, and property” to destroy civilian morale.⁷⁰ It is quite easy to recognize Fischer’s Scot-Irish heritage in these tenets. They were and continue to be people who have since their arrival been disregarded by other sections of settlers, until such time as America needs to fight a war – one cannot be waged by the US without the support of this culture, and politicians cannot end one “except on Jacksonian terms.”⁷¹ The basic problem of US politics remains “the cultural, political, and class difference between Jacksonian America” and the rest.⁷²

⁶⁴ Legistorm, “House Freedom Caucus,” accessed on 6 November 2022,

https://www.legistorm.com/organization/summary/128166/House_Freedom_Caucus.html.

⁶⁵ Ian McTear, “‘Scotch-Irish’ Influence on US Democracy,” *BBC*, 16 September 2018,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-45487891>.

⁶⁶ Barbara F. Walter, *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them*, (New York: Crown Publishing, 2022), p.149.

⁶⁷ Mead, *Special Providence*, p.251.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.254.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.255.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.259-260.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.263.

#3: Changes in the Post-WII Military

Since the end of WWII, the US military changed in two important ways that might contribute to the onset of the Second Civil War - it became highly Republicanized, and its leaders grew more powerful.

The Second World War was a watershed event for the American armed forces – sweeping powers were given to the military in terms of policy formulation and decision-making, and the “growth in the powers of the joint chiefs mirrored a corresponding increase in the power and importance of the military in the post-WWII world.”⁷³ This was important given the complex and heightened threat environment that existed after the war.⁷⁴ Military issues began to assume a greater role in US politics and foreign policy, although, with the coming of the nuclear age and persistent Soviet menace, many US politicians began to fear a military apparatus that might eventually wield dominance over the affairs of the state.⁷⁵ The relationship between civilians and the military hit a low point during the Truman administration when Douglas MacArthur, who had been called upon to reverse the 1950 North Korean invasion of South Korea, publicly rebuked the president for constraining his strategy.⁷⁶ This disregard is also evidenced by the fact that MacArthur violated direct guidance from the Truman Administration by speaking out to the press and threatening offensive operations against Chinese forces.⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that MacArthur was of Scots-Irish descent.⁷⁸

The relationship deteriorated further through the 1960s, and the left-leaning Kennedy/Johnson administration attempted to equalise the imbalance by selecting automobile industry executive Robert McNamara to install greater civilian control over

⁷³ Capt. Edward B. Westermann, “Contemporary Civil-Military Relations: Is the Republic in Danger?” *United States Air War College*, 15 September 1997, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA329083.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Richard H. Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *The National Interest*, No. 35, Spring 1994, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42894926>, p.4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.5.

⁷⁶ Charles D. Allen, “Civil Military Relations in Transitions: Behavior of Senior Military Officers,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 86, 3rd Quarter, 20 June 2017, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-86/jfq-86_49-58_Allen.pdf, p.50.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

⁷⁸ Rural Hill, “History of the Scots and Scots-Irish,” *Rural Hill*, accessed 1 December 2022, <https://ruralhill.net/heritage/>.

the Department of Defense (DOD), but his effectiveness as an administrator was overshadowed by his direction of the “failed as disastrously costly war” in Vietnam.⁷⁹ Political interference in the selection of bombing targets, and McNamara’s imposition of restrictive rules over the conduct of the war, incensed military leaders, and a chasm began to grow between civilians and the military at the DOD.⁸⁰

Critics of McNamara, having witnessed “a string of operational failures in the 1970s and early 1980s” in Vietnam, then subsequently in Iran, Beirut, and Grenada, were responsible for the creation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act (GWA) in 1986,⁸¹ which centralized and strengthened the authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)⁸² and gave military planners more power to coordinate operations.⁸³ The Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations were positive years for the military, and victories in both the Cold War and the Gulf War no doubt emboldened military leaders, including Colin Powell. As much as MacArthur, Powell contributed to the fracturing of the civil-military relationship. Except for four brief command assignments, from 1969 to 1993 Powell spent his career in Washington, which provided him with the politicking skills to match his presence. These skills enabled him to circumvent established protocols and to develop plans and strategies with no input from either the Secretary of Defense or the President.⁸⁴ His 1992 New York Times article, in which he came close to directing US foreign policy in warning against US military intervention in Bosnia, is cited as a key point in the deterioration of the civil-military relationship.⁸⁵ When he threatened to resign over the Clinton administration’s policy of allowing gays in the military, his “defiance at the top led to resistance all down the line.”⁸⁶ The institutional structure created by GWA has “increased the bargaining power of the corporate military”,⁸⁷ and allowed them a seat and a say in matters of national security.⁸⁸ From Powell onwards, subsequent CJCS’ have

⁷⁹ Harvey Sapolsky et al, *US Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy*, 4th edition, (New York: Routledge, 2021), p.69.

⁸⁰ Kohn, “Out of Control,” p.6.

⁸¹ Sapolsky et al, *US Defense Politics*, p.41.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, p.136.

⁸⁴ Kohn, pp.9-10.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.12.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.13.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

attempted to increase their roles and authorities regarding national security,⁸⁹ and the military's role in matters of state has become more prominent as a result.

So now, given the increased power of the CJCS in particular and the military in general within American political circles, consider the ongoing politicization of the military. The switch to the all-volunteer force model in 1973 essentially diminished any ideological diversity in the military, and as its leaders were given freer reign and more money under the Nixon/Ford and Reagan administrations, they began "thinking, voting and even espousing Republicanism with a capital R."⁹⁰ The Reagan military buildup of the 1980s resulted in cadets at West Point being referred to by their instructors as the "Reagan Youth,"⁹¹ As this youth matured, so did the military's Republican bias, as evidenced by Bush Jr.'s victory in Florida in 2000 which is believed to have been largely dependent upon absentee votes from military personnel.⁹² The Foreign Policy Leadership Project (FPLP) determined that from 1976 to 1996 the number of military personnel identifying as Republican skyrocketed from one-third to two-thirds, while the numbers within comparable sectors of civilian leadership rose from twenty-five to thirty-three percent.⁹³

This trend has remained similar for middle and senior-level officers into the 2010s, however the number of junior officers identifying as Republican has fallen more in line with civilian numbers.⁹⁴ A 2009 survey indicated many Democratic-leaning officers leave the military after their initial commitment, leaving a large number of Republicans in service. As they grow in terms of physical age and military maturity and graduate into senior management positions where they begin providing advice to the Secretary of Defense and President, it is certainly not difficult to imagine that advice coming with some degree of right-leaning bias.

⁸⁹ Russell F. Weigley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell," *The Journal of Military History* 57, number 5, October 1993, <file:///C:/Users/000139~1/AppData/Local/Temp/1/MicrosoftEdgeDownloads/81fe2844-990a-452f-bc5a-2dbd9e1c1b8a/Weigley%20The%20American%20Military%20and%20the%20Principal%20of%20Civilian%20Control.pdf>, pp. 57.

⁹⁰ Kohn, p.6.

⁹¹ Sapolsky, p.48.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Military politicking has continued into the Trump presidency, however, both Republicans *and* Democrats have recruited retired senior military officers to support their presidential candidates – something that would have been unthinkable for most of US history.⁹⁵ Since retired Commandant of the Marine Corps P.X. Kelley endorsed Bush Sr. in 1988, and former CJCS, retired Admiral William Crowe endorsed Clinton in 1992, both Republican and Democratic national conventions have regularly featured a litany of retired generals and admirals “lined up on stage behind the presidential nominee.”⁹⁶

A military establishment that has grown more powerful since WWII has now become highly Republicanized. These together have made the military a powerful agent of change in the US. The risk of military overreach within the political spectrum is rising, as evidenced by the “Open Letter” to the American public signed by over one hundred and twenty retired generals and admirals in May 2021, in which they not only questioned the 2020 election results, but warned against the Marxist direction in which the US government was heading, and questioned Biden’s mental and physical condition.⁹⁷ The boldness of the letter’s tone is underscored by its foreboding:

Aside from the election, the Current Administration has launched a full-blown assault on our Constitutional rights in a dictatorial manner, bypassing Congress, with more than 50 Executive Orders quickly signed, many reversing the previous Administration’s effective policies and regulations...We must support and hold accountable politicians who will act to counter Socialism, Marxism and Progressivism, support our Constitutional Republic, and insist on fiscally responsible governing while focusing on all Americans, especially the middle class, not special interest or extremist groups which are used to divide us into warring factions.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ David Barno et al, “The Increasingly Dangerous Politicization of the U.S. Military,” *War on the Rocks*, 18 June 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/06/the-increasingly-dangerous-politicization-of-the-u-s-military/>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Flag Officers 4 America, “Open Letter From Retired Generals and Admirals,” accessed 1 December 2022, <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/fb7c7bd8-097d-4e2f-8f12-3442d151b57d/downloads/2021%20Open%20Letter%20from%20Retired%20Generals%20and%20Adm.pdf?ver=1620643005025>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

The letter reads like it was written by and for Mead's Jacksonians. Undoubtedly these high-ranking officers waited until retirement to author such a document, preferring not to seem biased while in uniform. However, they did not change their political colours upon retirement – they were likely part of the *Reagan Youth* and were also likely associated with the *resistance all down the line* that resulted from Powell's defiance towards his civilian counterparts. The probability that their views are shared by some if not many active service members is high. Regardless, this level of vocal opposition to the serving president by *any* large group of military officers should raise alarms in Washington.

A Second Civil War

Some valid arguments for how a Second Civil War might start include a law enforcement confrontation with right-wing militias, a presidential assassination, a devastating natural disaster in a major coastal city, the detonation of a dirty bomb in Washington D.C., or the peaceful secession of states.⁹⁹ Given however the weakened state of American democracy, the Appalachian regional culture that has aligned with Trump and the Freedom Caucus, and most importantly, the powerful status of the right-wing US military, other scenarios are also possible, including the following.

Donald Trump is the presumptive Republican nominee for the 2024 election.¹⁰⁰ Suppose that this election results in even a remotely questionable count, and Trump loses, but again does not go down without registering inflammatory complaints of election fraud through as many social and traditional media outlets to which he has access. If half the country believed a civil war was likely *before* this election,¹⁰¹ many more may come to believe it afterwards. It is not implausible that any mention of any election improprieties in 2024 – an “I told you so” moment, might bring the Freedom Caucus to the edge. Suppose they believe that Trump is the legitimate president, and demand that until such time as that is recognized, they announce their intent to secede. This would result in a

⁹⁹ Stephen Marche, *The Next Civil War: Dispatches from the American Future*, (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2022)

¹⁰⁰ Jill Colvin, “Trump Clinches 2024 Republican Nomination”, *PBS.org*, 12 March 2024
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trump-clinches-2024-republican-nomination>.

¹⁰¹ Zogby Analytics, “Will the US have another Civil War?,” *Zogby Analytics*, 4 February 2021,
<https://zogbyanalytics.com/news/997-the-zogby-poll-will-the-us-have-another-civil-war>.

chaotic separation of *some* parts of many states, including central and eastern Ohio, a vast section of Appalachia covering parts of western Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, interior Carolinas, Tennessee, northern Georgia and northern Alabama, as well as parts of Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Idaho, and Montana.¹⁰² This not only corresponds with Fischer's Scots-Irish settlement patterns but given that "the majority of people who voted to re-elect Trump in 2020 also wanted their state to secede from the union," this result cannot be overlooked as a possibility.¹⁰³ The government would surely attempt to invoke the 1868 *Texas v. White* decision, which ruled that secession may only be achieved through revolution or by consent of the states,¹⁰⁴ but the winner-take-all form of politics that has emerged in the US, which has made "the habits of a normal democracy in which the losing party forms a loyal opposition" a dying thing, has made any hopes of consensus between Republicans and Democrats and near-impossibility.¹⁰⁵ No consent would be likely, raising the risks of a revolutionary event occurring.

This is unlikely to be one event, but many. Suppose the Freedom Caucus' actions incite action by right-wing militias, and they engage in what historian Michael Beschloss says could be "sporadic, mounting bursts of violence against our federal government"¹⁰⁶ – insurgencies in other words, similar to what the British military encountered in Northern Ireland in the latter third of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ Not only would these be on a far more decentralized scale, given the size of the US, but multiple militias would be involved - essentially large-scale Irish Republican Army cells - all spread out through the country.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Dara Roche, "Who is in the House Freedom Caucus? Full List of Members after Midterms Results," *Newsweek*, 10 November 2022, [Who Is In House Freedom Caucus? Full List of Members After Midterms Results \(newsweek.com\)](https://www.newsweek.com/who-is-in-house-freedom-caucus-full-list-of-members-after-midterms-results-171739.2).

¹⁰³ Ron Elving, "Imagine Another American Civil War, but This Time in Every State."

¹⁰⁴ Adam Staten, "Texas Seceding From U.S. 'Would Mean War' Law Expert Says", *Newsweek*, 20 June 2022 <https://www.newsweek.com/texas-seceding-us-would-mean-war-law-expert-says-171739.2>

¹⁰⁵ Gale et al, "Is the US Headed for Another Civil War?" *The Brookings Institution*.

¹⁰⁶ Countercurrents Collective, "Following Raid in Trump's Home, the Far Right Calls for Civil War in the U.S.", *Countercurrents*, 15 August 2022, <https://countercurrents.org/2022/08/following-raid-in-trumps-home-the-far-right-calls-for-civil-war-in-the-u-s/>.

¹⁰⁷ David Smith, "Is the US Really Heading for a Second Civil War?"

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

The most profound separation in the US today “is no longer as tidy as North and South...it is the familiar divide between urban and rural”¹⁰⁹ Figure 3 assists in illustrating this point.

Figure 3: US 2020 Presidential Results¹¹⁰



The major centres of population are near Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Miami, Houston, Dallas, Albuquerque, Phoenix, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle, as well as Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Memphis, and Atlanta all fall under Democratic influence, and the rural areas under Republican. Insurgencies are therefore likely to occur predominantly

¹⁰⁹ Ron Elving, “Imagine Another American Civil War, but This Time in Every State,” *NPR*, 11 January 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/11/1071082955/imagine-another-american-civil-war-but-this-time-in-every-state>.

¹¹⁰ Vivid Maps, “2020 U.S. Election Mapped: Trumpland vs Biden Archipelago,” accessed 4 December 2022, <https://vividmaps.com/us-election-2020/>

in the “Blue Zones”, as militias attack and disperse to the rural “Red Zones.” Given the fact that most of America’s guns are owned by rural males who identify as conservative Republicans,¹¹¹ there is a reasonable likelihood that insurgencies will both occur with greater frequency in Democratic urban centres and be more violent.

As violence escalates, Biden or his Democratic replacement will be forced to act. Units from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, and Tobacco, and perhaps Customs, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Secret Service, as well as state and local police, would initially be tasked with dealing with such insurgencies. If the militias become emboldened by any potential successes and momentum, violence against this first line of government intervention is likely.¹¹²

Concerns have been raised that a Trump loss in the 2024 election, whereby enough people come to believe he was cheated twice out of the presidency, might result in a Republican “shadow government”.¹¹³ He would certainly have enough support from the Freedom Caucus, and together they could form such a government and attempt to communicate with and direct their supporters through social media. Consider that the alignment observed in Figure 3 corresponds with the fact that the Democratic party is now almost entirely urban and multi-ethnic, while Republicans are white, small-town, and rural.¹¹⁴ Consider further that Donald Trump drew significant numbers of white voters *away* from the Democrats in 2016,¹¹⁵ and four years later garnered ten million *more*

¹¹¹ Lydia Saad, “What Percentage of Americans Own Guns?”, *Gallup*, accessed on 4 December 2022 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/264932/percentage-americans-own-guns.aspx#:~:text=1%20Republicans%20%2850%25%29%2C%20rural%20residents%20%2848%25%29%2C%20men%20%2845%25%29%2C,the%20least%20likely%20to%20report%20personal%20gun%20ownership>

¹¹² Marc Fisher, “Is the United States Headed for Civil War?,” *The Washington Post*, 26 August 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/08/26/civil-war-mar-a-lago-violent-extremism/>

¹¹³ [Evgeny Pashentev](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/08/26/civil-war-mar-a-lago-violent-extremism/), “U.S. on the Way to Right-Wing Coup and Civil War?” *Russian International Affairs Council*, 28 April 2022, <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/u-s-on-the-way-to-right-wing-coup-and-civil-war/>.

¹¹⁴ Edward Luce, “Is America Heading for Civil War?” *Financial Times*, 31 May 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/9c237473-603d-4196-8a32-0f135c900612>.

¹¹⁵ Tom Murse, “How Donald Trump Won the Presidential Election,” *ThoughtCo.*, 9 July 2019 <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-donald-trump-won-the-presidential-election-4113292>

votes.¹¹⁶ Research also demonstrates that by the 2020 election, nine in ten Trump supporters were white, middle-class voters¹¹⁷ - Jacksonians in other words. Further, by 2020 Caucasians accounted for ninety percent of the entire Republican party,¹¹⁸ and it has been argued that if a similar racial statistic was observed in another multiethnic, multi-religious country it would be called a “super faction,” which is dangerous to political stability.¹¹⁹ Given that whites are expected to lose their majority status by 2045,¹²⁰ and many white Americans have come to believe that blacks and other minorities have demanded too much in the way of special accommodations and favours and that in so doing, they have failed to uphold the Jacksonian code of rugged individualism, and failed to adhere to the Protestant Work Ethic,¹²¹ it is not difficult envisioning a large racial component to these insurgencies.

So suppose the militias continue their attacks, while less extreme Jacksonians lend support, whether in the form of resources, financing, or food and shelter. A Republican super-faction of whites will certainly have developed, and a Trump shadow government, assisted by the Freedom Caucus, and supported by a wide swath of Appalachian Jacksonians, right-wing militias, and rural Americans in several southern and western states will serve to weaken Biden’s influence. The weakened condition of the American democracy, outlined in *factor #1*, coupled with the support of Scots-Irish/Jacksonians outlined in *factor #2*, will both have contributed to the onset of these events.

Suppose now that he decides to flex some military might. Given the existence of a shadow government, consider that three serving generals in the US Army have openly stated that the US military could support a coup if it is unclear who the Commander-in-

¹¹⁶ Britni De La Cretaz, “Trump Got 10 Million More Votes This Election. Where Did They Come From?” *Refinery29*, 18 November 2020, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/11/10176029/who-voted-for-trump-2020-vs-2016>.

¹¹⁷ Pew Research, “An Examination of the 2016 Electorate Based on Validated Voters,” *Pew Research Center*, August 9, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/08/09/an-examination-of-the-2016-electorate-based-on-validated-voters/>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*,

¹¹⁹ Smith, “Is the US Really Heading for a Second Civil War?” *The Guardian*

¹²⁰ Countercurrents Collective, “Following Raid in Trump’s Home, the Far Right Calls for Civil War in the US,”

¹²¹ Barbara F. Walter, *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them*.

Chief (CIC) actually is.¹²² This scenario cannot be dismissed.¹²³ So as the violence escalates, with government facilities, critical infrastructure, and symbolic targets such as Democratic offices, or the homes of senior Democrats, banks, perhaps hospitals, and post offices being attacked, the Biden government will attempt to re-establish control. However, consider that those one hundred and twenty generals and admirals who authored the openly defiant letter are at most two generations removed from the current, active duty, upper military command structure, who are likely to share some of the views held by the *old guard*, and perhaps have even read some instruction in the letter, which of course, is not wrong about Biden's condition - a November 2022 poll indicated that nearly two-thirds of Americans and a majority of Democrats are now at least "somewhat concerned" about his mental health.¹²⁴ So if a number of Republicanized military officers also believe that Joe Biden - or Kamala Harris - is not the legitimate CIC, it would not take much convincing for a significant number of enlisted to follow their lead in questioning the authority of the administration. Many young recruits are from white, rural or southern backgrounds, and have conservative political leanings, army spokesmen have stated that the military recruits heavily from the same demographic that extremist organizations do, and many young white men arrive at basic training already having been primed by their families and communities and indoctrinated with right-wing racist ideologies.¹²⁵ Suppose a second contested election, an insurgency across the country, and orders from a government they do not trust are enough to force the idea of a mutiny into the heads of many of these young men, led by a command element of renegade officers. The increased authority of the military, outlined in *factor #3*, has the potential to make an already bad situation much worse. A break in the command structure might result in either the willful disobedience of orders to quell the insurgencies

¹²² Mary Louise Kelly, "Retired Generals Warn Segments of the Military Could Support a Future Coup," *NPR*, December 29, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/29/1068895489/low-probability-high-impact-3-generals-warn-of-a-potential-military-coup-in-2024>.

¹²³ Peter McKenna, "What Does Canada Do if There is a U.S. Military Coup in 2024," *Saltwire*, 6 January 2022, <https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/opinion/peter-mckenna-what-does-canada-do-if-there-is-a-us-military-coup-in-2024-100677578/>.

¹²⁴ Victor Nava, "More Americans Worried About Biden Mental Health After 'Where's Jackie' Gaffe," *The New York Post*, 10 October 2022, <https://nypost.com/2022/10/10/more-americans-worried-about-biden-mental-health-after-wheres-jackie-gaffe/>.

¹²⁵ Nan Levinson, "The Threat From Within: Right-Wing Extremism Lurks in the U.S. Military," *AlterNet*, 6 April 2021, <https://www.alternet.org/2021/04/far-right-in-the-military>.

or the movement of sympathetic officers and soldiers toward the militias. Suppose then that the shadow government of the newly declared American Free Republic undertakes a recruitment campaign for the standing up of a military establishment with an openly stated mission of either fighting or overthrowing the Biden government. Given the traditions adhered to in Appalachia, significant numbers of Jacksonians would be more than willing to participate and would be augmented by a serving military establishment with access to resources and weaponry, as well as a significant number of veterans, who have grown disillusioned and embittered by the government both for sending them to seemingly pointless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for a government bureaucracy that has failed them.¹²⁶ Many soldiers returning from Vietnam came to see the state as the enemy, and patriotism as something other than defending the nation.¹²⁷ Unlike in the Vietnam era, America's wars in *this* century have been far more lengthy, and therefore many *more* people are rotating back into society embittered with the government.¹²⁸

What would happen then? If two armies were to meet again, on such a fragmented battleground with the absence of any genuine front line, the result would surely be catastrophic, both for the people of the United States and for the country as a whole on the global stage. Perhaps smelling weakness, China or Russia might decide to act to finish the US off while its back is turned. Devastation might result. One can imagine a wide range of outcomes if the US were to descend into such chaos, none of which would result in a happier or safer version of America.

Conclusion

Given the splintered state of US politics, if Trump is not allowed to fulfill his role as the Republican nominee, some form of violence is likely to result. Ron Desantis and Nikki Haley presented viable right-wing alternatives to Trump and may have contributed to the prevention of such violence.¹²⁹ What the 2024 election will not do,

¹²⁶ Konstantin Toropin, "Veterans Make Up Most of Proud Boys Members Indicted on Sedition for Jan. 6 Violence," *Military.com*, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/06/07/veterans-make-most-of-proud-boys-members-indicted-sedition-jan-6-violence.html>.

¹²⁷ Nan Levinson, "The Threat From Within: Right-Wing Extremism Lurks in the U.S. Military,"

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Evelyn Hockstein, "Will Ron DeSantis Become the GOP's Standard-Bearer?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 24, 2022, <https://www.csmonitor.com/layout/set/amphtml/USA/Politics/2022/1024/Will->

however, is loosen the Republican party's grip on the Scots-Irish vote. The white descendants of the original Scots-Irish immigrants who settled Appalachia are alive and well in the American middle class, and to ignore their wants and needs is to prevent Republican *and* Democratic candidates access to a powerful voting bloc –Trump's language and oratory notwithstanding, he still harnessed a substantial amount of support from white voters in 2016 and continued to gather more in 2020.

Biden inherited not only the enormous undertaking of seeing the country through the Covid pandemic, but also a faltering economy, rising inflation, and the increasingly contentious issues of racial equality, gun control, and abortion.¹³⁰ Indeed, Supreme Court decisions that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, invalidated a century-old law in New York State banning the concealed carrying of guns in public and made it increasingly more difficult for Washington to cut carbon emissions from power plants, have all made the divisions in the US worse. The weakened state of American democracy may not withstand further deterioration. In order to prevent additional rot, politicians would do well to consider the psychological makeup of those who voted for Donald Trump.

A study found that his supporters shared five traits¹³¹ - ones that Walter Russell Mead would describe as pure Jacksonian traits. First, *authoritarianism* - they shared strict obedience to the code of the group, resistance to new experiences, and little concern for the welfare or opinions of "outsiders". Second, a *social dominance orientation* – a preference for their group and code over those of others. In the Trump era, his has translated into a preference for the traditionally white, Anglo ideology over others. This has resulted in the further division of two groups: "those living in conservative southern states, who (want) to avoid liberal dictates from the national government, and people on the West Coast and Northeast, who (favour) exacting legislation favoured by liberal voters."¹³² Third, *prejudice* – since Nixon's Southern Strategy, whereby words and phrases were used in speeches to attract white voters, this ploy has been used to garner support by

[Ron-DeSantis-become-the-GOP-s-standard-bearer?cmpid=mkt:ggl:dsa-np&gclid=Cj0KCOiAnNacBhDvARIsABnDa69LquUeitPVHO8yqDE3Q6_PB-Mv2bcHhMQeV2nCXfLPR2zEQ2PiVJMaAl_wEALw_wcB](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/urban-outcasts/2020/08/12/ron-desantis-become-the-gop-s-standard-bearer?cmpid=mkt:ggl:dsa-np&gclid=Cj0KCOiAnNacBhDvARIsABnDa69LquUeitPVHO8yqDE3Q6_PB-Mv2bcHhMQeV2nCXfLPR2zEQ2PiVJMaAl_wEALw_wcB)

¹³⁰ Gale et al, "Is the US Headed for Another Civil War?" *The Brookings Institution*

¹³¹ Bobby Azarian, "An Analysis of Trump Supporters Has Identified 5 Key Traits," *Psychology Today*, 31 December 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/mind-in-the-machine/201712/analysis-trump-supporters-has-identified-5-key-traits>

¹³² Gale et al, "Is the US Headed for Another Civil War?" *The Brookings Institution*

successive administrations including Reagan and Trump. Fourth, *lowered intergroup contact* – Trump’s white supporters have experienced significantly less contact with minorities than other Americans. And fifth, *relative deprivation* – they have been forced to forego things to which they feel they are entitled.

These echo Fischer’s detailed history of British migration to the US, particularly the Scots-Irish who settled in Appalachia and beyond. A weakened democracy and a bloc of white voters declining in number, who might see the state of US politics as approaching a point of no return, must be factors incoming administrations recognize. Right or wrong, many people support Donald Trump’s vision of America.

An increasingly powerful, Republicanized military establishment exists in the US, and this too must be factored in by successive administrations. A right-wing government will have far greater military support than a left-leaning one, and any Democratic administration will be required to keep the military on its good side, particularly given the current state of the global security environment.

So Samuel Huntington’s estimate of when the next instance of moral convulsion will occur in the US is perhaps not quite here, but his sixty-year estimate is nonetheless highly prescient.

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