



Throughout the first three years of the war, the Confederates looked as if they might win. What, then, accounted for their loss? Many have pointed to external causations - failure to gain support of European powers, the Union's strategic shift of objectives, etc. However, a clear analysis of the war indicates that internal problems within the Confederate government and military were the primary causations for losing the war. At least seven internal factors led to the southern defeat.

1. **Loss of the border states**

- o Failure of the South to convince the four border states to secede hurt their argument that South must secede to protect their right to own slaves.
- o The states that remained loyal to the Union would have added 45% more white military manpower to the Confederacy and 89% more manufacturing capacity.

2. **Absence of centralized/unified political power and goals.** From the beginning of the Confederacy, President Jefferson Davis was unable to create a feeling of national community or unity because the government was split between Davis and his followers who believed the Confederacy's first role was to secure the South's independence, even at the expense of states' rights; versus his Vice President, Alexander Stephens, who believed the Confederacy existed to protect slavery and ensure states' rights.

3. **Southern belief in aristocratic privilege.** Many southerners believed that it was a "rich man's war but a poor man's fight".

- o At least 50,000 of the wealthiest southerners paid for their exemptions - \$5,000 or more. Two out of every 3 white persons who fought owned no slaves.
- o Wartime conditions affected the rich and poor differentially. As food shortages became more acute, the rich began to hoard. The poor suffered so severely that food riots broke out in 1863 in four Georgia cities and in North Carolina. In 1864, the price of food soared - a dozen eggs sold for \$6; a pound of butter for \$25. The rich paid; the poor starved.
- o Southern aristocracy felt social class should override military rank. Wealthier soldiers would not obey officers of ordinary social rank. Discipline broke down.

4. **Failure to provide enough services to meet wartime demands.** Although the South had brilliant military leaders and high morale among its troops, it lacked the industrial and agricultural capability to support its supply food, clothing, shoes, medicine, transportation. Further, it lacked the railroad infrastructure to move much needed supplies to the army.

5. **Plantation owners continued to rely on cotton crops.** Cotton planters were insistent upon raising cotton for profit and would not convert their land to food production for the armies. Confederacy had to pass an impressment act to feed its armies - took food from civilian farms and plantations, by force in some areas.

6. **Internal disintegration of slavery.** Slaves ran away, some joined the army, others fled to freedom behind Union lines. Those who remained on the plantation, undermined the system and drastically decreased productivity.

7. **Inability to raise enough finances to support the war.** Unlike the Union which passed a series of broad-based taxes and borrowed from the middle and wealthy classes, the Confederacy covered less than 5% of its wartime expenditures through taxation and 35% by borrowing money.

- o The Confederate Congress fiercely opposed taxes on cotton exports and the property of planters (especially slaves) and while wealthy planters had enough capital to fund a relatively large part of the war, most refused to buy Confederate bonds.
- o Thus, the Confederacy was forced to finance about 60% of its war expenses with unbacked paper money which, in turn, caused soaring inflation and counterfeit copies of poorly designed and printed Confederate notes.