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‘The victory of the Union in the Civil War was inevitable.’ How far do you agree with this view?

It may be argued that the Union’s victory in the Civil War was inevitable due to the fact that they were far more industrialized, had superior political leadership and a considerably larger amount of sheer manpower. However, the Union suffered from a series of “do-nothing” political generals who did little to benefit their armed forces, and were forced to fight an offensive war in the South, both of which were factors that could be used in arguing that the Union’s victory was not inevitable, but just rather lucky.

When talking about the Civil War, perhaps one of the biggest factors that contributed to the victory of the Union over the Confederacy is how industrialized they were as a society. The majority of their population worked in factories and the like, which benefitted them throughout the course of the war due to the fact that they were able to be relatively self-sufficient in terms of gathering supplies for both their citizens and soldiers, a luxury that the Southern armies simply did not possess. New technologies such as railways and the steam engine (used in trains, boats, etc.) also aided them throughout the Civil War, as Northern armies were able to quickly and efficiently transport troops and supplies to and from areas of conflict. Furthermore, Lincoln was able to keep control over the border-states, which provided for close to 90% of all of the Unions industrial centers, which not only contributed to Northern victory but also prevented the South

from reaping similar benefits. The industrialization of the North allowed for Union forces to fight the Civil War in a more advanced and modern manner than any war previously, which gave them a colossal advantage over their opponent.

In comparison to Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, Lincoln was superior in a multitude of ways. Militarily, he was fairly hands-off, and allowed his generals to move as they saw fit, considering they had actually been trained to do so in an efficient manner. Davis, on the other hand, insisted on micro-managing the entire war, stifling his generals and causing the South to lose many opportunities that could have possibly furthered their quest for victory. Lincoln was also more adept in handling his country's finances, which he demonstrated through several actions including the creation of a national paper currency and the passing of legislation such as the Morrill Land Grant Act and the National Banking Act. This meant that Lincoln was able to efficiently finance the war without putting his nation's entire economy at risk, as Davis did with his massive inflation, as Lincoln issued federal bonds and the first American income tax in order to pay for the war, all of which he was able to pay back when it came to an end. Finally, Lincoln created a cabinet that was extremely diverse, and therefore provided a myriad of perspectives into the issues the Union faced throughout the war, as well as how to deal with said issues.

In the 1860s, wars were not fought in a very tactical manner, as certain advancements in both technology and military strategy had not been made yet. For this reason, most all battles were fought with infantry, which meant that whichever army had the most power behind it usually won, and this power came in numbers. For this reason, it could be said that the Union's victory was inevitable, as it had far larger armed forces. This was due to several reasons. Despite having less land than the Confederacy, states in the Union were far more densely populated due

to the fact that they were a largely industrial society, and therefore did not have much farm land and such, which required substantial amounts of land. Additionally, conscription, or the draft, meant that most all men within a certain age group had to enlist in the army. Not having many wealthy farmers, the North did not have as much of an issue as the South did with higher-ups in society hiring substitutes, who often times deserted. Finally, the Union forces enlisted African-Americans in their army, which strengthened their numbers even further than their already enormous population. Because of the nature of war at this time, the war had a huge advantage in favor of them winning the Civil War.

Throughout the course of the war, President Lincoln struggled to find proficient generals to lead his forces. Many officers moved up the ranks through political, economic, and social means, which meant that many who ended up leading armies were simply not equipped with the skills needed to do their jobs well. This led to a series of failures for the North, which accounts for the reason the Union was clearly losing for the first half of the war. Simple mistakes, or even cowardice, meant defeat after defeat for Union forces. Despite the fact that Lincoln was able to hire generals Grant and Sherman later on in the war, it was unclear as to whether or not the Union would be able to recover from the losses they had suffered. Therefore, due to inept military leadership, it was not inevitable that the Union would win the Civil War, especially when considering they were up against opponents such as Robert E. Lee. The weak generals that controlled Union forces throughout the first half of the war severely weakened their nations armies, both through casualties and a loss of morale, both of which could have easily led to the defeat of the Union by Confederate forces, meaning the Union's victory was far from certain.

During the Civil War, the Confederacy decided that they simply had to defend their newly formed country. This forced the Union to fight with an offensive strategy, bringing the

fighting into Southern territories. This presented several issues to Union forces. Not being in their “home turf” was a problem because they did not have access to their industrialized cities and technologies, and therefore had to rely on what they could find in the South while waiting for any supplies they needed. Additionally, the South managed to keep 5% of its population armed throughout the course of the war, which is a surprisingly considerable number, and meant that citizens of the Confederacy were more likely to fight back and defend themselves than those of the North. Lastly, Union forces were constantly in danger whilst fighting in the South, especially those in control of African-American regiments, as several Confederate generals were not very keen on following rules of combat, and showed no mercy even when not engaged in battle, and the Northern generals had to attempt to keep up with the internal communications between Confederate regiments and their government.

In summation, it is possible that the Union victory over Confederate forces was indeed inevitable, as they had advantages of an industrialized society, a more skillful political/economic leader, and simply had a larger pool of forces from which to gather their army. However, as many Union general in the early part of the war were less than reputable and the North was forced to fight an offensive war, there was no guarantee of victory.