

Could the Civil War Have Been Avoided?

Donald Trump is taking [heat](#) from the media on his ramblings about whether a leader such as Andrew Jackson could have crafted a compromise to avoid the 620,000 deaths in the Civil War. The general view seems to be that Trump is crazy for questioning the inevitability and justness of the slaughter. Of course, everyone knows that had Lincoln not attacked the South, slavery would exist today, right?

Not exactly. As I pointed out in my Independent Institute book, [Reclaiming the American Revolution](#), at the time of the war there was a long history of peaceful abolition occurring around the globe. From 1813 to 1854, peaceful emancipation occurred in Argentina, Columbia, Chile, Central America, Mexico, Bolivia, Uruguay, the French and Danish colonies, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. In the Western Hemisphere, violence predominated in the abolition of slavery only in the United States and Haiti.

Had Lincoln permitted the states of the lower South to depart in peace, the states of the upper South would not have seceded. But for Lincoln planning to use force to hold the Union together, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia would have stayed in the Union. With the lower South gone from the Union, there would have been enough votes in Congress to abolish slavery in the U.S. The Gulf Coast states of the CSA would have been isolated and the costs of preventing runaways to the U.S. would have posed a crushing burden. Actually, in urging the North to secede from the South, [William Lloyd Garrison](#), editor of the anti-slavery newspaper *The Liberator*, believed that such a scenario would occur and result in the collapse of the institution of slavery. Garrison was not foolish in his belief—this scenario actually played out in Brazil where the state of Ceara

abolished slavery and thus caused a massive exodus of slaves from neighboring states. As Jeffrey Rogers Hummel has pointed out in his book, [*Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*](#), the value of Brazilian slaves plummeted, the institution soon self-destructed, and Brazilian slavery ended shortly thereafter.

So, while Trump's musings were convoluted, he should not be burned at the stake for questioning the necessity of a Civil War. There is strong evidence that slavery in the Gulf Coast states would have died away without 620,000 deaths and a war that propelled the federal government to omnipotent status.

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