

'The South seceded reluctantly.' Using Sources A–E, discuss how far the evidence supports this assertion.

1 Read the sources and then answer the question.

Source A

It is for Congress to regulate domestic policy. I shall look with confidence to the patriotism of that body to adopt such measures of conciliation as may harmonise conflicting interests and perpetuate that Union which should be the paramount object of our affections. In any action promoting an object so near the heart of everyone who loves his country I will unite with other branches of Government.

Zachary Taylor: Presidential Inaugural Address, 5 March 1849.

Source B

I believe that slavery, as it exists in different States, is recognized by the Constitution. I believe that the States where it exists are entitled to remedies to enforce the constitutional provisions. I hold that the 1850 Compromise measures are strictly constitutional and should be carried into effect. I believe that the authorities of this Republic are bound to regard the rights of the South as

they would view any other legal and constitutional right, and that laws to enforce them should be respected and obeyed. Such are my convictions. I passionately hope that the question is at rest, and that no sectional or fanatical excitement may again threaten the durability of our institutions.

Franklin Pierce: Presidential Inaugural Address, 4 March 1853.

Source C

What a happy conception for Congress to decide that the will of the majority shall govern, to the settlement of the question of slavery in the Territories and to leave the people thereof free to form

and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution.

The whole Territorial question being settled upon the principle of popular sovereignty, everything

practical has been decided. All agree that under the Constitution slavery in the States is beyond the

reach of any power except that of the States where it exists. May we hope that the long agitation on

this subject will end, that the geographical parties to which it has given birth will become extinct?

It will be better for the country when the public mind shall be diverted from this question to others

of more pressing importance. This question of slavery is of far greater importance than any mere

political question, because should the agitation continue it may eventually endanger the personal

safety of a large portion of our countrymen where slavery exists. Let every Union-loving man exert

his influence to suppress this agitation.

James Buchanan: Presidential Inaugural Address, 4 March 1857.

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Source D

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. I have no purpose to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists; I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I hold that by the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied in the fundamental laws of all national governments. No government ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. It follows that no State by its own resolution can lawfully get out of the Union; that ordinances to that effect are legally void, and that acts of violence within any State against the authority of the United States are insurrection or revolution. Therefore I consider that by the Constitution the Union of these States is unbroken and to the utmost of my ability I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all States. One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I have made the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it'. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.

Abraham Lincoln: First Presidential Inaugural Address, 4 March 1861.

Source E

If the Union were to survive, decisive leadership was essential but this was beyond the capacity of Pierce. He showed himself to be shallow, weak and too ready to back the Southern wing of his party. He believed that an expansionist foreign policy in trying to acquire Cuba (where slavery was legal) was the best way of diverting attention from the slavery issue and to unite the country. Buchanan was indecisive and obstinate yet lacked firmness when needed. He had hoped for a peaceful term but the decision of the Supreme Court allowing slavery in all Territories unleashed the worst passions of pro- and anti- slavery when his administration was less than a week old. Thereafter he reeled from disaster to disaster.

From a modern historian's account of the 1850s.

Now answer the following question.

'Lincoln was the only President capable of dealing with the basic issues underlying the sectional conflict in the United States.' Using Sources A–E, discuss how far the evidence supports this assertion.