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US History, Period 03

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September 9, 2016

### The Causes of the Civil War

The four lengthy years between April 12, 1861, and May 9th 1865 will forever be remembered as the taxing conflict known as the American Civil War. Within what seemed to be an inseparable union of a country were two sides turned on each other - the Northern states, known as the Union, and the Southern states, known as the Confederacy. The conflicts between these two sides focused mainly on the differences of their beliefs, such as the morality and necessity of slavery, as well as imbalance and inequity of the treatment between the two parts of the United States, as well as the rights of the states. The innumerable causes to this war range from miniscule facts and encounters to the most notable ones, four of them being the economic and social differences between the North and South, the establishment and maintenance of slavery, the argument of the states' rights compared to the federal rights, and the election of Abraham Lincoln.

The development of the economy in the United States before and during the time period of the Civil War plays a substantial part relating to the tensions between the Union and the Confederacy. With the Industrial Revolution came technology that intensified the work placed on agriculture and farming (such as the cotton textiles), and the labor the South maintained in its industry became increasingly strained. This occurrence thus provides a greater need for more manpower; more specifically, slaves. The establishment of slaves had become a large factor for the economy in the South, and even some of these practices were implemented in the North. The

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economy and marketing of the northern states, however, focused much more on the production of manufactured and finished goods, and dealt with the matters of “city life”, rather than the hard labor of harvesting and processing raw materials in the “farm life”. From this information alone, it is not difficult for one to see the general tendency of the manners of the two different cultures. The North had easier transportation, a larger population, the habit to live in urban areas, and a greater influx of immigrants that slowly sidelined the need for slaves (the immigrants were looking for work). The South, however, found transportation between cities to be quite hard, lived in urban areas less often, and focused so much more on agricultural work. Tariffs were placed upon the states by the federal government, making it much more difficult for the South, who purchase a great number of their supplies from the finished products of the North. As time passed, the northerners failed to see how much the South depended on slaves, and the southerners believed that the North was favored by the government and were too privileged.

The economic growth of the South extended to a point where slaves began to riot; by the first half of the 1800’s, there had been at least 200 significant riots lead by the slaves. This, however, caused slave owners to deliver rougher treatment, causing outrage from those in the North. By this time, the abolition movement had grown substantially, and several people began to act out against the south, all the more increasing conflict between the two sides. Due to the spread of antislavery beliefs and higher morals in the North, the amount of slaves held by the northern states lessened, and the states became known as “free states”. This great dissimilarity between the North and South had caused yet another conflict between the two sides of the American Civil War.

As mentioned before, the federal government was viewed by the south as biased, and that it favored the northern states. In retaliation to the “unfair treatment” that was given to the South,

they demanded that the states have more power and rights, rather than the federal government holding much of the said power. The North disagreed, as one would expect, and thus another subject was added to the increasingly heated dispute between the two sides.

The last and most memorable factor to the beginning of the Civil War would be the Election of 1860, known as the Election of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, famous for his speech of the Emancipation Proclamation, was known to be pro-abolitionist and antislavery. Some of the southern states, knowing that the North would reap the benefits of him being appointed President, seceded from the Union even before the end of the election. One could theorize that it was Lincoln's appointment that changed the civil disputes between the North and the South to become more chaotic battles.

The Civil War certainly has been driven by the conflicts of the economic and social differences between the North and South, the establishment and maintenance of slavery, the argument of the states' rights compared to the federal rights, and the election of Abraham Lincoln, though the level to which it has an impact varies from one person to the other. It is my belief that the differences of beliefs and opinions, such as matters concerning morality (in this case, slavery) as well as the imbalance and inequity of the treatment of certain members of a group may cause messy and frenzied disputes. Nevertheless, the American Civil War was one of the most brutal and unforgettable wars in American history, and its impact on our society today reminds us to never again fight one of our own people.

## Citations

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