

The Impact of The Emancipation Proclamation

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The Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865, between the Union states and 11 states that seceded: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee. While the cause of the Civil War is still debated, it can be assumed that Abraham Lincoln winning the election in 1860 was the primary cause. While campaigning, Lincoln had pledged to keep slavery out of the territories. In response, these 11 slave states seceded. The Lincoln administration and the North refused to recognize the secession. Lincoln's initial goal in the war effort was to preserve the Union, make the country whole again. It was Lincoln's agenda to stop the spread of slavery into the territories that caused the secession, but abolishing slavery completely was not part of his original military goal.

As the war progressed the Union realized they needed a new method to weaken the Confederacy. The new strategy was to eliminate the crucial internal resources the slaves provided (Holzer et al.). Lincoln issued a proclamation, going into effect on January 1, 1863. It declared that slaves being held in a state that was in rebellion against the U.S, were free. Going forward the government would protect their freedom, and not prevent them from obtaining it. Also, it declared all freed slaves could join the military. But, slavery was allowed to continue in the slave states that had not seceded or were in the Union occupied areas in the South (Lee, Francis Graham). This proclamation, the Emancipation Proclamation, and its impact on the war effort and diplomacy, is considered a turning point in the Civil War; its impact on the people of the South, both black and white, continues today.

The Emancipation Proclamation gave the Union a new goal, one backed with moral righteousness: to end slavery in the Confederacy. Union soldiers had a new pride in fighting. They were not only saving the Union, but also liberating slaves to their freedom. The proclamation boosted the morale of Northern soldiers. It also allowed freed slaves to join the

Army and the Navy. This is critical, as it increased the size of the Union military and weakened the Confederate forces. Slaves were resources that allowed Southern plantations to run effectively during the war. By removing this resource, the economy of South would destabilize. The Confederacy also felt the loss of the slaves on the battleground where they were manual laborers. Approximately 200,000 freed slaves joined the Union armed forces ("Civil War Facts"), invigorating their war effort, while undermining the Confederacy's.

The impact of the Emancipation Proclamation not only effected troops on the battlefield, but also the United States' international relations, especially in Europe. No other country ever recognized the Confederacy as a sovereign state; officially they were considered an organized belligerent. The Confederacy was confident that it would gain the support of Europe because of the pivotal role Southern cotton played in the European economy. Most of the world's raw cotton supply came from the South. The Confederacy believed Great Britain was dependent on their cotton. But, in fact, at the start of the war, the British had a year's supply of cotton in storage and had started importing cotton from India and Egypt ("Diplomacy of the American Civil War").

The Emancipation Proclamation solidified Europe's moral and political position. The Union's decision to make abolishing slavery an end-goal heavily influenced European nations to not support the Confederacy because much of Europe had already abolished slavery. Also, Lincoln made it clear any support of the Confederacy was an act of war. This would mean the end of trade-relations and loss of the indispensable import, grain, for Europe. While Southern cotton was needed, the risk of waging war against the Union was not worth it. Lack of support from European nations further weakened the Confederacy.

On an even larger scale of impact, the Emancipation Proclamation essentially led to the decimation of the South as it existed. The economic and cultural implications for both blacks and

whites was profound. The black people of the South viewed Lincoln's proclamation as a document that would radically change their lives by giving them their freedom and ending an existence filled with brutality and abuse (Holzer et al.). Slaves were motivated to flee their owners and migrate north, with assistance from the Union military. After more than 200 years of slavery, black people in the South had an unknown future, but the proclamation provided a hope they had never known.

If the Emancipation Proclamation brought freedom and hope to the African-American slaves, it meant the end for a Southern culture where people identified more as “Southerners” than “Americans” (“Confederate States of America”). The Southern economy was based on agriculture, which was completely dependent on slave labor. On the home-front, slaves were responsible for providing the basic necessities of cooking, cleaning, and child care. The freeing of 3 million slaves meant that the South would cease to operate. It would strip them of their labor force, paralyze plantations, and cripple their economy. It also eradicated a social structure where white's proclaimed supremacy allowed them to own slaves. The gentility of the Antebellum south, enabled by the enslaved, would become a thing of the past due to the historical edict.

When Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he changed the direction of the Civil War. Freeing the slaves had immediate military, diplomatic and social impacts. The Union's war efforts were drastically strengthened and the neutrality of European nations was ensured, depriving the Confederacy of crucial support. These factors played heavily into the Union's eventual victory. The social and cultural impact for the people of the South is unquantifiable. The historical legacy of the proclamation is seen in the 13th Amendment of the Constitution, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. The cultural legacy, which still unfolds today, remains as complicated.

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