

# Slavery as a structural cause argumentative essay sample

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Any historical event has numerous interpretations and judgments of a certain time. American history is not an exception; it is full of important events which were definitely changing the country and nation. There is probably no more important and arguable event in the American history than the Civil War as a result of colonial societies' existence for a century of common history. In this context, of particular importance are origins of the war and how each epoch interpreted them. In the previous times, the main reason for the war was definitely slavery as a symbol of social inequality and an obstacle for the natural desire of people to be free and independent. In the last decades, attention was paid to other reasons for the war, putting slavery aside. Among those reasons were social conflict between various migrants, which was developing from the time of the first settlements; need for economic unification of the disconnected and diverse states; political struggle between various parties and even natural order of states' development. Although these reasons might seem quite just, the modern approach is that slavery was still the main reason for the war, but not as a natural human struggle for the freedom. Slavery was the reason for the war because it was a crucial socio-economic and political obstacle on the way of the American states' development towards capitalism and new social reality. Thus, the main aim of the present paper is to explain why slavery was the reason for the war as part of the overall American society and why destruction of slavery was crucial for economic, political and social evolution of the society.

First of all, it should be said that classical interpretation of the meaning of slavery as social struggle of people for freedom and equality was definitely

taking place, but it was not as strong as we might imagine it today. The main meaning of slavery for colonies was in the fact that it contributed to their development, even for the growth of the North (Foner 37). In order to understand why slavery was an obstacle of American economic development, it is important to understand what was the place of slavery in American economy before the war. The huge dependence of American economy on slaves can be shown by simple figures showing of how many slaves were imported to the colonies and their total value. In the period of 1805-1860, the number of slaves increased from 1 million in 1805 to 4 million in 1860 (Ransom 56). The total amount of slaves' value increased from \$300 million to \$3 billion, which equaled total value of property in the South (Spicer 48). In this context, from the point of population, 40% of people in the 11 states of Confederation were slaves (Ransom 67). The meaning of the mentioned above figure is crucial from economic point of view, mainly because the South was living on free slavery labor and all its planter economy was base on it. In order to understand the connection between slavery and a simple economy of everyday life, personal income of white people should be mentioned. In the seven states - major cotton producers, 50% of population were slaves (Spicer 47). The following slaves-related income of white population was 31 % from the total (Ransom 86). This figure shows that slavery was not just a source of profitable economizing on costs of labor force; slavery was the crucial element of Southern economy. It was so vital for Southern economy that it was worth of war spending and massive bloodshed (Foner 28).

One of traditional controversy about historical interpretation of the war is

that Southern states were the only ones who benefited from slavery, while Northern states were building their economy on the basis of free employment and equality (Spicer 52). In fact, the situation was not entirely so. The slavery South and its economic growth contributed to the development of the North. The North was directly developing on the growth speed of Southern demand for the cotton export abroad and manufacturing of cheap and diverse textiles for the local and foreign markets (Spicer 51). Subsequently, as Chinese cheap products today, cheap textiles were increasing customers' consumption and boosting economy. In the long-term run, Southern slavery and production of cotton boosted industrialization and development of urbanization in the North, which essentially added to its final fall (South) and following establishment of unified economic system of capitalism (Foner 41). In this context, Southern contribution to the industrial development of the North looks like a signing of the death warrant. The meaning of this statement is explained in the next paragraph.

Although slavery was in fact assisting to the development of the North, and weak South was not Northern interest, slavery was also the main obstacle for the further industrialization and economic development of the North (Spicer 58). In this context, the issue should be analyzed from three sides: political, economical and social. From the political point of view, slavery had no direct impact on Northern society, but interests of Southern slave-owners, who had strong influence in Congress, were opposing direction chosen by Northern states (Ransom 75). One of the most vivid examples was that each side had its own view on land settlement and use of land. While Northerners were eager to use new settlements for the industrial use and family-owned

farming, Southerners wanted to create slavery plantations on those lands. The further conflict was in political feuds in Congress and House of Representatives (Foner 88). On the other hand, the problem between two sides was their structural differences and inability to develop peacefully in separate ways. This became especially obvious in context of new economic reality.

The new economic reality was the fact that industrialized North was heading towards new socio-economic reality - capitalism and urbanization. The corner stone of capitalism was market relations based on the law of supply and demand, in which labor force was paid, poorly but still paid. In this context, if the slavery South continued to develop in its own old-fashioned way, it would become a threat to economic compatibility of the North, since poorly-paid labor force still was not compatible with unpaid labor force of slaves (Foner 81). In this context, slavery abolition was crucial for further development of the North. In order to achieve this, there were three options. The first one was a quite peaceful solution - governmental purchasing of slaves from Southern owners, which could cost \$2. 7 billion, in 1860 (Ransom 81). Although this option might be seen as reasonable, its practical implementation was impossible, since costs would have destroyed federal budget.

Another option slavery abolishing was through political channels on federal level. From the point of legitimacy, this option was quite just and could have been easily applied by newly-elected president Lincoln. It was obvious that Southern states would rather leave the union than allowed something of that kind to happen (Ransom 103). In this context, additional disorder could have

been caused by Southern influence in Congress and political power in general. In other words, political means were not working under those conditions. The final option was an inevitable conflict and its result in the final war. Particular feature was that war was the most efficient way of problem resolution (Foner 105). Its efficiency was conditioned by the fact that Northerners were able to lead colonies towards current stage of development; they had an excuse of Southerners first attack and they could abolish slavery as a structural obstacle for the further progress of capitalism (Spicer 58).

Overall, from all mentioned above, it can be concluded that slavery was not the reason for the Civil War because of its inferior essence of human exploitation. It was the reason for the war because it represented and embodied a developmental difference of two groups of colonies and their inability to develop peacefully. From the developmental point of view, the attitude of slavery was a certain test for societies' maturity and ability to progress further. The North was ready to go to the next stage, while the South preferred its prehistoric and imperial way of life. Fortunately, the North was reluctant to slow down because of Southern imperial ambitions. From the surviving point of view, it was a matter of survival of one society and death of another one. In this context, slavery was the main reason why two societies could not unite and develop like one nation. In this case, the reason and pretext were the same. If the civil war did not take place and slavery was not abolished, who knows would there be United States at all.

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