

Causes of the Civil War

By the time Abraham Lincoln was elected president in November 1860, the Civil War was so close to beginning that it was unlikely that anyone could have prevented it. Before he even officially became president in March 1861, seven states had seceded from the Union, and Jefferson Davis had already been elected President of the Confederate States of America.

What caused the Civil War?

The disagreement about slavery was probably the major cause. Although there were many differences between the Southern and Northern states, slavery was the only institution not shared by both areas.

Besides the disagreement between the North and South about the legality and morality of slavery, there were other causes. The first was the expansion of slavery. Northerners wanted to end the expansion of slavery. Slave owners wanted to extend slavery to all new states.



Another difference was states' rights. Southerners believed individual states should have more control over laws than the federal government. Northerners felt the federal government should have more power than any individual state.

The third difference was the Union. Northerners believed the United States must remain one country to remain strong. Southerners claimed that the United States was an organization of independent states. Since they chose to join it, they could also choose to leave it and form their own country.

A last difference was tariffs, or taxes on goods brought in from another country. Southern farmers and plantation owners wanted to sell their cotton and tobacco to other countries and buy manufactured goods as cheaply as possible because the South had few factories. They did not want to pay tariffs.

Northern factory owners wanted high tariffs on imported goods so they could sell their own products in the United States. They wanted to keep out competition by making foreign goods more expensive.

Both the North and the South had their own ways of doing things. They had reasons for their ideas but didn't always agree. The Civil War erupted and resulted in one of the most deadly wars in history.