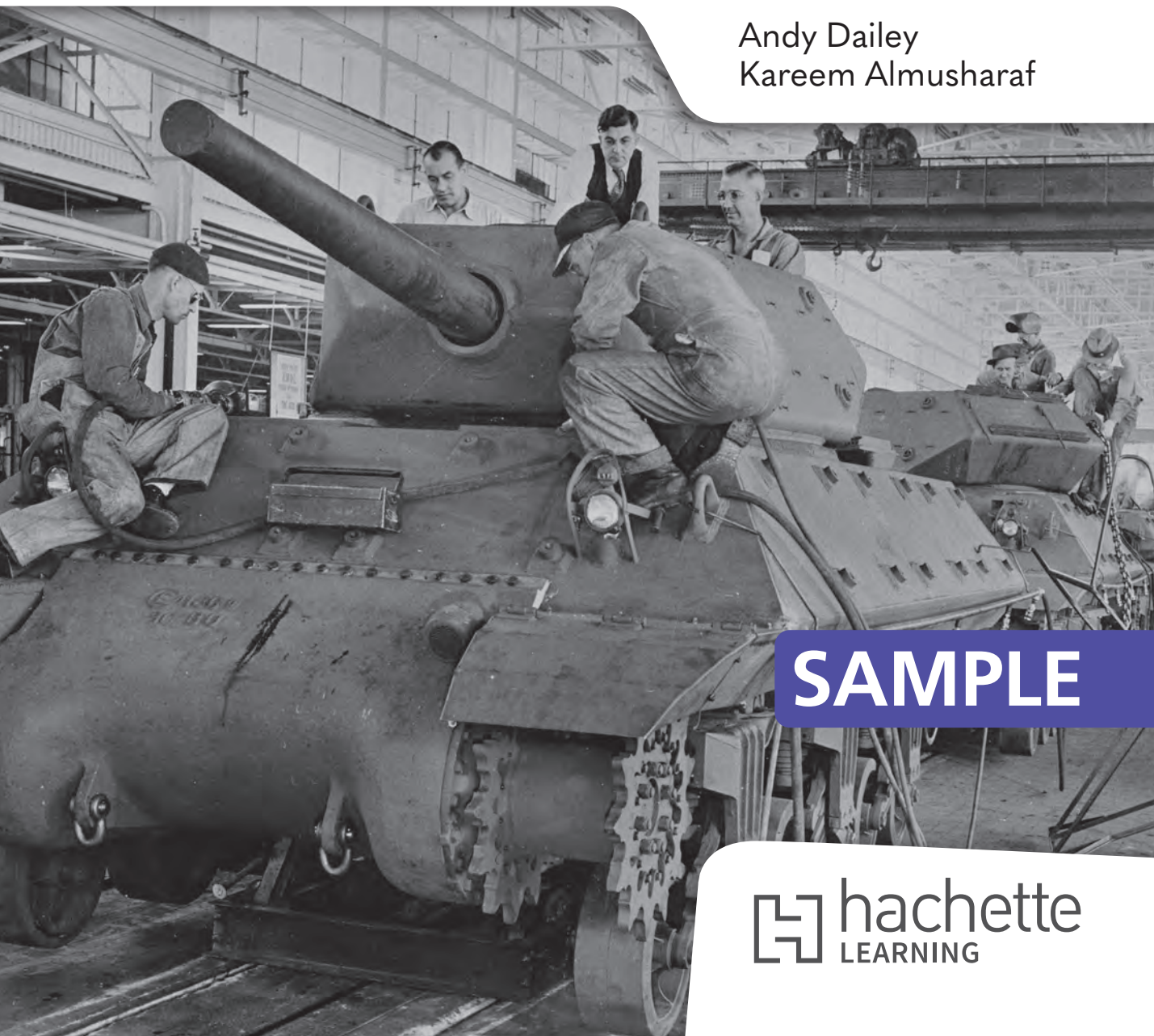


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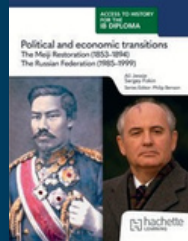
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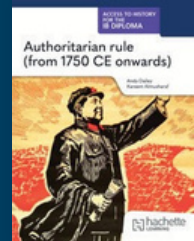
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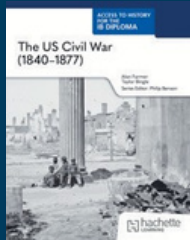
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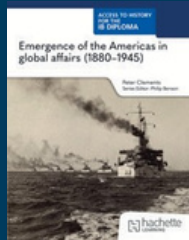
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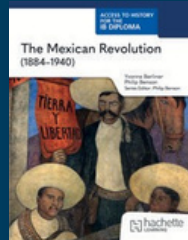
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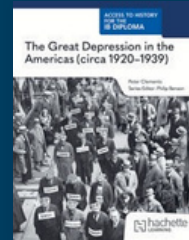
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ACCESS TO HISTORY
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Conflict (from 750CE)

Andy Dailey
Kareem Almusharaf
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Contents

Dedication and Disclaimer	1
Introduction	2
Chapter 1 The US Civil War, 1861–5 in the Americas	15
1 Why did conflict emerge in the USA during the 19th century?	17
2 What determined the outcome of the US Civil War?	38
3 How did the US Civil War affect people's lives?	64
4 How was peace established in 1865 in the USA?	77
Chapter 2 The First World War in Europe, 1914–8	87
1 Why did conflict emerge in Europe in 1914?	88
2 What determined the outcome of the First World War in Europe?	106
3 How did the First World War affect people's lives in Europe?	134
4 How was peace established in 1918 in Europe?	146
Chapter 3 The Second World War in Europe, 1939–45	154
1 Why did conflict emerge in Europe in 1939?	155
2 What determined the outcome of the Second World War in Europe?	171
3 How did the Second World War affect people's lives in Europe?	200
4 How was peace established in 1945 in Europe?	214
Chapter 4 The Second World War in Asia and Oceania, 1941–5	225
1 Why did conflict emerge in Asia and Oceania in 1941?	227
2 What determined the outcome of the Second World War in Asia and Oceania?	240
3 How did the Second World War affect people's lives in Asia and Oceania?	263
4 How was peace established in 1945 in Asia and Oceania?	275
Chapter 5 Case studies	284
1 Americas: Why did the American Revolutionary War emerge in 1775?	284
2 Africa and the Middle East: What determined the outcome of the Ethiopian–Adal War in 1543?	300
3 Asia and Oceania: How did the Mongol Conquest of the Song dynasty affect people's lives?	319
4 Africa and the Middle East: How was peace established in 750 after the Abbasid Revolution?	338

Chapter 6 Examination advice and practice

363

1 Addressing Section A	363
2 Addressing Section B, Part (a)	366
3 Addressing Section B, Part (b)	371
Index	381

Online extras

Summary diagrams
Glossary
Further reading
Internal assessment

The US Civil War, 1861–5

The United States of America's Civil War is often considered the first modern war as it involved the concept of 'total war', saw the introduction of trench warfare and involved iron-clad steam ships and the first use of submarines. To fight the war, northern industry was mobilized and ultimately ensured victory. The war led to major changes in US society and political direction.

This study of the US Civil War will allow you to develop an understanding of this conflict, including:

- ★ Why did conflict emerge in the USA during the 19th century?
- ★ What determined the outcome of the US Civil War?
- ★ How did the US Civil War affect people's lives?
- ★ How was peace established in 1865 in the USA?



Lithograph of the Battle of Shiloh, 1862

The United States of America's Civil War (1861–5) was fought between the Union of Northern states and the Confederacy of Southern states. The central cause of the war was slavery, particularly its expansion into new territories, alongside broader disputes over states' rights, economic systems and political power. Southern **secession** followed the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, whom Southern leaders feared would restrict slavery. The war began in April 1861 and ended in April 1865 with

KEY TERM

Secession The ability of a state to leave the USA and operate as an independent state.

750,000 deaths and immense destruction. The North was victorious, the result of factors such as population, industry, railroads and successful war strategies. The war preserved the United States of America and ended slavery through the adoption of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution.

EXTENSION: Slavery versus enslavement

While modern discourse often pivots toward ‘enslavement’ to emphasize human agency and the process of dehumanization, the term ‘slavery’ names the institution itself – the legal, economic and social framework. It also identifies a codified system of laws rather than just a series of actions.

It is important to note that this chapter breaks down the US Civil War through inquiry questions and lines of inquiry, not in a chronological order. For a chronology of events, see the following key dates:

KEY DATES

- 1820** Missouri Compromise
- 1831** Nat Turner’s Rebellion; *The Liberator* newspaper founded
- 1832–3** Nullification Crisis
- 1846–8** Mexican–American War
- 1850** Compromise of 1850; Fugitive Slave Act
- 1854** Kansas–Nebraska Act; Republican Party founded
- 1854–9** ‘Bleeding Kansas’
- 1857** *Dred Scott versus Sandford* decision; Panic of 1857
- 1860** Abraham Lincoln elected president; South Carolina secedes
- 1861** Confederate States of America formed; attack on Fort Sumter; First Battle of Bull Run; Morrill Tariff
- 1862** Battle of Antietam; Battle of Shiloh; capture of Forts Henry and Donelson; capture of New Orleans; Confederate Conscription Act; Pacific Railway Act; Homestead Act; Morrill Land-Grant Act
- 1863** Emancipation Proclamation; Battle of Gettysburg; Siege of Vicksburg; Battle of Chattanooga; Union Enrollment Act; New York Draft Riots; Women’s Loyal National League founded; Richmond Bread Riots
- 1864** Grant appointed General-in-Chief; Overland Campaign; Siege of Petersburg begins; Battle of Atlanta; Sherman’s March to the Sea; Lincoln re-elected
- 1865** Lee surrenders and war ends; Lincoln assassinated; Andrew Johnson becomes president; 13th Amendment ratified; Freedmen’s Bureau established; Ku Klux Klan founded
- 1867** Reconstruction Acts; Congressional Reconstruction begins
- 1868** 14th Amendment ratified; President Johnson impeached
- 1870** 15th Amendment ratified; Hiram Revels becomes first Black American US senator
- 1877** Compromise of 1877; end of Reconstruction

1 Why did conflict emerge in the USA during the 19th century?

▶ **Key question:** *What were the most significant factors that caused the US Civil War?*

The US Civil War emerged as the result of the complex interplay of economic, political, social and environmental factors.

Economic factors

The economic systems of the North and South contributed to the emergence of the Civil War, which in turn contributed to political, social and environmental causes as well (see Source A).

Divergent economic systems

By the mid-19th century, the Northern and Southern states had developed two distinct and divergent economic systems.

The Northern economy

The North experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization, creating a dynamic, integrated market economy based on free-wage labour. Its economy was built on industrial production. By 1860, the North was home to over 90% of US factories and produced 90% of all manufactured goods. This dominance was near-total in critical sectors: the North manufactured 97% of firearms, 94% of cloth and 93% of **pig iron**. This industrial engine was connected by a vast transportation network. The Northern states contained 72% of the nation's railway tracks, allowing for the efficient movement of raw materials and finished goods.

Over 1.3 million Americans worked in Northern factories, compared to just over 100,000 working in factories in the South. Industry fuelled **urbanization**, with 26% of the Northern population living in cities, compared to only 10% in the South; the North had nine of the ten largest cities. The North was also the undisputed financial centre of the country, holding over 80% of all bank deposits and the vast majority of taxable wealth. While highly industrialized, the North also maintained a powerful and diversified agricultural sector that was not dependent on a single cash crop like cotton, unlike much of the South. Northern farms were more mechanized and produced the majority of the nation's food, including 80% of its wheat and 60% of its livestock.

The North was home to roughly two-thirds of the total US population, about 22 million people. This provided both the labour force and the consumer market for its expanding economy.

Why is it significant to understand economic factors in the emergence of the US Civil War?

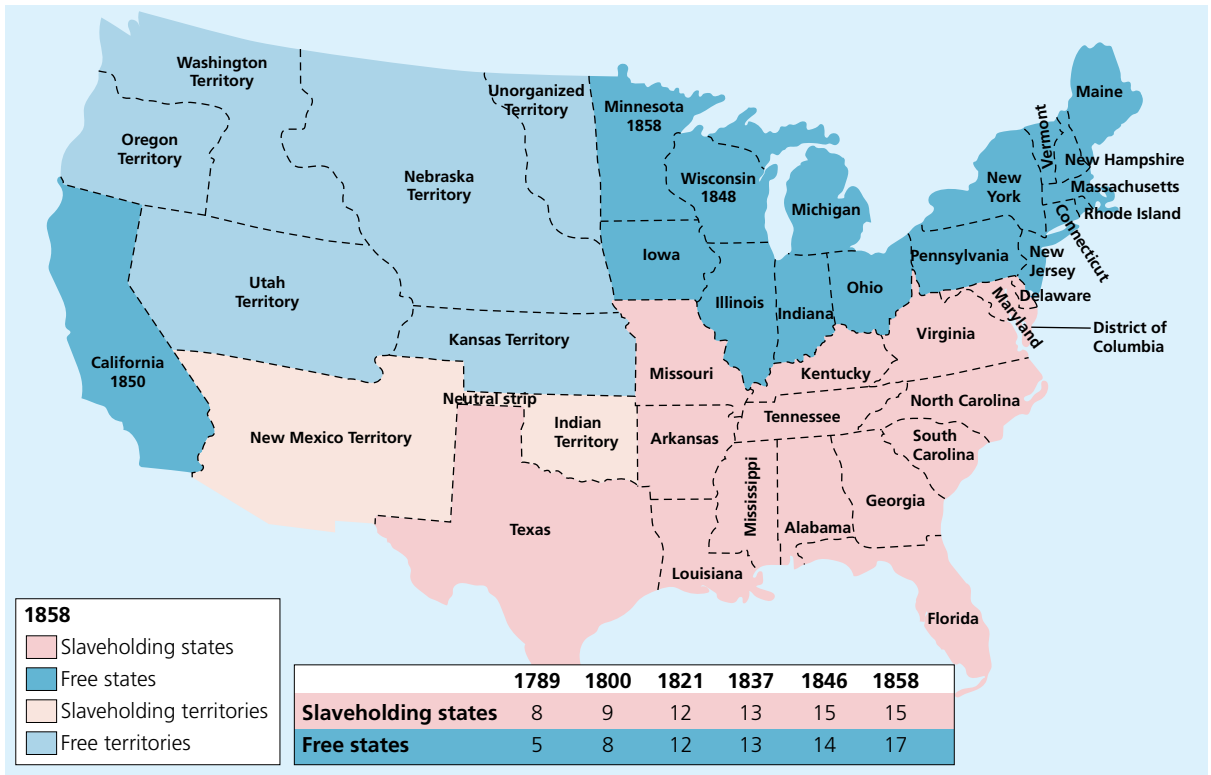
KEY TERMS

Pig iron A crude, high-carbon iron produced in a blast furnace; it is the raw material used in the production of wrought iron and steel for industrial and military applications.

Urbanization The process by which an increasing proportion of a population moves from rural areas to live in towns and cities.

SOURCE A

US states and territories in 1858



What can be learned from Source A about the divisions that existed in the USA in 1858?



KEY TERMS

Agrarian Based on agriculture.

Plantation system An economic model of large-scale agriculture centred on growing cash crops, such as cotton, sugar or tobacco.

The Southern economy

The Southern economy remained overwhelmingly **agrarian**. By 1860, over 80% of its labour force was engaged in agriculture. This economy was built not on the wage labour that defined the North but on the forced labour of approximately 4 million enslaved Black Americans. Representing about one-third of the South’s total population, this enslaved workforce was the main driver of the **plantation system**.

EXTENSION: Wessyngton Plantation

Wessyngton Plantation was one example of a plantation and was Tennessee’s largest and most profitable farm. By 1860, the massive 5,200-hectare (13,000-acre) estate was home to 274 enslaved men, women and children, the largest number held on any single plantation in Tennessee. Its immense wealth was built entirely on their labour. Wessyngton was famously the largest tobacco plantation in the USA, producing more than 113,000 kilograms (250,000 pounds) of tobacco in 1860. The enslaved workforce also cultivated corn, wheat and rye, raised hogs for cured hams and performed all skilled labour, such as brickmaking, alongside domestic work in the main house.

The South's economic, and therefore political, power was dominated by a small, wealthy planter class whose wealth was concentrated in land and in enslaved people.

While plantations produced staples like tobacco, sugar and rice, the Southern economy was dominated by a single crop: cotton. Fuelled by the invention of the **cotton gin** and the immense demand from British and Northern US textile mills, the South became the world's primary cotton supplier. In 1860, cotton alone accounted for 57% of all US exports, providing the capital that helped finance the entire nation's development.

This deep investment in agriculture, however, came at the cost of economic diversification. The South experienced very little industrialization, possessing only 10% of the nation's manufacturing capacity and producing less than 10% of its manufactured goods. Consequently, the region also saw minimal urbanization. Only about 10% of the Southern population lived in cities like New Orleans, Charleston and Richmond which served primarily as commercial and shipping hubs for exporting agricultural goods, not as centres of industrial production. While incredibly wealthy, the South's economy was non-industrial and heavily dependent on a single crop and a system of forced labour.

Forced labour was the central pillar of the South's wealth. By 1860, the 4 million enslaved individuals were valued as property at an estimated 3 billion USD (145 billion USD today, equivalent to 47 times the entire government's budget in 1860). This sum represented the single largest financial asset in the entire USA, worth more than all the nation's factories, railroads and banks combined. The profitability of cotton tied the region's wealth and stability directly to the continuation of slavery. This reliance on enslaved labour stifled industrialization, urbanization and innovation.

Trade and tariffs

Economic tensions between the North and South were dramatically intensified by disputes over trade policy, particularly **tariffs**. These policies became symbols of the deeper sectional divide.

North support for tariffs

The Northern economy, dominated by manufacturing and commerce, generally benefited from high, protective tariffs. When high tariffs were placed on British iron and textiles, those products became more expensive, allowing Northern factories in Pennsylvania and New England to sell their own products more competitively. Northern political leaders, first in the Whig Party and later in the Republican Party (see page 20), argued that protectionism was essential for building national self-sufficiency, creating wage labour jobs and financing federal infrastructure.

KEY TERM

Cotton gin Machinery that quickly removed seeds from cotton, a difficult task that was previously completed by hand; this allowed cotton production to be a faster process.

KEY TERM

Tariffs Taxes on imports and exports.



KEY TERMS

'American System' Henry Clay's 19th-century economic plan designed to unify the nation by using a protective tariff to shield domestic industry, a national bank to foster commerce and federal subsidies for internal improvements like roads and canals.

Congress The two-house US parliament consisting of a House of Representatives, based on the population of each state, and a Senate, with two members from each state.

National bank Clay's idea of a central, federally-chartered bank to stabilize the nation's currency, manage government revenues, regulate state banks and provide credit for economic development.

Free Soilers A short-lived American political party active from 1848 to 1854 whose central platform was opposing the expansion of slavery into the western territories of the USA.

EXTENSION: Whig Party

The Whig Party was a major American political party active from the 1830s to the 1850s. The Whigs were led by figures like **Henry Clay** and **Daniel Webster**. They promoted the '**American System**', which advocated for protective tariffs to support industry and federal funding for internal improvements like roads and canals. The party elected Presidents William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor but collapsed in the 1850s due to divisions over the expansion of slavery.

KEY FIGURES

Henry Clay (1777–1852) was a founder of the Whig Party, served as Speaker of the House in **Congress**, was a US senator from Kentucky and Secretary of State (minister of foreign affairs). He was the chief architect of the 'American System', an economic plan promoting protective tariffs, a **national bank** and federal funding for infrastructure. He drafted the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (see page 26) and the Compromise of 1850 (see page 27), both helping defuse crises over slavery to hold the Union together.

Daniel Webster (1782–1852) was an American statesman, orator and lawyer in the Whig Party. He served as a US senator from Massachusetts and as Secretary of State. Webster was a passionate defender of the Constitution and the Union. He was a key figure in negotiating the Compromise of 1850, which sought to prevent a civil war.

EXTENSION: Republican Party and Democratic Party

The Republican Party was founded in 1854 as a coalition of anti-slavery Whigs, **Free Soilers** and Northern Democrats united by their opposition to the expansion of slavery into western territories. The 1860 election of its first president, Abraham Lincoln, triggered secession and the Civil War.

The Democratic Party, formally organized in 1828, was the dominant political force before the Civil War. It championed the rights of states over the federal government, limited federal government and aggressive national expansion. The Democratic Party, whose base included Southern enslavers, western farmers and urban immigrants, opposed the Whig Party's platform of protective tariffs. While its policies protecting slavery unified its powerful Southern branch, the issue of slavery's expansion into new territories fractured the party in the 1860 election, splitting it into Northern and Southern factions.

Southern support for free trade

The Southern economy, rooted in agrarian exports, relied entirely on free trade. The South had very little industry and imported the vast majority of its manufactured goods, from tools to clothing. High tariffs impacted the South negatively in two ways: they directly increased the cost of all imported goods and they threatened the South's export-based prosperity. Southerners feared that if the USA taxed British goods, Britain would retaliate by imposing its own tariffs on Southern cotton. Southerners viewed protective tariffs as an unconstitutional tax on the South designed to subsidize Northern factories at their expense.

Tariff disputes

Tariff policy was a primary source of political tension. The flashpoint occurred with the Tariff of 1828, derisively nicknamed the 'Tariff of Abominations', which imposed duties as high as 45% on some goods. South Carolina, led by **John C Calhoun**, declared the tariff unconstitutional and void within its borders, sparking the **Nullification Crisis of 1832–3**. This was the first time a state had explicitly threatened to leave the union of the USA (or secede) over federal economic policy; the crisis was only resolved by the **Compromise Tariff of 1833**, which gradually lowered the rates.

KEY FIGURE

John C Calhoun (1782–1852) was a politician from South Carolina who served as vice president, senator and Secretary of State. Though he began as a nationalist, he became the nation's most powerful defender of **states' rights**. He developed the constitutional theory of nullification, the right of a state to void federal laws, to protect the South from federal power. Calhoun was also the foremost intellectual defender of slavery, arguing it was a 'positive good'.

The South successfully lobbied for lower duties in the following decades, notably with the **Walker Tariff of 1846** and the **Tariff of 1857**. However, the issue resurfaced with the financial Panic of 1857 (see page 22), which many in the North blamed on low tariffs. The new Republican Party advocated a return to high protective tariffs as a core part of its 1860 election platform.

By 1860, the US government relied almost exclusively on customs duties to fund its operations, with tariffs accounting for approximately 95% of all federal tax revenue. Although the Republican-controlled House of Representatives had passed the **Morrill Tariff** in May 1860, the bill remained stalled in the Senate by Southern senators. It was only after Southern senators resigned their seats that the bill finally passed the Senate in February 1861. Signed by President Buchanan just days before Lincoln took over, the act significantly raised import tariffs from roughly 19% to an average of 26% initially.

KEY TERMS

Nullification Crisis of 1832–3 A major confrontation in which South Carolina declared the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832 unconstitutional and therefore void within the state, prompting President Andrew Jackson to threaten military force to uphold federal law.

Compromise Tariff of 1833 A bill that gradually lowered protective tariff rates over a decade, persuading South Carolina to withdraw its nullification decision.

States' rights A political belief that individual US states had the right to determine which US laws should be followed.

Walker Tariff of 1846 A law that significantly reduced import duties, moving the USA away from a high protective-tariff policy.

Tariff of 1857 A major tax-reduction law that lowered import duties to their lowest point since 1816.

Morrill Tariff of 1861 A protective tariff bill passed by the US Congress that significantly increased duties on imported goods.

EXTENSION: Panic of 1857

The Panic of 1857 was a sudden global economic crisis triggered by the failure of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company, which revealed widespread **overspeculation** in railroads and land. The crisis spread rapidly via **telegraph**, leading to mass bank failures, business closures and high unemployment, particularly in the industrial North. The South's cotton-based economy was less affected, which reinforced its belief in the superiority of its enslaved-labour system and deepened the sectional divide leading up to the Civil War.



KEY TERMS

Overspeculation A flawed assumption about buying assets and expecting their value to increase.

Telegraph A communication device that uses electrical pulses that can form a readable code.

Maysville Road Veto President Andrew Jackson's 1830 rejection of a bill that would have used federal funds to build a road entirely within Kentucky.

Debate over national infrastructure

Another profound economic source of North–South tension was the debate over federal spending on infrastructure. This issue pitted the two regions' economic philosophies directly against each other.

Northern politicians, particularly Whigs like Clay and later Republicans like **Abraham Lincoln**, championed federal funding for roads, canals, harbours and railways which were central parts of Clay's 'American System'. This system proposed using revenue from protective tariffs to fund infrastructure projects that would connect the industrial Northeast with the agricultural west, all while being managed by a national bank. Northerners argued these improvements were essential to promote commerce, national integration and the growth of their wage labour market.

The South saw this as a misuse of federal funds that primarily benefited Northern industry. Many Southern leaders argued that the federal government had no authority to spend money on local projects. They also saw the 'American System' as a threat: a system where tariffs were used to fund projects which the South did not need, and that would strengthen the North politically and economically.

This conflict over infrastructure funding reached a crisis point in 1830 with President Andrew Jackson's **Maysville Road Veto**. Jackson, a Southern enslaver from Tennessee, vetoed a bill that would use US government funds to build a road in Kentucky that would only benefit local people. This veto set a precedent that severely limited federal infrastructure spending for decades. As a result, most infrastructure development in the USA was built using state or private funds, which favoured the North.

While the North financed projects like the **Erie Canal**, a New York state project, and a massive rail network, the South received minimal investment. By 1860, the North possessed over 35,000 kilometres (22,000 miles) of railway track, 72% of the US total, creating a dense web that connected its factories and markets. The South, in contrast, had fewer than 16,000 kilometres (10,000 miles), which were primarily used to move cotton to the nearest sea port. This reinforced the region's fundamental opposition to the 'American System' and its vision of national development.

Competition over western US territories

Competition over the western territories was a primary economic driver of sectional tension. As new lands were acquired, both the North and South sought to export their own economic systems: the North, its model of wage labour and small farms, and the South, its model of agrarian agriculture based on the labour of enslaved people.

Abraham Lincoln (1809–65)

Lincoln was the 16th president of the USA and successfully led the country through the crises of the US Civil War. Born into poverty in Kentucky, Lincoln was self-educated. He settled in Illinois and became a lawyer, state legislator and a one-term congressman as a Whig. He opposed the expansion of slavery into new territories and joined the new Republican Party, gaining national prominence in 1858 through public debates. His election as president in 1860 prompted seven Southern slaveholding states to secede, forming the Confederacy and beginning the Civil War.

As president, Lincoln was the commander-in-chief of the US armed forces and had the primary goal of preserving the Union. In 1863, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation (see page 50), which declared enslaved people in Confederate-held territory to be free. This pivotal act redefined the war, making the abolition of slavery a core Union objective. His Gettysburg Address later that year framed the war as a struggle to uphold the principles of human equality. After winning re-election in 1864, Lincoln championed the **13th Amendment** to permanently abolish slavery. On 14 April 1865, just days after the Confederate surrender, he was assassinated.



US President Abraham Lincoln, 1863

KEY TERMS

Erie Canal A nearly 600-kilometre (over 350 miles) man-made waterway in New York that connects the Hudson River to Lake Erie, creating a navigable water route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes.

13th Amendment An amendment to the US Constitution that formally abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime.

For Southern planters, this expansion was an economic necessity. The intensive farming of cash crops like cotton and tobacco rapidly depleted the soil in the older states. To maintain profitability, they needed to expand to new, fertile lands. This was not a new phenomenon; the mass migration of American planters into Texas during the 1820s and 1830s (see extension box), culminating in its annexation in 1845, was a massive and successful effort to create a new cotton-farming state using enslaved labour. The planters' primary financial asset was enslaved people, but their labour needed land to be profitable to the plantation owners. Southern leaders argued that any restriction on slavery's expansion was a direct threat to their economic survival.

EXTENSION: US expansion into Texas

In the 1820s, Mexico encouraged settlement of US citizens in its Texas territory, offering cheap land grants. Thousands of US citizens, many bringing enslaved people, quickly outnumbered Spanish-speaking settlers in the province. Friction over slavery, which Mexico abolished, and political autonomy led to the Texas Revolution in 1836. After winning independence, the Republic of Texas sought US statehood. This was delayed for nearly a decade by US political divisions over adding another state where enslavement was legal. The USA finally annexed Texas in 1845, an act that directly triggered the Mexican–American War in 1846.

Northern industrialists and free-soil advocates wanted to reserve new lands for small-scale farming and free-wage labour. They argued that their economic model could not compete with large-scale plantations using unpaid labour as this would depress wages and concentrate land in the hands of a few. These two groups debated in Congress, as the western territories, lands like Kansas, Nebraska and the territories of California and New Mexico acquired from Mexico in 1848, were politically crucial. Each territory admitted as a state would tip the balance of power, determining whether the federal government would favour the South's free-trade, agrarian interests or the North's protectionist, industrial agenda.

Political factors

A central political dispute leading to the US Civil War was the unresolved conflict between federal authority and the doctrine of states' rights (see page 26).

To what extent were political factors the main cause of the US Civil War?

EXTENSION: US presidents as enslavers

Of the first 18 presidents, 12 of them enslaved people at some point in their lives, including:

- George Washington
- Thomas Jefferson
- James Madison
- James Monroe
- Andrew Jackson
- Martin Van Buren
- William Henry Harrison
- John Tyler
- James K Polk
- Zachary Taylor
- Andrew Johnson
- Ulysses S Grant

While Jefferson enslaved more than 600 people during his lifetime, Washington, Jackson, Madison and Taylor all enslaved between 100 and 300 people at some point.

Slavery and the US Constitution

The **US Constitution** required a national census every ten years to determine representation in the House of Representatives and direct taxation. Under the **Three-Fifths Compromise**, agreed at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, three-fifths of the enslaved population were counted for these purposes. This arrangement significantly increased Southern states' political power in Congress compared to counting only free citizens and denied enslaved people any rights. It allowed a minority of enslavers to heavily influence or block national policy, such as tariffs and the admission of new states. The North increasingly resented this system, feeling that it undermined the principle of a government based on the will of free citizens.

EXAM PRACTICE

Paper 2, Section B, Part (b) 15 marks

To what extent were economic factors significant in the emergence of conflict? Use examples from at least **two** regions to support your response.

KEY TERMS

US Constitution Supreme law of the United States, effective since 1789.

Three-Fifths Compromise An agreement reached that dictated that three out of every five enslaved individuals would be counted to determine a state's number of seats in the House of Representatives and calculate a state's share of direct federal taxes.

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