

Secession and Civil War



Lincoln's election in 1860 brought the Southern states to the point of secession and Lincoln to a fateful question: Should he allow peaceful secession or should he coerce the rebels to stay in the Union?

I. Secession of the South

A. Reasons for secession

1. Emotional--the North wants to establish black rule in the South. Their goal is not equality, but the reversal of roles for the races.
2. Economic--the policies of a Republican president--protective tariffs, free homesteads in the west, etc.--will prevent the South from prospering.

B. Northern reaction to secession

1. Most opposed forcing the South to return to the Union
2. Pres. Buchanan refused to act when a federal supply ship was attacked in Charleston Harbor in January 1861
3. Crittenden Compromise proposed the prohibition of slavery north of the Missouri Compromise line (36 30), but allowing it south of the line in addition to compensation to owners for runaway slaves

C. Lincoln decided to employ force because the South was denying the democratic principle that formed the basis of the Union.

1. Supplies are sent to Ft. Sumter in Charleston Harbor (April 12, 1861)
2. Confederates opened fire on the fort, starting the war

II. The North and the South Compared

A. North's advantages over the South

1. Potential fighting and working force: 20 million citizens
 - a) Population: 2.5:1
 - b) Free male population (ages 18-60): 4.4:1
2. Wealth produced: 3:1
 - a) Factory production: 10:1
 - b) Textile goods produced: 14:1
 - c) Iron production: 15:1
 - d) Coal production: 38:1
 - e) Farm acreage: 3:1
 - f) Draft animals: 1.8:1
 - g) Livestock: 1.5:1
 - h) Wheat production: 4.2:1
 - i) Corn production: 2:1
3. Transportation--superior in every respect
 - a) Railroad mileage: 7:1
 - b) Naval tonnage: 25:1
 - c) Merchant ship tonnage: 9:1

B. South's advantages over the North

1. Fighting a defensive war. Local support and familiarity with terrain
2. Positive goal: seeking independence
3. Short communication lines and friendly population
4. United public in contrast to the North. Nonslaveholders eager to volunteer to fight
5. Experienced officer corps--many veterans of the Mexican-American War joined the Confederacy
6. Cotton (24:1 advantage over North)--necessary for textile factories of England and France

III. Early Strategies of the Opposing Sides

A. North

- 1) Capture Richmond and force surrender
- 2) Expel Confederates from border states
- 3) Control the Mississippi River
- 4) Blockade southern ports and stop cotton shipments

B. South

- 1) Capture Washington, D.C.
- 2) Control border states
- 3) Gain England's support
- 4) Expel Union troops from South

For a quick view of key events and battles, see the Chart: Key Civil War Events

IV. Northern Domestic Issues

A. Prosperity and expansion--the war provided a stimulant to Northern economic interests

1. Homestead Act (1862)--160 acres of land virtually free to any citizen willing to occupy it for five years
2. Morrill Land Grant Act (1862)----30,000 acres of land for each Congressional representative granted to each state. Proceeds of land sales to be used to finance public colleges
3. High tariffs passed to protect Northern industries
4. Transcontinental railroad promoted with creation of federally chartered corporations receiving free public lands and generous loans
5. National Bank Act (1863)--created national banking system. Stabilized currency and reduced confusing state bank note system

B. Financing the war

1. First income tax (1861): 3% on incomes above \$800
2. Borrowing. \$6.2 billion through the issuance of bonds
3. Greenbacks--paper currency not supported by specie reserve. Value fluctuated with success of Northern armies. Caused serious inflation problems

C. Raising the Union army

1. Lincoln issues call for 75,000 volunteers in 1861 to supplement 16,000 man army.
2. Although volunteer call succeeded at first, by 1863 Congress turned to a draft to fill units. States could avoid draft by filling quotas of volunteers. Draft opposed by Peace Democrats, laborers, and immigrants
3. Draft riots resulted in New York City in July 1863, causing hundreds of deaths, mostly of blacks

D. Lincoln's enormous political problems

1. Seen as inexperienced and unfit, he was challenged by members of his own cabinet, including Chase and Seward
2. Expansion of war powers
 - a) Call for troops to repress rebellion without declaration of war
 - b) Arrest of unfriendly newspaper editors
 - c) Suspension of habeas corpus
 - d) Proclamation of naval blockade without Congressional approval
 - e) 13,000 political opponents arrested for varying periods
 - f) Refusal to obey writ issued by Chief Justice Taney (*Ex parte Merryman*)
3. Presidential Election of 1864
 - a) Abolitionists urged the Republicans to choose a candidate who would wage total war against the South

- b) Lincoln chose Andrew Johnson as his running mate to attract "War Democrats" and formed the Union Party
- c) Democrats nominated McClellan and a platform which called for a truce and settlement with the South
- d) Lincoln once again won in the electoral college, but only had a 400,000 vote majority in the popular vote

V. Northern Foreign Issues

A. Relations with England

1. English support for the Confederacy
 - a) Upper class feared leveling effect of Union victory on English society, felt socially close to the Southern plantation aristocracy, and needed cotton
 - b) Some liberals and lower-class English favored the South, seeing the Civil War as a rebellion against Northern tyranny or as a struggle to preserve the Union
2. English support for the Union
 - a) Many English workers favored the North because a Northern victory would mean emancipation of the slaves
 - b) Others felt western wheat was more critical to England than Southern cotton
3. Trent Affair (November 1861)--American warships stopped a British ship and removed two Confederate diplomats.
 - a) Britain threatened war unless they were released
 - b) Sec. of State Seward ordered the men released, although Northern sentiment opposed backing down

B. Relations with France--Union defeats in 1861 and 1862 convinced France that the South would win.

- 1) Lincoln delayed both France and England's recognition of the Confederacy by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation
- 2) France placed Archduke Maximilian on the Mexican throne in challenge to Monroe Doctrine