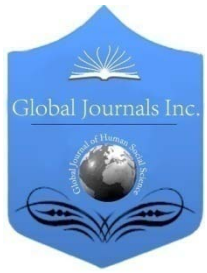
Volume 15 Issue 44
Originally issued as E6



Global Journal of human-social science: E Economics
Volume 15 Issue 6 Version 1.0 Year 2015
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Pugnacious Reformation or "Civil War"? A Reconsideration of the American Civil War

By Adebile,Oluwaseyi Paul
Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria

Abstract- Civil war in its generic outlook implies a war between citizens of the same nation or a war within a nation. This article is a reflection on the American civil war in its origins, nature, scope and aftermath. The thesis in the paper conflicts with the label (American Civil War) given to the violent upheaval that featured between the Southern and Northern states of America in the 1860s. It posits that the label emanated from a facile outlook;that a more in-depth and critical analysis of the occurrence will occasion the birth of a healthierdepiction of the event. The paper therefore, clinches within the premises of the aforementioned that the label- American Civil War is a misnomer; it suggests that a more befitting term could be 'American Pugnacious.

Keywords: *America, civil war, pugnacious reformation, economy.*

GJHSS-E Classification : *FOR Code: 940401*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2015. Adebile,Oluwaseyi Paul. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Pugnacious Reformation or "Civil War"? A Reconsideration of the American Civil War

Adebile, Oluwaseyi Paul

Abstract- Civil war in its generic outlook implies a war between citizens of the same nation or a war within a nation. This article is a reflection on the American civil war in its origins, nature, scope and aftermath. The thesis in the paper conflicts with the label (American Civil War) given to the violent upheaval that featured between the Southern and Northern states of America in the 1860s. It posits that the label emanated from a facile outlook;that a more in-depth and critical analysis of the occurrence will occasion the birth of a healthierdepiction of the event. The paper therefore, clinches within the premises of the aforementioned that the label- American Civil War is a misnomer; it suggests that a more befitting term could be 'American Pugnacious.

Keywords: *america, civil war, pugnacious reformation, economy.*

I. Introduction

The sixth decade of the nineteenth century marked a period of violent revolution in the American society; it was the period that witnessed what has been commonly referred to as the American Civil War. In broad terms, civil war could be described as an armed conflict causing more than one thousand deaths, challenging the sovereignty of an internationally recognized state, occurring within the recognized boundaries of that state, involving the state as one of the principal combatants, including rebels with the ability to mount an organized opposition and involving parties concerned with the prospect of living together in the same political unit after the end of the war.[1]

Events of such have been a reoccurring experience in global history. The American situation between 1861 and 1865 was not a deviation from this description, it thus reveals why the American Civil War was also regarded as the war between states. The American Civil War was indeed a key event in the history of America.It occasioned grave mayhem and outrageous scourge in the American human and societal civilization.

The war was set on stage when the confederates' army attacked Fort Sumter on12th April, 1861 and it was brought to an end on 9th April, 1865 when General Lee surrendered to General Grant of the Union Army at Appomattox Court House. The war was in all regards the first modern war with an unprecedented scope; it has been widely regarded as the first total war in global history as a result of the entanglement of all factions of the society. George Brown and David Shi share a similar view when they argued that:

> *The civil war was not neatly self-contained; it was a total war, fought not solely by professional armies but by and against whole societies, farms became battlefields, cities were transformed into armed encampments, and homes were commandeered for field hospitals… was modern in that much killings was distant, impersonal and mechanical.*[2]

Fundamentally, it must be stated that the American Civil War was a combating and pugnacious contact or armed conflict between the seceding American Confederate States of the South which was made up of the eleven slave states of the South and the North which housed the American federal polity; it represented the Union of the American states.

Thepaper attempts a review of the label (American Civil War) accorded to the socio-political challenge that bedevilled the American civilization betwixt 1961 and 1965. The paper is presented thus: First, it tries to survey the socio-political and economic formation of Americabefore the war, this constitutes the background to the war; second, it examines the aftermaths of the war in restructuring the American geo-political, economic and socio-cultural character; third, it attempts an economic discourse on the war. Finally, it concludes the paper by summarizing the key thesis of the article.

II. American Civilization before the War

The American society had developed structures and institutions of political, economic social and cultural relevance to sustain the existence of its civilization before the occurrence of the civil war. After all, the American Civil War (1861-1865) could not have erupted as a result of compatibility, consonance or convenience. Indeed, its occurrence could be associated to dynamic complexities.

Slavery constituted an intricate factor in the occurrence of the American Civil War. The institution of slavery was inherent in the origin of the American state; traceably, the 1945 annexation of Texas during the epoch of 'Manifest Destiny' welded slavery with the American system. The South had a slave oriented

Author: Department of History and International Studies, Adekunleajasin University Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.
e-mails: opadebile@gmail.com, shayenevagivesup@yahoo.com

© 2015 Global Journals Inc. (US)

economy and social formation which was incessantly attacked and condemned by the abolitionist of the North of which majority were adherents of the republican party. To the white South this strategy trampled their Constitutional rights.[3]Thisgradually gave rise to a perturbed relationship between the Americans of the South and the North sides. In addition the slavery issue heightened the instability of American political formation as the differences between the Republican and Democratic Party became more seemingly irreconcilable.

The proliferation of anti-slavery sentiments in the North and among pious republicans as well as the southern low representation in the federal structure coupled with the radical chauvinism of African Americans following the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 signalled daunting threats to the Southerners. On the other hand, the Northerners were sensitive to the increasing power of the federal government which could undermine sacredness of property rights in the future. This was another channel in the American formation that engendered regional tension.

Noticeable as slavery and the popular quest for the protection of States' rights in the American formation before the Civil war was sectionalism. In this context, sectionalism refers to the different economies, social structure, customs and political values of the North and South.[4] It was profound in the economic and religious fabric of the people; the South had an agrarian and slavery economic orientation, whilst the North had an industrial economy. This economic variation between the North and the South partly cumulated in the Civil War. In the religious sphere, the ideological disparity between the North and South over the slavery issue led to the division of dominant religious affiliations, i.e. the Catholic and the Presbyterian religious denomination in the South and the North.

The emergence of Abraham Lincoln as the president of the United States of America in November 1860 after defeating John C. Breckinridge who was the Southern presidential candidate further aggravated the fragility of the American political, economic and socio-cultural formation. Meanwhile, the policies of Lincoln been a republican, was anti-slavery which resulted in the secession of the South from the union of American states to form the Confederate State of America under the auspice of Jefferson Davis who functioned as the president of the confederacy. Notably, this action of secession was regarded as a rebellion to the federal polity and was utterly condemned. An attempt to reverse this was a forward march into war.

Thus far, the foregoing have been able to look into the origin, nature and scope of the American civil war, it therefore reveals that the civil war was engendered by the slavery question, antagonistic nationalism, property rights' and sectionalism among others. Apart from the aforementioned, it is apparent that economic dynamism and complexities was a fundamental underpinning influence to the eventuality of the Civil War. Hence, the contradictions in the American civilization before the civil war coupled with the quest to preserve the union of the American states resulted in the American Civil War.

III. Aftermaths of the 'American Civil War'

A war which historians have described as a total war and the first modern war in global history must have occasioned myriad of consequences on virtually all spheres of the American civilization. After all, Harold Faulkner attested to this when he advanced that "its effects upon our industrial, financial, and commercial history were profound".[5] The point of contention here is;what were the consequences of the American civil war? How relevant werethe consequence of the American Civil War to the reformation of the American civilization? This section will engage in tackling these questions.

The first visible and physical consequence of the American Civil Wars was massive death and widespread destruction of properties. The mortality rate was extremely high without the number of injured personalities on both factions. It is important to mention that the physical destruction during the war was pervasive. In the South, Places like Charleston and Richmond suffered a huge loss of plantation labour system and investment in slave whilst in the North, the destruction of public and private properties was prevalent. Importantly, the condition of the war was outrageous such that people died more as a result of infections and illness than on the war front.
According to Davidson, et al.:

> *Approximately 620,000 men on both sides lost their lives… In material terms, the conflict cost an estimated $20 billion, more than 11 times the total amount spent by the federal government from 1789 to 1861.*[6]

This further reveals that the economy of America after the war was battered as a result of the heavy four year war. The war recorded about 1,030,000 casualties. It adversely affected the American economy, specifically the wealth of the South, whereby income per person in the south dropped to less than 40% to that of North which lasted until well into the 20th century.[7]

Consequent on the defeat of the South, partly as a result of the statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln which eventually brought an end to the 'American Civil War'; it holds relevance to quickly make known that President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by a southerner recalled to be christened John Booth perhaps in retaliation for his anti-southern policies on April 14, 1862 at Ford's Theatre in Washington barely six days after the war ended. Therefore, it is convenient to

© 2015 Global Journals Inc. (US)

assert that Abraham Lincoln was sacrificed for the peace, unity and reformation of the American states.

The union of the states was preserved, the nation was reunited and the southern states were not allowed to secede. In fact, the war wiped out the union's philosophy and ideology of voluntary confederacy which reserved the rights for states to secede and form a stronger federal union which still exists till date.

It is interesting to note that the 'American Civil War' brought an end to the institution of slavery in the American society. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the Thirteen Amendments of 1865 led to the entire abolition of slavery everywhere in America and its territories, the slaves were set loose, which led to the organic union of the African-Americans. As many as 3.5million blacks were freed from the clutches of slavery during the Civil War.[8] Consequently, African-Americans began to achieve equality, but not without pugnacious obstacles. In a way, African-Americans were allowed access to education in the South but with unequal school system; they were given the right to vote and to contest election at diminutive political levels. Albeit still reflecting some traces of social cum racial discrimination; on the long run, job opportunities began to improve for them in the South as well as the commencement of robust inter-racial relationships and marriages. It must be sated that all this were achieved through the formation of Civil Rights Organisation to chant the course for African-Americans total liberation in America. Indeed, these were important social alterations that positioned a sect of the society from being a mere property of another to a status of social equality. The socket of argument at this juncture is that the armed combat between the Northern and Southern state of America occasioned vital modifications in the American social formation.

The establishment of the Freedman's Bureau in 1865;the Bureau was a government agency saddled with the responsibility of allocating works, supplies and abandoned as well as confiscated Southern lands among freed African-Americans. In addition to this, the agency was to deliver health care, educational and judicial services by putting up medical clinics, schools for academic study amidst other amenities that would better the existence of African-Americans in the United States. The Freedman's Bureau worked with educated former slaves and northern churches and charities to open up more than 4,300 schools in the South.[9]

Industrialism was a remarkable social change that was instigated by the war. Here, the point is that like other reformation that accompanied the war, it stimulated indigenous industrialization. Industrialism began as a result of the increase in wartime production and the development of new technologies. During and after the war, national industries in flour milling, meat packing, clothing, shoe manufacture and machinery making emerged in the American society. Mention must be made of the new innovation and inventions of weapons and munitions to develop and expand military utilization capacities. Thomas Cochran complemented this when he wrote that:

> *Colourful business development in the North-adoption of new machines, the quick spread of war contracting, boost given to profits by inflation, and the creation of a group of war millionaires-makes the war years seem not only a period of rapid economic change but also one that created important forces for future growth.*[10]

However, the reconstruction programme which was aimed at making America to recover its loss during the war also aided industrial development. Therefore, it is apt to posit that the Civil War was a reformation process in itself while the reconstruction era emerged afterward to be one of its inextricable products.

In the political sphere, the war dramatically changed the balance of power in the American society. The South as a result of its abundant economic loss and military defeat lost it varied influence in the political firmament of America. Also, the war led to the decline of the American Democratic Party while the Republican Party rose to dominance in American politics. It shouldbe inscribed in mind that the victory of the Union army signalled the triumph of nationalism as the victory was partly as a result of the support of the African-Americans.

The 'American Civil War' reformed the military machinery of America and chanted a new course in the military history of America. Innovations and inventions as to warfare methods and ammunitions as mentioned earlier were informed by the technological and industrial advancement that was witnessed in the North shortly before and during the war. These developments in the military circle give rise to the use of rifles and rifled artillery as well as the adoption of revolutionized tactics and strategies of warfare. The trench warfare method was implemented on war fields; in addition the union adopted the strategy of attacking the civilian population of the South.

Victory on the side of the Union Army in the war opened up the South to military occupation and strict surveillance. The South was partitioned into military provinces and was placed under military control and authority. The Southern states were then mandated to reapply for admission into the United State of American after fulfilling certain conditions. The militarization of the South was to supress tendencies of further rebellion in the area until 1877. All these were pugnacious but reformatory in view of the advances it staged up from the pre-existing American civilization.

The war was a springboard for societal humanitarianism in America. The establishment of the American Red Cross and other altruistic social clusters. Here, it is important to make mention of Clara Baston who was a staunch republican who went to the battle

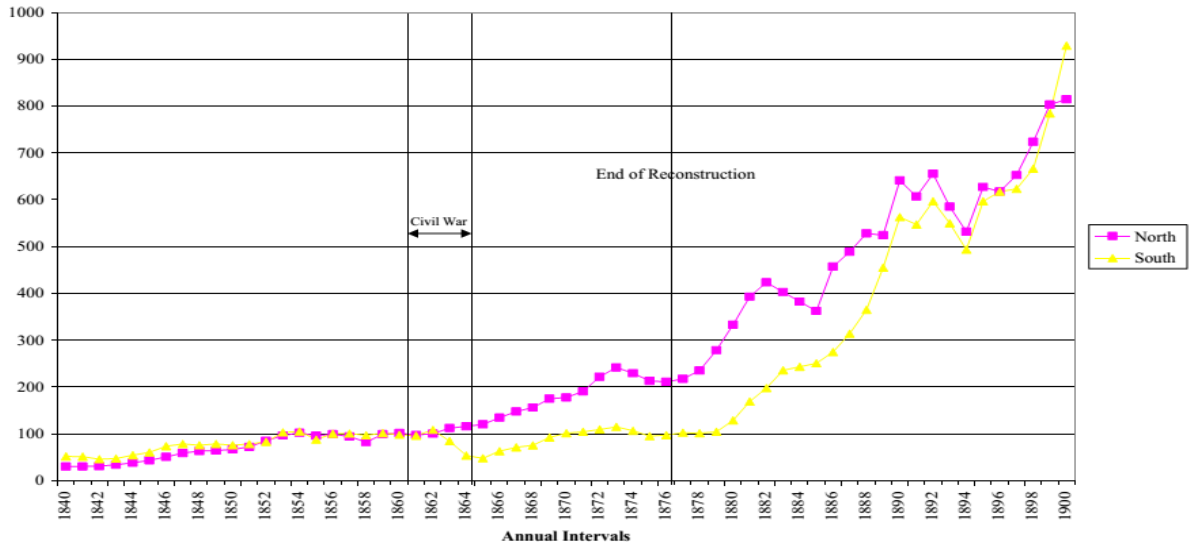
© 2015 Global Journals Inc. (US)

field with the union soldiers to deliver medical care to them when injured. It was the activities of this valiant feminine character that instigated the establishment of the American Red Cross. Clara Bast on is widely regarded as the founder of the American Red Cross.

It must also be mentioned within the premises of the above that, after the Civil War, women confronted new responsibilities and enjoyed new occupational duties. The thrust here is that, prior to the war, the female folks were restricted to domestic obligations rather than public works, however, after the Civil War, women began to involve in public affairs such as politics, health delivery services, and military services among others.

The American Civil War is one of the reforming politico-economic events in the history of America. This view has been polished by some notable Americaneconomic historians of the twentieth century. Charles Beard and Mary Beard in their view referred to the civil war as the Second American Revolution.[11] Here, it is important to state that the position of Beard is conditioned on the reformation that accompanied the Civil War. They furthered by publishing thatthe so-called Civil War - was a social war, ending in the unquestioned establishment of a new power in the government, making vast changes, arrangement of classes, in the accumulation and distribution of wealth, in the course of industrial development, and in the constitution inherited from the Fathers.[12]By implication the term 'so-called Civil War' used by Beard is a sentiment of the inaptness of the term 'American Civil War'.

In a similar vein, Louis Hacker posited that the Civil War signalled the triumph of industrial capitalism in America.[13]At this time, the thrust of Hacker's argument is that the civil war was in itself the emergence and dominance of the capitalist mode of production in America. Arising from this is that, the economic clout American is globally recognized for is an offshoot of the Civil War, since the economic splendour of America is the handmaid of its capitalist economy.



Source: Joseph Davis and Marc D. Weidenmier[14](nd.)

The above is a graphical illustration of the industrial production (economy) of the Northern and Southern state of America; it will further be of benefit to this analysis. The chart presents four distinct periods with extension to the period before andafter the 'American Civil War',spreading from 1840 to 1900; the periods are; The Pre-war years (1840- 60), The Inter -war years (1861- 65) as well as the Recovery years (1865-76), and Beyond Recovery years (1877- 1900) which are both identified as the end of reconstruction in the graph. The graphic representation reveals that the economy of America during the war was considerably higher than what it was prior to the war especially in the North, while the economy deflation in the South was for obvious factors as noted earlier. Also, the termination of the Civil War in 1865 occasioned a progressive growth and development in the economy of the North and South alike which continued up to 1900.

Therefore, it could be deduced that; American had a rapid recovery from the Civil War, in about fifteen years American had already recovered from the war. On this basis, arguably, the war was needed for certain

© 2015 Global Journals Inc. (US)

reformation in the American society and to ensure this reformation, the war broke-out. Hence, the commencement of the war was the beginning of the desired reformation.

IV. Conclusion

The label Civil War is a misnomer. In thereal sense, the Southern states of America did not galvanizeaninsurgence; the secession of the South was a pure demonstration of the American foundational ideology of self-determination and equality. However, most cases of CivilWars are engendered by the quest of belligerentsto gain control of the central polity. It is instructive that the term *Civil War*in its origin could be better traced to seventeenth centuryEngland, a period that witnessed a bellicose confrontation between the loyalist and allies of King Charles the First on the one hand and Oliver Cromwell and his parliamentarian supporters on the other hand for political supremacy. In the case of the 'American Civil War', Donald Miller observes that,

> *The South had no designs on the federal government of the North, headquartered in Washington, D. C. It did not want to run that government. The breakaway Southern States asserted their independence, like the American colonies did from Britain eighty-five years before, formed their own Confederate States of America and placed their seat of government in Richmond, Virginia.*[15]

Nevertheless, on the basis of the rationale that the aftermath of an eventultimately outlives its causes, events such as the 'AmericanCivil War' should be christened in context of its transforming outcomes which have added almost exhaustive reformation to the American system. Even though the era that followed it was regarded as the era of reconstruction, it is undisputable that the idea of reconstruction was an inspiration of the truculent interaction between both sides.

On the whole, the American civil War (1861-1865) was a significant event in the history of America as it reformed the nation's political institution, economy and values. It must be stressed that the war was followed by twelve years of reconstruction which occasioned the debate of the fate of the African-American in America and the reconstruction of the nation in an attempt to define the new shape for its union. However, it goes without stating that the Civil War which was recorded as the bloodiest and most destructive war in the history of America also stimulated industrial advancement, political transformation, social equality and development which have placed America in a position of primacy globally in contemporary times. Therefore, within the above premises, it is convenient to opine that the concept of *Civil War* in its description is incongruous; a healthier depiction could be America Pugnacious Reformation.

References Références Referencias

1. Elbadawi and N. Sambanis, *Why Are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict*, in Journal of African Economies, December 2000, p. 5.
2. G. Brown and D. Shi, *America: A narrative history,* New York: W.W. Norton and Company Publishers, 2007, p.709.
3. Olsen C.J (2002). *Political Culture and Secession in Mississippi: Masculinity, Honor, and the Antiparty Tradition, 1830-1860*. Oxford University Press. p. 237.
4. Sydnor C. S, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism 1819–1848* (1948).
5. Faulkner, Harold Underwood, *American Economic History*, Fifth edition, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943, p. 340.
6. Davidson et al, *Nations of Nations: A Concise Narrative of the American Republic*, McGraw Hill Publishers, New York; 2002. p. 449
7. The Economist, *The Civil War: Finally Passing*, 2nd April, 2011; p. 24.
8. Abhijit Naik, *Causes and Effect of the Civil War*, 2010, http://www.buzzel.com/article/causes_and_effects_of_the_civil_war.html
9. Herman J. Viola, *Why we Remember United States History*, Pearson Publishers, New Jersey, 2007, p.528.
10. Thomas C. Cochran, *Did the Civil War Retrad Industrialization?* in The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Organization of American Historians, September,1961 Vol. 48, No. 2, p.197.
11. Beard Charles and Mary Beard. *The Rise of American Civilization*, Two volumes. New York: Macmillan, 1927, p. 53.
12. Ibid.
13. Hacker Louis,*The Triumph of American Capitalism:The Development of Forces in American History to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1940, p.373.
14. For details on the economic dimension of the American Civil war see, Joseph Davis and Marc D. Weidenmier, *The Macroeconomic Impact of the American Civil War*, Manuscript, Department of Economics, Claremont McKenna College and NBER, California, nd…
15. Donald W. Miller, *A Jeffersonian View of the Civil War*, http://www.lewrockwell.com/orig2/miller1.html, retrieved on 16th June 2013.

© 2015 Global Journals Inc. (US)