

Breckinridge

There are surprisingly few timelines where the United States does *not* have a Civil War at some point. On Quantum 7's Breckinridge, they've avoided it so far -- but as the 1864 election looms, it would appear that *something* is going to happen, and soon. The compromises that kept the Democrats unified enough in 1860 to win the election all died with Vice President Stephen Douglas: today, President John Breckinridge is loathed by half his party, but his refusal to stand aside in the upcoming election worries a lot of people. Including those on Homeline: they know how the story can end.

Breckinridge, 1863

Current Affairs

An America with a forestalled Civil War and a Democratic house divided against itself.

Divergence point

1855: Chief Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney dies in a carriage accident.

Major Civilizations

Western (Empire with rivals), Islamic (empire), Chinese (Empire)

Great Powers

Great Britain (oligarchy, CR3), United States of America (democratic republic, CR2, CR5 for blacks), Empire of France (dictatorship, CR3), Russian Empire (dictatorship, CR4), Ottoman Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Chinese Empire (feudal, CR3-5)

Worldline Data

TL: 5

Quantum: 7

Mana Level: None

Centrum Zone: Red

Infinity Level: P3

Roger B. Taney's accidental death in 1855 was tragic, of course, but the Pierce administration duly nominated Samuel Nelson to be Chief Justice and William Matthews Merrick to fill the vacancies on the court. Of course, nobody on Breckinridge realized that doing so would

significantly change the 1857 Dred Scott decision. The lack of Taney on the bench changed the decision from being a sweeping overturn of existing American policy on slavery in the territories to becoming a 7-2 procedural split deciding that the federal courts had no jurisdiction over the case to begin with.

The short term effect of this decision was to somewhat loose existing tensions between the North and the South, instead of tightening them further. "Bleeding Kansas," of course, continued to fester - but without a Freeport Doctrine (the Lincoln-Douglas debates in Breckinridge were considerably less dramatic) and the survival of popular sovereignty as a concept the Democrats were able to produce a unity ticket consisting of Vice President Breckinridge and Senator Stephen Douglas. The Democrats went on to barely beat out the Republican Seward/Bates ticket, largely on the strength of what papers called the "Quiet Compromise," embodied in the persons of the President and Vice President.

Unfortunately, Stephen Douglas died of typhoid in 1861 -- more or less as he did on Homeline -- and the entire arrangement immediately fell apart, thanks to the suddenly-thorny problem of the spoils system. Without Douglas to distribute patronage to Northern Democrats

job-seekers (called 'carpetbaggers' in a memorable, if unfortunate after-dinner speech by Secretary of War William Preston), internal divisions inside the party festered. The Republican party won control of the House of Representatives in the remarkably vicious elections of 1862, and next year's election promises to be even bitterer. President Breckinridge has publicly declared his intention to run for re-election, which almost guarantees that the Democratic party will split into two rival groups. And with it, possibly the country.

Outworld Involvement

Centrum and Infinity both actively contest for control of this timeline; it is probably no accident that the Breckinridge administration is top-heavy with people who had prominent roles in Homeline's Confederacy. There have also been the usual rash of suspiciously convenient heart attacks among both violent abolitionists and virulent secessionists: Centrum's long-term plan was apparently to forestall the American Civil War by putting the South's natural leadership in charge of the government that they were originally fated to rebel against. Unfortunately, this seems to have backfired: the same sectarian lines are still there, and promise to hand the election to the Republicans in 1864. And whoever is running Centran operations in this

timeline is apparently not one of their best operatives. In fact, he or she may not be one of their *competent* operatives. It's a bit surprising that the aggressively unsentimental meritocracy that is Centrum hasn't cleaned house by now.

Infinity plays a defensive game in Breckinridge. Whatever Centrum is doing is apparently not working very well for the Centrans, but it's also making the timeline even politically unstable. Slavery is not *quite* the issue that it was at the equivalent dates on Homeline, but the abolitionist movement is still alive, well, and ready for war -- even if William Lloyd Garrison and George Luther Stearns **did** die in their sleep, back in 1859 and 1860. Homeline's USA is particularly interested in this timeline, for fairly obvious reasons: it's suggested that the I-Cops arrange matters so that the French Empire installs Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico after all, on the grounds that this would help inspire national unity in Breckinridge's Democratic party. Infinity is seriously considering it.

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