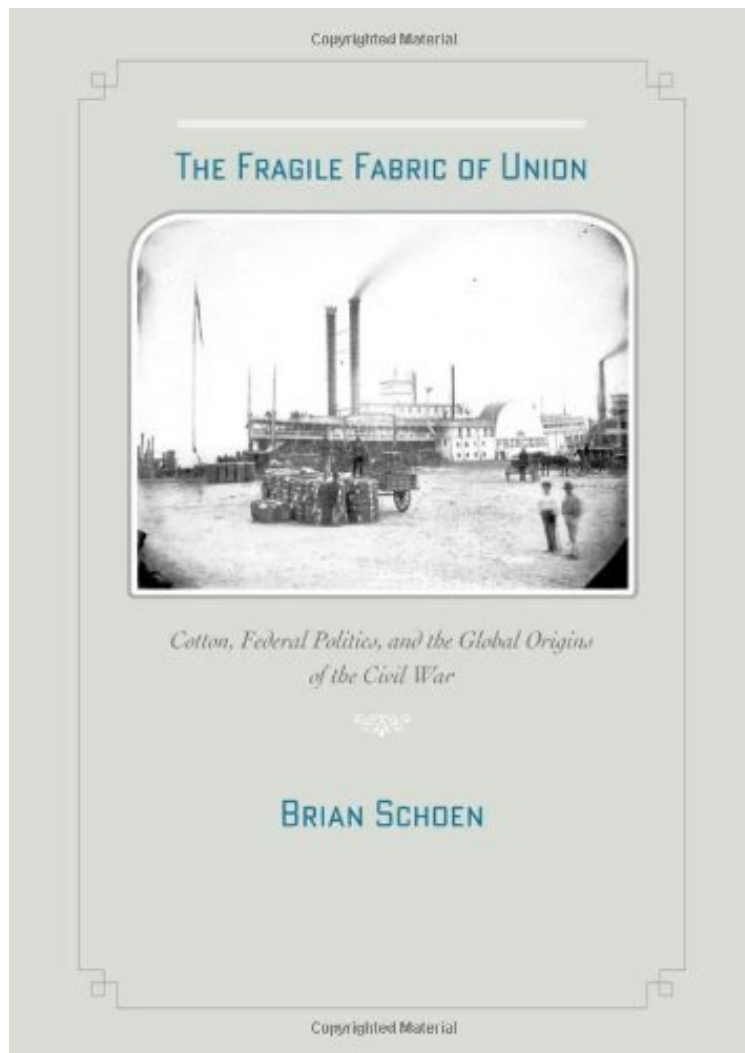


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The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War

Brian D. Schoen

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Analysis of the Economic Causes of the Civil War
By Land Wayland
An exhaustive analysis of the economic background to the Civil War. The Southern States were convinced that not only their economies but the economy of the United States itself was based on cotton and they understood that the only way to grow cotton to greatest financial advantage was to pay virtually nothing to the workers

who produced this labor intensive crop. They did this by relying on slaves to do this brutal work and they wanted to guarantee that they would be able to not only keep their social and production system intact but they insisted that most of the new States being admitted to the Union had to tolerate slavery. They believed that the countries of Europe, which purchased most of the cotton crop, needed the South's cotton so much that they would (reluctantly) agree to support the South if it formed its own country. Finally, they also believed that the Northern States would grumble but would also accept the secession. This is a scholarly work that examines and carefully explains each of the propositions, year by year, as the disagreement became more and more intense until it exploded with the attack on Ft. Sumter 39 days after Lincoln's inauguration. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book By Caleb Greene A great read indeed. A very fresh take on the origins of the Civil War. Dr. Schoen is a thorough historian. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Impressively written! By Jim Brown I had the privilege of having Dr. Brian Schoen as a professor in several upper level classes concerning the American Civil War and the antebellum south. Furthermore, Schoen is a skillful writer. This wonderfully researched piece of work highlights cotton's importance during the first 100 years of the United States' existence. He proves, through primary sources, that King Cotton certainly was exactly that for much of the early 19th century; however, not "king" enough to avoid a war or receive military aid from Great Britain, the largest importer of southern cotton. Schoen's work is a precise insight on the geopolitical framework of cotton and the diplomatic, and at times militaristic, relations that cotton caused and influenced. He covers a diverse subject with concise writing and a focused objective. He covers subject matters including, but not limited to: Cotton's rise in demand and its economic and geopolitical effects How southern planters increased their supply and answered the demand, not only Whitney's gin but others who piggybacked his invention - and Richard Leake's and others who increased the long staple cotton seed's yield. The continued commercial relations from pre - revolutionary times that culminated into the War of 1812 - largely caused by economic problems involving cotton and the shipments of it. How cotton influenced both domestic and foreign economic diplomacy. How King Cotton evolved into a Bloody Civil War and how this "king" was not that during the actual war thanks to the Union's embargo and British hesitancy to acknowledge the Confederacy. And lastly, the hard to separate issue of the close but not identical relationship and correlation between cotton and slavery. A must read for American historians interested in geopolitics and the origins of both the War of 1812 and the American Civil War.

In this fresh study Brian Schoen views the Deep South and its cotton industry from a global perspective, revisiting old assumptions and providing new insights into the region, the political history of the United States, and the causes of the Civil War. Schoen takes a unique and broad approach. Rather than seeing the Deep South and its planters as isolated from larger intellectual, economic, and political developments, he places the region firmly within them. In doing so, he demonstrates that the region's prominence within the modern world and not its opposition to it indelibly shaped Southern history. The place of "King Cotton" in the sectional thinking and budding nationalism of the Lower South seems obvious enough, but Schoen reexamines the ever-shifting landscape of international trade from the 1780s through the eve of the Civil War. He argues that the Southern cotton trade was essential to the European economy, seemingly worth any price for Europeans to protect and maintain, and something to defend aggressively in the halls of Congress. This powerful association gave the Deep South the confidence to ultimately secede from the Union. By integrating the history of the region with global events, Schoen reveals how white farmers, planters, and merchants created a "Cotton South," preserved its profitability for many years, and ensured its dominance in the international raw cotton markets. The story he tells reveals the opportunities and costs of cotton production for the Lower South and the United States.

"Schoen has written an immensely important history of southern political economy, one that is destined to be prominent in future studies of the Old South." (James L. Huston *Civil War Book*) "Schoen's chronological approach in five chapters develops his arguments and does a masterful job of keeping the focus on cotton, its politics, its exploitation of slaves, and ultimately the self-delusions of the cotton states vis-à-vis the world... An excellent book on all counts. Highly recommended." (Choice) "A sophisticated, nuanced analysis of elite political-economic rhetoric in the antebellum South." (Lawrence A. Peskin *North Carolina Historical*) "In sure-footed fashion, Brian Schoen guides the reader through overlooked issues in the oft-told account of southern secession." (Frank J. Byrne *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*) "Students of the causes of the Civil War should read *The Fragile Fabric of Union*. It is well written and extensively documented... The author brings the issues to life by illustrating how economic self-interest colored the views of the South to the point that it was willing to sunder the Union and go to war." (Stephen Donnelly *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*) "I found myself reading this book in light of current events. Schoen does a good job pointing out that legislative victors may rue their triumph, while losers may inadvertently reap benefits from loathed legislation... The book is clearly written." (David G. Surdam *Journal of Economic History*) "Impressive... Adds an intriguing new dimension to ongoing debates about the nature of southern economic development, what motivated southern states to secede, why they seceded when they did, and ultimately what caused the Civil War." (Beth *English American Historical*) "In this provocative book, he forces historians who

have not done so already to discount 'Lost Cause' lore and pay greater attention to southerners who thought they could use their monopoly in raw cotton as leverage to advance the interests of their region in the larger world." (Glenn C. Altschuler *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) "An important contribution to the reinterpretation of plantation slavery and the origins of the U.S. Civil War... A lucidly written, richly researched, and convincing analysis of the global forces that shaped the politics of the southern slaveholders." (Charles Post *Journal of American History*) "There is much to admire in Brian Schoen's ambitious new book... A remarkable scholarly debut that represents one of the most important studies of 'why the South fought' to be released in over a generation." (Scott P. Marler *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*) "Schoen's readable prose deserves a wide audience. His explanations of tariffs and other economic issues are clear, and he has admirable command of a wide range of political and economic subjects (both domestically and in foreign relations). This book will be a welcome addition to the bookshelf of any scholar of the antebellum era." (Aaron W. Marrs *Technology and Culture*) "Schoen extends the transatlantic dimensions of this era; just as the politics of slavery were shaped by developments in the Caribbean and Europe, so too did the political economy of cotton stretch throughout the Atlantic world. This book should be read by all those interested in broadening their understanding of both the Atlantic world of the nineteenth century and the coming of the American Civil War." (Ed Rugemer *H-CivWar, H-Net*) "Schoen challenges previous studies and underscores the impact of external global economics as a primary cause of the Civil War. This contention is likely to stir controversy and healthy debate." (Michael Russert *Civil War News*) "Schoen's *Fragile Fabric* commendably sheds renewed light on the conflict's origins at the local, sectional, and transatlantic level." (Marc-William Palen *Southern Historian*) "Schoen effectively links ideology, institutions, and econometrics... [and] skillfully places the nineteenth-century South and U.S. on the global stage." (Todd W. Wahlstrom *Journal of Social History*) "Specialists will welcome Schoen's deeply researched, well-crafted, and sophisticated book." (John David Smith *The Historian*) "The insights presented here are novel and require the engagement of all scholars of Old South politics and economic processes... Provocative, well-written." (Andrew Prymak *South Carolina Historical Magazine*) "Anyone interested in the growing importance of the cotton industry to the South during the ante-bellum period, and to American and global politics, will find this work of use." (Lisa Gillis *IA: The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology*) "In *The Fragile Fabric of Union*, Brian Schoen offers historians a compelling, highly readable, and historiographically significant account of the exact circumstances that led to Southern secession in the late 1860 and early 1861... The book deserves to be widely read, particularly in graduate seminars of the Early American Republic, the American Civil War, and American Economic History." (Andrew J.B. Fagal *Enterprise and Society*) "A complex portrayal of southern cotton planters that will revise the way many scholars interpret the political economy of slavery." (John Majewski, University of California, Santa Barbara) "In this bold new interpretation of the contours of southern political economy between the Constitution and the Civil War, Brian Schoen skillfully embeds U.S. history in its proper international context. *The Fragile Fabric of Union* marks the impressive debut of an exceptional young historian." (Peter A. Coclanis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) "This fascinating and deeply researched book challenges enduring myths about the Cotton South and the roots of the Civil War. From the vantage point of global political economy, it sheds new light on how American slaveholders aggressively pursued commercial power." (Charles Postel, Bancroft prizewinning author of *The Populist Vision*) From the Back Cover Winner, Bennett H. Wall Award, Southern Historical Association In this fresh study, Brian Schoen views the Deep South and its cotton industry from a global perspective, revisiting old assumptions and providing new insights into the region, the political history of the United States, and the causes of the Civil War. "Impressive... Adds an intriguing new dimension to ongoing debates about the nature of southern economic development, what motivated southern states to secede, why they seceded when they did, and ultimately what caused the Civil War."? *American Historical* "An important contribution to the reinterpretation of plantation slavery and the origins of the U.S. Civil War... A lucidly written, richly researched, and convincing analysis of the global forces that shaped the politics of the southern slaveholders."? *Journal of American History* "Schoen has written an immensely important history of southern political economy, one that is destined to be prominent in future studies of the Old South."? *Civil War Book* "In this provocative book, he forces historians who have not done so already to discount 'Lost Cause' lore and pay greater attention to southerners who thought they could use their monopoly in raw cotton as leverage to advance the interests of their region in the larger world."? *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* "This book will be a welcome addition to the bookshelf of any scholar of the antebellum era."? *Technology and Culture* About the Author Brian Schoen is an associate professor of history at Ohio University.