

# THE CIVIL WAR, 1861–1865

*It is enough to make the whole world start to see the awful amount of death and destruction that now stalks abroad. Daily for the past two months has the work progressed and I see no signs of a remission till one or both the armies are destroyed. . . . I begin to regard the death and mangling of a couple of thousand men as a small affair, a kind of morning dash—and it may be well that we become so hardened.*

General William T. Sherman, June 30, 1864

The Civil War between the Union and the Confederacy (1861–1865) was the most costly of all American wars in terms of the loss of human life—and also the most destructive war ever fought in the Western Hemisphere. The deaths of 750,000 people, a true national tragedy, constituted only part of the impact of the war on American society. Most important, the Civil War freed 4 million people from slavery, giving the nation what President Lincoln called a “new birth of freedom.” The war also transformed American society by accelerating industrialization and modernization in the North and destroying much of the South. These changes were so fundamental and profound that some historians refer to the Civil War as the Second American Revolution. While this chapter summarizes the major military aspects of the Civil War, it, like the AP exam, emphasizes the social, economic, and political changes that took place during the war.

## The War Begins

When Lincoln took office as the first Republican president in March 1861, people wondered if he would challenge the secession of South Carolina and other states militarily. In his inaugural address, Lincoln assured Southerners that he would not interfere with slavery. At the same time, he warned, no state had the right to break up the Union. He concluded by appealing for restraint:

In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors.

## ***Fort Sumter***

Despite the president's message of both conciliation and warning, the danger of a war breaking out was acute. Most critical was the status of two federal forts in states that had seceded. One of these, Fort Sumter, in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, was cut off from vital supplies and reinforcements by Southern control of the harbor. Rather than either giving up Fort Sumter or attempting to defend it, Lincoln announced that he was sending provisions of food to the small federal garrison. He thus gave South Carolina the choice of either permitting the fort to hold out or opening fire with its shore batteries. Carolina's guns thundered their reply and thus, on April 12, 1861, the war began. The attack on Fort Sumter and its capture after two days of incessant pounding united most Northerners behind a patriotic fight to save the Union.

**Use of Executive Power** More than any previous president, Lincoln acted in unprecedented ways, drawing upon his powers as both chief executive and commander in chief, often without the authorization or approval of Congress. For example, right after the Fort Sumter crisis he (1) called for 75,000 volunteers to put down the "insurrection" in the Confederacy, (2) authorized spending for a war, and (3) suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus. Since Congress was not in session, the president acted completely on his own authority. Lincoln later explained that he had to take strong measures without congressional approval "as indispensable to the public safety."

## ***Secession of the Upper South***

Before the attack on Fort Sumter, only seven states of the Deep South had seceded. After it became clear that Lincoln would use troops in the crisis, four states of the Upper South—Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas—also seceded and joined the Confederacy. The Confederates then moved their capital to Richmond, Virginia. The people of western Virginia remained loyal to the Union, and the region became a separate state in 1863.

## ***Keeping the Border States in the Union***

Four other slaveholding states might have seceded, but instead remained in the Union. The decisions of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky *not* to join the Confederacy was partly due to Union sentiment in those states and partly the result of shrewd federal policies. In Maryland, pro-secessionists attacked Union troops and threatened the railroad to Washington. The Union army resorted to martial law to keep the state under federal control. In Missouri, the presence of U.S. troops prevented the pro-South elements in the state from gaining control, although guerrilla forces sympathetic to the Confederacy were active throughout the war. In Kentucky, the state legislature voted to remain neutral in the conflict. Lincoln initially respected its neutrality and waited for the South to violate it before moving in federal troops.

Keeping the border states in the Union was a primary military and political goal for Lincoln. Their loss would have increased the Confederate population by more than 50 percent and would have severely weakened the North's

strategic position for conducting the war. Partly to avoid alienating Unionists in the border states, Lincoln rejected initial calls for the emancipation of slaves.

### ***Wartime Advantages***

The Union and the Confederacy each started the war with some strengths and some weaknesses.

**Military** The Confederacy entered the war with the advantage of having to fight only a defensive war to win, while the Union had to conquer an area as large as Western Europe. The Confederates had to move troops and supplies shorter distances than the Union. It had a long, indented coastline that was difficult to blockade and, most important, experienced military leaders and high troop morale. The Union hoped that its population of 22 million against the Confederate's population of only 5.5 million free whites would work to its favor in a war of attrition. The North's population advantage was enhanced during the war by 800,000 immigrants. Emancipation also brought 180,000 African Americans into the Union army in the critical final years of the war. The Union could also count on a loyal U.S. Navy, which ultimately gave it command of the rivers and territorial waters.

**Economic** The Union dominated the nation's economy, controlling most of the banking and capital of the country, more than 85 percent of the factories, more than 70 percent of the railroads, and even 65 percent of the farmland. The skills of Northern clerks and bookkeepers proved valuable in the logistical support of large military operations. Confederates hoped that European demand for its cotton would bring recognition and financial aid. Like other rebel movements in history, the Confederates counted on outside help to be successful.

**Political** The two sides had distinct goals. The Confederates were struggling for independence while the Union was fighting to preserve the Union. However, the ideology of states' rights proved a serious liability for the new Confederate government. The irony was that in order to win the war, the Confederates needed a strong central government with strong public support. The Confederates had neither, while the Union had a well-established central government, and in Abraham Lincoln and in the Republican and Democratic parties it had experienced politicians with a strong popular base. The ultimate hope of the Confederates was that the people of the Union would turn against Lincoln and the Republicans and quit the war because it was too costly.

### ***The Confederate States of America***

The Confederate constitution was modeled after the U.S. Constitution, except that it provided a single six-year term for the president and gave the president an item veto (the power to veto only part of a bill). Its constitution denied the Confederate congress the powers to levy a protective tariff and to appropriate funds for internal improvements, but it did prohibit the foreign slave trade. President Jefferson Davis tried to increase his executive powers during the war, but Southern governors resisted attempts at centralization, some holding back troops and resources to protect their own states. At one point, Vice President

Alexander H. Stephens, in defense of states' rights, even urged the secession of Georgia in response to the "despotic" actions of the Confederate government.

The Confederacy was chronically short of money. It tried loans, income taxes (including a 10 percent tax in-kind on farm produce), and even impressment of private property, but these revenues paid for only a small part of war costs. The government issued more than \$1 billion in paper money, so much that it caused severe inflation. By the end of the war, the value of a Confederate dollar was less than two cents. The Confederate congress nationalized the railroads and encouraged industrial development. The Confederacy sustained nearly 1 million troops at its peak, but a war of attrition doomed its efforts.

## **First Years of a Long War: 1861–1862**

People at first expected the war to last no more than a few weeks. Lincoln called up the first volunteers for an enlistment period of only 90 days. "On to Richmond!" was the optimistic cry, but as Americans soon learned, it would take almost four years of ferocious fighting before Union troops finally did march into the Confederate capital.

**First Battle of Bull Run** In the first major battle of the war (July 1861), 30,000 federal troops marched from Washington, D.C., to attack Confederate forces positioned near Bull Run Creek at Manassas Junction, Virginia. Just as the Union forces seemed close to victory, Confederate reinforcements under General Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson counterattacked and sent the inexperienced Union troops in disorderly and panicky flight back to Washington (together with civilian curiosity-seekers and picnickers). The battle ended the illusion of a short war and also promoted the myth that the Rebels were invincible in battle.

**Union Strategy** General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, veteran of the 1812 and Mexican wars, devised a three-part strategy for winning a long war:

- Use the U.S. Navy to blockade Southern ports (called the Anaconda Plan), cutting off essential supplies from reaching the Confederacy
- Take control of the Mississippi River, dividing the Confederacy in two
- Raise and train an army 500,000 strong to conquer Richmond

The first two parts of the strategy proved easier to achieve than the third, but ultimately all three were important in achieving Northern victory.

After the Union's defeat at Bull Run, federal armies experienced a succession of crushing defeats as they attempted various campaigns in Virginia. Each was less successful than the one before.

**Peninsula Campaign** General George B. McClellan, the new commander of the Union army in the East, insisted that his troops be given a long period of training before going into battle. Finally, after many delays that sorely tested Lincoln's patience, McClellan's army invaded Virginia in March 1862. The

Union army was stopped as a result of brilliant tactical moves by Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who emerged as the commander of the South's eastern forces. After five months, McClellan was forced to retreat and was ordered back to the Potomac, where he was replaced by General John Pope.

### THE CIVIL WAR: THE UNION VS. THE CONFEDERACY



**Second Battle of Bull Run** Lee took advantage of the change in Union generals to strike quickly at Pope's army in Northern Virginia. He drew Pope into a trap, then struck the enemy's flank, and sent the Union army backward to Bull Run. Pope withdrew to the defenses of Washington.

**Antietam** Following up his victory at Bull Run, Lee led his army across the Potomac into enemy territory in Maryland. In doing so, he hoped that a major Confederate victory in a Union state would convince Britain to give official recognition and support to the Confederacy. By this time (September 1862), Lincoln had restored McClellan to command of the Union army. McClellan had the advantage of knowing Lee's battle plan, because a copy of it had been dropped accidentally by a Confederate officer. The Union army intercepted the invading Confederates at Antietam Creek in the Maryland town of Sharpsburg.

Here the bloodiest single day of combat in the entire war took place, a day in which more than 22,000 soldiers were killed or wounded.

Unable to break through Union lines, Lee's army retreated to Virginia. Disappointed with McClellan for failing to pursue Lee's weakened and retreating army, Lincoln removed him for a final time as the Union commander. The president complained that his general had a "bad case of the slows." While a draw on the battlefield, Antietam proved to be a decisive battle because the Confederates failed to get what they so urgently needed—open recognition and aid from a foreign power. On the other side, Lincoln found enough encouragement in the results of Antietam to claim a Union victory. As explained later in this chapter, Lincoln used the partial triumph of Union arms to announce plans for a direct assault on the institution of slavery.

**Fredericksburg** Replacing McClellan with the more aggressive General Ambrose Burnside, Lincoln discovered that a strategy of reckless attack could have even worse consequences than McClellan's strategy of caution and inaction. In December 1862, a large Union army under Burnside attacked Lee's army at Fredericksburg, Virginia, and suffered immense losses: 12,000 dead or wounded compared to 5,000 Confederate casualties. Both Union and Confederate generals were slow to learn that improved weaponry, especially the deadly fire from enemy artillery, took the romance out of heroic charges against entrenched positions. By the end of 1862, the awful magnitude of the war was all too clear—with no prospect of military victory for either side.

The second year of war, 1862, was a disastrous one for the Union except for two engagements, one at sea and the other on the rivers of the West.

**Monitor vs. Merrimac** The Union's hopes for winning the war depended upon its ability to maximize its economic and naval advantages by an effective blockade of Confederate ports (the Anaconda plan). During McClellan's Peninsula campaign, the Union's blockade strategy was placed in jeopardy by the Confederate ironclad ship the *Merrimac* (a former Union ship, rebuilt and renamed the *Virginia*) that attacked and sunk several Union wooden ships on March 8, 1862, near Hampton Roads, Virginia. The ironclad ship seemed unstoppable. However, on March 9, the Union's own ironclad, the *Monitor*, engaged the *Merrimac* in a five-hour duel. Although the battle ended in a draw, the *Monitor* prevented the Confederate's formidable new weapon from challenging the U.S. naval blockade. More broadly, the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac* marked a turning point in naval warfare, with vulnerable wooden ships being replaced by far more formidable ironclad ones.

**Grant in the West** The battle of the ironclads occurred at about the same time as a far bloodier encounter in western Tennessee, a Confederate state. The Union's campaign for control of the Mississippi River was partly under the command of a West Point graduate, Ulysses S. Grant, who had joined up for the war after an unsuccessful civilian career. Striking south from Illinois in early 1862, Grant used a combination of gunboats and army maneuvers to capture Fort Henry and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River (a branch of the Mississippi). These stunning victories, in which 14,000 Confederates were taken

prisoner, opened up the state of Mississippi to Union attack. A few weeks later, a Confederate army under Albert Johnston surprised Grant at Shiloh, Tennessee, but the Union army held its ground and finally forced the Confederates to retreat after terrible losses on both sides (more than 23,000 dead and wounded). Grant's drive down the Mississippi was complemented in April 1862 by the capture of New Orleans by the Union navy under David Farragut.

## **Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy**

The Confederate's hopes for securing independence hinged as much on its diplomats as on soldiers. Confederate leaders fully expected that cotton would indeed prove to be "king" and induce Britain or France, or both, to give direct aid to the war effort. Besides depending on cotton for their textile mills, wealthy British industrialists and members of the British aristocracy looked forward with pleasure to the breakup of the American democratic experiment. From the Union's point of view, it was critically important to prevent the Confederacy from gaining the foreign support and recognition that it desperately needed.

### ***Trent Affair***

Britain came close to siding with the Confederacy in late 1861 over an incident at sea. Confederate diplomats James Mason and John Slidell were traveling to England on a British steamer, the *Trent*, on a mission to gain recognition for their government. A Union warship stopped the British ship, removed Mason and Slidell, and brought them to the United States as prisoners of war. Britain threatened war over the incident unless the two diplomats were released. Despite intense public criticism, Lincoln gave in to British demands. Mason and Slidell were duly set free, but after again sailing for Europe, they failed to obtain full recognition of the Confederacy from either Britain or France.

### ***Confederate Raiders***

The Confederates were able to gain enough recognition as a belligerent to purchase warships from British shipyards. Confederate commerce-raiders did serious harm to U.S. merchant ships. One of them, the *Alabama*, captured more than 60 vessels before being sunk off the coast of France by a Union warship. After the war, Great Britain eventually agreed to pay the United States \$15.5 million for damages caused by the South's commerce-raiders.

The U.S. minister to Britain, Charles Francis Adams, prevented a potentially much more serious threat. Learning that the Confederacy had arranged to purchase Laird rams (ships with iron rams) from Britain for use against the Union's naval blockade, Adams persuaded the British government to cancel the sale rather than risk war with the United States.

### ***Failure of Cotton Diplomacy***

In the end, the South's hopes for European intervention were disappointed. "King Cotton" did not have the power to dictate another nation's foreign policy, since Europe quickly found ways of obtaining cotton from other sources. By the time shortages of Southern cotton hit the British textile industry, adequate

shipments of cotton began arriving from Egypt and India. Also, materials other than cotton could be used for textiles, and the woolen and linen industries were not slow to take advantage of their opportunity.

Two other factors went into Britain's decision not to recognize the Confederacy. First, as mentioned, General Lee's setback at Antietam played a role; without seeing a decisive Confederate military victory, the British government would not risk recognition. Second, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (January 1863) made the end of slavery an objective of the Union, a position that appealed strongly to Britain's working class. While conservative leaders of Britain were sympathetic to the Confederates, they could not defy the pro-Northern, antislavery feelings of the British majority.

## **The End of Slavery**

Even though Lincoln in the 1850s spoke out against slavery as "an unqualified evil," as president he seemed hesitant to take action against slavery as advocated by many of his Republican supporters. Lincoln's concerns included (1) keeping the support of the border states, (2) the constitutional protections of slavery, (3) the racial prejudice of many Northerners, and (4) the fear that premature action could be overturned in the next election. All these concerns made the timing and method of ending slavery fateful decisions. Enslaved individuals were freed during the Civil War as a result of military events, governmental policy, and their own actions.

### ***Confiscation Acts***

Early in the war (May 1861), Union General Benjamin Butler refused to return captured slaves to their Confederate owners, arguing that they were "contraband of war." The power to seize enemy property used to wage war against the United States was the legal basis for the first Confiscation Act passed by Congress in August 1861. Soon after the passage of this act, thousands of "contrabands" were using their feet to escape slavery by finding their way into Union camps. In July 1862, Congress passed a second Confiscation Act that freed persons enslaved by anyone engaged in rebellion against the United States. The law also empowered the president to use freed slaves in the Union army in any capacity, including battle.

### ***Emancipation Proclamation***

By July 1862, Lincoln had already decided to use his powers as commander in chief of the armed forces to free all enslaved persons in the states then at war with the United States. He justified his policy as a "military necessity." Lincoln delayed announcement of the policy, however, until he could win the support of conservative Northerners. At the same time, he encouraged the border states to come up with plans for emancipation, with compensation to the owners.

After the Battle of Antietam, on September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued a warning that enslaved people in all states still in rebellion on January 1, 1863, would be "then, thenceforward, and forever free." As promised, on the first

day of the new year, 1863, the president issued his Emancipation Proclamation. After listing states from Arkansas to Virginia that were in rebellion, the proclamation stated:

I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, shall recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

**Consequences** Since the president's proclamation applied only to enslaved people residing in Confederate states *outside* Union control, it immediately freed only about 1 percent of slaves. Slavery in the border states was allowed to continue. Even so, the proclamation was of major importance because it enlarged the purpose of the war. For the first time, Union armies were fighting against slavery, not merely against secession. The proclamation added weight to the Confiscation acts, increasing the number of slaves who sought freedom by fleeing to Union lines. Thus, with each advance of Northern troops into the South, abolition advanced as well. As an added blow to the Confederacy, the proclamation also authorized the use of freed slaves as Union soldiers. Suddenly, the Union army had thousands of dedicated new recruits.

### ***Thirteenth Amendment***

Standing in the way of full emancipation were phrases in the U.S. Constitution that had long legitimized slavery. To free all enslaved people in the border states, the country needed to ratify a constitutional amendment. Even the abolitionists gave Lincoln credit for playing an active role in the political struggle to secure enough votes in Congress to pass the 13th Amendment. By December 1865 (months after Lincoln's death), this amendment abolishing slavery was ratified by the required number of states. The language of the amendment could not be simpler or clearer:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

### ***Freedmen in the War***

After the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1863), hundreds of thousands of Southern blacks—approximately one-quarter of the slave population—walked away from slavery to seek the protection of the approaching Union armies. Almost 200,000 African Americans, most of whom were newly freed slaves, served in the Union army and navy. Segregated into all-black units, such as the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, black troops performed courageously under fire and won the respect of Union white soldiers. More than 37,000 African American soldiers died in what became known as the Army of Freedom.

## The Union Triumphs, 1863–1865

By early 1863, the fortunes of war were turning against the Confederates. Although General Lee started the year with another major victory at Chancellorsville, Virginia, the Confederate economy was in desperate shape, as planters and farmers lost control of their slave labor force, and an increasing number of poorly provisioned soldiers were deserting from the Confederate army.

### **Turning Point**

The decisive turning point in the war came in the first week of July when the Confederacy suffered two crushing defeats in the West and the East.

**Vicksburg** In the West, by the spring of 1863, Union forces controlled New Orleans as well as most of the Mississippi River and surrounding valley. Thus, the Union objective of securing complete control of the Mississippi River was close to an accomplished fact when General Grant began his siege of the heavily fortified city of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Union artillery bombarded Vicksburg for seven weeks before the Confederates finally surrendered the city (and nearly 29,000 soldiers) on July 4. Federal warships now controlled the full length of the Mississippi and cut off Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas from the rest of the Confederacy.

**Gettysburg** Meanwhile, in the East, Lee again took the offensive by leading an army into enemy territory: the Union states of Maryland and Pennsylvania. If he could either destroy the Union army or capture a major Northern city, Lee hoped to force the Union to call for peace—or at least to gain foreign intervention on behalf of the Confederacy. On July 1, 1863, the invading Confederate army surprised Union units at Gettysburg in southern Pennsylvania. What followed was the most crucial battle of the war and the bloodiest, with more than 50,000 casualties. Lee's assault on Union lines on the second and third days, including a famous but unsuccessful charge led by George Pickett, proved futile, and destroyed a key part of the Confederate army. What was left of Lee's forces retreated to Virginia, never to regain the offensive.

### **Grant in Command**

Lincoln finally found a general who could fight and win. In early 1864, he brought Grant east to Virginia and made him commander of all the Union armies. Grant settled on a strategy of war by attrition. He aimed to wear down the Confederate's armies and systematically destroy their vital lines of supply. Fighting doggedly for months, Grant's Army of the Potomac suffered heavier casualties than Lee's forces in the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor. But by never letting up, Grant succeeded in reducing Lee's army in each battle and forcing it into a defensive line around Richmond. In this final stage of the Civil War, the fighting foreshadowed the trench warfare that would later characterize World War I. No longer was this a war "between gentlemen" but a modern "total" war against civilians as well as soldiers.

**Sherman's March** The chief instrument of Grant's aggressive tactics for subduing the South was a hardened veteran, General William Tecumseh

Sherman. Leading a force of 100,000 men, Sherman set out from Chattanooga, Tennessee, on a campaign of deliberate destruction that went clear across the state of Georgia and then swept north into South Carolina. Sherman was a pioneer of the tactics of total war. Marching relentlessly through Georgia, his troops destroyed everything in their path, burning cotton fields, barns, and houses—everything the enemy might use to survive. Sherman took Atlanta in September 1864 in time to help Lincoln’s prospects for reelection. He marched into Savannah in December and completed his campaign in February 1865 by setting fire to Columbia, the capital of South Carolina and cradle of secession.

Sherman’s march had its intended effects: helping to break the spirit of the Confederacy and destroying its will to fight on.

**The Election of 1864** The Democrats’ nominee for president was the popular General George McClellan, whose platform calling for peace had wide appeal among millions of war-weary voters. The Republicans renamed their party the Unionist party as a way of attracting the votes of “War Democrats” (those who disagreed with the Democratic platform). A brief “ditch-Lincoln” movement fizzled out, and the Republican (Unionist) convention again chose Lincoln as its presidential candidate and a loyal War Democrat from Tennessee, Senator Andrew Johnson, as his running mate. The Lincoln-Johnson ticket won 212 electoral votes to the Democrats’ 21. The popular vote, however, was much closer, for McClellan took 45 percent of the total votes cast.

### ***The End of the War***

The effects of the Union blockade, combined with Sherman’s march of destruction, spread hunger through much of the South in the winter of 1864–1865. On the battlefield in Virginia, Grant continued to outflank Lee’s lines until they collapsed around Petersburg, resulting in the fall of Richmond on April 3, 1865. Everyone knew that the end was near.

**Surrender at Appomattox** The Confederate government tried to negotiate for peace, but Lincoln would accept nothing short of restoration of the Union, and Jefferson Davis still demanded nothing less than independence. Lee retreated from Richmond with an army of less than 30,000 men. He tried to escape to the mountains, only to be cut off and forced to surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. The Union general treated his longtime enemy with respect and allowed Lee’s men to return to their homes with their horses.

**Assassination of Lincoln** Only a month before Lee’s surrender, Lincoln delivered one of his greatest speeches—the second inaugural address. He urged that the defeated South be treated benevolently, “with malice toward none; with charity for all.”

On April 14, John Wilkes Booth, an embittered actor and Confederate sympathizer, shot and killed the president while he was attending a performance in Ford’s Theater in Washington. On the same night, a co-conspirator attacked but only wounded Secretary of State William Seward. These shocking events aroused the fury of Northerners at the very time that the Confederates

most needed a sympathetic hearing. The loss of Lincoln's leadership was widely mourned, but the extent of the loss was not fully appreciated until the two sections of a reunited country had to cope with the overwhelming problems of postwar Reconstruction.

## Effects of the War on Civilian Life

Both during the war and in the years that followed, American society underwent deep and sometimes wrenching changes.

### **Political Change**

The electoral process continued during the war with surprisingly few restrictions. Secession of the Southern states had created Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. Within Republican ranks, however, there were sharp differences between the radical faction (those who championed the cause of immediate abolition of slavery) and the moderate faction (Free-Soilers who were chiefly concerned about economic opportunities for whites). Most Democrats supported the war but criticized Lincoln's conduct of it. Peace Democrats and Copperheads opposed the war and wanted a negotiated peace. The most notorious Copperhead, Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, was briefly banished from the United States to the Confederacy for his "treasonable," pro-Confederacy speeches against the war. He then went to Canada.

**Civil Liberties** Like many leaders in wartime governments, Lincoln focused more on prosecuting the war than with protecting citizens' constitutional rights. Early in the war, Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus in Maryland and other states with strong pro-Confederate sentiment. Suspension of this constitutional right meant that persons could be arrested without being informed of the charges against them. During the war, an estimated 13,000 people were arrested on suspicion of aiding the enemy. Without a right to habeas corpus, many of them were held without trial.

Democrats charged that Lincoln acted no better than a tyrant. However, most historians have been less critical. Especially in the border states, people had difficulty distinguishing between combatants and noncombatants. Moreover, the Constitution does state that the writ of habeas corpus "shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it." After the war, in the case of *Ex Parte Milligan* (1866), the Supreme Court ruled that the government had acted improperly in Indiana where, during the war, certain civilians had been subject to a military trial. The Court declared that such procedures could be used only when regular civilian courts were unavailable.

**The Draft** When the war began in 1861, those who fought were volunteers. However, as the need for replacements became acute, both the Union and the Confederacy resorted to laws for conscripting, or drafting, men into service. The Union's first Conscription Act, adopted in March 1863, made all men between the ages of 20 and 45 liable for military service but allowed a draftee to avoid service by either finding a substitute to serve or paying a \$300

exemption fee. The law provoked fierce opposition among poorer laborers, who feared that—if and when they returned to civilian life—their jobs would be taken by freed African Americans. In July 1863, riots against the draft erupted in New York City, in which a mostly Irish American mob attacked blacks and wealthy whites. Some 117 people were killed before federal troops and a temporary suspension of the draft restored order.

**Political Dominance of the North** The suspension of habeas corpus and the operation of the draft were only temporary. Far more important were the long-term effects of the war on the balance of power between two sectional rivals, the North and the South. With the military triumph of the Union came a new definition of the nature of the federal union. Old arguments for nullification and secession ceased to be issues. After the Civil War, the supremacy of the federal government over the states was accepted as an established fact.

Furthermore, the abolition of slavery—in addition to its importance to freed African Americans—gave new meaning and legitimacy to the concept of American democracy. In his famous Gettysburg Address of November 19, 1863, Lincoln rallied Americans to the idea that their nation was “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Lincoln was probably alluding to the Emancipation Proclamation when he spoke of the war bringing “a new birth of freedom.” His words—and even more, the abolition of slavery—advanced the cause of democratic government in the United States and inspired champions of democracy around the world.

### ***Economic Change***

The costs of the war in both money and men were staggering and called for extraordinary measures by both the Union and Confederate legislatures.

**Financing the War** The Union financed the war chiefly by borrowing \$2.6 billion, obtained through the sale of government bonds. Even this amount was not enough, so Congress raised tariffs (Morrill Tariff of 1861), added excise taxes, and instituted the first income tax. The U.S. Treasury also issued more than \$430 million in a paper currency known as Greenbacks. This paper money could not be redeemed in gold, which contributed to creeping inflation. Prices in the North rose by about 80 percent during the war. To manage the added revenue moving in and out of the Treasury, Congress created a national banking system in 1863. This was the first unified banking network since Andrew Jackson vetoed the recharter of the Bank of the United States in the 1830s.

**Modernizing Northern Society** The war’s impact on the Northern economy was dramatic. Economic historians differ on the question of whether, in the short run, the war promoted or retarded the growth of the Northern economy. On the negative side, workers’ wages did not keep pace with inflation. On the other hand, there is little doubt that many aspects of a modern industrial economy were accelerated by the war. Because the war placed a premium on mass production and complex organization, it sped up the consolidation of the North’s manufacturing businesses. War profiteers took advantage of the government’s urgent needs for military supplies to sell shoddy goods at high

prices—a problem that decreased after the federal government took control of the contract process away from the states. Fortunes made during the war produced a concentration of capital in the hands of a new class of millionaires, who would finance the North’s industrialization in the postwar years.

Civilians Employed by the Federal Government				
Year	Post Office	Defense	Other	Total
1841	14,290	598	3,150	18,038
1851	21,391	403	4,480	26,274
1861	30,269	946	5,457	36,672
1871	36,696	1,183	13,741	51,020
1881	56,421	16,297	27,302	100,020

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*

Republican politics also played a major role in stimulating the economic growth of the North and the West. Taking advantage of their wartime majority in Congress, the Republicans passed an ambitious economic program that included not only a national banking system, but also the following:

- The *Morrill Tariff Act* (1861) raised tariff rates to increase revenue and protect American manufacturers. Its passage initiated a Republican program of high protective tariffs to help industrialists.
- The *Homestead Act* (1862) promoted settlement of the Great Plains by offering parcels of 160 acres of public land free to any person or family that farmed that land for at least five years.
- The *Morrill Land Grant Act* (1862) encouraged states to use the sale of federal land grants to maintain agricultural and technical colleges.
- The *Pacific Railway Act* (1862) authorized the building of a transcontinental railroad over a northern route in order to link the economies of California and the western territories with the eastern states.

## Social Change

Although every part of American society away from the battlefield was touched by the war, those most directly affected were women, whose labors became more burdensome, and African Americans, who won emancipation.

**Women at Work** The absence of millions of men from their normal occupations in fields and factories added to the responsibilities of women in all regions. They stepped into the labor vacuum created by the war, operating

farms and plantations and taking factory jobs customarily held by men. In addition, women played a critical role as military nurses and as volunteers in soldiers' aid societies. When the war ended and the war veterans returned home, most urban women vacated their jobs in government and industry, while rural women gladly accepted male assistance on the farm. Of course, for the women whose men never returned—or returned disabled—the economic struggle continued for a lifetime.

The Civil War had at least two permanent effects on American women. First, the field of nursing was now open to women for the first time; previously, hospitals employed only men as doctors and nurses. Second, the enormous responsibilities undertaken by women during the war gave impetus to the movement to obtain equal voting rights for women. (The suffragists' goal would not be achieved until women's efforts in another war—World War I—finally convinced enough male conservatives to adopt the 19th Amendment.)

**End of Slavery** Both in the short run and the long run, the group in American society whose lives were most profoundly changed by the Civil War were those African Americans who had been born into slavery. After the adoption of the 13th Amendment in 1865, 4 million people (3.5 million in the Confederate states and 500,000 in the border states) were “freed men” and “freed women.” For these people and their descendants, economic hardship and political oppression would continue for generations. Even so, the end of slavery represented a momentous step. Suddenly, slaves with no rights were protected by the U.S. Constitution, with open-ended possibilities of freedom.

While four years of nearly total war, the tragic human loss of 750,000 lives, and an estimated \$15 billion in war costs and property losses had enormous effects on the nation, far greater changes were set in motion. The Civil War destroyed slavery and devastated the Southern economy, and it also acted as a catalyst to transform America into a complex modern industrial society of capital, technology, national organizations, and large corporations. During the war, the Republicans were able to enact the pro-business Whig program that was designed to stimulate the industrial and commercial growth of the United States. The characteristics of American democracy and its capitalist economy were strengthened by this Second American Revolution.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHY DID THE UNION WIN?

The Union's victory in the Civil War was by no means inevitable. Why did the Union win and the Confederates lose? To be sure, the Union had the advantage of a larger population and superior wealth, industry, and transportation. On the other hand, the Confederacy's advantages were also formidable. The Confederacy needed merely to fight to a stalemate and hold out long enough to secure foreign recognition or intervention. The Union faced the more daunting challenge of having to conquer an area comparable in size to Western Europe.

Some historians blame the Confederacy's defeat on the overly aggressive military strategy of its generals. For example, Lee's two invasions of the North leading to Antietam and Gettysburg resulted in a much higher loss of his own men, in percentage terms, than of his opponent's forces. If the Confederates had used more defensive and cautious tactics, they might have secured a military stalemate—and political victory (independence).

Other historians blame the Confederacy's loss on its political leadership. They argue that, compared to the Lincoln administration, Jefferson Davis and his cabinet were ineffective. Another weakness was the lack of a strong political party system in the Confederacy. Without a strong party, Davis had trouble developing a base of popular support. Confederates' traditional emphasis on states' rights also worked against a unified war effort. Governors of Confederate states would withhold troops rather than yield to the central government's urgent requests for cooperation. Vital supplies were also held back in state warehouses, where they remained until war's end.

Historian Henry S. Commager argued that slavery may have been responsible for the Confederates' defeat. For one thing, slavery played a role in deterring European powers from intervening in support of the Confederacy and its backward institution. Beyond this, Commager also believed that slavery undermined the region's ability to adapt to new challenges. It fostered an intolerant society, which lacked the "habit of independent inquiry and criticism." Thus, according to Commager, the failure of the Confederacy was not a "failure of resolution or courage or will but of intelligence and morality." If so, then the Confederacy's attachment to an outdated institution—slavery—was what ultimately meant the difference between victory and defeat.

## KEY NAMES, EVENTS, AND TERMS

### The Break (NAT, POL)

border states  
Confederate States of America  
Jefferson Davis  
Alexander H. Stephens  
Second American Revolution

### Economic Growth (WXT)

greenbacks  
Morrill Tariff Act (1861)  
Morrill Land Grant Act (1862)  
Pacific Railway Act (1862)

### Free Land (MIG)

Homestead Act (1862)

### The Fighting (POL, GEO, CUL)

Fort Sumter  
Bull Run  
Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson

Winfield Scott  
Anaconda Plan  
George McClellan  
Robert E. Lee  
Antietam  
Fredericksburg  
*Monitor vs. Merrimac*  
Ulysses S. Grant  
Shiloh

David Farragut  
Gettysburg  
Vicksburg  
Sherman's March  
Appomattox Court House

### War and the Law (POL)

executive power  
habeas corpus  
insurrection  
Confiscation acts  
Emancipation Proclamation  
13th Amendment  
*Ex Parte Milligan*  
draft riots

### Wartime Politics (POL)

Copperheads  
election of 1864

### War Diplomacy (WOR)

Trent Affair  
Alabama  
Laird rams

### The Final Act (CUL)

John Wilkes Booth

### Social Impact (NAT, CUL)

segregated black troops  
Massachusetts 54th Regiment  
women in the workplace  
women in nursing  
war's long term effects  
4 million freedmen