

Essay on final examination: his335 - us civil war

[War](#), [Civil War](#)



Final Essay Examination: HIS335 – US Civil War

Answer to Question 1

The most important factors that led to the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War were: a) the Emancipation proclamation of 1862, b) General Sherman's 1864 March to the Sea, and c) low morale arising from poor economic planning by the South.

One of the most important factors that led to the defeat of the Confederacy in the US civil war was the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. The Southern states comprised of a substantial African-American slave population. It was expected that these slaves would be used as soldiers to fight the North on behalf of the Confederacy. However, through the Emancipation Proclamation, the Union was able to sow the seeds of dissent in the hearts of the slaves, who would now prefer the North to win the war as it would serve their own purposes. By winning the hearts of the Southern African-American population, the Union was able to win their loyalty and ensure that the military strength of the South would be greatly reduced as slaves would either revolt, or those participating in the war would have questionable loyalty. However, the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation was not limited to the homeland population. It had a two pronged effect as it also limited the South's ability to for foreign allegiances. For instance, the South had sought to win the alliance of European giants, Great Britain and France. However, by supporting the Confederacy, England and France would inadvertently have to oppose the Emancipation Proclamation, which was a stance that they did not favour. This withdrawal of support from two great powers played a great role in the defeat of the Confederacy.

The second most crucial factor that led to the defeat of the Confederacy was the low levels of morale among Southerners in general. The African-American slave population had clearly revealed its shift in loyalty when a massive number of slaves, freed by General Sherman on his ' March to the Sea', followed him towards the Union in December 1864. However, the free population of the South was also wavering in its support of the Confederacy. This can be mainly attributed to poor economic planning and funding of the war itself. While the North had mainly relied on taxation of the people to raise war funds, the South had refused to increase taxes and instead resorted to printing fresh notes. Although not being taxed first seemed to be alluring to the Southern populace, the rapid increase in inflation as a result of the un-backed notes. Further, the Confederacy diverted public goods towards military use, which in turn led to greater shortages of supplies and rise in the prices of basic consumer goods. The final ' nail in the economic coffin' was the pillaging of 20 Georgia farms by General Sherman as part of his ' March to the Sea'. Not only did Sherman draw away thousands of slaves, but he also destroyed already scarce crops and produce. With a large number of Southern families facing starvation, Confederacy soldiers began abandoning their positions to return to support their families. McPherson notes that low morale forms a vicious circle, where defeats leads to deprivation, which leads low morale, which in turn leads to further defeats .

Answer to Question 2

Although the Reconstruction era of the civil war began on a highly positive note, it eventually failed to live up to its initial promise. For the Union states, the reconstruction was deemed to be an opportunity to abolish slavery at its

roots and gradually reinstate the South as a part of the United States.

However, the Confederacy states viewed it as further degradation after the humiliating defeat in the civil war. This difference in perception and the lack of a common vision of the future of the nation can be considered to be the base cause of the ultimate failure of the Reconstruction.

At the onset of the reconstruction, President Lincoln actively sought to introduce the concept of equality by freeing slaves as well as allowing heightened powers to the Radical Republicans. However, these measures faced stiff challenges in implementation and, at its root, acceptance. As a result, not only did the freedom and equality of slaves progress at a snail's pace but the implementation of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments was also partial. Racism prevailed across the nation until the Civil Rights movement nearly a century later in the 1960s. The reconstruction was greatest hit by the assassination of President Lincoln, which led to widespread discontent among the Radical Republicans and brought into power Vice President Andrew Johnson.

Although President Johnson had initially promised strict actions against those who had plotted Lincoln's assassination, his stance towards the Confederates was considered to be extremely lenient. However, his decisions pertaining to the freedom and rights of freed slaves had the most negative impact on the success of the reconstruction. He permitted the 'Black Codes' to be passed, which more or less gave the freed African-Americans the same status as they had as slaves. They were denied voting rights as American citizens and the Freedman's Bureau, which was created to further the cause of freed slaves, was vetoed. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 that ensured the equality

and protection of African-Americans also met the same fate . Although the veto of the Civil Rights Act was eventually prevented, Johnson had made his stance on the freedom and equality of slaves clear. As a result, the little progress made during Lincoln's time was negated and the United States reverted to pre-civil war era slavery.

The final blow to reconstruction efforts came in the form of Hayes coming into power and effectively ended all plans to liberate black Americans. The Radical Republicans still managed to impeach Johnson and gain little ground through the 13th, 14, and 15th Amendments that had survived Johnson's vetoing efforts. Hence, it can be said that, although the reconstruction may have held promise as visualized by Lincoln, its slow paced implementation by him, its ' deconstruction' at the hands of Johnson, and its ultimate death at the hands of Hayes, clearly show that the reconstruction was, in fact, a failure.

Answer to Question 3

When the legislative and executive authority of the nation had been separated by the Framers, the objective was to ensure that country would never be ruled by a dictatorial government, that there would be controls in place to maintain a balance of power. This approach had worked well up until 1866, when President Johnson, whose decisions pertaining to post civil-war reconstruction had been failing, saw widespread discontent and opposition from the general public as well as the congress. While a parliamentary system would have ensured that a leader who had lost the support of the people would have been immediately replaced by a new Prime Minister. However, according to the United States system of government, Johnson

remained in power for two more years after losing the mid-term polls. This was the first time in history that political relationship between the executive and legislative authorities has been tremendously strained. While Johnson, whose policies assumed a racist flavour, retained his authority over the executive authority, the Radical Republicans, who mainly south to secure and safeguard the freedom and equality of black slaves, had the support of the people and could resort to removing Johnson through impeachment, which they ultimately did. This near equal distribution of power led to a deadlock.

While the executive and legislative authorities tried to force their will during the reconstruction era, the judiciary remained an independent entity.

However, as the nation was being formed and reformed, the laws pertaining to governance, especially with regards to freed slaves, were the battle grounds where the executive and legislative authorities clashes for dominance. While President Johnson sought to curtail, if not eradicate, most of the liberties that President Lincoln had either implemented or pushed for the freedom and equality of the African-American population, the Radical Republicans with their massive public support sought to retain them, with a specific focus on the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. However, the failure of the reconstruction and the prolonged subjugation of the Africa-American community up until the Civil Rights movement beginning in the 1950s, reveal how, despite becoming a part of the constitution, the freedom and equal treatment of blacks remained limited to official papers but not a part of reality .

Answer to Question 4

The American Civil War is considered to be the first of its kind in the impact that technological development and industrial advancement had on its outcome. The superiority of the Union states in terms of advanced transportation systems, military artillery and medicine as well other technologies played a major role in its victory over the Confederacy. The nature of industrial development of the two sides also revealed significant economic and cultural differences. During the Civil War itself, industrialization picked up pace for the Northern states, while the growth achieved by the South was stunted by its defeat.

The Union states mainly comprised a mixed economy that had witnessed swift industrialization at the beginning of the 19th century. The North has several major industries that included large size factories and manufacturing units as well as housing facilities for workers. A significant part of the work force was made up of women. While the textile industry in Massachusetts was thriving, the North also boasted of a prosperous merchant shipping industry. In order to capitalize on this rapid industrial growth, the Northern states focused on developing their railroad and steamboat systems. This facilitated the exchange of goods with key allies as well as encouraged immigration, paving the way for strong trade as well as political ties.

However, the industries did not provide reasonable wages and this led to the development of a destitute labour population as well as urban crimes .

The Southern side, on the other hand, had mainly relied on the growth of its cotton gin industry, for which it developed its railways and steamboat systems as well as increased its dependence on the slavery system. It was

this stark difference in economies and perceptions that led to the Civil War. The North had a major immigrant population from Europe. This mainly consisted of cheap and unskilled labourers. As a result, the states began developing more advanced technologies and production methods to compensate for the lack of skill of the labourers. Although the immigration rate slowed considerably during the Civil War, there was a major boom after the North won the war and reaffirmed its commitment towards industrialization. The agricultural sector of the North had already started the mechanization of its farming before the war broke out. After the pillaging of the South's farms by Sherman, and widespread scarcity of food, agricultural mechanization saw a rapid growth, as did the number of farms in the years immediately following the end of the war .

Although the defeat faced by the Confederacy states may have destroyed its farms, the industrialization promoted by the Union and Northern states had a major impact across the nation. The government laid great emphasis on the development of technology and scientific understanding. As industrialization picked up pace, the interactions of the United States as an industrial nation with European giants improved greatly, paving the way for the US to become a leading, if not the most, industrialized country in the world.

Answer to Question 5

The generalship of Ulysses S. Grant has been the subject of praise as well as criticism for his unorthodox tactics and seeming disregard for the loss of human life. While Grant did make several grievous mistakes that resulted in an unprecedented number of casualties, his persistent pursuit and eventual defeat of Confederate General Lee led to the effective end of the war and

victory for the Union states .

Grant had been the target of great mockery for his drinking habits and his low tolerance of alcohol consumption. He had been known to be, at times, inebriated during crucial battles although his key officers struggled to prevent him from drinking. In addition, Grant lacks the flair and glory associated with, and even expected of, military leaders. While these flaws did not make him too popular among his critics and posed a challenge during his initial years in the Union army, his steady determination and unfailing pursuit of the enemy eventually won over the loyalty and respect of his men. While he may not have received the degree of reverence that his great battlefield victories warranted, it cannot be denied that they played the greatest role in bringing the civil war to an end. Also, there are no accounts that reveal that Grant ever allowed his intoxication to interfere with the effectiveness of his battlefield tactics.

Grant's critics often attribute his victories more to the lack of sufficient resources available to the Confederates rather than Grant's own cunning stratagems. However, his victories at Chattanooga and Vicksburg reveal brilliant military mind and sheer will to overcome the enemy. Grant's persistence has been viewed as his strongest military trait. His key battles, even the most bloody ones, involved keeping enemy stronghold under siege for prolonged durations. It was also a unique Grant tactic to keep up a steady onslaught instead of giving a break between battles. He was also acutely aware that the war being fought had greater political implications than traditional warfare. In Grant's own words " The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike at him

as hard as you can and as often as you can, and keep moving on” . Grant applied this approach to all his strategies, specifically in Virginia, where he was able to clinch the crucial victory against General Lee to effectively end the Civil War.

Grant made it a point to limit his influence to the battlefield and showed no interest what so ever in getting involved with politics. It is for this reason, despite facing severe flak after his initial defeat at Shiloh Church, that he was supported unconditionally by Union President Abraham Lincoln. This attribute also enabled him to be promoted to the position of Supreme Commander of the Union armies. Having unwavering political support empowered Grant to form battle strategies fearlessly. While it is true that his battles resulted in an abnormal number of casualties, it can be argued that the numbers would have died, albeit over a longer period of time, if the Civil War had continued. Finally, his grit and determination to see his plans through were traits that set Grant’s generalship apart from others. It through his faith in his own actions and commitment to the task that was given to him, that he was able to bring the war to an end. Ulysses S. Grant, even with his imperfections, remains one of the greatest generals in American history.

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