

# Neo-Confederate

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“ “If at first you don't secede, try, try again.” ”

—*MAD Magazine*

**Neo-Confederate** (otherwise known as **Southern Nationalism**) is a label for several fringe political groups that believe that the states that made up the Confederacy during the American Civil War (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas and in some cases Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri despite not actually being members of the Confederacy) should once again secede from the Union and form their own nation. These people believe that Southern interests have diverged so far away from Northern interests that it merits splitting America into two countries.

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## History

The origin of the term is unclear, but it was used as early as 1949 by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in his book *The Vital Center* to describe Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats, and in 1954 by Leonard Levy in a book review published in *The Western Political Quarterly*. The modern use of the term as a self-identifier dates from *Southern Partisan* magazine in 1988.

The modern neo-Confederate/Southern Nationalist movement got a boost with the publication of the 1991 book *The South Was Right* by James Ronald Kennedy and Walter Donald Kennedy. That book used the occasion of the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as an excuse to assert that the time had come for the Southern states to once again secede, arguing that the South was culturally and historically a separate people from the North. *The South Was Right* is also filled with "slaves-didn't-have-it-so-bad" arguments alongside blaming Northerners for the slave trade, the use of Yankee, Scalawag, and Carpetbagger as insults on almost every page, and claims that

### The colorful pseudoscience Racialism



#### Hating thy neighbour

- Racism
- Racial pride
- Nationalism

#### Divide and conquer

- Everyone is racist
- James Damore
- Reverse racism
- Yakub Islam
- Yellow Peril

#### Dog-whistlers

- Eric S. Raymond
- Joseph Kony
- Louis Farrakhan
- Max Hermansen
- Troy Southgate

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Southern people are of primarily Celtic ancestry while Yankees are primarily Anglo. This is, at best, a gross twisting of history. In the early European settlement of North America, the Celtic peoples (Scots, Scots-Irish, and Welsh) settled in Pennsylvania and the Appalachian region — the latter of which was a stronghold of pro-Union sentiment during the Civil War, to the point where northwestern Virginia counter-seceded from Virginia and remained loyal. This is before you get into later migrations of Irish Catholics to the Northern industrial cities. Meanwhile, the coastal regions of Virginia and the Deep South, the core of secessionist and pro-slavery sentiment, were (and still are) primarily Anglo.<sup>[note 1]</sup>

The League of the South is one of the most visible neo-Confederate/Southern Nationalist organizations, founded in 1994. In 1999, members of the League of the South formed the Southern Party, a minor political party with a Southern nationalist/secessionist platform which ran candidates in the 2000 elections but disbanded in 2003 due to internal squabbling, although a few state chapters remain. Another example of a Neo-Confederate/Southern Nationalist organization is *Occidental Dissent*, an alt-right, white nationalist, and anti-Semitic news website run by Alabama native Brad Griffin (aka Hunter Wallace). Griffin/Wallace and other writers of *Occidental Dissent* regularly write articles that attack leftists, liberals, political correctness, Jews, blacks, Hispanics and non-whites in their articles.

## Beliefs

Neo-Confederates/Southern Nationalists believe and promote the Lost Cause of the South mythos. They tend to be racists and Dominionists, and there is some degree of overlap with Christian Identity. They believe that the South has a primarily Christian and European background (usually "Anglo-Celtic") and that it should take steps to preserve this. While their literature is silent about the issue of Jim Crow, and they claim that they do not want to reinstate slavery, it is a pretty safe bet that being a black person in a new Confederacy would not be a comfortable life. It should be noted that these people vociferously deny that the Confederacy was founded to protect slavery, instead maintaining that the secession was due to some nebulous idea of "states' rights" and protecting against the rise of centralized tyranny in the North. A recent new belief of the Neo-Confederate movement is called "Alt-South" by *Occident Dissent* writer Brad Griffin/Hunter Wallace. Alt-South (as its name suggests) mixes the ideas of Neo-Confederates with the alt-right.

## Strange Yankee bedfellows

Despite (or perhaps because of) their antipathy for Yankees, many Neo-Confederates/Southern Nationalists vocally and, on their websites, blogs, and message boards, vociferously support the small group spawned by the Mississippi-born creator of the Second Vermont Republic (SVR), Thomas H. Naylor. During an hour-long interview on his Holocaust-denying, neo-Confederate Internet radio program *The Political Cesspool* for Confederate History Month, James Edwards, League of the South leader and author of *Racism Schmasism*, said that Naylor was "obviously a good Confederate". (<http://vermontsecession.blogspot.com/2007/10/thomas-h-naylor-obviously-good.html>)<sup>[1]</sup> Naylor and SVR are a topics of frequent discussion on Stormfront, the message board of ex-Klansman Don Black.<sup>[2]</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale<sup>[note 2]</sup>, a co-founder of SVR and current delegate to the neo-Confederate Southern National Congress, delusionally spoke of his friend Naylor's "successful" efforts and his frequently proposed plan for a confederation of states from a secessionist New England and the Maritime Provinces of Canada.<sup>[3]</sup>

immigration to the United States

- Occupy Wall Street
- Ratfucking
- Tim Kaine

### Persons of interest

- J. Edgar Hoover
- Jack Abramoff
- Mo Brooks
- Paul Wolfowitz
- Scooter Libby
- Tony Zirkle

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“ “The people in Vermont, who have been very successful in their secession efforts, talk about a New England secession, which might make sense. They could form an alliance with certain of the coastal provinces of Canada. That might make a viable kind of nation.” ”

In 2007, shortly after the Vermont Secession blog revealed the SVR's ties to numerous neo-Confederates/Southern Nationalists<sup>[4]</sup> like Thomas DiLorenzo and LOS board of director member Franklin Sanders (who served on the SVR advisory board), controversy broke in the Vermont blogosphere over the disclosure concerning one board member, Donald Livingston, who headed up the neo-Confederate Abbeville Institute, so named for the plantation of the mid-19th century slavery advocate James C. Calhoun, and where Naylor serves as an "associate scholar".<sup>[5]</sup> Livingston had been the first director of the League of the South's Institute for the Study of Southern Culture and History, as well an adjunct faculty member at the libertarian Ludwig von Mises Institute in Alabama.<sup>[6]</sup> Champlain College professor Rob Williams, then co-chair of SVR and managing editor of the now defunct companion journal of SVR, *Vermont Commons*, responded to questions about racists from the League of the South and specifically about VTCommons contributor Livingston by saying,

“ “Is (Livingston) a racist? I don't know. And frankly, it is none of my damn business, at a personal level.”<sup>[7]</sup> ”

Thus began the SVR policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Care" concerning racism amongst its Southern neo-Confederate allies.

## See also

- Dixiecrat, breakaway faction of the Democratic Party that promoted the Confederate battle flag and brought it into mainstream.
- Ku Klux Klan, one of the most infamous racist organizations has Neo-Confederate ties.
- League of the South, the leading Neo-Confederate, "Southern Nationalist" organization.
- Irish slaves, myth alleging that Irish were slaves in the New World is promoted by Neo-Confederates.
- Lost Cause of the South, promoted heavily by Neo-Confederates.
- Second Vermont Republic, secessionist group promoting an independent Vermont whose founder has close ties with the Neo-Confederates.
- Thomas DiLorenzo, pseudo historian who formerly worked with the League of the South and the Council of Conservative Citizens.
- Council of Conservative Citizens, white nationalist organization with some Neo-Confederate lineage.
- R.J. Rushdoony

## Notes

1. For an accurate and much better overview than the not even wrong history one will find in *The South Was Right*, see *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* by David Hackett Fischer on Celtic and Anglo migration patterns and cultural influence, *Our Southern Highlanders* by Horace Kephart on the culture specifically of the ancestrally Celtic peoples in the southern U.S. and how it differs from the Anglo Deep South, and finally *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War* by David Williams to demolish any lingering myths that the Southern people were ever united behind the Confederacy in the first place.
2. Yes, the same Kirkpatrick Sale who wrote the definitive history of Students for a Democratic Society. An example of someone who has gone so far to the left — specifically in his case Luddism — that he has common cause with the

far-right on shared "decentralist" grounds.

## References

1. Hour-long interview of Thomas Naylor on *The Political Cesspool* for Confederate History Month (<http://americacast.ezstream.com/play/index.cfm?fuseaction=playemb&id=65871>) James Edwards, April 23, 2007.
2. Naylor vid on American Socialism, Burlington Telecom cable access show (<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t781007/#post8972319>) Stormfront.org, February 18, 2011.
3. Kirkpatrick Sale interview (<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20121124/PC12/121129732/1268/qa-with-kirkpatrick-sale-secessionist-weighs-in-on-petition-drives-fiscal-cliff-and-lincoln&source=RSS>) The Post and Courier, South Carolina, November 24, 2012.
4. Vermont Secession blog February 2007 archive ([http://vermontsecession.blogspot.com/2007\\_02\\_01\\_archive.html](http://vermontsecession.blogspot.com/2007_02_01_archive.html))
5. Second Vermont Republic Pushes for Independence in Vemont (<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2008/summer/north-meets-south>) Southern Poverty Law Center, Beirich, Heidi, Summer 2008.
6. The Ideologues: Donald Livingston (<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2004/winter/the-ideologues?page=0,2>) Southern Policy Law Center Intelligence Report, Winter 2004.
7. Rob Williams tirade at his VTCommons website where he also screws up American history, as well as who, in fact, was writing the Vemont Secession blog (<http://www.vtcommons.org/node/652>) February 11, 2007.

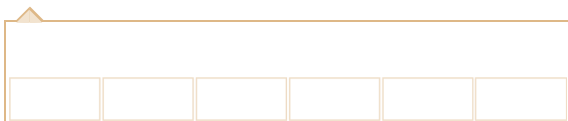
## External links

- SPLC's collection of articles and media on Neo-Confederate groups and figures (<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/neo-confederate>)
- Breaking the White Nation (<http://www.templeofdemocracy.com/breaking.htm>) by Edward H. Sebesta
- Neo-Confederates and the Revival of “Theological War” for the “Christian Nation” ([http://www.religiondispatches.org/dispatches/sarahposner/4858/neo-confederates\\_and\\_the\\_revival\\_of\\_%E2%80%9Ctheological\\_war%E2%80%9D\\_for\\_the\\_%E2%80%9Cchristian\\_nation%E2%80%9D/](http://www.religiondispatches.org/dispatches/sarahposner/4858/neo-confederates_and_the_revival_of_%E2%80%9Ctheological_war%E2%80%9D_for_the_%E2%80%9Cchristian_nation%E2%80%9D/)), Religion Dispatches

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# Neo-Confederate

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**Neo-Confederate** or **Southern Nationalist**, is a term used to describe the views of various groups and individuals who use historical revisionism to portray the Confederate States of America and its actions in the American Civil War in a positive light.

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## Etymology

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### History of the term

Historian James M. McPherson used the term "neo-Confederate historical committees" in his description of the efforts from 1890 to 1930 to have history textbooks present a version of the Civil War in which secession was not rebellion, the Confederacy did not fight for slavery and the Confederate soldier was defeated by overwhelming numbers and resources.<sup>[1]</sup> Historian Nancy MacLean used the term "neo-Confederacy" in reference to groups, such as the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, that formed in the 1950s to oppose U.S. Supreme Court rulings demanding racial integration, in particular *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).<sup>[2]</sup> Former *Southern Partisan* editor and co-owner Richard Quinn used the term when he referred to Richard T. Hines, former *Southern Partisan* contributor and Ronald Reagan administration staffer as being "among the first neo-Confederates to resist efforts by the infidels to take down the Confederate flag"<sup>[3]</sup> It is possibly the earliest use of the term "neo-Confederate" in *Southern Partisan*.

This definition is not necessarily accepted by neo-Confederates, though Mel Bradford, who was a key figure in the neo-Confederate movement and frequent writer for *Southern Partisan* from its founding, titled one of his books *The Reactionary Imperative: Essays Literary and Political*.

An early use of the term came in 1954. In a book review, Leonard Levy (later a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1968) wrote: "Similar blindness to the moral issue of slavery, plus a resentment against the rise of the Negro and modern industrialism, resulted in the neo-Confederate interpretation of Phillips, Ramsdell and Owsley"!<sup>[4]</sup>

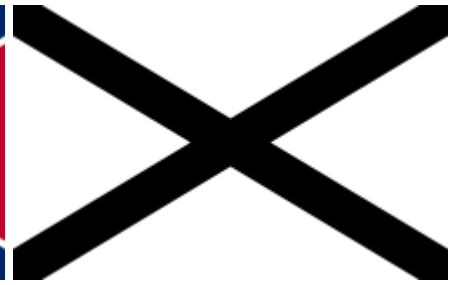
## Criticism of the term

Gary W. Gallagher, author of *The Confederate War*, has stated:

Any historian who argues that the Confederate people demonstrated robust devotion to their slave-based republic, possessed feelings of national community, and sacrificed more than any other segment of white society in United States history runs the risk of being labeled a neo-Confederate. As a native of Los Angeles who grew up on a farm in southern Colorado, I can claim complete freedom from any pro-Confederate special pleading during my formative years. Moreover, not a single ancestor fought in the war, a fact I lamented as a boy reading books by Bruce Catton and Douglas Southall Freeman and wanting desperately to have some direct connection to the events that fascinated me. In reaching my conclusions, I have gone where the sources led me. My assertions and



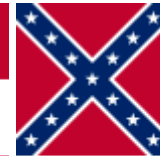
A rectangular variant of the Confederate Battle Flag also known as the "Southern Cross"



Southern Nationalist League of the South flag – black saltire with white background



The first national flag of the Confederate States with 13 stars used from November 28, 1861 to May 1, 1863; colloquially known as the "Stars and Bars"



The second national flag of the Confederate states used from May 1, 1863 to March 4, 1865; colloquially known as the "Stainless Banner"



The third national flag adopted March 4, 1865; shortly before the end of the Civil War, known colloquially as the "Bloodstained Banner"



Five flags commonly seen at neo-Confederate events.

speculations certainly are open to challenge, but they emerged from an effort to understand the Confederate experience through the actions and words of the people who lived it.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Background

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### Origins and doctrines of "Lost Cause" Civil War history

The "Lost Cause" is the name commonly given to a literary and intellectual movement that sought to reconcile the traditional society of the Southern United States with the defeat of the Confederate States of America in the American Civil War of 1861–1865.<sup>[6]</sup> Those who contributed to the movement tended to portray the Confederacy's cause as noble and most of the Confederacy's leaders as exemplars of old-fashioned chivalry, defeated by the Union armies not through superior military skill, but by overwhelming force. They believe the commonly portrayed Civil War history to be a "false history". They also tended to condemn Reconstruction.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), on its main website, still speaks of "ensuring that a true history of the 1861-1865 period is preserved" and claiming that "[t]he preservation of liberty and freedom was the motivating factor in the South's decision to fight the Second American Revolution".<sup>[7]</sup>

James M. McPherson has written on the origins of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and states: "A principal motive of the UDC's founding was to counter this 'false history' which taught Southern children 'that their fathers were not only rebels but guilty of almost every crime enumerated in the Decalogue'.<sup>[8]</sup> Much of what the UDC termed as "false history" centered on the role of slavery with secession and the war. The chaplain of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), forerunner of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, wrote in 1898 that history books as written could lead Southern children to "think that we fought for slavery" and would "fasten upon the South the stigma of slavery and that we fought for it ... the Southern soldier will go down in history dishonored".<sup>[9]</sup> Referring to a 1932 call by the Sons of Confederate Veterans to restore "the purity of our history", McPherson notes that the "quest for purity remains vital today as any historian working in the field can testify".<sup>[10]</sup>

In the 1910s, Mildred Rutherford, the historian general of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, spearheaded the attack on schoolbooks that did not present the Lost Cause version of history. Rutherford assembled a "massive collection" which included "essay contests on the glory of the Ku Klux Klan and personal tributes to faithful slaves".<sup>[11]</sup> Historian David Blight concluded: "All UDC members and leaders were not as virulently racist as Rutherford, but all, in the name of a reconciled nation, participated in an enterprise that deeply influenced the white supremacist vision of Civil war memory".<sup>[12]</sup>

Historian Alan T. Nolan refers to the Lost Cause as "a rationalization, a cover-up". After describing the devastation that was the consequence of the war for the South, Nolan states:

Leaders of such a catastrophe must account for themselves. Justification is necessary. Those who followed their leaders into the catastrophe required similar rationalization. Clement A. Evans, a Georgia veteran who at one time commanded the United Confederate Veterans organization, said this: "If we cannot justify the South in the act of Secession, we will go down in History solely as a brave, impulsive but rash people who attempted in an illegal manner to overthrow the Union of our Country".<sup>[13]</sup>

Nolan further states his opinion of the racial basis of Lost Cause mythology:



The Lost Cause version of the war is a caricature, possible, among other reasons, because of the false treatment of slavery and the black people. This false treatment struck at the core of the truth of the war, unhinging cause and effect, depriving the United States of any high purpose, and removing African Americans from their true role as the issue of the war and participants in the war and characterizing them as historically irrelevant.<sup>[13]</sup>

Historian David Goldfield observes:

If history has defined the South, it has also trapped white southerners into sometimes defending the indefensible, holding onto views generally discredited in the rest of the civilized world and holding on the fiercer because of that. The extreme sensitivity of some southerners toward criticism of their past (or present) reflects not only their deep attachment to their perception of history but also their misgivings, a feeling that maybe they've fouled up somewhere and maybe the critics have something.<sup>[14]</sup>

When asked about purported "neo-Confederate revisionism" and the people behind it, Arizona State University professor and Civil War historian Brooks D. Simpson said:

This is an active attempt to reshape historical memory, an effort by white Southerners to find historical justifications for present-day actions. The neo-Confederate movement's ideologues have grasped that if they control how people remember the past, they'll control how people approach the present and the future. Ultimately, this is a very conscious war for memory and heritage. It's a quest for legitimacy the eternal quest for justification.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Tenets of neo-Confederate beliefs

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### Historical revisionism

Neo-Confederates often hold iconoclastic views about the American Civil War and the Confederate States of America. Contrary to the views held by most Americans, neo-Confederates are openly critical of the presidency of Abraham Lincoln to varied degrees and of the history of Reconstruction. Various authors have written critiques of Lincoln and the Union. Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea is singled out for purported atrocities against Southern civilians, in contrast to the mainstream historical perspective that Sherman targeted Southern infrastructure and curtailed killing rather than expanded it. Slavery is rarely mentioned, but if it is, it is usually not defended and is denied as a primary cause for the Confederacy's starting of the American Civil War. Critics often accuse neo-Confederates of engaging in historical revisionism and of acting as "apologists".<sup>[16][17]</sup>

Neo-Confederates have been accused of downplaying the role of slavery in triggering the Civil War and misrepresenting African American support for the Confederacy.<sup>[18]</sup> The book *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader* says that toward the end of the twentieth century, in order to support the idea that the Civil War was not about slavery, neo-Confederates began to claim that "thousands of African Americans had served in the Confederate army". A neo-Confederate publication, *Confederate Veteran*, published by the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Military Order of the Stars and Bars, said in 1992 that "the overwhelming majority of blacks during the War Between the States supported and defended, with armed resistance, the Cause of Southern Independence".<sup>[19]</sup> Historian Bruce Levine says that "their [neo-Confederates'] insistent celebration these days of 'Black Confederates' ... seeks to legitimate that claim" that the war "*had never* [italics in original] been fought on behalf of slavery; loyalty to the South, southern self-government, southern culture, or states' rights -- rather than to slavery and white supremacy -- fueled the southern war effort".<sup>[20]</sup>

Honor of the Confederacy and its veterans is another controversial feature of neo-Confederate dogma. The neo-Confederate movement is concerned with giving honor to the Confederacy itself, to the veterans of the Confederacy and Confederate veterans' cemeteries, to the various flags of the Confederacy and to Southern cultural identity.<sup>[21]</sup>



## Political beliefs

Political values held by neo-Confederates vary, but they often revolve around a belief in limited government, states' rights, the right of states to secede, theocracy, and Southern Nationalism, that is, the belief that the people of the South are part of a distinct and unique civilization. Neo-Confederates are sometimes associated with the paleoconservative and libertarian movements because of shared views of the role of government.

Neo-Confederates typically support a decentralized national government and are strong advocates of states' rights.<sup>[22][23]</sup> Neo-Confederates are strongly in favor of the right of secession, claiming it is legal, and thus openly advocate the secession of the Southern states and territories which comprised the old Confederate States of America. The League of the South, for example, promotes the "independence of the Southern people" from the "American empire".<sup>[24]</sup> Most neo-Confederate groups do not seek violent revolution, but rather an orderly separation, such as was done in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Many neo-Confederate groups have prepared for what they view as a possible collapse of the federal United States into its 50 separate states, much like the Soviet Union collapsed, and believe the Confederacy can be resurrected at that time.<sup>[25]</sup>

Neo-Confederates are typically opposed to the Civil Rights movement, which they view as federal overreach. Historian Nancy MacLean states that neo-Confederates used the history of the Confederacy to justify their opposition to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>[26]</sup> Historian David Blight writes that current neo-Confederates are "driven largely by the desire of current white supremacists to re-legitimize the Confederacy while they tacitly reject the victories of the modern civil rights movement".<sup>[27]</sup>

## Cultural and religious

Many neo-Confederates promote an unabashed Christian culture. For example, they support public displays of Christianity, such as Ten Commandments monuments and displays of the Christian cross.<sup>[28]</sup> Almost all neo-Confederates strongly support the right to keep and bear arms, present in both the United States Constitution and the Confederate States Constitution. They generally oppose unmitigated illegal immigration of foreign nationals into Southern states.<sup>[29]</sup> Some neo-Confederates view the Civil War as a conflict between a Christian South and a secular North.<sup>[30]</sup> Certain neo-Confederates believe in an "Anglo-Celtic" identity theory for residents of the South.<sup>[31]</sup> In addition to an Anglo-Celtic and Christian identity, neo-Confederates may often identify as "Southern nationalists".<sup>[32]</sup>

## Economic policies

Neo-Confederates usually advocate a free market economy which engages in significantly less taxation than currently found in the United States and which does not revolve around fiat currencies such as the United States dollar.<sup>[24]</sup> They desire an extreme type of laissez-faire economic system involving a minimal role for the state.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Neo-Confederates and libertarianism

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Historian Daniel Feller asserts that libertarian authors Thomas DiLorenzo, Charles Adams and Jeffrey Rogers Hummel have produced a "marriage of neo-Confederates and libertarianism". Despite an apparent disconnect ("How can a lover of liberty defend slavery?"), Feller writes:

What unites the two, aside from their hostility to the liberal academic establishment, is their mutual loathing of big government. Adams, DiLorenzo, and Hummel view the Civil War through the prism of market economics. In their view its main consequence, and even its purpose, was to create a leviathan state that used its powers to suppress the most basic personal freedom, the right to choose. The Civil War thus marks a historic retreat for liberty, not an advance. Adams and DiLorenzo dismiss the slavery issue as a mere pretext for aggrandizing central power. All three authors see federal tyranny as the war's greatest legacy. And they all hate Abraham Lincoln.<sup>[33]</sup>

In a review of libertarian [Thomas E. Woods, Jr.](#)'s *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*, in turn Hummel refers to the works by DiLorenzo and Adams as "amateurish neo-Confederate books". Of Woods, Hummel states that the two main neo-Confederate aspects of Woods' work are his emphasis on a legal right of secession while ignoring the moral right to secession and his failure to acknowledge the importance of slavery in the Civil War. Hummel writes:

Woods writes 'that the slavery debate masked the real issue: the struggle over power and domination' (p. 48). Talk about a distinction without a difference. It is akin to stating that the demands of sugar lobbyists for protective quotas mask their real worry: political influence. Yes, slaveholders constituted a special interest that sought political power. Why? To protect slavery.<sup>[34]</sup>

Hummel also criticizes Woods' "neo-Confederate sympathies" in his chapter on Reconstruction. Most egregious was his "apologia for the Black Codes adopted by the southern states immediately after the Civil War". Part of the problem was Woods' reliance on an earlier neo-Confederate work, [Robert Selph Henry's](#) 1938 book *The Story of Reconstruction*.<sup>[34]</sup>

Historian Gerald J. Prokopowicz mentioned apprehension toward recognizing Lincoln's role in freeing slaves as well as libertarian attitudes towards the Confederacy in an interview regarding his book *Did Lincoln Own Slaves? And Other Frequently Asked Questions about Abraham Lincoln*

Some critics look at his careful and politically practical approach to ending slavery and mistake it for reluctance to help African-Americans. Others overlook slavery altogether and romanticize the Confederacy as a libertarian paradise crushed by the tyrant Lincoln.

But since even Lincoln's most extreme opponents can't deny that the end of slavery was a good thing, they have to try to disassociate Lincoln from emancipation, and that leads to the absurdity of implying that Lincoln must have been a slave owner.<sup>[35]</sup>

Some intellectuals who have helped shape the modern neo-Confederate movement have been associated with libertarian organizations such as the [Mises Institute](#). These individuals often insist on the South's right to secede and typically hold views in stark contrast to mainstream academia in regards to the causes and consequences of the American Civil War.<sup>[36][23]</sup> Zack Beauchamp of [ThinkProgress](#) argues that because of its small size, the libertarian movement has become partially beholden to a neo-Confederate demographic.<sup>[37]</sup> In contemporary politics, some libertarians have tried to distance themselves from neo-Confederate ideology while also critiquing President Lincoln's wartime policies, such as the suspension of *habeas corpus*, from a libertarian perspective.<sup>[38]</sup>

## Neo-Confederate views and the Republican Party

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Historian Nancy MacLean writes that "since the 1960s the party of Lincoln has become the haven of neo-Confederacy. Having long prided itself on saving the [Union](#), the [Republican Party](#) has become home to those who lionize the slaveholding South and romanticize the [Jim Crow](#) South". This embrace of neo-Confederate views is not exclusively about race, but is related to a pragmatic political realization that the "retrospective romanticization of the Old South" and secession presented many possible themes that could be used as conservatives attempted to reverse the national changes initiated by the [New Deal](#).<sup>[39]</sup>

After the defeat of [Barry Goldwater](#) in the 1964 presidential election and the successes of the [civil rights movement](#), [national conservative](#) leaders distanced themselves from racial issues, but continued to support a "color blind" version of neo-Confederatism. MacLean writes that "even into the twenty-first century mainstream conservative Republican politicians continued to associate themselves with issues, symbols, and organizations inspired by the neo-Confederate Right".<sup>[40]</sup>

The current situation is in contrast to the view that many neo-Confederates held concerning the pre-1960s Republican Party. In a [Southern Mercury](#) article, "Republican Party: Red From the Start",<sup>[41]</sup> conservative columnist Alan Stang claims that there was a [communist](#) conspiracy in the Republican Party of the mid-19th century. He alleges that the [1848 revolutionaries](#) in Europe were

communists and that some of these revolutionaries came to America after the failed 1848 revolution to perpetrate some type of communist agenda in the United States. Stang states:

[Robert E.] Lee and [Thomas Jonathan] Jackson did not fully comprehend what they were fighting. Had this really been a 'Civil' War, rather than a secession, they would and could have easily seized Washington after Manassas and hanged our first Communist President and the other war criminals.

Stang continues:

So, again, the Republican Party did not "go wrong." It was rotten from the start. It has never been anything but red. The characterization of Republican states as "red states" is quite appropriate.<sup>[42]</sup>

Recently, two prominent neo-Confederates—Walter Donald Kennedy and Al Benson—published the book *Red Republicans and Lincoln's Marxists: Marxism in the Civil War*, in which they argue that Lincoln and the Republican Party were influenced by Marxism.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Criticism of neo-Confederates

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The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a private organization headed by Morris Dees, reports on the "neo-Confederate movement" almost always in a critical fashion. A special report by the SPLC's Mark Potok in their magazine, *Intelligence Report*, critically described a number of groups as "neo-Confederate" in 2000. "Lincoln Reconstructed", published in 2003 in the *Intelligence Report*, focuses on the resurgent demonization of Abraham Lincoln in the South. The article quotes the chaplain of the Sons of Confederate Veterans as giving an invocation which recalled "the last real Christian civilization on Earth". The article further mentions that the LewRockwell.com website hosts a collection of anti-Lincoln articles, which led Marcus Epstein, founder of the Robert Taft Club, to compare the SPLC's tactics to McCarthyism.<sup>[44]</sup> "Whitewashing the Confederacy" was a review that alleged that the movie *Gods and Generals* presented a false, pro-Confederate view of history.<sup>[45]</sup> Myles Kantor of the conservative *FrontPage Magazine* described the review as a "web of falsehood".<sup>[46]</sup> Critics have accused the neo-Confederacy of being essentially a movement with racist undertones. Most prominently, the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Council of Conservative Citizens (formerly the White Citizens' Council) have had this charge leveled against them!<sup>[47]</sup>

## Neo-Confederate groups

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- Ku Klux Klan (1st and 3rd incarnations)
- League of the South
- Sons of Confederate Veterans
- United Daughters of the Confederacy
- Abbeville Institute
- Southern Party (defunct)

## See also

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- Anti-federalism
- Alt-right
- Culture of the Southern United States
- Dixiecrat
- Eugene Genovese (1930-2012)
- Jeffersonian democracy
- List of active separatist movements in North America
- List of organizations designated by the Southern Poverty Law Center as hate groups
- List of monuments and memorials of the Confederate States of America

- Lost Cause of the Confederacy
- Loy Mauch (1952-)
- Mel Bradford (1934-1993)
- Naming the American Civil War
- Paleoconservatism
- Paleolibertarianism
- Politics of the Southern United States
- Radical right
- Richard M. Weaver (1910-1963)
- Second American Civil War
- Solid South
- Sons of Confederate Veterans
- Southern Democrats
- States' rights
- States' rights faction of the Republican Party of the United States
- Unite the Right rally

## Notes

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"The architects of the Lost Cause acted from various motives. They collectively sought to justify their own actions and allow themselves and other former Confederates to find something positive in all-encompassing failure. They also wanted to provide their children and future generations of white Southerners with a 'correct' narrative of the war"
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9. McPherson pg. 97
10. McPherson pg. 106
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## External links

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### Neo-Confederate groups

- Council of Conservative Citizens
- Abbeville Institute

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