# **Importance of the American Civil War**

The American Civil War is one of the most significant conflicts in the history of the modern world. This is especially considering that it ended up affecting a large part of the country’s population, while at the same time having an extremely high death toll. A consequence of the war was that it led to the considerable loss of power for the South while the country remained under the dominance of the North for decades to come. The major goal of the war was to prevent the Southern states from seceding from the United States because of their belief that it was their right to continue owning slaves even though the North considered emancipation the right course. The Civil War is important for a diverse number of reasons among which is that it had a high death toll, it was devastating, it led to the end of slavery, it was the last of the old-fashioned conflicts, and finally, it ensured Northern dominance of the United States for decades afterwards.

The American Civil War is a conflict that is considered to have had some of the highest death tolls in modern history. This is especially considering that the conflict involved two groups of states that were both highly capable militarily. Both sides seem to have been extremely determined to win at all costs and it led to a situation where it was difficult for the conflict to be interrupted for humanitarian reasons. Many soldiers on both the Confederate and Union sides of the conflict died in the various battles that were fought. While the exact number of those who died is not known, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of men died in the war (Hacker 307). A consequence of these deaths was that families lost sons and fathers and the country was never the same. It is likely that the high death toll during the Civil War ensured that there was the development of means through which conflicts such as the Civil War were prevented in the United States. This is especially considering that such a conflict would most likely spell the end of the United States as a union of a large number of states. The high death toll of the Civil War can also be considered an example of the high costs of war, especially a war that could have been prevented through negotiations by both parties involved in the conflict. The considerable loss of life that was brought about by the conflict can be considered a factor that would eventually bring the United States firmly together following the war and this has remained the case since.

Another important event that took place in the Civil War was that it led to the large-scale devastation of the South. The war, which had started out as essentially one about state rights, ended up becoming much more, with both sides determined to win at all costs. However, the technologically superior Unionist forces took advantage of the situation to enforce their dominance of the battlefield. The result was that almost all parts of the South were affected by the war to such an extent that some settlements ended up being burnt down or completely destroyed (Neely 1). The South would take many decades following the war in order to recover, and this is a testament of the severity of the war. The devastation of the South ensured that there was the loss of economic prosperity that its people had enjoyed prior to the war, which also led to considerable resentment towards the North. The actions of certain Unionist leaders, such as General Sherman, as seen in his order to burn Atlanta following a victory over Confederate forces, shows that the war had taken on a brutal turn (Janda 7-8). The destruction of property in the South may have been considered an essential means of forcing the population into submission. While the South would indeed end up surrendering to the North, the devastation committed against it would mark it for decades to come. The devastation, as well as a shift from a slave-based economy, is likely to have been a painful chapter in the history of the South.

Moreover, the Civil War ensured that there was the emancipation of all slaves in the United States. One of the major issues of contention that brought about the Civil War was whether the federal government had any jurisdiction over state government concerning the right to own slaves. Most of the states in the North had abolished slavery and had embraced a market economy, which had brought them considerable prosperity. However, the Southern economy was completely dependent on its slaves for survival. The latter case came about because of the hesitation by its landowning class to shift to a free labour economy. This situation may have been brought about by this class’s determination to continue in the tradition of slave owning without the realisation that doing so reduced productivity (Tindall and Shi 659). Therefore, when the advent of the Civil war and its aftermath led to the emancipation of all slaves, the Southern economy was not well equipped to ensure stability. In addition, the devastation caused by the war was instrumental in the further damage to the Southern economy to such an extent that it took a long time to recover. The shift from a slave-based economy to one based on free labour was an extremely painful transition for the South, which had relied heavily on slaves for most of its economic activities. The reaction to this situation was that it essentially led to the racial segregation of the South, which would be challenged in the mid-20th century by the Civil Rights Movement.

Another important aspect of the Civil war is that it led to the establishment of Northern dominance over the South. This is especially the case considering that the Union forces occupied the South following the war (MacKenzie 99). The dictates of the North were essentially applied to the South without consulting the local population; leading to a situation where the defeated Southerners felt that they had lost absolute control over their states. The Unionist occupation was aimed at ensuring that there was the enforcement of Emancipation as well as the readmission of the Confederate states into the United States. The achievement of this goal was essential in maintaining the stability of the nation following the Civil War. However, despite its intentions, the results had repercussions that have continued to remain relevant to their contemporary world. One of the most significant actions following the Civil War was emancipation, which ensured that the enslaved population had full rights. A consequence was that a large number of the formerly enslaved population became active participants in politics; voting for candidates who ensured the advancement of the power of the Republican Party over the United States. This situation led to a lot of resentment from among the Southern whites, who, in order to protect their interests, ended up supporting the rival Democratic Party. The Ku Klux Klan emerged during this period as a means of intimidating the black population into desisting from political participation, leading to Democratic dominance over the South. The Jim Crow laws were put in place to ensure that the newly acquired white dominance over the South was secured.

The American Civil War has come to be considered the last of the old fashioned wars and the beginning of modern warfare. This is because in the conflict, there was a melding of the old ways of conducting warfare, where soldiers confronted one another head on, with modern weapons. Among the weapons that were employed in the war were ironclad ships, submarines, and aerial reconnaissance using balloons. This war can be considered to have been transitional, because it allowed the parties involved in it to test weapons and manoeuvres that had not been used before in battle (Hess 371). The bloody nature of the conflict also shows the role that was played by technology because it is the use of the latter, which increased the casualties. Therefore, while the commanders in both sides of the conflict sought to ensure that they adopted manoeuvres that would provide them a swift victory, the war became drawn out because of both the determination and technological use by both the North and the South. A consequence was that the lessons learned during the Civil War were made use of in later decades to develop the military force of the United States, and would play a role in making it one of the most powerful in the world in the following century.

In conclusion, the American Civil war is important because it helped to secure the unity of the nation. The victory by the Unionist forces over the Confederate ones ensured that there was the achievement of the former’s dominance over the United States. It also promoted the emancipation of slaves in all states within the union; firmly establishing a market economy that has remained prevalent in the United States in the contemporary world.

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