

Term Paper  
MOCW- Semester 2

Contradictions inherent in the American Revolution eventually lead to  
the Civil War

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**"If the cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. Because the goal of America is freedom, abused and scorned tho' we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny."**

**- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr**

Slavery was deeply ingrained in the Southern economy. The slaves were the main source of agricultural labour in the southern states. The cotton plantations played a major role in industrializing the north and contributed majorly to the economy. In order to permit the continuation of this slave based agricultural labour, the south was not exposed to major technological innovation and industrial development like the north was. Slavery was not only an economic system, but also a legal one, where slaves were treated as property and severely dehumanized. While colonists fought for freedom from Britain, they were unable to grant slaves the same rights and freedoms. During the Civil War, some slaves saw an opportunity for freedom and joined the American cause. Thousands of slave troops served in the American army, hoping that their participation would convince enslavers that they too deserved the rights being fought for. However, many enslaved individuals saw a stronger chance for emancipation by fighting for the British, who promised freedom to the enslaved people who joined their ranks. More than 20,000 slaves fought for the British; More than just the number of people fighting for Americans. The slaves were majorly black people. The role of Black people in the Revolutionary War was significant, some of them even became symbols of Black patriotism and sacrifice. Attucks, a black man, was the first person killed in the Boston Massacre, which became the catalyst for the revolution. Others like Peter Salem and Salem Poole, played important roles in battles such as the Battle of Bunker Hill. Many of those who fought for the British again faced slavery or were sold into slavery in other British colonies. The promises made by both the Americans and British were not fulfilled for majority of the black individuals.

The seven-year conflict, often known as the French and Indian conflict, was the first war to be genuinely global. From 1756 until 1763, this was fought between the French and the Prussians, and the British and the Austrians. Winston Churchill referred to this war as the "first world war." This Seven Years' War between the French and Great Britain came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 leaving the British in great debt. To overcome this debt, the British instituted a tax system on the American colonies. This taxation was opposed by the colonies. And thus began the American Revolution.

The British Crown benefited from export and import taxes. In order to facilitate this taxation system, they imposed many acts. Some of the acts were sugar act, stamp act and Townshend acts. The Sugar Act levied a duty on sugar and molasses; the Stamp Act levied a tax on documents, cards, newspapers, and other items. On December 16, 1773, The Boston Tea Party took place, which involved the dumping of over 300 chests of British tea by the protesters into Boston Harbor, was the most effective way for colonists to protest the Townshend Acts, which imposed indirect taxes on imported British commodities such as glass, lead, paper, oil tea, etc. The British were furious. They proceeded to dissolve the general assembly, annul the charter, and take control of Massachusetts. In order to protest this, the protestors established committees of correspondence. Eventually, they began formulating and implementing policies. At this point, they were essentially acting as a government. The Maryland committee established the first continental congress, which drafted and approved the Declaration of Independence and edited over 25% of Jefferson's original declaration. By the time the war began, these colonists had established themselves as distinct from Great Britain. These committees of correspondence served as shadow governments. Approximately 20% of colonists remained loyal to Great Britain throughout the war, particularly in major cities that Britain occupied. Several slaves continued to support the British because Britain had promised to free them if they fought with them.

The purpose of the American Revolution was to fight against the oppression of the British government. Although they established the principles of individual rights, equality, and freedom, they didn't completely oppose slavery. during the American Revolution was that the institution of slavery was a legal and social institution based on violence and cruelty towards slaves. Ironically, it was thought to be beneficial to both slaves and society alike. Although the Declaration of Independence stated that "all men are created equal," while many of the Founding Fathers themselves owned slaves. Protests over slavery, the economic importance of slavery, and growing criticism of the system fueled the conflict. This contradiction between the ideals of freedom and the reality of slavery sowed the seeds of division that led to the uprising of the slave rebellions. The slaves thus tried their best to oppose this oppression by forming families, practicing religion, and some even ran away from their masters or owners. Even though large-scale slave uprisings were not that common, they did occur and expressed the inherent injustice of slavery. Additionally, the revolution created a sense of regional identity and autonomy in the colonies. Colonists, who once fought together against a common enemy, now began to develop differences over

regional and personal interests. This situation led to conflicts on issues such as the North-South divide, as well as the country's politics and economy. Additionally, the revolution created economic tensions between the agricultural South and the industrial North. While the South was dependent on slavery and agricultural exports, the North was increasingly industrializing and focusing on manufacturing. These economic differences led to disputes over tax and trade policies, resulting in the separation of the two regions. . Finally, the American revolution itself became an example of the use of violence and armed struggle to achieve political goals. The struggle of these countries against British rule showed that war could be a way to achieve independence. So this idea was later adopted by the North and South during the Civil War where both sides fought for their independence and freedom.

Another contradiction during the American revolution was the issue of states' rights versus a strong central government. The United States struggled to respond to the brutality of the British monarchy, which made many Americans wary of the central government. But the Articles of Confederation, which resulted in the weakening of the central government, proved to be ineffective in governing the newly formed United States. This tension between the need for human rights and the need for central government will continue to increase tensions that lead to the civil war. Additionally, the American Revolution created a sense of nationalism and pride in the Americans but, this nationalism was not uniform throughout the country and many regional differences and conflicts came up, mainly between the North and the South. These differences were mainly because of economic and cultural inequality. Ideals of freedom and equality collided with the reality of slavery, and tensions between the central government and the rights of the state further divided the country. In summary, the conflicts that existed in the American Revolution, including the slavery issue, ongoing conflicts, economic tensions, and the advance of armed rebellion, created the conditions that eventually led to the American Civil War.

The American revolution which took place between 1765 and 1783 led to multifaceted consequences. The immediate result was the 13 colonies gaining independence from Great Britain which was declared by the Declaration of Independence adopted on July 4 ,1776. The American revolution further led to the establishment of the new nation of United States which would have its own constitution, laws and government. The American revolution also popularized the ideas of Republican, Democracy and Individual rights. The Declaration of Independence asserted that "All men are created equal" and they have "unalienable rights" and this influenced political ideologies throughout the world. The triumph of the American Revolution eventually inspired the French

revolution and several other independence movements around the world. Hence, we can say that the American revolution influenced the International relations and the power dynamics in a significant manner. The American revolution also brought about huge changes in the new nation of United nations in terms of social and economic factors like abolition of aristocratic titles and redistribution of land.

The Revolution's emphasis on individual rights and freedom ignited a desire for independence and self-governance among the American colonists, but the desire for freedom did not extend to all Americans. Slavery had deep roots in the Southern Empire and was clearly at odds with the principles of freedom and equality on which the revolution was based. The existence of slavery created a divide between the North and the South; The former, which came to be known as the Union advocated the abolition of slavery, while the latter which came to be known as the confederacy defended the institution. As the United States expanded westward, the issue of slavery became more controversial. The Northwest Act of 1787 further emphasized the distinction between free and slave states by outlawing slavery in newly acquired territories north of the Ohio River. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 attempted to strike a fine balance by recognizing Missouri as a slave state while limiting slavery in the area north of the 36° 30° parallel in the Louisiana Purchase. However, this compromise only delayed the conflict that lead to the spread of slavery. The conflicts of the American Revolution also manifested themselves in politics and economics. . The Constitution, hailed as a groundbreaking document that established a system of democratic government, was a compromise that allowed for the continuation of slavery The Three- Fifths Compromise, which counted enslaved people as three-fifths of the population for purposes of determining representation in Congress, which further cemented the institution of slavery in the American politics. As the Declaration of Independence proclaimed. The Revolution was based on the belief that all men are created equal, . But fearful of losing the economical support of the southern states, the founders chose to remove the penalty for slavery from the document. This set the stage for future disputes over slavery in the United States. As the nation developed, the North and the South grew along different paths, leading to the emergence of two distinct cultural identities. The North rapidly industrialized, while the South relied on labor-intensive plantations. Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793 caused the slave trade to flourish in the region and the north's dependence on south for economic reasons became more concrete. Trade and agriculture in the Southern states, especially cotton, relied heavily on slavery. The benefits of slavery created an incentive to preserve and expand the institution of slavery in the southern states. The economic dependence of slavery

clashed with the goals of freedom and equality as stated in the declaration which created a fundamental contradiction that ultimately led to the conflict.

The balance between free and slave states was disrupted by the addition of new territories and states such as Missouri, California, Kansas, and Nebraska. Each new country threatened to disrupt the balance between North and South, leading to violence and chaos. The issue of slavery aggravated intensely, and became a moral question of basic human rights. Now slavery was not only a political and economic issue but also a deeply rooted moral evil. Abolitionists, both black and white, fought against the institution of slavery, while some in the North opposed it to preserve their economic interests. Figures like Abraham Lincoln rose to prominence, who strongly opposing slavery's expansion. The issue of slavery With Abraham Lincoln's victory in 1860, tensions between the North and the South reached a breaking point. This win was in favor of the southern states. Fearing that their economic and political influence would be lessened, the Southern states decided to separate from the Union, which was spurred by Northern opposition to the spread of slavery. The inconsistencies that had existed in the United States since its founding came into light during the Civil War, whose main reason was the issue of slavery.

In the years leading up to the Civil war in America, the matter of slavery became further polarizing and contentious. There were multiple factors that lead to this escalation. The first factor was due to the expansion of United States towards the west. This rapid expansion caused intense debate whether the new states would prohibit slavery or not. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was a significant legislative agreement passed by the United States Congress to resolve the conflict over the spread of slavery into new territories. It was an attempt to maintain a balance between the free and slave states but it only delayed the conflict that would happen eventually. The second factor was the Abolitionist movement , a social and political campaign aimed at ending slavery and the slave trade in the United States. The Abolitionist Movement gained momentum in the 19<sup>th</sup> century where the Abolitionists became more vocal and active in their dissent against slavery and the human right abuse it causes. The third factor which intensified the debate was the approach of popular sovereignty adopted in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. It allowed settlers in new territories to decide whether to allow slavery through a vote. The adoption led to violent clashes between the anti-slavery and pro-slavery groups eventually to be known as "Bleeding Kansas". The fourth factor is the Supreme court's decision in the Dred Scott vs Sandford case which added to the fire. The court declared that the enslaved individuals and their family members were not entitled to the rights as regular citizens and can be treated as property. This was a huge setback and a

validation of the institution of slavery according to the abolitionists. The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1980 further acted as a catalyst as the southern states began to secede from the Union fearing that the Lincoln administration would threaten their institution of slavery eventually forming the Confederate States of America.

This secession of the Sothern states and the confederate forces launching an attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861 marked the beginning of Civil war in America. This was primarily fought over the rights of the states, the future of the Union and the problem of slavery. The Union aimed to free the enslaved people and keep the country united under the leadership of Lincoln while the confederate forces fought to continue the practice of slavery. As the war continued, Lincoln issued the Emancipation proclamation on 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1863. Although it did not immediately emancipate all the enslaved individuals, it did declare those held in the confederate territory to be declared as free. This proclamation redefined the focus of the Civil war by positioning it as a fight for freedom and equality. The Civil war eventually led to the defeat of the Confederates and the passing of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the United States constitution in 1865 **eventually abolishing slavery throughout the nation.**

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