



## American Civil War (1861-1865)

**For Prelims:** [Slavery](#), [Africa](#), [Middle East](#), [Arthashastra](#), [Bonded Labour System \(Abolition\) Act 1976](#), [Sovereignty](#), [Immigration](#).

**For Mains:** World History, American Civil War, Abolition of Slavery.

[Source: IE](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, the Presidential candidate of the **Republican Party** became president of the **United States (US)** defeating the Presidential candidate of the **Democratic Party**.

- The **US Civil War** was driven by tensions over [slavery](#), economic differences, and states' rights, with the **Republican Party** opposing slavery and the **Democratic Party** initially supporting it.

### How did Slavery Evolve Through Human History?

- **Origins & Early Development:**
  - **Slavery** emerged around thousands of years ago with agricultural settlements when **victorious tribes enslaved defeated populations** instead of killing them.
  - **Ancient civilisations** including **Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome** developed complex slave-based economic systems.
  - Various forms of slavery emerged, including **debt bondage**, the enslavement of **conquered peoples, child labour** and **generational bondage**.
- **Global Expansion & Trade:**
  - Arab **slave trade** dominated the Indian Ocean routes from 7th-19th centuries, connecting [Africa](#), the [Middle East](#), and **Asia**.
  - The **trans-Saharan slave trade** transported millions from **Sub-Saharan Africa** to **North Africa** and the **Middle East**.
  - The **transatlantic slave trade** (16th-19th centuries) forcibly moved approximately **12 million Africans to various parts of the world**.
  - European colonial powers established systematic slave trading networks across continents.
- **Slavery in India:**
  - Early Sanskrit texts like [Arthashastra](#) and **Manusmriti** recognised and regulated slavery.
  - **Buddhist and Jain texts** also mention slavery while advocating compassionate treatment.
  - Islamic rulers introduced military slavery and domestic servitude systems.
  - The Mughal period saw extensive slave trading networks across South Asia.
  - **The Girmitiya system** was a form of indentured labour introduced in British colonies to address labour shortages on sugar plantations after the abolition of slavery in 1833.
  - **Indian Slavery Act of 1843** technically abolished slavery under British rule.
  - Post-independence India banned bonded labour through [Article 23 of the Constitution](#)

and subsequently through the [Bonded Labour System \(Abolition\) Act 1976](#).

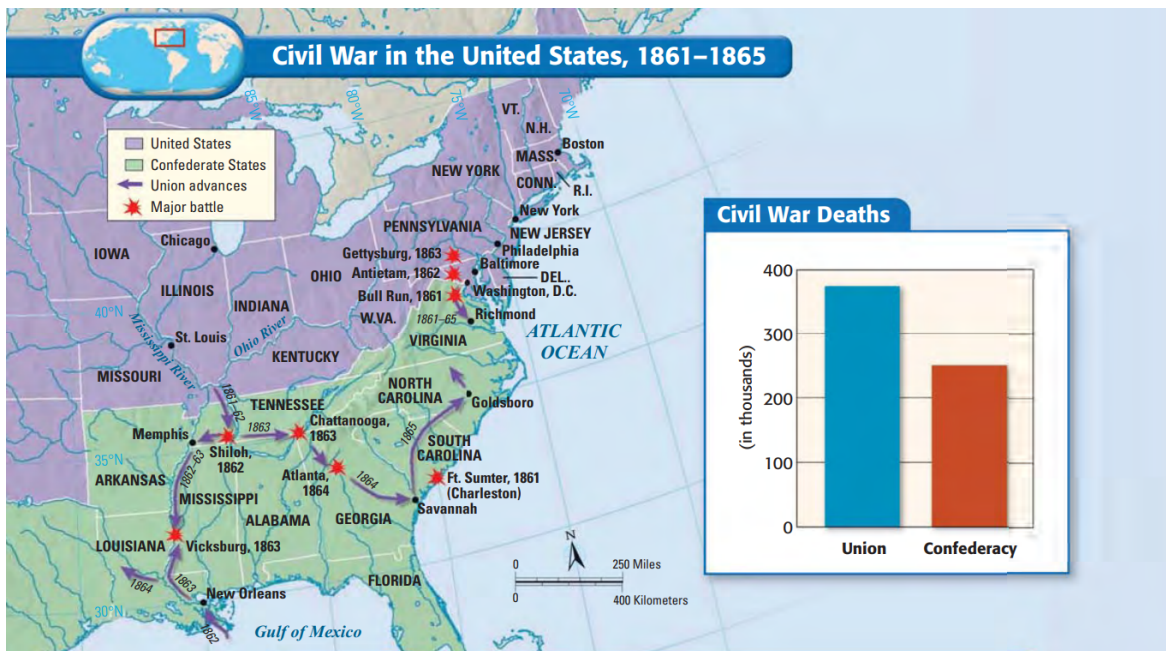
## What were the Causes and Course of the US Civil War?

### ▪ Causes of the US Civil War:

- **Slavery and Sectional Divides:** The **US Civil War** was primarily driven by the conflict over **slavery**.
  - The **northern United States (US)** had a diversified economy with both industry and farming, relying on free labour.
    - In contrast, the **southern United States** depended heavily on slave labour for its agricultural economy, particularly cotton.
  - This economic difference led to deep disagreements on the issue of slavery, with many **Northerners** seeking to **prohibit slavery** in new western states, while **Southerners** wanted laws that would protect it.
  - As the **US expanded westward**, the issue of slavery became a major point of contention, **especially for northern states**.
    - They **feared that allowing slavery in new territories** would give the **South greater political power in Congress**.
  - This growing divide over slavery contributed to **political tensions**, eventually leading **southern states** to seek secession from the Union.
  - The debate also centred on states' rights versus federal authority, with **Southern politicians** arguing that states had the right to leave the **Union**, while most **Northerners** believed the Union was permanent under the Constitution.
- **Ideological Divide Between North vs. South:**
  - The **ideological differences** between the North and the South were stark, with the North advocating for a diversified economy and free labour, while the South's economy was built on slave labour.
  - The **conflict was not only about slavery** but also about the nature of democracy, as both sides sought to shape the future of the nation according to their values and way of life.

### ▪ Course of the Civil War:

- **Anti-Slavery Protest:** The **Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854** allowed settlers in **Kansas and Nebraska** to decide on the legality of slavery in their territories through popular **sovereignty**, intensifying sectional tensions in the US.
- In response to the passage of the Nebraska Bill, anti-slavery activists organised and came together to create a new political party, which was named the Republican Party.
- In February 1856, anti-slavery activists gathered in Pittsburgh to formalise the **Republican Party**, with **Abraham Lincoln** among those present.
- **Secession and Outbreak of War:** The conflict reached a climax in 1860 when **Lincoln** was elected president. His opposition to the spread of slavery led to the secession of Southern states, which formed the **Confederate States of America**.
  - In April 1861, **Confederate** forces attacked **Fort Sumter** in South Carolina, marking the start of the war. **Lincoln** ordered the army to bring the rebel states back into the Union.
  - Though the South had superior military leadership, the North's larger population, industrial capacity, and infrastructure eventually in **April 1865** South surrendered.
- **Emancipation Proclamation:** In 1863, **Lincoln** issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**, declaring that all slaves in the **Confederate** states were free.
  - This move also had international significance, discouraging European nations from supporting the Confederacy.
  - However, **Lincoln declared that the war was being fought to preserve the Union, not to abolish slavery**.
- **Thirteenth Amendment and Abolition of Slavery:** In the aftermath of the war, the **13th Amendment to the US Constitution** was passed in 1865, abolishing slavery.



## What were the Challenges and Impacts of the US Civil War?

- **Reconstruction and Post-War Challenges in the US:**
  - **Reconstruction and Southern Resistance:** The **Reconstruction era (1865-1877)** sought to reintegrate the Southern states and enforce civil rights for **African Americans**.
    - The **14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments** granted citizenship and voting rights to African Americans, altering the social and political landscape of the US.
  - **Economic Changes and Industrialisation:** The war accelerated industrialisation in the US. By **1914**, the US became a leading industrial power, partly due to the need for mass production during the war.
    - **Immigration** played a significant role in fueling industrial growth, with nearly 20 million immigrants arriving between 1870 and 1914.
    - The development of the railroad system, particularly the completion of the **Transcontinental Railroad** in 1869, helped facilitate trade and industrial growth, linking the eastern US with the West and promoting the movement of goods.
  - **Postwar Economic Expansion:** The war also spurred the growth of railroads, which linked farming communities to industrial cities.
    - Steel became a crucial resource as railways expanded, and the movement of goods, such as corn, wheat, and cattle, helped position the US as a world leader in agriculture and industry by the 20th century.
- **Global Impact on the Cotton Trade and its Influence on India:**
  - **Disruption of Cotton Exports:** The **Civil War** caused a major disruption in the global cotton trade as the South, a primary supplier of cotton to Britain, could no longer export it.
    - British textile manufacturers turned to **India** as an alternative source, leading to a significant increase in cotton demand from Indian growers.
  - **The Cotton Boom in India:** As a result, India became a key supplier of cotton to British industries during the war.
    - This demand drove Indian merchants to encourage farmers in regions like Gujarat and Maharashtra to plant more cotton, resulting in an economic boom, though it often led to exploitation.
- **Long-Term Economic Consequences for India:** While India benefited from increased cotton exports, it was primarily British industries that profited.
  - This cotton boom also caused **food shortages** in some regions, as farmers were encouraged to grow cotton instead of food crops, leading to **famines** and economic

distress for Indian farmers.

- The British colonial system continued to extract wealth from India while leaving its farmers in debt and poverty.

**Drishti Mains Question:**

How was the cotton trade from India impacted during the US Civil War, and what were the long-term consequences for Indian farmers?

**UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Mains:**

**Q.** Why indentured labour was taken by British from India to other colonies? Have they been able to preserve their cultural identity over there? (2018)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/american-civil-war-1861-1865>

