

Free economic, social and political differences that led to the civil war essay e...

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



The 1800's were a time for high growth and success for the United States. Yet, throughout the 1840's and the 1850's, a rift between the Southern and the Northern United States started to develop. During this period, the North and the South developed different social, economical, as well as political values. These social, economy and political differences set forth the stage for Civil War. This paper aims to explore some the economic, social and political differences between the North and the South that eventually led to the Civil war.

The South had for long relied on cotton cultivation, an economic activity that was hugely driven by slavery. Slaves would work in enormous cotton plantations all day to drive forward this economic backbone of the South. On the other hand, the North's economy was driven by industrialization unlike their southern counterparts (Stamp, 34).

Since the north did not depend on slavery for its economic progress, it became a proponent for the abolishment of slavery. The South was on the other hand opposed to this because it understood that the abolishment of slavery would be mean economic doom for the region. This created a huge political rift between the two regions (Mountjoy and McNeese, 23). The North felt that slavery was an immoral activity and therefore fought to abolish it while the South felt that slavery was their natural way of life. The North's push for the abolishment of slavery infuriated the Southern States, which depended on this free form of labor for their income. In fact, one legislator, Thomas R. Drew tried to defend the issue of slavery in the Virginia Legislature by referencing the state's total, half of which was directly attributable to slavery. Drew argued that taking away slave labor from the

state of Virginia would essentially ruin the state and would become a 'waste howling wilderness' (Brinkley). The abolishment of slavery would be a great setback for the Southern states and would potentially put them out of business.

Another prominent political difference was in regards to territorial expansion. During this period of the 1800's, more and more states were being admitted to the Union. However, there was a huge dilemma in regards to the nature of admittance to the Union. The issue was whether the states being admitted to the Union would be slave or free states. The Missouri Compromise helped to settle this question by dictating that all states above the 36-degree and 36-minute latitude would be free and those below it would be slave states.

However, the expansion of the United States in the South after the war with Mexico caused an explosion in both territory and population and the Missouri compromise had to be replaced in 1850. It was decided that the slavery issue in the newly acquired states would be determined through popular sovereignty. In addition, the Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854, which gave the states above Missouri the right to determine the slavery issue through popular sovereignty, was a further source of division between the South and the North. The Northerners were outraged and claimed that a conspiracy was being forged to breed the slavery institution to every part of the nation (Mountjoy and McNeese, 54). This prompted them to be even more aggressive in their push for slavery abolition, something that created further differences with the South (Stamp, 64).

There were other political issues that were obvious even before the Civil war sprung up. However, there had been a habit of enacting acts and

compromises to keep peace between all states of the Union. The Compromise of the 1850, The Three Fifths Compromise and the Kansas Nebraska Acts are just some of the examples of such acts that were instituted to nullify political differences. Another example of such a compromise was the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. This law was very influential as it seemed to weaken the lines between 'slave' and 'free' states by requiring the North to cooperate fully with the South in regards to retrieving runaway or fugitive slaves. Under the laws of this compromise, those who did not help in recapturing the runaway slaves would be fined or even imprisoned. This Fugitive Slave Law however disconnected the South and the North because most of the Northerners refused to cooperate because they were of the opinion that such an endeavor essentially encroached their dominant abolitionist ideals (Stamp, 61). The Southerners therefore resented the North for this.

Most of the southerners belonged to the Democratic Party and believed that the national Constitution did not take any power away from the states and therefore the states should be in control of most of their affairs (Briekley). In fact, this was the political argument brought forth by the southern states in regards to slavery. The Southern states argued that the issue of abolishing or supporting slavery was an issue that should be left to the individual states to determine and not to the national government. Most of the northerners on the other hand were republicans who believed in the absolute power of the Union and who were of the political view that the federal government had ultimate power over the entire nation ((Mountjoy and McNeese, 59). In fact, it was some of these differences that propagated Abraham Lincoln into

office. Apart from the support of the Republican states, which were against the institution of slavery, Lincoln was also able to gain the support of some Southern states, which were traditionally democrat simply because there were indeed some democrats who opposed slavery (Brinkley). However, when Lincoln was elected President, some of the predominantly democrat southern states started to push for secession from the national Union. These states knew that Lincoln, a Republican President would without a doubt be in favor of anti slavery views. However, when these southern states tried to challenge the federal government's authority and tried to secede, they were met with the harsh reality that they still had to oblige to the rules of the national constitution. These states therefore entered into war hoping that they would gain independence and self-rule. The Southern states understood that if the North was successful with its slavery abolishment agenda, the Southern economy would be significantly damaged. With a damaged economy, the South would ultimately have no political influence in the union ((Mountjoy and McNeese, 61).

Apart from the differing political views, the social ideals of the South and the North were staggeringly different. The north viewed modernization as key. Most northerners adamantly pushed for economy modernization, for instance, the government railroads started being laid at very fast rates and there was springing up of many inventions. In fact, most of the Northerners were being inspired by such new things and ideas and wanted to move away for the traditional and old European living ways. Industrialization was key part of the Northern States and most northern residents in fact lived in urbanized cities and towns. The North's wealth was increasing and even

more importantly, it was fairly distributed (Stamp, 71). On the other hand, most southerners worked and lived on relatively small farms. The whites who owned plantations held the majority wealth. More strikingly was the fact that about half of the Southern society was comprised of enslaved African Americans. The Southern aristocrats hugely treasured their European imported goods as well as ideas, which helped to push their economy. Therefore, it became clear that the United States was home to two societies that were very socially different. While the Northerners wanted to adopt progressive modernization, the Southerners held conservative views and wanted to stick to tradition. As result, the North felt that the South was pulling the country back and was preventing the onward progress of the nation. The forced created by these social differences played by the Northern and the Southern states was strong factor in causing the Civil war (Mountjoy and McNeese, 72).

In conclusion, it is very clear to see that there were several things that led to the Civil war. Most of them were because of pronounced economical, social and political differences between the North and the South. However, it is also clear that the focal issue that directly contributed to the Civil War was the issue of slavery. In fact, most of the social and political differences between the North and the Southern States are because of the slavery issue. While the North sought to abolish this institution terming as an immoral issue, the South was in favor of slavery mainly because it was the backbone of the economy in that region. The slavery issue seemed to influence every legislation piece of legislation and depending on the results; it fired up the two sides of the nation.

Works Cited

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