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The War Between the States

Recall that from the Revolution to 1860 the North and South moved apart (diverged) in several ways so that by Lincoln's election they were very different.

Balance Sheet

Population: North - 22.5 million South – 9 million (3.5 million of them slaves).

Economics: North – 86% of factories and industrial output
North – 81% of banks deposits
North – 75% of taxable wealth
North – 71% of railroad mileage
North – 70% of food production

Seems that these advantages would mean a quick victory for the Union. And neither side thought the war would last very long. Southerners believed that they could overcome Northern advantages because of their martial skills and superiority. The South also mobilized much faster than the North.

Two Battles

Rather than review battle tactics and strategy at length, let's look at two important battles only.

First Battle of Bull Run - Northerners especially believed that the Confederacy would collapse after the first battle. The Northern Press called for a quick decisive attack at the new Southern capital, Richmond, Virginia. About 35,000 troops under General McDowell marched out of Washington DC.

They were met about 25 miles into Virginia by 22,000 Confederates under P.G.T. Beauregard. The Union forces were on the verge of victory when Southern reinforcements under Thomas Jackson (thereafter known as "Stonewall") arrived to save the day for the South. The Federal forces were routed and ran back to Washington.

There were nearly 5000 casualties in one day (which was equal to ¼ of the casualties from the prior Mexican-American War lasting almost 2 years!) People realized that this would be a long bloody war.

Gettysburg – The first two years of the war went poorly for the North. Southerners were able to hold out mainly through defensive actions that would make Northerners weary, especially in the East. Many Southerners hoped that England or France, or both would recognize them as an independent nation.

Some in Europe did want to do this, for political and economic reasons.

The danger was recognizing a nation that might not survive. To help their cause, Robert E. Lee decided to change tactics from defensive engagements to an invasion of the North. After all, what better evidence of independence than the ability to invade another nation?

Lee moved into Pennsylvania to capture the key town of Gettysburg. Northern forces under General Meade moved to the area and a 3 day long battle, the bloodiest of the war took place. 50,000 were killed on both sides. But, manpower was more difficult to replace for the South. After this, the tide of the war turned into the North's favor.

War And Government

Recruiting Soldiers – nearly 80% of the soldiers on both side were volunteers. Their units were comprised of those from the same locality. Unfortunately, this meant that some areas lost disproportionate numbers of fathers, sons and brothers.

Both sides did turn to the draft. This resulted in a burden on the poor and working class since the rich could purchase a substitute.

Financing War- There are three basic ways to finance war: 1) Taxes, 2) Loans (war bonds), 3) Printing money.

Printing money causes inflation while tax increases take money out of the system. About 2/3rds of the cost of the war in the North was paid for by bonds.

The remainder came from an Income Tax Act and a Legal Tender Act.

Because every Southern Congressman and Senator but one (Andrew Johnson) went South during the war, the Federal Government was free to enact legislation previously blocked by the South, including the building of a Transcontinental Railroad, a Homestead Act, and a Land Grant College Act.

The power of the President also increased during the war.

War and Society

Women served an important role during the Civil War. The absence of men from the family farm or business alone increased the importance of women. Many others entered into nursing, soldier's aid society's, or became active in sanitation efforts.

Some women went so far as to spy and even disguised their identities, became

men and joined the army. Many lived as men and their gender was not discovered!

Not everyone was supportive of the war effort. The increase in government power, racism, war-weariness and the draft turned some against the war.

New York especially witnessed draft riots that centered around racial tensions.

Though some refused to fight for an end to slavery, many free blacks in the North tried to volunteer. Initially they were turned away. It was not until 1864 that black troops were allowed to fight.

The South at War

The Civil War transformed the South. The irony is that the South went to war to preserve its "way of life," but the experience of war alter Southern Society.

War required a central government similar to the one they seceded from in the name of states' rights. Eventually the Confederacy developed a significant central bureaucracy, instituted taxes, drafted soldiers, enforced martial law, and regulated the economy.

Women, sheltered earlier, had to enter the economy or government in the same way that Northern women did.

Emancipation

During the first few years of the war, Lincoln refused to acknowledge that the war was about slavery, rather it was to preserve the Union. Lincoln was afraid of alienating border states like Maryland and Kentucky that, though slave states, had remained loyal to the North. However, the war went poorly for the North. And there was the possibility that European nations would recognize the South.

By 1862, Lincoln realized the need to make the war less about Union and more about slavery. The war had to become about a moral issue (slavery) rather than a theoretical issue (Union). Waiting for a Union victory to announce his plans, Lincoln announced that he would emancipate the slaves on January 1, 1863.

In reality, not all slaves were freed, only those in areas that the North did NOT control were freed!

The results were that border states controlled by the Union did not have to free slaves, Europe refused to support the South now that the war was about slavery, and Lincoln was able to silent critics from both sides.

Even the South considered its own emancipation plan. Jefferson Davis initiated

a policy of freeing slaves who would fight for the South! There's much irony to freeing slaves so they would fight to preserve southern slavery! But this came at the end of the war and had little impact.

Results

There were over 1 million casualties.

North – 360,000 dead; 275,000 wounded

South – 258,000 dead; 250,000 wounded

More deaths than all other US wars combined!

The monetary cost was tremendous (the Federal Government was still paying 40% of the budget on interest into the 1880s).

From 1789-1860 the federal government had spent \$4 billion, from 1861-65 it spent \$20 billion!

The war changed America. Slavery ended (though race relations were still a problem), and bureaucracy remained industrialization remained. One big question was what to do with 4 million freed slaves, where did they fit into American society?



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