Introduction

This final chapter summarizes the findings presented in the previous two chapters and draws conclusions from them. The first section will briefly recap the study's main findings. The next sections explore these findings in more detail, first emphasizing the progression of the national debate surrounding the issues of the National Bank, internal improvements, and protective tariffs, and then examining Calhoun’s opinions on these issues. Then, the similarities and differences between his writing and the national debates surrounding the National Bank, internal improvements and protective tariffs will be explored. Finally, the thesis ends with speculations about any conclusions that can be drawn from these similarities and differences.

The New Nationalist Spirit Reviewed

The United States victory in the War of 1812 marked the point at which the U.S. gained its economic freedom from Great Britain. In the years prior to the War, the United States was decidedly non-militaristic. However, its experiences during the War of 1812 soon highlighted the shortcomings of the nation, and taught members of Congress valuable lessons about the economy and military. First, the experiences demonstrated that a weak national currency that fluctuated in value from region to region could lead to the bankruptcy of the Treasury. Next, they showed that poor roads and canals could prevent troops and supplies from moving through the country. Finally, they confirmed that American commerce, without the British embargo, would be forced to trade in an unprotected environment. Following the War, the re-chartering of the National Bank, the undertaking of internal improvements such as roads and canals, and the creation of a protective tariff became national projects aimed at strengthening the economic and military position of the United States. These efforts symbolized the commitment of
legislators and citizens alike to increase the military and economic strength of the United States as well as to correct the weaknesses made evident during the War.

Intent on correcting these weaknesses, Congress set out to re-charter the National Bank, develop and implement a variety of internal improvement projects, and impose a mild protective tariff to nurture American commerce. Although each effort initially met enthusiasm in Congress, as various projects accumulated and evolved all eventually became entangled in national debate. Moreover, advocates and detractors alike relied on the Constitution to defend their claims. While some issues, for example the National Bank, were often confined to Constitutional debate, others, like internal improvement projects and protective tariffs, dissolved into sectional concerns.

John C. Calhoun, who had entered the national political scene in the early 1800s, like many other members of Congress during the years following the War found himself consumed with nationalist spirit. Calhoun’s nationalism was fostered in the belief that a strong military and economy were necessary for the United States to remain economically independent. However, Calhoun’s “qualified nationalism” came with a caveat: any sort of “grand” national project, whether it be the National Bank, internal improvement, or protective tariffs, had to be wholly national in scope, with the sole purpose of bettering the military and economic strength of the country and ensuring national defense. Local, piecemeal projects that served individual state interests, according to Calhoun’s line of reasoning, were unacceptable.¹

Calhoun’s apparent shift in political philosophy, which occurred during the 1820s, seemingly grew out of the two qualifications listed above. For example, many of the internal improvement projects during this time had lost their “grand” scale; that is, they had dissolved into specific projects serving state interests. Similarly, Calhoun believed that protective tariffs, although originally benefiting the entire nation, had transformed into sectional projects helping only the industrialized states.

In the remaining sections, it will be apparent that Calhoun’s “qualified” nationalism resonates throughout his opinions regarding each issue. The discussion will attempt to paint a picture of Calhoun’s political philosophy on these particular issues in 1816 and in the 1830s. Consistencies and changes will be noted based on an analysis using Calhoun’s two qualifying factors for national projects: (1) that projects benefit the whole nation; and (2) that they strengthen the economic and military strength of the nation. It will also be apparent that similarities exist between Calhoun's political stances and those of other officials in the South, generally, and South Carolina, specifically.

**The Growth of Nationalism**

As examined earlier, the War of 1812 marked the point at which the United States gained its economic freedom from Great Britain. Although the United States was ultimately triumphant, members of Congress quickly learned that the issues of a strong national economy and a strong military needed to be addressed. Pointing their efforts towards the re-chartering of the National Bank, improving roads and canals, and protecting an infant industrial sector, legislators embarked on a variety of national projects. Hence, nationalism has arrived. And, this spirit of nationalism appeared to overwhelm the majority of Congressmen, who at least on the surface put aside their sectional concerns, and directed their support toward federal projects designed to promote the overall good of the nation.

Early efforts directly following the War were clearly fueled by the nationalist bug that was spreading across the United States. The re-chartering of the National Bank in 1817 provides an excellent example. Prompted by the fluctuation in currency value across the United States and the clear need for a more solid economy, legislators took it upon themselves to force state banks to comply with a national standard. Debate surrounding the re-chartering, while evident, was limited to Constitutional issues. Unlike other efforts, for example protective tariffs, it never really evolved into sectional conflict. Rather, advocates and detractors alike remained concerned primarily with the Constitutional legitimacy of the Bank; and even that issue was put to rest by the *McCulloch v. Maryland.*
Similarly, the first protective tariff, the Tariff of 1816, was also a unified effort, which for the most part was untainted by sectional concerns. The Tariff of 1816 was written so as to benefit the majority of states. The Tariff was protective in that it recognized the difficulties of shifting the economy from a state of war to a state of peace. However, it was intended to be a temporary measure that ensured that a state of equilibrium could be achieved between American and British manufacturers. While, of course, some concessions were to be made by, for example, some Southern states, they were minimal and they were seen as small sacrifices for bettering the economic strength of the nation. After all, although Southern planters might not directly benefit from the Tariff, a strong economy ensured economic security and greater economic staying power for them in the long run.

However, while the Tariff of 1816 embodied nationalism, all of the tariffs succeeding it were surrounded by fierce and bitter sectional debate. Although all of the subsequent tariffs illustrate this point, the Tariff of 1828 serves as an exceptional example of how the guise of nationalism gave way to the colorings of sectionalism by the mid-1820s. Looking at the original tariff proposal, it is obvious that, unlike the Tariff of 1816, the Tariff of 1828 was written with a self-interested pen. Unlike the Tariff of 1816, legislators were clearly not interested in sacrificing their “piece of the pie” for the good of the nation. Members of Congress seemed to abandon any semblance of nationalism that they had had in previous years; replacing it was a clear desire to promote individual state interests. Looking at either side of the debate, it is clear that legislators were interested in serving sectional interests. The North wanted to protect a fledgling industrial sector. The South desired to protect what it perceived as an already devastated economy; tariffs seemed only to amplify the devastated economic state of the South as well as the increasingly disadvantageous position it faced compared to the rest of the nation. Again, as Dangerfield notes:

... Everyone wanted something. The essence of any political tariff may well be the whetting of appetites; so that the Tariff of 1828, although designed to favor the grower over the
fabricator, became in the end an undisguised hunt for special advantages.\(^2\)

This apparent dissolving of nationalism was not limited to protective tariffs, however. Careful examination of the discussion surrounding internal improvement projects depicts how members of Congress often expounded on their belief in nationalism while keeping a careful eye on securing federal funds for sectional projects. Although some projects, such as the Cumberland Road bill, did benefit everyone involved, it was apparent by the mid-1820s that the majority of internal improvement projects had become efforts to secure federal monies for projects that clearly promoted individual states' commercial interests. Similar to the Tariff of 1816, early internal improvement projects certainly did benefit some states more than others. However, Congressmen (for example, Calhoun and Lowdes) were willing to put aside their own sectional concerns, realizing that small concessions were necessary. After all, improved roads and canals promoted a strong military, which in turn ensured the security of the entire nation.

By the mid-1820s, it was clear that the majority of projects Congress passed did not have such lofty intentions; in fact, many appeared to be motivated by the desire of individual state representatives to bring home commerce. Looking at the various supporters of internal improvement projects, it is clear that those states advocating such projects were to benefit from their implementation. For instance, the Western states supported a variety of internal improvement projects, hoping for increased migration and commerce. Pennsylvania and New York sought federal money to fund canal projects that would bring added commerce to both states, while Southern states received little benefit from proposed projects. In fact, many Southern states had already implemented internal improvement projects at the state and local levels, and did not need or want the federal assistance that many other states sought. Initial support for early internal improvement projects was often founded on the “qualified nationalism” Calhoun proposed.

By the mid-1820s, the allure of nationalism apparently had worn away. What was once a mind-set that had evidently consumed a majority of the nation’s members of Congress just a decade earlier seemed to dwindle in the light of sectionalism. Whether or not nationalism had disappeared, waned, or given way to new concerns is unclear. Perhaps members of Congress believed that the weaknesses brought out by the War were overcome, or maybe new concerns had arisen. Or, perhaps the breed of nationalism that was so apparent earlier was just a fashionable guise that masked the sectional concerns of legislators. Whatever the case, the nationalist spirit that had consumed the country just a decade before seemed to dissolve into sectionalism. Moreover, Southern citizens were growing increasingly discontent by the 1830s with what they perceived as destructive federal efforts aimed directly at them. As one newspaper noted in 1830,

> If it is not, it ought to be understood that the Tariff is only one of the subjects of complaint of the South. The Internal Improvement, or general bribery system, and the interference with our domestic policy – most especially the latter – are things which... will, if necessary, be met with something more than words.

Calhoun’s Qualified Nationalism

Calhoun, like many Congressmen following the War of 1812, favored an agenda that included national projects. Calhoun, for example, was the author and sponsor of the bill to re-charter the National Bank; the author and sponsor of the Bonus Bill, which supported national improvements; and a supporter of the Tariff of 1816. As John Quincy Adams observed, Calhoun was “above all sectional and factious prejudices more than any other statesman of this Union with whom I have ever acted.” As Calhoun himself noted,

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3 The Winyaw Intellegencer, May 12, 1830.
Nearly half my life has been passed in the service of the Union, and whatever public reputation I have acquired is indissolubly identified with it. To be too national has, indeed, been considered by many, even of my friends, my greatest political fault…"[5]

However, Calhoun’s support of these nationalist efforts was always qualified; his rationale for supporting efforts that did not benefit South Carolina directly was his belief that such national projects would promote the national defense and prevent a recurrence of what had happened during the War of 1812. Yet, projects and other efforts that did not meet Calhoun’s qualifications quickly received his criticism. To get his support, projects needed to be wholly national in scope, with the sole purpose of bettering the military and economic strength of the country and of ensuring the national defense. Local, piecemeal projects were unacceptable. Examining this “qualified nationalism,” Freehling states:

The case for nationalism Calhoun and Lowndes presented in 1816, and South Carolina nationalists defended thereafter, was premised on the exigencies of national defense. Since unstable national currency could complicate war finance, Calhounites favored a national bank. As poor roads could slow down military transportation, the nationalists advocated internal improvements. Because dependence on foreign factories could be dangerous if an enemy controlled the seas, Calhounites accepted a protective tariff. Since a weak local militia invited external attack, they demanded a strong national army.[6]

Calhoun continued to endorse the National Bank into the 1830s. His position remained stable, given that the issues surrounding the Bank did not change substantially.

Moreover, the Bank was not an important issue in South Carolina in the 1820s. The Bank throughout its existence remained national in scope and had the purpose of bettering the economic position of the country.

Calhoun supported internal improvements so long as they were limited to a few "great" projects that served the national as a whole. However, after 1824, Calhoun and his followers, while still claiming to support national internal improvements, denounced almost every project as local, since many of the internal improvement projects during this time were motivated by sectional interests, and did not meet Calhoun's definition of a truly national project. In terms of internal improvements, then, it was not Calhoun's position on nationalism that changed, but, rather, the events and issues surrounding internal improvements that shifted.

... Calhounites' sectionalism in 1827 was as qualified as their nationalism in 1816... [They] continued to endorse the United States bank; they failed to repudiate “truly national” internal improvements (and continued to oppose piecemeal projects); they still affirmed that protective tariffs were legitimate if a war was imminent and if essential industries required support. Even their sectionalism was, in an important sense, nationalistic.

Finally, Calhoun applied the notion of qualified nationalism to judge the merit of protective tariffs. From the beginning, more so than the National Bank and internal improvement projects, the idea of protective tariffs was the greatest stretch to fit Calhoun's criteria. Calhoun himself noted that if the United States had "the means of attaining an immediate naval ascendancy," the proposed policy [Tariff of 1816] would be very

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8 Ibid, p. 98.
9 Ibid, p. 121.
10 Ibid, p. 131.
questionable. While the South generally supported the Tariff, there were still reservations, as Freehling notes:

> Even in the heyday of South Carolina's infatuation with nationalism, planters had misgivings about a mildly protective tariff…

More than any of the later tariffs, though, the Tariff of 1816 was the closest to fitting Calhoun's qualifications, in that it did answer a wide variety of needs. However, subsequent tariffs would be unable to fit Calhoun's qualifications at all, thus losing his support.

**Conclusion**

Although Calhoun shifted from a platform centered on nationalism to one that emphasized sectionalism, certain features are apparent in Calhoun’s political philosophy. While Calhoun did support nationalist efforts early in his political career, he consistently supported “qualified nationalism” – projects that bettered the nation as a whole and were aimed at strengthening the economic and military position of the United States.

Given this, there appear to be certain similarities between the national political currents and Calhoun’s evident metamorphosis, correspondences that suggest that Calhoun’s decisions and opinions were not isolated from the national debate generally or the political climate of South Carolina, specifically. To illustrate, Calhoun’s position on internal improvement projects and the Tariff of 1828 do seem to have corresponded to the opinions of South Carolina, specifically, and the South, generally, especially in the 1820s and 1830s. Looking at the opinions expressed in local newspapers and by state legislators and other members of Congress at the time as well as at the evolution of the debate

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11 Calhoun, Papers, I, 351-2; Annals of Congress, 14 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 516-22; Wiltse, Calhoun: Nationalists, pp. 121-2 (See Freehling, p. 95.)
12 Freehling, p. 96.
13 Dangerfield, p. 13.
surrounding the issues, there does appear to be some congruence. Although it cannot be said whether there was some sort of causal relationship, it is worth noting that these similarities did exist. It seems that Calhoun did not live his life secluded from the rest of the country, isolated from the issues, events and debates that shaped the nation. As a result, his sentiments on some, although not all, of these issues, often mirrored the sentiments of the South and South Carolina and reflected the larger debates in which Americans were enmeshed.

However, pointing to the example of the Tariff of 1828, there seems to have been a point at which Calhoun made the leap from a savvy elected official to a radical in his writings. As noted above, there are many similarities between Calhoun's position, the tide of events in the United States, and the views of Southern politicians more generally. This seems to emphasize Calhoun's ability to be a competent politician. With the South Carolina Exposition and Protest, however, and the prospect of nullification, Calhoun appears more radical in his views, which goes beyond the scope of just a savvy politician. Perhaps, Calhoun himself recognized this: he concealed his authorship of the document for three years.

This points as well to the limitations of this thesis. The use of Calhoun's notion of qualified nationalism to gauge any change in his opinion and the examination of the policy issues of the National Bank, internal improvement projects, and protective tariffs fail to address why Calhoun became so radical in his writings. As Chapter 2 noted, other relevant factors were not included in this analysis. Most important was the issue of slavery.

As Wiltse notes, and as Chapter Four suggested, the Southern economy was centered around cotton, and therefore depended on the institution of slavery. By the mid-1820s, some $300,000,000 in Southern capital was invested in slaves and millions in land. Wiltse highlights the Southern dependence on slavery:

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14 See Chapter 3, p. 25, and Chapter 5, p.47.
These sums [invested in slaves and land] could not be reclaimed for investment in manufacturing or other enterprises, the way New England's merchant capital had been put into industry; and they could be made to pay interest only in cotton culture. The Southerner could not seek a new career in the remoter West, as his Northern compatriot did, without leaving his slaves behind, and so those that emigrated only served to concentrate still further the slave population. Unable to sell them and not daring to grant them freedom, the South was herself in fearful bondage to her slaves. Is it any wonder that intelligent Southerners looked upon the tariff with deep anxiety?

Calhoun himself pointed to the link between the tariff and the issue of slavery when he wrote to his brother-in-law that the Tariff of 1828 was one of the "great instruments" of Southern impoverishment and, if successful, would push the South to either poverty or to change its industry.

Perhaps, then the interplay among the issues of slavery, internal improvements, tariffs, and the growing alienation of the south played a key role in explaining Calhoun's more radical beliefs regarding protective tariffs and federal-state relations.

In conclusion, Calhoun's notion of qualified nationalism did not change over the time period examined with regard to the National Bank, internal improvement projects, and protective tariffs. Rather, it was the events surrounding these three issues that either changed or remained stable. Calhoun's positions often coincided with the positions of other Southern legislators during the time period examined, indicating that Calhoun was, indeed, a competent politician who was receptive to the issues and events that impacted the people that he represented. However, with regard to protective tariffs and Calhoun's advocacy of nullification, it is apparent that he made the leap from concerned politician to

15 Wiltse, p. 376-77.
16 See discussion in Chapter Four, p. 40.
radical. Tracking Calhoun's positions using his notion of qualified nationalism and the issues of the National Bank, internal improvements and protective tariffs alone does not fully address this jump, indicating that other factors - in particular, slavery - may have played a key role in the evolution not only of Calhoun's positions but also of the opinions of other Southerners.