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Factors that led to Civil War in America From 1820-1861

**Introduction**

Civil War was one of the most pivotal and important events in the history of USA. Its outcome shaped the very future of the country and saved several generations of people from slavery. Primarily this war was between the difference in opinion of Northern and Southern colonies of the newly formed states of America. Their difference was on the continuation or legalization of slavery in the whole country. The Civil War happened after years and years of regional and political conflict between the states on this issue which was taking the country towards a divide. This essay analyses the different factors from 1820 to 1861 that led to the civil war.

**Discussion**

During the time period of 1619 to 1865, slavery and its abolishment had very tough time. This institution was made prevalent by the Spanish and English colonists who imported an average of 645000 African and indentured slaves. Before this time period most of the northern states had already abolished slavery in their territories, whereas the Southern states fought to keep this administration because their whole system was dependent on it. They even tried to pass slavery as a benevolent Christian institution that was beneficial for all parties involved. This coupled with a series of other events laid the foundation for the fight of a decade that would decide the future path of the country.

**The Missouri Comprise 1820**

After the purchase of Louisiana in the year 1803, a policy regarding the future of slavery in the westward expansion of the states had to be publish by congress. All of the states north of Maryland had generally abolished slavery, while all the states still holding slavery as legal were in the south. A balance was present between the proportions of Free states compared to Slave states in the congress. The issue arose when Missouri applied to become a slave state. This would upset the balance of power in the congress and neither the Northern nor the Southern states could have this divide in power. So a compromise was reached between the states by admitting Maine as a Free State and Missouri as a Slave State. This was known as Missouri Compromise and was one of the primary foundations that led to the civil war.

**Nate Turners Rebellion 1831**

During the summer of 1831, a spread of uprisings was seen across several plantations in southern Virginia. This uprising was perpetrated by Nate Turner and his seventy accomplices killed about 60 white individuals. The uprisings were quashed after the deployment of militia infantry and artillery within two days. A group of 50 slaves and turner were indicted and found responsible for this uprising. They were then executed for playing a part in the insurrection. While mobs lynched more than two hundred more slaves in retaliation. This rebellion led to the Virginia government taking back what few rights people of color had. Following this rebellion they were not allowed any education or right to assembly.

**The Wilmot Proviso 1846-1850**

David Wilmot in the years from 1846-1850 proposed a legislation. This was around the time during the closing of the war between Mexico and America. According to this proviso slavery would have been outlawed in all newly occupied territories by the USA due to any war if it was passed. This area from the southwest all the way to California came under this proviso. After two years of intense struggle in getting this passed as either a rider to existing bills or attaching it to treaties, it eventually failed. The debate that emerged regarding this decision between the Northern and Southern states were very intense and heated and could be considered as the first signs of secessions.

**The Compromise 1850**

The debate around Wilmot Proviso kept tensions running high among all the states. To diffuse this situation two senators namely, Henry Clay and Stephen Douglas, with maximum effort formed the Compromise of 1850. This was a shaky accord at the most and was used to dim the spark of any rivalry between the states in the North and the South. This compromise allowed California’s registration as a state without slaves and fortified the Fugitive Slave Act, which forced the northerners to capture and send back any runaway slaves back to the south. This act forced the northerners to become a part of this immoral institution.

**Uncle Tom’s Cabin 1852**

In 1852, Uncle Tom’s Cabin was published which was written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. This book provided a fictional exploration of everyday lives of slaves. This book became a cultural sensation and had a profound effect on both the Southerners and the Northerners. The horrible reality of slavery was felt by the Northerners, whereas Southerners detested it and marked it as slanderous. After the Bible, this book was the most sold in America and brought the issue of slavery to the limelight and indirectly increased the differences between the Northerners and Southerners.

**Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854-1859**

Under the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, both Kansas and Nebraska were established as territories and by acquiring of popular sovereignty. Under this method, residents of these territories had the power to choose the fate of their state and declare by popular vote if they wanted to be either a slave or a free state. People from both the northern and the southern states were rushing into these areas to push the vote towards their side and violence erupted. John Brown, an anti-slavery enthusiast came to fight the forces of slavery. A guerilla war had started between the pro- slavery and anti-slavery armies after the sack of Lawrence and the massacre of 50 pro slavery settlers in Pottawatomie Creek by John Brown and his supporters. By 1859, a fragile peace treaty was formed between the two warring factions but this did not happen till more than fifty settlers had already been killed.

**Dread Scott vs Sanford 1857**

In 1857, a slave by the name of Dread Scott (a slave in Virginia), tried to fight for his freedom by lodging a case in the courts. The case got so much popularity and coverage that it eventually reached the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court in its judgment declared that as Dread Scott was not a free man but a slave and a piece of property, so he did not enjoy all the rights and legal liberties that a free man has. This decision heavily influenced the political landscape of the time making it even more volatile and labelling a slave a piece of property showed that the federal government had no idea of how to handle such a situation.

**Debates between Lincoln and Douglas 1858**

Abraham Lincoln and Senator Stephen Douglas were at odds with each other during the senate race in 1858. Abraham Lincoln was a relatively unknown one time former congressmen, whereas, Stephan Douglas was a senator in the US Congress. During the campaign Lincoln and Douglas butted heads over a number of topics slavery being the most controversial. Lincoln got better end of the stick and was propelled into the spotlight making him a nomination for the presidential run in 1860. Whereas, Douglas won the senate race but got alienated by the southern wing of his party and cost him any chance of presidential run.

**John Brown’s Raid 1859**

The major role in starting the Civil War was of John Brown due to his abolitionist anti southern views on slavery. After the events that occurred in Pottawatomie, Kansas, brown started planning an even dangerous act. He and a few fellow supporters raided the federal armory in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. They confiscated weapons and ammunition and distributed them among slaves to start an uprising. In order to suppress this uprising, a small unit of the US Marines was sent in. With heavy losses on both sides, this uprising was quashed and John Brown and some of his fellow supporters were captured, tried and executed.

**Battle of Fort Sumter 1861**

After Abraham Lincoln won the presidential race, several southern states started seceding from the union including South Carolina. This trend continued until more than seven states seceded from the union by December 20, 1860. This led to the different federal forts in the southern territories feeling as entities in dangerous waters. Abraham Lincoln tried to send resupplies to these beleaguered outposts but the confederate army forced the convoy headed to Fort Sumter back on April, 12, 1861. They bombarded the fort for nearly 34 hours and the fort had to surrender itself after two days.

After these acts Civil War had become a reality, with Lincoln calling for volunteers to join the northern army.

**Conclusion**

Hence, the events from 1820 to 1861 played an immense role in promoting and increasing animosities between the states in the north and the south. The feeling of resentment went to such an extent after the election of Lincoln into office that Civil War had to become a reality now. Lives were lost on both sides between people fighting for clashing ideologies related to slavery. This war eventually shaped the future of not just USA but also the people on whose back the country was created.

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