

BATTLE CRY OF FREEDOM: THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR by JAMES McPHERSON

[A page featuring selected quotes from this single-volume history of the Civil War era in America]

Both sides in the American Civil War professed to be fighting for freedom. The South, said Jefferson Davis in 1863, was "forced to take up arms to vindicate the political rights, the freedom, equality, and State sovereignty which were the heritage purchased by the blood of our revolutionary sires." But if the Confederacy succeeded in this endeavor, insisted Abraham Lincoln, it would destroy the Union "conceived in Liberty" by those revolutionary sires as "the last, best hope" for the preservation of republican freedoms in the world. "We must settle this question now," said Lincoln in 1861, "whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose."

Northern publicists ridiculed the Confederacy's claim to fight for freedom. "Their motto," declared poet and editor William Cullen Bryant, "is not liberty, but slavery." But the North did not at first fight to free the slaves. "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists," said Lincoln early in the conflict. The Union Congress overwhelmingly endorsed this position in July 1861. Within a year, however, both Lincoln and Congress decided to make emancipation of slaves in Confederate states a Union war policy. By the time of the Gettysburg Address, in November 1863, the North was fighting for a "new birth of freedom" to transform the Constitution written by the founding fathers, under which the United States had become the world's largest slaveholding country, into a charter of emancipation for a republic where, as the northern version of "The Battle Cry of Freedom" put it, "Not a man shall be a slave."

The multiple meanings of slavery and freedom, and how they dissolved and re-formed into new patterns in the crucible of war, constitute a central theme of this book. That same crucible fused the several states bound loosely in a federal Union under a weak central government into a new Nation forged by the fires of a war in which more Americans lost their lives than in all of the country's other wars combined.

Americans of the Civil War generation lived through an experience in which time and consciousness took on new dimensions. "These are fearfully critical, anxious days, in which the destinies of the continent for centuries will be decided," wrote one contemporary in a sentence typical of countless others that occur in Civil War diaries and letters. "The excitement of the war, & interest in its incidents, have absorbed everything else. We think and talk of nothing else," wrote Virginia's fire-eater Edmund Ruffin in August 1861, a remark echoed three days later by the Yankee sage Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The war . . . has assumed such huge proportions that it threatens to engulf us all--no preoccupation can exclude it, & no hermitage hide us." The conflict crowded into a few years the emotions of a lifetime," wrote a northern civilian in 1865. After Gettysburg, General George Meade told his wife that during the past ten days "I have lived as much as in the last thirty years." From faraway London, where he served his father as a private secretary at the American legation, young Henry Adams wondered "whether any of us will ever be able to live contented in times of peace and laziness. Our generation has been stirred up from its lowest layers and there is that in its history which will stamp every member of it until we are all in our graves. We cannot be commonplace. . . . One does every day and without a second thought, what at another time would be the event of a year, perhaps of a life." In 1882 Samuel Clemens found that the Civil War remained at the center of southern consciousness: it was "what A.D. is elsewhere; they date from it." This was scarcely surprising, wrote Twain, for the war had "uprooted institutions that were centuries old . . . transformed the social life of half the country, and wrought so profoundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be measured short of two or three generations."

Five generations have passed, and that war is still with us. Hundreds of Civil War Round Tables and Lincoln Associations flourish today. Every year thousands of Americans dress up in blue or gray uniforms and take up their replica Springfield muskets to re-enact Civil War battles. A half-dozen popular and professional history magazines continue to chronicle every conceivable aspect of the war. Hundreds of books about the conflict pour off the presses every year, adding to the more than 50,000 titles on the subject that make the Civil War by a large margin the most written-about event in American history. Some of these books--especially multi-volume series on the Civil War era--have achieved the status of classics: James Ford Rhodes seven-volume History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to the Compromise of 1877; Allan Nevins four-volume Ordeal of the Union from 1847 to 1861, and four more on The War for the Union; David M. Potter's 600-page study The Impending Crisis 1848-1861; Bruce Catton's three volumes on the Army of the Potomac (Mr. Lincoln's Army; Glory Road; and A Stillness at Appomattox), his three additional volumes, The Centennial History of the Civil War, plus two volumes on Ulysses S. Grant's Civil War career; Douglas Southall Freeman's magnificent four-volume biography R. E. Lee and his additional three-volume Lee's Lieutenants; and Shelby Foote The Civil War, three engrossing volumes totaling nearly three thousand pages.

Alongside these monumental studies the present effort to compress the war and its causes into a single volume seems modest indeed. Nevertheless, I have tried to integrate the political and military events of this era with important social and economic developments to form a seamless web synthesizing up-to-date scholarship with my own research and interpretations. Except for Chapter 1, which traces the contours of American society and economy in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, I have chosen a narrative

framework to tell my story and point its moral. This choice proceeds not only from the overall design of the Oxford History but also from my own convictions about how best to write the history of these years of successive crises, rapid changes, dramatic events, and dynamic transformations. A topical or thematic approach could not do justice to this dynamism, this complex relationship of cause and effect, this intensity of experience, especially during the four years of war when developments in several spheres occurred almost simultaneously and impinged on each other so powerfully and immediately as to give participants the sense of living a lifetime in a year.

As an example: the simultaneous Confederate invasions of Maryland and Kentucky in the late summer of 1862 occurred in the context of intense diplomatic activity leading toward possible European intervention in the war, of Lincoln's decision to issue an emancipation proclamation, of anti-black and anti-draft riots and martial law in the North, and of hopes by Peace Democrats to capture control of the Union Congress in the fall elections. Each of these events directly affected the others; none can be understood apart from the whole. A topical or thematic approach that treated military events, diplomacy, slavery and emancipation, anti-war dissent and civil liberties, and northern politics in separate chapters, instead of weaving them together as I have attempted to do here, would leave the reader uninformed about how and why the battle of Antietam was so crucial to the outcome of all these other developments.

The importance of Antietam and of several other battles in deciding "the destinies of the continent for centuries" also justifies the space given to military campaigns in this book. Most of the things that we consider important in this era of American history--the fate of slavery, the structure of society in both North and South, the direction of the American economy, the destiny of competing nationalisms in North and South., the definition of freedom, the very survival of the United States--rested on the shoulders of those weary men in blue and gray who fought it out during four years of ferocity unmatched in the Western world between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I.

[Editor's Introduction from C. Vann Woodward]

Of the ten periods covered in this series there is not one when Americans were not involved in some war or other. Two of them are called world wars--three counting one in the eighteenth century. What then is to be said to justify the exceptional attention and space allotted to this particular war? There are numerous criteria at hand for rating the comparative magnitude of wars. Among them are the numbers of troops or ships committed, the years the conflict lasted, the amount of treasure spent, the numbers of objectives gained or lost, and so on. One simple and eloquent measurement is the numbers of casualties sustained. After describing the scene at nightfall on September 17, 1862, following the battle called Antietam in the North and Sharpsburg in the South, McPherson writes: "The casualties at Antietam numbered four times the total suffered by American soldiers at the Normandy beaches on June 6, 1944. More than twice as many Americans lost their lives in one day at Sharpsburg as fell in combat in the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Spanish-American War combined."

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Prologue: From the Halls of Montezuma

The Mexican War fulfilled for the United States its self-proclaimed manifest destiny to bestride the continent from sea to shining sea. But by midcentury the growing pains of this adolescent republic threatened to tear the country apart before it reached maturity.

The bickering Americans won the Mexican War because their adversaries were even more riven by faction. They won also because of the marksmanship and elan of their mixed divisions of regulars and volunteers and above all because of the professionalism and courage of their junior officers. Yet the competence of these men foreshadowed the ultimate irony of the Mexican War, for many of the best of them would fight against each other in the next war. Serving together on General Winfield Scott's staff were two bright lieutenants, Pierre GT Beauregard and George B McClellan. Captain Robert E. Lee's daring reconnaissances behind Mexican lines prepared the way for two crucial American victories. Lieutenants James Longstreet and Winfield Scott Hancock fought side by side in the battle of Churubusco; sixteen years later Longstreet commanded the attack against Hancock's corps at Cemetery Ridge.

#1 The United States at Midcentury

The hallmark of the United States has been growth. Americans have typically defined this process in quantitative terms. Never was that more true than in the first half of the 19th century, when an unparalleled rate of growth took place in three dimensions: population, territory, and economy. The population of the US had doubled and then doubled again. Pushing relentlessly westward and southward, Americans had similarly quadrupled the size of their country by settling, conquering, annexing or purchasing territory that had been occupied by millennia by Indians and claimed by France, Spain, Britain and Mexico... No other nation in that era could match even a single component of this explosive growth. The combination of all three made American the 'Wunderkind' nation of the 19th century.

Regarded as 'progress' by most Americans, this unrestrained growth had negative as well as positive consequences... Slave-grown crops sustained part of the era's economic growth and much of its territorial expansion. The cascade of cotton from the American South dominated the world market, paced the industrial revolution in England and New England, and fastened the shackles of slavery more securely than ever on Afro-Americans.

The greatest threat to American survival at midcentury was neither class tension nor ethnic division. Rather it was sectional conflict between North and South over the future of slavery. To many Americans, human bondage seemed incompatible with the founding ideals of the republic... The generation that fought the Revolution abolished slavery in states north of the Mason-Dixon line; the new states north of the Ohio River came into the Union without bondage. South of these boundaries, however, slavery became essential to the region's economy and culture.

A wave of Protestant revivals known as the Second Great Awakening swept the country during the first third of the 19th century. In New England, upstate New York and those portions of the Old Northwest populated by the descendants of New England Yankess, this evangelical enthusiasm generated a host of moral and cultural reforms. The most dynamic and divisive of them was abolitionism... by midcentury this antislavery movement had gone into politics and begun to polarize the country... Slaveholders managed to convince most non-slaveholding whites in the South (two-thirds of the white population there) that emancipation would produce economic ruin, social chaos and racial war.

The slavery issue would probably have caused an eventual showdown between North and South in any circumstances. But it was the country's sprawling growth that made the issue so explosive. Was the manifest destiny of those 2 million square miles west of the Mississippi River to be free or slave? Like King Solomon, Congress had tried in 1820 to solve that problem by splitting it at the latitude of 36' 30. But this only postponed the crisis. In 1850 Congress postponed it again with another compromise. By 1860 it could no longer be deferred. The country's territorial growth might have created a danger of dismemberment by centrifugal force in any event. But slavery brought this danger to a head at midcentury.

At the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 the United States was an insignificant nation on the European periphery. Its population was about the same as Ireland's... a few years after 1850 the United States surpassed Britain to become the most populous nation in the Western world save Russia and France.

Improved transportation was a prerequisite of economic development in a country as large as the United States. Before 1815 the only cost-efficient means of carrying freight long distances were sailing ships and downriver flatboats. Most American roads were rutted

dirt paths all but impassable in wet weather. The cost of transporting a ton of goods 30 miles inland from an American port equalled the cost of carrying the same goods across the Atlantic... it is not surprising therefore that America's transatlantic trade exceeded internal commerce and that most manufactured goods purchased in the US came from Britain... All this changed after 1815 as a result of what historians have called, without exaggeration, a transportation revolution. Private companies, states, even the national government financed the construction of all-weather macadamized roads. More important, New York state pioneered the canal era by building the Erie Canal... setting off a frenzy of construction that procured 3700 miles of canals by 1850... The 9000 miles of rail in the US by 1850 led the world, but paled in comparison with the 21000 additional miles laid during the next decade, which gave the US in 1860 a larger rail network than the rest of the world combined. An even newer invention, the telegraph, sent instant messages along copper wires and leaped beyond the railheads to span the continents in 1861... Together these modes of transport reduced the shipment time of freight between, for example, Cincinnati and New York from 50 days to 5. The difference between the wholesale price of western pork in Cincinnati and New York declined from \$9.53 to \$1.18 a barrel.

The transportation revolution refashioned the economy. As late as 1815, Americans produced on their farms or in their homes most of the things they consumed, used, or wore... in an age of slow and expensive overland transport, few of these items were sold more than 20 miles from where they were made. This pre-industrial world could not survive the transportation revolution, which made possible a division of labor and specialization of production for ever larger and more distant markets. More and more farmers specialized in crops for which their soil and climate were most suitable. With the cash from sale of these crops they bought food and clothing and hardware previously made locally or by themselves but now grown, processed or manufactured elsewhere and shipped in by canal or rail.

Considering themselves members of the "middling classes," most Americans in the 1850s were willing and able to buy ready-made shoes, furniture, men's clothing, watches, rifles and even houses. If these products lacked the quality, finish, distinction and durability of fine items made by craftsmen, they were nevertheless functional and affordable... Grinding poverty and luxurious wealth were by no means absent from the US, but what impressed most observers was the broad middle.

Although the working poor of New York would explode into the worst riot of American history in 1863, these people did not provide the cutting edge of labor protest in the antebellum era. It was not so much the level of wages as the very concept of wages that fueled much of this protest. Wage labor was a form of dependency that seemed to contradict the republican principles on which the country had been founded. The philosopher of republicanism, Thomas Jefferson, had defined the essence of liberty as independence, which required the ownership of productive property. A man dependent on others for a living could never be truly free. Women, children and slaves were dependent; that defined them out of the polity of republican freemen. Wage laborers were also dependent; that was why Jefferson feared the development of industrial capitalism with its need for wage laborers. Jefferson envisaged an ideal American of farmers and artisan producers who owned their means of production and depended on no man for a living. But the American economy did not develop that way.

The political and economic manifestations of slavery generated more contention than moral or humanitarian indictments. Bondage seemed and increasingly peculiar institution in a democratic republic experiencing a rapid transition to free-labor industrial capitalism. In the eyes of a growing number of Yankees, slavery degraded labor, inhibited economic development, discouraged education and engendered a domineering master class determined to rule the country in the interests of its backward institution... but whether or not slavery was backward and inefficient, it was extraordinarily productive. The yield of raw cotton doubled each decade after 1800. Cotton from the American South grown mostly by slave labor furnished three-fourths of the world's supply. Southern staples provided three-fifths of all American exports, earning foreign exchange that played an important part in American economic growth.

North and South shared the same language, the same Constitution, the same legal system, the same commitment to republican institutions, the same predominantly Protestant religion and British ethnic heritage, the same history, the same memories of a common struggle for nationhood. Yet by the 1850s Americans on both sides of the line separating freedom from slavery came to emphasize more their differences than similarities... The legal system also became an instrument of division, not unity: northern states passed personal liberty laws to defy a national fugitive slave law supported by the South; a southern-dominated Supreme Court denied the right of Congress to exclude slavery from the territories, a ruling that most northerners considered infamous... People on both sides began pointing with pride or alarm to certain quantitative differences between North and South.

To 19th century Americans the West represented the future. Expansion had been the country's lifeblood. So long as the slavery controversy focused on the morality of the institution where it already existed, the two-party system managed to contain the passions aroused. But when in the 1840s the controversy began to focus on the expansion of slavery into new territories it became irrepressible.

#2 Mexico Will Poison Us

Like the Mexican War, Manifest Destiny was mainly a Democratic doctrine. Since the day when Thomas Jefferson overcame Federalist opposition to the purchase of Louisiana, Democrats had pressed for the expansion of American institutions across the

whole of North America whether the residents — Indians, Spaniards, Mexicans, Canadians — wanted them or not... Whigs were not averse to extending the blessings of American liberty. even to Mexicans and Indians. But they looked askance at doing so by force. Befitting the evangelical origins of much Whig ideology, they placed their faith in mission more than in annexation. "As a city set upon a hill," the United States should inculcate the ideals of "true republicanism" by example rather than conquest, insisted many Whigs... While the Democratic notion of progress envisioned the spread of existing institutions over space, the Whig idea envisaged the improvement of those institutions over time.

The triumph of Manifest Destiny may have reminded some Americans of Ralph Waldo Emerson's prophecy that "the United States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows the arsenic. Mexico will poison us". He was right. The poison was slavery. Jefferson's Empire for Liberty had become mostly an empire for slavery. Territorial acquisitions since the Revolution had added the slave states of Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Florida and Texas to the republic, while only Iowa, just admitted in 1846, had increased the ranks of free states. Many northerners feared a similar future for this new southwestern empire. They condemned the war as part of a "slave power conspiracy" to expand the peculiar institution.

Almost all free soilers concurred with the following set of propositions: free labor was more efficient than slave labor because it was motivated by the inducement of wages and the ambition of upward mobility rather than by the coercion of the lash; slavery undermined the dignity of manual work by associating it with servility and thereby degraded the white labor wherever bondage existed; slavery inhibited education and social improvements and kept poor whites as well as slaves in ignorance; the institution therefore mired all southerners except the slaveowning gentry in poverty; slavery must be kept out of all new territories so that free labor could flourish there... If slavery goes into the new territories, wrote free-soil editor and poet William Cullen Bryant, "the free labor of all the states will not". But if slavery is kept out, "the free labor of the states will go there and in a few years the country will teem with an active and energetic population".

"Enslave a man and you destroy his ambition, his enterprise, his capacity. In the constitution of human nature, the desire of bettering one's condition is the mainspring of effort."

- Horace Greeley

The Compromise of 1850 undoubtedly averted a grave crisis. But hindsight makes clear that it only postponed the trauma. Generations of schoolchildren recited the famous Senate speeches of the Compromise debates. "I wish to speak today, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American," said Daniel Webster as he began his address that could cause former antislavery admirers to repudiate him. "I speak today for the preservation of the Union. Hear me for my cause."

Webster's speech appealed to a broad range of Americans who by March 1850 were rallying in support of compromise.

#3 An Empire for Slavery

On all issues but one, antebellum southerners stood for state's rights and a weak federal government. The exception was the fugitive law of 1850, which gave the national government more power than any other law yet passed by Congress.

Magnified by southerners into an enormous Yankee network of lawbreakers who stole thousands of slaves each year, the underground railroad was also mythologized by its northern conductors who related their heroic deeds to grandchildren. The true number of runaway slaves is impossible to determine. Perhaps several hundred each year made it to the North or to Canada. Few of these fugitives had escaped from the lower South, the region that clamored loudest for a stronger fugitive slave law — less for practical advantage than as a matter of principle. Like a free California, northern aid to escaping slaves was an insult to southern honor.

The South's defensive-aggressive temper in the 1850s stemmed in part from a sense of economic subordination to the North. In a nation that equated growth with progress, the census of 1850 alarmed many southerners. During the previous decade, population growth had been 20% greater in the free states than in the slaves states. Lack of economic opportunity seemed to account for this ominous fact. Three times as many people born in slaves states had migrated to free states as vice versa, while seven-eighths of the immigrants from abroad settled in the North. The North appeared to be racing ahead of the South in crucial indices of economic development.

Some evidence points to the South's agrarian value system as an important reason for the lack of industrialization. Although the light of Jeffersonian egalitarianism may have dimmed by 1850, the torch of agrarianism still glowed...By the late 1850s southern agrarians had mounted a counterattack against the gospel of industrialization. The social prestige of planters pulled other occupations into their orbit rather than vice versa. "That the North does our trading and manufacturing mostly is true," wrote an Alabamian in 1858, "and we are willing that they should. Ours is an agricultural people, and God grant that we may continue so. It is the freest, happiest, most independent, and with us, the most powerful condition on earth."

Although the persistence of Jeffersonian agrarianism may help explain this phenomenon, the historian can discover pragmatic reasons as well. The 1850s were boom years for cotton and for other southern staples. Low cotton prices in the 1840s had spurred the

crusade for economic diversification. But during the next decade the price of cotton jumped more than 50%... the apparent insatiable demand for southern staples caused planters to out every available acre into these crops. Although these trends alarmed some southerners, most expressed rapture over the dizzying prosperity brought by the cotton boom. The advocates of King Commerce faded; King Cotton reigned supreme.

#4 Slavery, Rum, and Romanism

Even more important than the fugitive slave issue in arousing northern militancy was the Kansas- Nebraska Act passed by Congress in May 1854. Coming at the same time as the Anthony Burns case, this law may have been the most important single event pushing the nation toward civil war. Kansas-Nebraska finished off the Whig party and gave birth to a new, entirely northern Republican party.

Who would pick up the pieces of the smashed political parties? In the lower South, Democrats would sweep most of the remaining shards of Whiggery into their own dustbin. In the North, matters were more complicated... new antislavery coalitions formed throughout the North to contest the 1854 fall elections. These coalitions called themselves by various names — Anti-Nebraska, Fusion, People's, Independent — but the one name that emerged most prominently was Republican. An anti-Nebraska rally at a church in Ripon, Wisconsin seems to have been the first to adopt this label.

Republicans and Know-Nothings had succeeded in breaking down the Whigs and weakening the Democrats in most parts of the North. But in 1855 it remained uncertain which of these two new parties would emerge as the principal alternative to the Democrats. In about half of the states, Republicans had become the second major party. In the other half the American party, as the Know Nothings now named their political arm, seemed to prevail... But in 1855 the center of nativist gravity began to shift southward... The slavery issues soon split the Know Nothings along sectional lines... from this time forth the party wasted away in the North while it grew stronger in the South. The logical place for antislavery Know Nothings to go was the Republican party, which stood ready to receive them if it could do so without sanctioning nativism.

What made possible this remarkable eclipse of Know Nothings and surge of Republicans to become the North's majority party within less than 2 years? Part of the answer lay in a dramatic decline of immigration, which during the years after 1854 fell to less than half of the level it had attained in the first half of the decade. But the main reason could be expressed in two words: Bleeding Kansas. Events in that far-off territory convinced most northerners that the slave power was after all a much greater threat to republican liberty than the Pope was.

#5 The Crime Against Kansas

Having lost the battle in Congress for a free Kansas, antislavery men determined to wage the war on the prairie itself... at the outset, however, Missourians from just across the border were stronger in numbers than the soilers and at least equal in determination. Fifteen years earlier Missourians had harried and burned the Mormons out of the state; Senator David Atchison was confident of their ability to give free soilers the same treatment in Kansas.

By January 1856 Kansas had two territorial governments: the official one at Lecompton and an unofficial one at Topeka representing a majority of actual residents. Partisans of both sides in the territory were walking arsenals; it was only a matter of time until a shooting war broke out.

The campaign (1856 presidential election) generated a fervour unprecedented in American politics. Young Republicans marched in huge torchlight parades chanting a hypnotic slogan: "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Men, Fremont!" ...But while this passion mobilized a large Republican vote, it deepened the foreboding that drove many ex-Whigs to vote for Buchanan or Fillmore.

Kansas finally came in as a free state in January 1861, joining California, Minnesota and Oregon, whose entry since the Mexican War had given the North a four-state edge over the South. Kansas also became one of the most Republican states in the Union. Though most of the free-state settlers had originally been Democrats, the struggle with the slave power pushed them into the Republican party... With enemies like the Democrats, Republicans scarcely needed friends. As if Kansas were not enough, the Buchanan administration, the Supreme Court, and southern Democrats ventured several other actions seemingly designed to assure Republican victory in the presidential election of 1860.

6. Mudsills and Greasy Mechanics for A. Lincoln

The Lincoln-Douglas debates are deservedly the most famous in American history. They matched two powerful logicians and hard-hitting speakers, one of them nationally eminent and the other little known outside his own region... the stakes were higher than a senatorial election, higher even than the looming presidential contest of 1860, for the theme of the debates was nothing less than the future of slavery and the Union. The other staples of American politics received not a word in these debates — the sole topic was slavery.

In the fashion of debaters, Douglas and Lincoln opened with slashing attacks designed to force the other man to spend his time defending vulnerable positions... Lincoln's main thrust was the accusation that Douglas had departed from the position of the founding fathers, while the Republicans were upholding that position. Like the fathers, Republicans "insist that slavery should as far as may be, be treated as a wrong, and one of the methods of treating it as a wrong is to make provision that it shall grow no larger." Lincoln reiterated that the country could not exist forever half slave and half free; it had existed in that condition so far only because until 1854 most Americans shared the founders' faith that restricting slavery's growth would put it on the path to ultimate extinction.

The southern checkmate of tariff, homestead, Pacific railroad, and land-grant college acts provided the Republicans with vote-winning issues for 1860.

#7 The Revolution of 1860

John Brown's ghost stalked the South as the election year of 1860 opened. Several historians have compared the region's mood to the "Great Fear" that seized the French countryside in the summer of 1789 when peasants believed that the "King's brigands are coming" to slaughter them. Keyed up to the highest pitch of tension, many slaveholders and yeoman alike were ready for war to defend hearth and home against those Black Republican brigands. Thousands joined military companies; state legislatures appropriated funds for the purchase of arms. Every barn or cotton gin that burned down sparked new rumors of slave insurrections and abolitionist invaders. Every Yankee in the South became persona non grata. Some of them received a coat of tar and feathers and ride out of town on a rail. A few were lynched. The citizens of Boggy Swamp, South Carolina, ran two northern tutors out of the district. "Nothing definite is known of their abolitionist or insurrectionary sentiments," commented a local newspaper, "but being from the North, and, therefore, imbued with doctrines hostile to our institutions, the presence in this section has been obnoxious." The northern-born president of an Alabama college had to flee for his life. In Kentucky, a mob drove thirty-nine people associated with an antislavery church and school at Berea out of the state.

Most southern Democrats went to (the Democratic National Convention in) Charleston with one overriding goal: to destroy Douglas. In this they were joined by a scattering of administration Democrats from the North... Some lower-South Democrats even preferred a Republican president to Douglas in order to make the alternatives facing the South starkly clear: submission or secession. And they ensured this result by proceeding to cleave the Democratic party in two. The Alabama Democratic convention took the first step in January 1860 by instructing its delegates to walk out of the national convention if the party refused to adopt a platform pledging a federal slave code for the territories. Other lower-South Democratic organisations followed suit... Douglas's supporters were as determined to block a slavecode plank as southerners were to adopt one.

Anti-Douglas southerners wanted all or nothing. They walked out once more, followed by most delegates from the upper South and a handful of proslavery northerners — more than one third of the total. The bolters quickly organized their own convention and nominayed John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky (the current vice president) for president on a slave-code platform. The dispirited loyalists nominated Douglas and returned home with renewed bitterness in their hearts toward the rebels who had all but ensured the election of a Black Republican president.

By the time the (Republican National) convention's opening gavel came down on May 16, Lincoln had emerged from a position as the darkest of horses to that of Seward's main rival. Party leaders gradually recognized that the Illinoisian had most of the strengths and few of the weaknesses of an ideal candidate. He was a former antislavery Whig in a party made up mostly of antislavery Whigs. But despite his house-divided speech, he had a reputation as a moderate... Lincoln had opposed the Know Nothings, which would help him with the German vote, but not so conspicuously as to drive away former American voters... Finally, Lincoln was from a state and region crucial to Republican chances, particularly if Douglas as expected became the nominee of northern Democrats.

The election of 1860 was unique in the history of American politics. The campaign resolved itself into two separate contests: Lincoln vs Douglas in the North; Breckinridge vs Bell in the South. Republicans did not even have a ticket in ten southern states.

Though repudiated by the South and by the Buchanan administration, Douglas remained a formidable opponent... In a bold break with tradition, he campaigned for himself. In ill health, his voice hoarse, he nevertheless ranged through the whole country (except the west coast) from July to November in an exhausting tour that nevertheless did much to bring on his death a year later. It was a courageous effort, but a futile one. Douglas carried the message to both North and South that he was the only national candidate, the only leader who could save the country from disunion. But in reality, Douglas Democrats were scarcely more a national party than the Republicans... Douglas wound up with only 12% of the southern popular vote.

Nor did Lincoln expect "any formidable effort to break up the Union." Republicans refused to take these warnings to heart. They had heard them before, a dozen times or more. In 1856 Democrats had used such threats to frighten northerners into voting Democratic. Republicans believed the same thing was happening in 1860... Hindsight was to reveal that southerners meant what they said. Two sagacious historians have maintained that Republican failure to take these warnings seriously was a "cardinal error". Yet it is hard to see what Republicans could have done to allay southern anxieties short of dissolving their party and proclaiming slavery a positive

good. As a committee of the Virginia legislature put it, "the very existence of such a party is an offense to the whole South." A New Orleans editor regarded every northern vote cast for Lincoln as a "deliberate, cold-blooded insult and outrage" to southern honor. I was not so much what Republicans might do as what they stood for that angered southerners.

On his first foray into the South Douglas told crowds in North Carolina that he would "hang every man higher than Haman who would attempt... to break up the Union by resistance to its laws."

At some risk to his deteriorating health and even his life, Douglas courageously repeated his warnings against secession. The whole North would rise up to prevent it, he said pointedly. "I hold that the election of any man on earth by the American people, according to the Constitution, is not justification for breaking up this government." Southerners listened to him, but they did not hear.

#8 The Counterrevolution of 1861

The second Continental Congress had deliberated 14 months before declaring American independence in 1776. To produce the United States Constitution and put the new government into operation required nearly two years. In contrast, the Confederate States of America organized itself, drafted a constitution, and set up shop in Montgomery, Alabama, within three months of Lincoln's election. The South moved so swiftly because, in seeming paradox, secession proceeded on a state-by-state basis rather than by collective action.

Secession was an unequivocal act which relieved the unbearable tension that had been building for years. It was a catharsis for pent-up fears and hostilities. It was a joyful act that caused people literally to dance in the streets. The fierce gaiety anticipated the celebratory crowds that gathered along the Champs-Élysées and the Unter den Linden and at Piccadilly Circus in that similarly innocent world of August 1914. Not that the flag-waving, singing crowds in Charleston and Savannah and New Orleans wanted or expected war; on the contrary, they believed that "the Yankees were cowards and would not fight."

The belief in a repressed unionist majority rests on a misunderstanding of southern unionism. As a Mississippi 'unionist' explained after Lincoln's election, he was no longer "a Union man in the sense in which the North is Union." His unionism was conditional; the North had violated the condition by electing Lincoln.

In 1861 the Confederate secretary of state advised foreign governments that southern states had formed a new nation "to preserve their old institutions" from "a revolution that threatened to destroy their social system". This is the language of counterrevolution. But in one respect the Confederacy departed from the classic pattern of the genre. Most counterrevolutions seek to restore the ancien régime. The counterrevolutionaries of 1861 made their move before the revolutionaries had done anything — indeed, several months before Lincoln even took office. In this regard, secession fit the model of "pre-emptive counterrevolution" developed by historian Arno Mayer. Rather than trying to restore the old order, a pre-emptive counterrevolution strikes first to protect the status quo before the revolutionary threat can materialize... Though Mayer was writing about Europe in the 20th century, his words also describe the immediate secessionists of 1860. The exaggerated the Republican threat and urged pre-emptive action to forestall the dangers they conjured up. The South could not afford to wait for an "overt act" by Lincoln against southern rights, they insisted.

Seldom in history has a counterrevolution so quickly provoked the very revolution it sought to pre-empt. This happened because most northerners refused to condone disunion. On that matter, if on little else, the outgoing and incoming presidents of the United States agreed. In his final message to Congress, on 3 December, 1860, James Buchanan surprised some of his southern allies with a firm denial of the right of secession.

Fears of a domino effect were especially pervasive. "A successful rebellion by a few States now," ran an editorial typical of hundreds, "will be followed by a new rebellion or secession a few years hence." This was not mere alarmism. Some Americans were already speculating about a division of the country into three or four "confederacies" with an independent Pacific coast republic thrown in for good measure. Several New York merchants and Democrats with ties to the South were talking of setting up as a free city.

Neither Lincoln nor any other northerner denied the right of revolution. After all, Yankees shared the legacy of 1776... Revolution was "a moral right, when exercised for a morally justifiable cause," wrote Lincoln. But "when exercised without such a cause revolution is no right, but simply a wicked exercise of physical power." The South had no just cause. The event that precipitated secession was the election of a president by a constitutional majority.

The problem was compounded by the lame-duck syndrome in the American constitutional system. During the four-month interval between Lincoln's election and inauguration, Buchanan had the executive power but felt little responsibility for the crisis, while Lincoln had responsibility but little power. The Congress elected in 1860 would not meet in regular session for 13 months.

#9 Facing Both Ways: The Upper South's Dilemma

The outbreak of war at Fort Sumter confronted the upper South with a crisis of decision. its choice could decide the fate of the Confederacy. These eight states contained most of the South's resources for waging war: more than half of its population, two-thirds

of its white population, three-quarters of its industrial capacity, three-fifths of its livestock and food crops. In addition, men of high potential as military leaders hailed from these states: Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. Jackson, James EB Stuart... John Bell Hood... Nathan Bedford Forrest. The upper South's response to Lincoln's April 15 militia requisition seemed to promise well for the Confederacy. Kentucky "will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing his sister Southern States," the governor wired Washington. Tennessee "will not furnish a single man for the purpose of coercion," proclaimed her governor, "but fifty thousand if necessary for the defense of our rights and those of our Southern brothers."

The governors of Virginia, Missouri, North Carolina and Arkansas sent similar replies, while the governors of Maryland and Delaware remained ominously silent. These references to "our rights" and "southern brothers" suggest the motives that impelled four of the eight states into the Confederacy and left three others with large secessionist minorities.

The claim that Lincoln's call for troops was the cause of the upper South's decision to secede is misleading. As the telegraph chattered reports of the attack on Sumter April 12 and its surrender next day, huge crowds poured into the streets of Richmond, Raleigh, Nashville and other upper South cities to celebrate the victory over the Yankees. These crowds waved Confederate flags and cheered the glorious cause of southern independence. They demanded that their own states join the cause. Such demonstrations took place before Lincoln issued his call for troops. Many conditional unionists were swept along by this powerful tide of southern nationalism; others were cowed into silence... these outbursts were not merely a defensive response to northern aggression. Rather they took on the character of a celebration, a joyous bonding with southern brothers who had scored a triumph over the Black Republican Yankees.

Nearly three-quarters of the white men in Missouri and two-thirds of those in Maryland who fought in the Civil War did so on the side of the Union. Kentucky was even more evenly divided between North and South, at least two-fifths of her white fighting men wore grey. Kentucky was the birthplace of both Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis... Three slave states and three states touched its borders. Precisely because Kentucky was so evenly divided in sentiment and geography, its people were loath to choose sides... Kentuckians took pride in their traditional role as mediator between North and South.

The actions of the eight upper South states in 1861 had an important but equivocal impact on the outcome of the war. One can begin to measure that impact by noting the possible consequences of what did not happen. If all eight states had seceded, the South might well have won its independence. If all eight had remained in the Union, the Confederacy surely could not have survived as long as it did. As it was, the balance of military manpower from these states favored the South. The estimated 425,000 soldiers they furnished to southern armies comprised half of its total. These same states furnished some 235,000 white soldiers to the Union armies... The strategic importance of the rivers, railroads, and mountains of the border states (including West Virginia) can hardly be exaggerated. On the other hand, guerrilla warfare and the problems of administering sizeable regions with populations of doubtful loyalty tied down large numbers of Union troops in the border states.

#10 Amateurs Go to War

A Confederate soldier captured early in the war put it simply. His captors asked why he, a nonslaveholder, was fighting to uphold slavery. He replied: "I'm fighting because you're down here." For this soldier, as for many other southerners, the war was not about slavery. But without slavery there would be no Black republicans to threaten the South's way of life, no special southern civilization to defend against Yankee invasion. This paradox plagued Southern efforts to define their war aims. In particular, slavery handicapped Confederate foreign policy... Confederates rarely mentioned slavery except obliquely in reference to northern violations of southern rights. Rather, they portrayed the South as fighting for liberty and self-government — blithely unmindful of Samuel Johnson's piquant question about an earlier generation of American rebels: "How it is that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?"

The United States has usually prepared for its wars after getting into them. Never was this more true than in the Civil War. The country was less ready for what proved to be its biggest war than for any other war in its history. In early 1861 most of the tiny 16,000 man army was scattered in 79 frontier outposts west of the Mississippi. Nearly a third of its officers were resigning to go with the South.

The logistical demands of the Union army were much greater than those of its enemy. Most of the war was fought in the South where Confederate forces operated close to the source of many of their supplies. Invading northern armies, by contrast, had to maintain long supply lines of wagon trains, railroads, and port facilities.

Confederate officers, at least in the Virginia theater, probably did a better job than their Union counterparts during the first year or two of the war. Two factors helped to explain this. First, Union General-in-Chief Winfield Scott decided to keep the small regular army together in 1861 rather than to disperse its units among the volunteer army. Hundreds of officers and non-coms in the regular army could have provided drill instructors and tactical leadership to the volunteer regiments. But Scott kept them with the regulars, sometimes far away on the frontier, while raw volunteers bled and died under incompetent officers in Virginia. The South, by contrast, had no regular army. The 313 officers who resigned from the US army to join the Confederacy contributed a crucial leaven

of initial leadership to the southern armies. Second, the South's military schools had turned out a large number of graduates which provided the Confederacy with a nucleus of trained officers. In 1860 of the eight military "colleges" in the entire country, seven were in slave states.

The trial and error of experience played a larger role than theory in shaping Civil War strategy. The experience of the Mexican War governed the thinking of most officers in 1861. But that easy victory against a weak foe in an era of smoothbore muskets taught some wrong lessons to Civil War commanders who faced a largely determined enemy armed (after 1861) largely with rifled muskets. The experience necessary to fight the Civil War had to be gained in the Civil War itself. As generals and civilian leaders learned from their mistakes, as war aims changed from limited to total war, as political demands and civilian morale fluctuated, military strategy evolved and adjusted. The Civil War was pre-eminently a political war, a war of peoples rather than of professional armies. Therefore political leadership and public opinion weighed heavily in the formation of strategy.

#11 Farewell to the Ninety Days' War

Much confusion of uniforms occurred during the battle of Bull Run. On numerous occasions regiments withheld their fire for fear of hitting friends, or fired on friends by mistake. The same problems arose with the national flags carried by each regiment. With 11 stars on a blue field set in the corner of a flag with two red and one white horizontal bars, the Confederate "stars and bars" could be mistaken for the stars and stripes in the smoke and haze of battle. Afterwards Beauregard designed a new battle flag, with white stars embedded in a blue St. Andrew's Cross on a red field, which became the familiar banner of the Confederacy.

The confidence gained by the men who at Manassas imbued them with an esprit de corps that was reinforced by more victories in the next two years. At the same time the Union defeat instilled a gnawing, half-acknowledged sense of martial inferiority among northern officers in the Virginia theater. This the battle of Manassas, and more importantly the collective southern and northern memories of it, became an important part of the psychology of war in the eastern theater. This psychology helps explain why McClellan, having created a powerful army, was reluctant to commit it to an all-out battle. He always feared, deep down, that the enemy was more powerful than he.

"McClellan is to me one of the mysteries of the war," said Ulysses S. Grant a dozen years after the conflict. Historians are still trying to solve that mystery. Life seemed to have prepared McClellan for greatness... After graduating second in his West Point class, McClellan won renown at the age of 20 for engineering achievements in the Mexican War... In May 1861, at the age of 34, he became the second-ranking general in the US army and in July he took command of the North's principal field army. ...But perhaps McClellan's career had been too successful. He had never known, as Grant had, the despair of defeat or the humiliation of failure. He had never learned the lessons of adversity and humility.

Military success could only be achieved by taking risks; McClellan seemed to shrink from the prospect. He lacked the mental and moral courage required of great generals — the will to act, to confront the terrible moment of truth on the battlefield. Having experience nothing but success in his career, he was afraid to risk failure.

The first victim of McClellan's vainglory was General-in-Chief Scott. More than twice McClellan's age, Scott was America's foremost living soldier, a hero of two wars, second only to George Washington in military reputation. But Scott's fame belonged to past wars, McClellan aspired to be the hero of this one. A rivalry with the "old general", as McClellan privately called Scott, soon developed.

#12 Blockade and Beachhead: The Salt-Water War, 1861-1862

"Whereas we had available for immediate purposes 149 first-class warships, we have now two, these two being the Warrior and her sister Ironside. There is not now a ship in the English navy apart from these two that it would not be madness to trust to an engagement with that little Monitor."

- The Times of London, after the clash of the Monitor and Virginia

The worst time for unemployment in the British textile industry occurred from the summer of 1862 to 1863. But the impact of this did not measure up to southern hopes. Even before the war, textiles had been losing their dominant role in the British economy. The war further stimulated growth in the iron, shipbuilding, armaments and other industries. This offset much of the decline in textiles. A flourishing trade in war materiel with the North as well as blockade running to the South helped convince British merchants of the virtues of neutrality... And because Confederate commerce raiders drove much of the US merchant marine from the seas, much of this expanded trade with the North was carried by British ships — another economic shot in the arm that helped discourage British intervention in the war.

By the second year of the conflict, Britain was willing to tolerate extraordinary northern extensions of the blockade... In 1863 a northern court extended the doctrine of continuous voyage beyond any previous precedent. In February a Union warship captured the British vessel Peterhoff in the Caribbean, where she was on her way to Mexico with a cargo of military supplies. The Union navy had good reason to suspect that the ultimate destination of this cargo was the Confederacy... A large portion of the British public

railed against Yankee "overbearing and domineering insolence". But the British Foreign Office merely recorded the precedent, which Britain cited a half-century later to justify seizure of American ships carrying contraband to neutral Holland intended for overland trans-shipment to Germany.

Cooler heads recognized the wisdom of Lincoln's reported words: "One war at a time." The Union army's capacity to carry on even that one war was threatened by an aspect of the Trent crisis unknown to the public and rarely mentioned by historians. In 1861 British India was the Union's source of saltpeter, the principal ingredient of gunpowder. The war had drawn down stockpiles to the danger point. IN the fall of 1861 Seward sent a member of the du Pont company to England to buy all available supplies of saltpeter there and on the way from India. The agent did so, and was loading 5 ships with 2,300 tons of the mineral when news of the Trent reached London. The British government clamped an embargo on all shipments to the United States until the settlement was resolved. No settlement, no saltpeter.

#13 The River War in 1862

Shiloh launched the country onto the floodtide of total war. Before Shiloh, Grant had believed that one more Union victory would end the rebellion; now he "gave up all idea of saving the Union except by complete conquest".

Although Grant had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat at Pittsburg Landing, northern opinion at first focused more on those jaws than on victory.

The capture of New Orleans illustrated the strategic wisdom of Lincoln's desire to attack several places simultaneously. Union pressure in Tennessee had forced southern leaders to strip Louisiana of an army division (which fought at Shiloh) and 8 gunboats (the fleet destroyed at Memphis).

#14 The Sinews of War

So long as the South seemed to be winning the war, Jefferson Davis was an esteemed leader. But adversity clouded his reputation... Austere and humorless, Davis did not suffer fools gladly. He lacked Lincoln's ability to work with partisans of a different persuasion for the common cause. Lincoln would rather win the war than an argument; Davis seemed to prefer winning the argument. Although he rarely defended himself in public, he sometimes privately lashed back at critics in a manner that only increased their hostility.

By the winter of 1861-62 the bloom had faded from southern enthusiasm for the war.

The main purpose of conscription was to stimulate volunteering by the threat of coercion rather than by its actual use. Thus the law allowed 30 days for potential draftsmen to avoid the stigma of the draft by volunteering... To a degree this carrot and stick method worked. During 1862 the total number of men in the Confederate army increased from about 325,000 to 450,000 — the net gain was approximately 200,000.

Despite its success in getting more men into the army, conscription was the most unpopular act of the Confederate government. Yeoman farmers who could not buy their way out of the army voted with their feet and escaped to the woods or swamps. Conscription represented an unprecedented extension of government power among a people on whom such power had rested lightly in the past... It dramatized a fundamental paradox in the Confederate war effort: the need for Hamiltonian means to achieve Jeffersonian ends.

Of the three principal methods to finance the war — taxation, borrowing and fiat money — taxation is the least inflationary. But it also seemed the least desirable to southerners in 1861. Antebellum Americans had been one of the most lightly taxed peoples on earth. And the per capita burden in the South had been only half that in the free states. A rural society in which one-third of the people were slaves, the South had few public services and therefore little need for taxes.

Although the proportion of loans and taxes increased slightly in later years, the Confederacy financed itself primarily with a billion and a half paper dollars that depreciated from the moment they came into existence... Southern states, counties, cities, even private businesses also began to issue notes and small-denomination "shinplasters". Shortages of high-quality paper and skilled engravers in the South meant that these as well as the Confederate notes were crudely printed and easily counterfeited. Some counterfeit notes could be detected because of their superior quality to the real thing. Awash in a sea of paper, the South experienced runaway inflation.

Military reverses in the spring of 1862 moved the index up 100% in the first half of the year... By the beginning of 1863 it took seven dollars to buy what one dollar had bought two years earlier. This kind of inflation became, in effect, a form of confiscatory taxation whose burden fell most heavily on the poor. It exacerbated class tensions and caused a growing alienation of the white lower classes from the Confederate cause.

By 1862 the Confederate economy had become unmanageable... Under the pressures of blockade, invasion, and a flood of paper money, the South's unbalanced agrarian economy simply could not produce both guns and butter without shortages and inflation.

The northern economy proved more adaptable to the demands of war... Unlike the Confederacy, which relied on loans for less than two-fifths of its war finances, the Union raised two-thirds of its revenues by this means. And while the South ultimately obtained only 5% of its funds by actual taxation, the northern government raised 21% in this manner... The first federal income tax in American history was enacted on August 5, 1861. This revolutionary measure grew from a need to assure the financial community that sufficient revenue would be raised to pay interest on bonds. The Republican architects of the 1861 income tax made it modestly progressive by imposing the 3% tax on annual incomes over \$800, thereby exempting most wage-earners.

By its legislation to finance the war, emancipate the slaves, and invest public land in future growth, the 37th Congress did more than any other in history to change the course of national life. As one scholar has aptly written, this Congress drafted "the blueprint for modern America". This new America of big business, heavy industry, and capital-intensive agriculture that surpassed Britain to become the foremost industrial nation by 1880 and become the world's breadbasket for much of the 20th century probably would have come about even if the Civil War had never occurred. But the war molded the particular configuration of this new society.

#15 Billy Yank's Chickahominy Blues

One reason for the high casualties of Civil War battles was the disparity between traditional tactics and modern weapons. The tactical legacy of 18th century and Napoleonic warfare had emphasized close-order formations of soldier trained to maneuver in concert and fire by volleys. To be sure, some citizen-soldiers of American Revolution had fought Indian style from behind trees or rocks, but they did so mainly because they lacked training and discipline. The ideal for Washington's Continentals and Napoleon's veterans as well as Wellington's redcoats remained the compact, cohesive columns and lines of automatons who moved and fired with machine-like efficiency. These tactics also stressed the offensive. Assault troops advanced with cadenced step, firing volleys on command and then double-timing the last few yards to pierce the enemy line with a bayonet charge. Napoleon used his artillery in conjunction with infantry assaults, moving the field guns forward with the foot soldiers to blast holes in enemy ranks and soften them up for the final charge. Americans used these tactics with great success in the Mexican War. West Point teaching stressed the tactical offensive. Most of the top Civil War officers had fought in Mexico and/or attended West Point; from both experiences they had absorbed the message that the tactical offensive based on close-order infantry assaults supported by artillery won battles. In Mexico this happened without high casualties because the basic infantry weapon was the single-shot muzzle-loading smoothbore musket; its effective range was about 80 yards on a still day.

The transition from smoothbore to rifle had two main effects: it multiplied casualties and it strengthened the tactical defensive. Officers trained and experienced in the old tactics were slow to recognize these changes. Time and again generals on both sides ordered close-order assaults in the traditional formation. With an effective range of 300 to 400 yards, defenders firing rifles decimated these attacks.

Marksmen could pick off targets at distances up to half a mile. Sharpshooters singled out enemy officers, which helps to explain why officers and especially generals had higher casualty rates than privates. Officers on both sides soon began to stay off horseback when possible and to wear a private's uniform with only a sewn-on shoulder patch to designate their rank. The old-fashioned cavalry charge against infantry, already obsolescent, became obsolete in the face of rifles that could knock down horses long before their riders got within saber or pistol range.

The quest of both sides for victory through tactical assaults in the old manner proved a chimera in the new age of the rifle. The tactical predominance of the defence helps explain why the Civil War was so long and bloody. The rifle and trench ruled Civil War battlefields as thoroughly as the machine-gun and trench rules those of World War I.

#16 We Must Free the Slaves or Be Ourselves Subdued

The failure of McClellan's Peninsula campaign was not alone a military failure; it represented also the downfall of the limited war for limited ends that McClellan favored. From now on the North would fight not to preserve the old Union but to destroy it and build a new one on the ashes.

Contemporary commentators, of course, could not foresee the profound irony of Lee's achievement. If McClellan's campaign had succeeded, the war might have ended. The Union probably would have been restored with minimal destruction in the South. Slavery would have survived in only slightly modified form, at least for a time. By defeating McClellan, Lee assured a prolongation of the war until it destroyed slavery, the Old South, and nearly everything the Confederacy was fighting for. After the Seven Days', Union policy took a decisive turn toward total war.

The 'copperhead' faction of the northern Democratic party opposed the transformation of the Civil War into a total war — a war to destroy the old South instead of to restore the old Union. In Republican eyes, opposition to Republican war aims became opposition to the war itself.

#17 Carry Me Back to Old Virginny

"If he can't fight himself, he excels in making others ready to fight."

- President Lincoln, putting McClellan in charge of the defense of Washington

History can at least record Antietam as a strategic Union success. Lee's invasion of Maryland recoiled more quickly than Bragg's invasion of Kentucky. Nearly one-third of the rebels who marched into Maryland became casualties... At Whitehall and the White House the battle of Antietam also went down as a northern victory. It frustrated Confederate hopes for British recognition and it precipitated the Emancipation Proclamation. The slaughter at Sharpsburg therefore proved to have been one of the war's great turning points.

#18 John Bull's Virginia Reel

"We must continue to be lookers-on till the war shall have taken a more decided turn."

- British Prime Minister Palmerston (1862)

Many Englishmen had cheered the Greek fight for independence or the struggle of Hungary and Italian states to throw off Hapsburg rule. Some viewed the South's revolution against Yankee overlordship in a similar light. "Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South," said William Gladstone in a celebrated speech at Newcastle in October 1862, "have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is more than either; they have made a nation".

The canker in this image of southerners as freedom-loving nationalists, of course, was slavery. One thing upon which Englishmen prided themselves was their role in suppressing the transatlantic slave trade and abolishing slavery in the West Indies. To support a rebellion in behalf of slavery would be un-British. To accept the notion that the South fought for independence rather than slavery required considerable mental legerdemain. But so long as the North did not fight for freedom, many Britons could see no moral superiority in the Union. If the North wanted to succeed in "their struggle for the sympathies of Englishmen," warned a radical newspaper, "they must abolish slavery".

But these issues of ideology and sentiment played a secondary role in determining Britain's foreign policy. A veteran of half-century in British politics, Lord Palmerston was an exponent of Realpolitik. When pro-Southern members of Parliament launched a drive in the summer of 1862 for British recognition of the Confederacy, he professed not to see the point. The South, he wrote, would not be "a bit more independent for our saying so unless we followed up our Declaration by taking Part with them in the war." Few in Britain were ready for that.

Antietam ended the South's best chance for European intervention. It did not end irrevocably, for the military situation remained fluid and most Britons remained certain that the North could never win. But at least they had avoided losing. Antietam had, in Charles Francis Adams's understatement, "done a good deal to restore our drooping credit here." It had done more; by enabling Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation the battle also ensured that Britain would think twice about intervening against a government fighting for freedom as well as Union.

The Emancipation Proclamation envisaged a limited role for black soldiers "to garrison forts, positions, stations and other places" instead of to fight as front-line troops. But reality had a way of surpassing policy.

Rumors and reports of massacres (of black prisoners) vexed Union authorities through the rest of the war and forced them more than once to threaten retaliation. This was one reason for the hesitation to use black troops in combat, where they ran a heightened risk of capture. The Confederate refusal to treat captured black soldiers as legitimate prisoners of war contributed to the eventual breakdown in prisoner of war exchanges that had tragic consequences for both sides.

Northern diplomats were disappointed by the initial skeptical response of many Englishmen to the Emancipation Proclamation. But as the real import of the edict sank in, and as Lincoln made clear on January 1 that he really meant it, British antislavery sentiment mobilized for the Union. Mass meeting took place throughout the kingdom... Young Henry Adams, whose mood tended to swing from despair to euphoria, was thrilled by the outpouring of British pro-Union expressions. "The Emancipation Proclamation had done more for us here than all our former victories and our diplomacy," wrote Henry with hyperbole to his brother.

#19 Three Rivers in Winter, 1862-1863

A prevalent theme in complaints about Grant concerned his drinking. It is hard to separate fact from fiction in this matter. Many wartime stories of Grant's drunkenness are false; others are at best dubious. Grant's meteoric rise to fame provoked jealousy in the hearts of men who indulged in gossip to denigrate him. Subject to headaches brought on by strain and loss of sleep, Grant sometimes acted unwell in a manner to give observers the impression he had been drinking. But even when the myths have been stripped away, a hard substratum of truth about Grant's drinking remains. He may have been an alcoholic in the medical meaning of that term. He was a binge drinker. For months he could go without liquor, but if he once imbibed it was hard for him to stop. His wife and his chief of staff John A. Rawlins were his best protectors. With their help, Grant stayed on the wagon nearly all the time during the war. If he did get drunk (and this is much disputed by historians) it never happened at a time crucial to military operations. Recognized today as

an illness, alcoholism in Grant's time was considered a moral weakness. Grant himself believed it so and battled to overcome the shame and guilt of his weakness. In the end, as a recent scholar has suggested, his predisposition to alcoholism may have made him a better general. His struggle for self-discipline enabled him to understand and discipline others; the humiliation of prewar failures gave him a quiet humility that was conspicuously absent from so many generals with a reputation to protect; because Grant had nowhere to go but up, he could act with more boldness and decisions than commanders who dared not risk failure.

#20 Fire in the Rear

The Enrollment Act of 1863 was designed mainly as a device to stimulate volunteering by the threat of a draft. As such it worked, but with such inefficiency, corruption and perceived injustice that it became one of the most divisive issues of the war and served as a model of how not to conduct a draft in future wars. By the beginning of 1863 recruitment in the North arrived at the same impasse it had reached in the South a year earlier. The men likely to enlist for patriotic reasons or adventure or peer-group pressure were already in the army. War weariness and the grim realities of army life discouraged further volunteering. The booming war economy had shrunk the number of unemployed men to the vanishing point. Like the Confederacy in early 1862, the Union army in 1863 faced a serious manpower loss through expiration of enlistments. This prompted Congress to act.

What kind of conscription was this, in which only 7% of the men whose names were drawn actually served? The answer: it was not conscription at all, but a clumsy carrot and stick to stimulate volunteering. The stick was the threat of being drafted and the carrot was a bounty for volunteering. In the end this method worked... While the social and economic cost of this process was high, Americans seemed willing to pay the price because compulsory service was contrary to the country's values and traditions... Yet in the end, bounty-stimulated volunteering came to be seen as an even greater evil than the draft.

The half-billion dollars paid in bounties by the North represented something of a transfer of wealth from rich to poor — an ironic counterpoint to the theme of rich man's war/poor man's fight. By 1864 a canny recruit could pyramid local, regional, and national bounties into grants of \$1000 or more.

Immigrants were proportionally under-represented in the Union's armed services. Of some 2 million white soldiers and sailors, half a million had been born abroad. While immigrants therefore constituted 25% of the servicemen, 30% of the males of military age in the Union states were foreign-born. Despite the fighting reputation of the Irish Brigade, the Irish were the most under-represented group in proportion to population, followed by German Catholics. Other immigrant groups enlisted in rough proportion to their share of the population. The under-representation of Catholic immigrants can be explained in part by the Democratic allegiance of these groups and their opposition to Republican war aims, especially emancipation. Some of them had not yet filed for citizenship and were therefore exempt from the draft.

The specter of class conflict haunted the South. As in the North, conscription worsened the friction. Manpower needs had forced the Confederate Congress in September 1862 to raise the upper age limit from 35 to 45. This made the heads of many poor families suddenly subject to the draft at a time when that summer's drought had devastated food crops. And Congress added insult to injury by a provision to exempt one white man on every plantation with 20 or more slaves.

Refugees exacerbated the South's food crisis. Tens of thousands of civilians fled their homes as the Yankee juggernaut bore down on them. Thousands of others were exiled by Confederate officers who turned their cities in a battle zone (Corinth and Fredericksburg, for example) or by commanders of Union occupation forces who insisted that they take the oath of allegiance or leave. All wars produce refugees; these homeless people generally suffer more than the rest of the civilian population; in the American Civil War this suffering was confined almost entirely to the South.

#21 Long Remember: The Summer of '63

Although civilians were going hungry in Mississippi, Grant was confident that his soldiers would not. A powerful army on the move could seize supplies that penniless women and children could not afford to buy... Some of these midwestern farm boys proved to be expert foragers. When an irate planter rode up on a mule and complained to a division commander that plundering troops had robbed him of everything he owned, the general looked him in the eye and said: "Well, those men didn't belong to my division at all, because if they were my men they wouldn't have left you that mule."

With confidence bred by success, northern boys charged the maze of trenches, rifle pits, and artillery ringing the landward side of Vicksburg. But as they emerged into the open the rebel lines came alive with sheets of fire that stopped the bluecoats in their tracks. Ensnared behind the most formidable works of the war, the rebels had taken heart. They proved the theory that one soldier under cover was the equal of at least three in the open.

The Fourth of July 1863 was the most memorable Independence Day in American history since that first one four score and seven years earlier. Far away in Pennsylvania the high tide of the Confederacy receded from Gettysburg. Here in Mississippi, white flags sprouted above rebel trenches, the emaciated troops marched out to stack arms, and a Union division moved into Vicksburg to raise

the stars and stripes over the courthouse.

The capture of Vicksburg was the most important northern strategic victory of the war, perhaps meriting Grant's later assertion that "the fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell."

Important as they were, Grant's achievements in Mississippi took second place in public attention to events in the Virginia theater. The Union ultimately won the war mainly by victories in the West, but the Confederacy more than once came close to winning it in the East. During the spring and summer of 1863, Robert E Lee scored his greatest success in this effort — followed by his greatest failure.

Like a rabbit mesmerized by the gray fox, Hooker was frozen into immobility and did not use half his power at any time in the battle. The triumph at Chancellorsville, however, came at great cost. The Confederates suffered 13,000 casualties, 22% of their forces (the Union figures were 17,000 and 15%). The most grievous loss was Stonewall Jackson, who had done so much to make the victory possible. And the boost that the battle gave to southern morale proved in the end harmful, for it bred an overconfidence in their own prowess and a contempt for the enemy that led to disaster. Believing his troops invincible, Lee was to ask them to do the impossible.

The Confederacy could not rest of Lee's laurels in Virginia or Beauregard's at Charleston. Although beaten, Hooker's army still bristled 90,000 strong along the Rappahannock. Grant was on the move in Mississippi. Rosecrans showed signs of motion in middle Tennessee. Pressed on all sides by invading forces, the South needed an offensive-defensive stroke to relieve the pressure.

In sum, Lee concluded "it becomes a question between Virginia and Mississippi." Lee's opinion carried so much weight that Davis felt compelled to concur. The President remained disquieted by news from Mississippi, however, and called Lee to Richmond for a strategy conference on May 15. The time the Virginian dazzled Davis and Seddon with a proposal to invade Pennsylvania with a reinforced army and inflict a crushing defeat on the Yankees in their own backyard. This would remove the enemy threat on the Rappahannock, take the armies out of war-ravaged Virginia, and enable Lee to feed his troops in the enemy's country. It would also strengthen Peace Democrats, discredit Republicans, reopen the question of foreign recognition, and perhaps even conquer peace and recognition from the Union government itself. The cabinet was awed by this vision. Postmaster-General John Reagon was the sole dissenter. The only member of the cabinet from west of the Mississippi (Texas), Reagon still thought that preservation of Vicksburg as a link between the Confederacy's two halves should have top priority. But Lee convinced the others that even if the climate failed to drive the Yankees out of Mississippi, a successful invasion of Pennsylvania would draw them out. In the post-Chancellorsville aura of invincibility, anything seemed possible. "There were never such men in an army before," said Lee of his soldiers.

Northerners abroad understood only too well the stakes involved in military operations during June 1863. "The truth is," wrote Henry Adams, "all depends on the progress of our armies."

Finally, about 3:00pm, Longstreet reluctantly ordered the attack (on the centre of the Union line at Gettysburg). The Confederate bombardment seemed to have disabled the enemy's artillery; it was now or never. With parade-ground precision, Pickett's three brigades moved out joined by six or more from Hill's division on their left and two others in reserve. It was a magnificent mile-wide spectacle, a picture-book view of war that participants on both sides remembered with awe until their dying moment — which for many came within the next hour. Pickett's charge represented the Confederate war effort in microcosm: matchless valor, apparent initial success, and ultimate disaster. As the gray infantry poured across the gently undulating farmland with seemingly irresistible force, northern artillery suddenly erupted in a savage cascade, sending shot and shell among the southern regiments and changing to canister as they kept coming. The Union guns had not been knocked out after all; their canny chief of artillery, General Henry J Hunt, had ordered them to cease firing to lure on the rebels and conserve ammunition to welcome them. Yankee infantry behind stone walls opened up at 200 yards while Vermont, Ohio and New York regiments on the left and right swung out to rake both flanks of the attacking force. The southern assault collapsed under this unbearable pressure from front and flanks. Two or three hundred Virginians and Tennesseans under General Lewis Armistead breached the first Union line, where Armistead was mortally wounded with his hand on a Yankee cannon and his followers fell like leaves in an autumn wind. Of the 14,000 Confederates who had gone forward, scarcely half returned. Pickett's own division lost two-thirds of its men; his three brigadiers and all thirteen colonels were killed or wounded.

Lee and his men would go on to earn further laurels. But they never again possessed the power and reputation they carried into Pennsylvania those palmy midsummer days of 1863. Though the war was destined to continue for two more bloody years, Gettysburg and Vicksburg proved to have been its crucial turning point.

#23 When This Cruel War Is Over

Unhappily for Jefferson Davis, elections for the Confederate Congress took place in the fall of 1863 when southern morale was at low ebb. The Davis administration suffered a more severe rebuke from voters than the Lincoln administration had sustained the previous year in a similar situation. The difference resulted not only from the greater calamity to Confederate arms but also from the

different political structures in North and South. Formal political parties did not exist in the Confederacy. This state of affairs arose from two main causes: the erosion of the two-party system in the 1850s and the perceived need for a united front during the emergencies of secession and war... Southerners considered this circumstance a source of strength. But in fact, as historians now recognize, the absence of parties was actually a source of weakness. In the North, the two-party system disciplined and channeled political activity. The Republican party became the means for mobilizing war resources, raising taxes, creating a new financial system, initiating emancipation, and enacting conscription. Democrats opposed most of these measures; the existence of the well-defined opposition caused Republicans to close ranks when the chips were down. Because measures were supported or opposed by parties, voters could identify those responsible for them and register their approval or disapproval at the polls by voting a party ticket. Both parties, of course, used their well-oiled machinery to rally voters to their side. In the Confederacy, by contrast, the Davis administration had no such means to mobilize support. No parties meant no institutionalized discipline over congressmen or governors. Davis could not invoke party loyalty and patronage on behalf of his policies, as Lincoln. Opposition to the Davis administration became personal or factional and therefore difficult to deal with. In the North, where nearly all state governors were Republicans, the ties of party bound them to the war effort. In the South the obstructionist activities of several governors hindered the centralized war effort because the centrifugal tendencies of state's rights were not restrained by the centripetal force of party. The Confederate Constitution limited the president to a single six-year term, so Davis had no reason to create a party organization for re-election. Such government policies as conscription, impressment, the tax in kind, and management of finances were the main issues in the congressional elections of 1863. Opposition candidates ran on an individual rather than a party basis, and the government could not muster political artillery to shoot at all these scattered targets.

Historians have identified "proto-parties" emerging in the Confederacy by 1863. Former Whigs were most prominent in the crystallizing opposition.

By the fall of 1863 General Joseph E Johnston had become, in the words of another Confederate general, a "shield" behind which critics of the administration "gathered themselves... and shot arrows at President Davis."

Lincoln never deviated from the theory that secession was illegal and southern states therefore remained in the Union. Rebels had temporarily taken over their governments; the task of reconstruction was to return 'loyal' officials to power. At one level all Republicans subscribed to this theory of indestructible states in an indissoluble Union; to believe otherwise would stultify their war aims... But at another level, no one could deny that the southern states had gone out of the Union and had formed a new government with all the attributes of a nation... Many Republicans subscribed to one variant or another that by attempting the treasonable act of secession, southern states had committed 'state suicide' (Charles Sumner's phrase) or had 'forfeited' their rights as states and reverted to the condition of territories.

Lincoln's renomination and re-election were by no means assured, despite folk wisdom about the danger of swapping horses in midstream. No incumbent president had been renominated since 1840, and none had been re-elected since 1832. Even the war did not necessarily change the rules of this game. If matters were going badly at the front, voters would punish the man in charge. And if the man in charge was not conducting affairs to the satisfaction of his party, he might fail of renomination. The Republican party contained several men who in 1860 had considered themselves better qualified for the presidency than the man who won it.

#24 If It Takes All Summer

"Upon the progress of our arms," said Lincoln late in the war, "all else chiefly depends." Never was this more true than in 1864, when "all else", included Lincoln's own re-election as well as the fate of emancipation and of the Union.

In the spring of 1864 the progress of Union arms seemed assured... The Union's three best generals — Grant, Sheridan, Sherman — in top commands, the days of the Confederacy appeared numbered. After their setbacks during the latter half of 1863, rebel armies had suffered through a hard winter of short rations. The South was scraping the bottom of the manpower barrel... Southern forces numbered fewer than half the enemy's as spring sunshine began to dry the red clay roads of Virginia and Georgia. But there were flaws in the Union sword and hidden strengths in the Confederate shield. Northern success paradoxically created military weakness. Union forces had to detach many divisions to police 100,000 square miles of conquered territory. Invading armies had to drop off large numbers of troops to guard their supply lines against cavalry and guerrilla raids.

The morale of the Army of Northern Virginia remained high. Most of the Confederate soldiers were veterans. Many of the veterans in the Union army were due to go home in 1864 when their three-year enlistments were up. If this happened, the South might well seize victory from the jaws of defeat. The Union Congress did not emulate its southern counterpart and require these veterans to re-enlist... Some 136,000 veterans re-enlisted. Another hundred thousand or so decided not to... To replace wounded, killed and discharged soldiers the Union armies mustered conscripts, substitutes, and bounty men who had been obtained by the first draft in 1863. This procedure affected most the Army of the Potomac. Veteran officers and men regarded most of these new recruits with contempt... Much of the North's apparent superiority in numbers this dissolved in 1864. "The men we have been getting in this way nearly all desert," Grant complained in September, "and out of five reported North as having enlisted we don't get more than one

effective soldier."

Southern leaders discerned these flaws in their foe's sword. They hoped to exploit them in such a manner as to influence the 1864 presidential election in the North. The Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz had defined war as the pursuit of political goals by other means. Confederate strategy in 1864 certainly conformed to this definition. If southern armies could hold out until election, war weariness in the North might cause the voters to elect a Peace Democrat who would negotiate Confederate independence.

These four weeks (May-June 1864) had been exhausting as well as bloody beyond all precedent. The Federals had suffered some 44,000 casualties, the Confederates about 25,000. This was a new kind of relentless, ceaseless warfare. These two armies had previously fought several big set-piece battles followed by the retreat of one or the other behind the nearest river, after which both sides rested and recuperated before going at it again. Since the beginning of this campaign, however, the armies had never been out of contact with each other...

Grant's purpose was not a war of attrition — though numerous historians have mislabelled it thus. From the outset he tried to maneuver Lee into open-field combat, where Union superiority in numbers and firepower could cripple the enemy. It was Lee who turned it into a war of attrition by skillfully matching Grant's moves and confronting him with an entrenched defence at every turn. Although it galled Lee to yield the initiative to an opponent, his defensive strategy exacted to enemy casualties for every one of his own. This was a rate of attrition that might stun northern voters into denying Lincoln re-election and ending the war. To avoid such a consequence Grant had vowed to fight it out on this line if it took all summer.

...Thus ended a seven-week campaign of movement and battle whose brutal intensity was unmatched in the war. Little wonder that the Army of the Potomac did not fight at Petersburg with "the vigor and force" it had shown in the Wilderness — it was no longer the same army. Many of its bravest and best had been killed or wounded; thousands of others, their enlistments expired or about to expire, had left the war or were unwilling to risk their lives during the last few days before leaving.

Despite the horrendous losses the Army of the Potomac had inflicted a similar percentage of casualties (at least 35,000) on Lee's smaller army, had driven them south 80 miles, cut part of Lee's communications with the rest of the South, pinned him down in defense of Richmond and Petersburg, and smothered the famed mobility of the Army of Northern Virginia.

#25 After Four Years of Failure

The months of July and August 1864 brought a greater crisis of northern morale than the same months in 1862. The theme of homefront war songs (which enjoyed an extraordinary popularity during the conflict, with sheet music selling millions of copies) took a sudden turn from ebullient patriotism to a longing for peace. "When This Cruel War Is Over", with its haunting refrain "Weeping, sad and lonely" became the best-seller of 1864.

#26 We Are Going To Be Wiped Off the Earth

"The people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war."

- General Phillip Sheridan, cutting a swathe through the Shenandoah Valley

On September 18 Sheridan's 37,000 bluecoats attacked the 15,000 Confederates at Winchester. The wagon train of one Union corps tangled up the troops of another and almost halted the assault before it began. But with much energy and profanity Sheridan straightened out the jam, got his troops into line, and led them forward in an irresistible wave. Northern cavalry with their rapid-firing carbines played a conspicuous role.

Partisan warfare along the Kansas-Missouri border continued the violence than had begun in 1864. The vicious conflict between Border Ruffians and Jayhawkers expanded a hundredfold after 1861 as they gained sanction from Confederate and Union governments. The guerrilla fighting in Missouri produced a form of terrorism that exceeded anything else in the war. Jayhawking Kansas and bushwhacking Missourians took no prisoners, killed in cold blood, plundered and pillaged and burned (but almost never raped) without stint. Jayhawkers initiated a scorched-earth policy against rebel sympathisers three years before Sheridan practiced it in the Shenandoah Valley. Guerrilla bands in Missouri provided a training ground for outlaw gangs that emerged after the war — notably the James and Younger brothers.

Many Union soldiers had a chance to register their opinions at the ballot box (of the 1864 presidential election). Here was a bold experiment in democracy: allowing fighting men to vote in what amounted to a referendum on whether they should continue fighting... Twelve of the states allowing absentee voting provided for the separate tabulation of soldier ballots. Lincoln received 119,754 of them to McClellan's 34,291, a majority of 78% for the president compared with 53% of the civilian vote in those states.

#27 South Carolina Must Be Destroyed

New industries had blossomed in the hothouse climate of the southern wartime economy. Gunpowder mills, ordnance plants, machine

shops and the like sprang up at Augusta, Selma, Atlanta and numerous other places, while the Tredegar Works in Richmond turned out iron for every conceivable military use. But Yankee invasions and raids sooner or later destroyed most of this new industry, along with anything else of economic value within reach, so that by war's end much of the South was an economic desert. The war not only killed one-quarter of the Confederacy's white men of military age. It also killed two-fifths of southern livestock, wrecked half of the farm machinery, ruined thousands of miles of railroad, left scores of thousands of farms and plantations in weeds and disrepair, and destroyed the principal labor system on which southern productivity had been based. Two-thirds of assessed southern wealth vanished in the war. The wreckage of the southern economy caused the 1860s to become the decade of least economic growth in American history before the 1930s... In 1860 the average per capita income of southerners including slaves was about two-thirds of the northern average; after the war southern income fell to less than two-fifths of the northern average and did not rise above that level for the rest of the 19th century. Such were the economic consequences of the South's bid for independence.

#28 We Are All Americans

The Confederacy had one last string to its bow — a black string. Early in the war a few voices had urged the arming of slaves to fight for their masters. But to most southerners such a proposal seemed at best ludicrous and at worst treasonable... After the fall of Vicksburg and the defeat at Gettysburg, however, the voices suggesting such a thing had become less lonely. Had secession been a means to the end of preserving slavery? Or was slavery one of the means for preserving the Confederacy, to be sacrificed if it no longer served that purpose? Few southerners would have recognized any dilemma: slavery and independence were each a means as well as an end in symbolic relationship with each other, each essential for the survival of both. By 1864, however, southerners in growing numbers were beginning to wonder if they might have to make a choice between them.

"I want to see Richmond."

- President Abraham Lincoln, after the city's fall

Lee knew that he must pull out... Everything of military and industrial value in Richmond was put to the torch. As night came and the army departed, mobs took over and the flames spread. Southerners burned more of their own capital than the enemy had burned of Atlanta or Columbia... Following the northern soldiers into Richmond came a civilian — the number one civilian, in fact, Abraham Lincoln... Lincoln's visit to Richmond produced the most unforgettable scenes of this unforgettable war. With an escort of only ten sailors, the president walked the streets while Admiral David Porter peered nervously at every window for would-be assassins. But the Emancipator was soon surrounded by an impenetrable cordon of black people shouting "Glory to God! Glory! Glory! Glory!" Overwhelmed by rare emotions, Lincoln said to one black man who fell on his knees in front of him: "Don't kneel to me. That is not right. You must kneel to God only, and thank Him for the liberty you will enjoy hereafter."

Near Appomattox Courthouse... almost surrounded, outnumbered by five or six to one in effective troops, Lee faced up to the inevitable. One of his subordinates suggested an alternative to surrender: the men could take to the woods and become guerrillas. No, said Lee, who did not want all of Virginia devastated as the Shenandoah Valley had been... "We would bring on a state of affairs it would take the country years to recover from."

The surrender completed, the two generals saluted somberly and parted. "This will live in history," said one of Grant's aides. But the Union commander seemed distracted. Having given birth to a reunited nation, he experienced a post-partum melancholy. "I felt . . . sad and depressed," Grant wrote, "at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, thought that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought." As news of the surrender spread through Union camps, batteries began firing joyful salutes until Grant ordered them stopped. "The war is over," he said; "the rebels are our countrymen again, and the best sight of rejoicing after the victory will be to abstain from all demonstrations." To help bring those former rebels back in the Union, Grant sent three days' rations for 25,000 men across the lines. This perhaps did something to ease the psychological as well as physical pain of Lee's soldiers.

So did an important symbolic gesture at a formal ceremony three days later when Confederate troops marched up to stack arms and surrender their flags. As they came, many among them shared the sentiments of one officer: "Was this to be the end of all our marching and fighting for the past four years? I could not keep back the tears." The Union officer in charge of the surrender ceremony was Joshua L. Chamberlain, the fighting professor from Bowdoin who won a medal of honor for Little Round Top, had been twice wounded since then, and was now a major general. Leading the southerners as they marched toward two of Chamberlain's brigades standing at attention was John B. Gordon, one of Lee's hardest fighters who now commanded Stonewall Jackson's old corps. First in line of march behind him was the Stonewall Brigade, five regiments containing 210 ragged survivors of four years of war. As Gordon approached at the head of these men with "his chin drooped to his breast, downhearted and dejected in appearance," Chamberlain gave a brief order, and a bugle call rang out. Instantly the Union soldiers shifted from order arms to carry arms, the salute of honor. Hearing the sound General Gordon looked up in surprise, and with sudden realization turned smartly to Chamberlain, dipped his sword in salute, and ordered his own men to carry arms. These enemies in many a bloody battle ended the war not with the shame on one side and exultation on the other but with a soldier's "mutual salutation and farewell."

Epilogue: To the Shoals of Victory

...Weary, ragged Confederate soldiers straggling homeward begging or stealing food for dispirited civilians who often did not know where their own next meal was coming from; joyous black people celebrating the jubilee of a freedom whose boundaries they did not yet discern; gangs of southern deserters, guerrillas and outlaws ravaging a region that would not know real peace for many years to come.

- On the immediate aftermath of the war

The terms of the peace and the dimensions of black freedom would preoccupy the country for a decade or more.

Was the liberation of 4 million slaves and the preservation of the Union worth the cost? That question too will probably never cease to be debated — but in 1865 few black people and not many northerners doubted the answer. In time even a good many southerners came to agree the sentiments of Virginian Woodrow Wilson expressed in 1880: "Because I love the South, I rejoice in the failure of the Confederacy... Slavery was enervating out Southern society... [Nevertheless] I recognize and pay loving tribute... to the immortal courage of the soldiers of the Confederacy." Wilson's words embedded themes that would help reconcile generations of southerners to defeat: their glorious forebears had fought courageously for what they believed was right; perhaps they deserved to win; but in the long run it was a good thing they lost. This Lose Cause mentality took on the proportions of a heroic legend...

But a persistent question has nagged historians and mythologists alike: if Lee was such a genius and his legions so invincible, why did they lose?

There are several variants of an interpretation that emphasizes a gradual development of superior northern leadership... Lee's strategic vision was limited to the Virginia theater, and the Confederate government neglected the West, where Union armies developed a strategic design and the generals to carry it out, while southern forces floundered under incompetent commanders who lost the war in the West. Jefferson Davis was better qualified by training and experience to lead a nation at war but by 1863, Lincoln's remarkable abilities gave him a wide edge over Davis as a war leader, while in Grant and Sherman the North acquired commanders with a concept of total war and the determination to make it succeed.

Most attempts to explain southern defeat or northern victory lack the dimension of contingency — the recognition that at numerous critical points during the war things might have gone altogether differently. Four major turning points defined the eventual outcome: In the summer of 1862, the counter-offensives of Jackson and Lee in Virginia and Bragg and Kirby Smith in the West arrested the momentum of a seemingly imminent Union victory; In the fall of 1862 battles at Antietam and Perryville threw back Confederate invasions, forestalled European mediation and recognition of the Confederacy and perhaps prevented a Democratic victory in the northern elections of 1862... and set the stage for the Emancipation Proclamation which enlarged the scope and purpose of the conflict. The third critical point came in the summer of 1863 when Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Chattanooga turned the tide toward ultimate northern victory. One more reversal of that tide seemed possible in the summer of 1864, when appalling Union casualties and apparent lack of progress in Virginia brought the North to the brink of peace negotiations and the election of a Democratic president. But the capture of Atlanta and Sheridan's destruction of Early's army in the Shenandoah Valley clinched matters for the North. Only then did it become possible to speak of the inevitability of Union victory.

Defeat caused demoralization and loss of will; victory pumps up morale and the will to win... These changes of mood were caused mainly by events on the battlefield. Northern victory and southern defeat in the war cannot be understood apart from the contingency that hung over every campaign, every battle, every election, every decision during the war. This phenomenon of contingency can best be presented in narrative a format — a format this book has tried to provide.

Secession and slavery were killed, never to be revived in the century and a quarter since Appomattox. These results signified a broader transformation of American society and polity punctuated if not alone achieved by the war. Before 1861 the two words "United States" were generally rendered as a plural noun: "the United States are a republic." The war marked a transition of the United States to a singular noun. The "Union" also became a nation.

The old federal republic in which the national government had rarely touched the average citizen except through the post-office gave way to a more centralized polity that taxed the people directly and created an internal revenue bureau to collect these taxes, drafted the men into the army, expanded the jurisdiction of federal courts, created a national currency and a national banking system, and established the first national agency for social welfare. This change in the federal balance paralleled a radical shift of political power from South to North... After the war a century passed before a resident of an ex-Confederate state was elected president.

From a broader perspective it may have been the North that was exceptional and unique before the Civil War. The South more closely resembled a majority of the societies in the world than did the rapidly changing North during the antibellum generation. Most societies in the world remained predominantly rural, agricultural, and labor-intensive... The North — along with a few countries of northwestern Europe — hurtled forward eagerly toward a future of industrial capitalism that many southerners found distasteful if

not frightening; the South remained proudly and even defiantly rooted in the past before 1861.

The accession to power of the Republican party, with its ideology of competitive, egalitarian, free-labor capitalism, was a signal to the South that the northern majority had turned irrevocably this frightening, revolutionary future... Secession was a pre-emptive counter-revolution to prevent the Black Republican revolution from engulfing the South.

Union victory in the war destroyed the southern vision of America and ensured that the northern vision would become the American vision. Until 1861, however, it was the North that was out of the mainstream, not the South. Of course the northern states, along with Britain and a few countries in northwestern Europe, were curving a new channel in world history what would doubtless have become the mainstream even if the American Civil War had not happened. But for Americans the Civil War marked the turning point... From the war sprang the great flood that caused the stream of American history to surge into a new channel and transferred the burden of exceptionalism from North to South.

Beyond The Book

The profound irony of the Civil War was that Confederate and Union soldiers ... interpreted the heritage of 1776 in opposite ways. Confederates fought for liberty and independence from what they regarded as a tyrannical government; Unionists fought to preserve the nation created by the founders from dismemberment and destruction.

- James McPherson, "What They Fought For"

I see a three-stage process in the origins of the Civil War. The first stage is a growing diversity between the economic and social systems of the North and the South. When the country was founded, all states had the institution of slavery and all were overwhelmingly rural and agricultural in character. But slavery was relatively marginal in the Northern states, and during and after the Revolution, they abolished it. Their economy began to develop in the direction of a more diversified, free-labor, commercial and industrial as well as agricultural economy, while the cotton boom in the South fastened slavery more firmly than ever on that section and kept the South overwhelmingly rural, overwhelmingly agricultural, and primarily dependent in its economy on slave-grown agricultural crops. The paths of development increasingly diverged over the first half of the nineteenth century and, in the process, generated increasingly polarized ideologies about what kind of society and what kind of nation the United States ought to be. And that focused on the institution of slavery, which by the 1830s was being increasingly attacked by the Northern abolitionists as contrary to the ideals of liberty that the country had been founded on, and as contrary to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence; while the South grew increasingly defensive and turned aggressive in its defensiveness, defending slavery as a positive good and as the basis for a far superior society to what they increasingly portrayed as a chaotic, disorganized, unjust, exploitative, free-labor society in the North.

National political debates focused on the question of whether slavery ought to continue to expand, as it had expanded from the admission of Kentucky and Tennessee in the 1790s right on through the annexation of Texas in 1845. With the acquisition of a huge amount of new territory in the Mexican War in 1848, the debate about whether slavery should be allowed in any more territories sharpened to a mortal conflict. You had Northern and Southern congressmen drawing weapons on each other or threatening to do so on the floor of Congress, and South Carolina Congressman Preston Brooks beating unconscious Senator Charles Sumner in 1856; and the rise of a new major party, the Republican Party, out of the earlier Free Soil Party, whose platform stated that there should be no more slave territories.

When Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860 on that platform, without the vote of a single slave state, Southern leaders saw the handwriting on the wall. They saw that they had lost control of the national government--which they had enjoyed most of the time before 1860s owing to their leverage in the Democratic Party--and probably would never be able to regain it. And they decided that the fate of their society, their institution, their economy, their way of life--to use the phrase that was often used at the time--was in jeopardy under a United States government completely in the hands of people who opposed the expansion of slavery and whose leaders branded slavery a moral wrong that must eventually disappear from American society. So they seceded. These are the first two stages: the increasingly divergent Northern and Southern societies, and the institution of slavery as the focal point of that divergence.

The third and final stage is the nationalism of the Northern people, or a majority of them. They held the conviction that if any one or any group of states could secede from the United States in response to the election of somebody they didn't like as President of the United States, the United States would in fact cease to exist, that a constitutional republic based on majority rule and on free elections could not survive under a system where a state could secede when it didn't like the outcome of that constitutional process. Lincoln expressed his determination and was supported by the majority of the Northern people not to recognize the legitimacy of secession.

The trigger point was Fort Sumter, where Confederate leaders claimed they could not tolerate a foreign fort in the harbor of one of their principal ports, Charleston, South Carolina. The Lincoln Administration was determined to hang on to Fort Sumter as a symbol of what it considered to be federal sovereignty. When the Confederates decided to attack the fort and seize it before the ships sent to resupply the garrison could get there, that was the spark that set off the war.

- James McPherson, [interviewed](#) in Humanities magazine

The Mexican War had two major kinds of influence. It reopened the question of the expansion of slavery that had already been opened by the annexation of Texas in 1845. The situation led to the divisive debates that underlay the eventual Compromise of 1850, and then also played a part in reopening those debates in the middle 1850s over whether or not slavery should be expanded into the territories. This issue increasingly drove the free states and the slave states farther and farther apart and helped to bring on the war.

The Mexican War also influenced the manner in which the Civil War was fought. Most of the men who became generals on both sides in the Civil War had been junior officers in the Mexican War. The Americans had won every battle in the Mexican War. They had won it by daring offensive tactics, by assaults that overran defensive positions, by tactical aggressiveness, and, indeed, by strategic aggressiveness. Invasions deep into enemy territory influenced commanders on both sides even long into the Civil War at a time when the technology had changed between 1847 and 1861 to favor the defensive. The development of the rifle musket, which gave defenders an advantage against attacking troops, the expanded use of railroads and telegraphs and steam-powered warships and other benefits of modern technology meant that the tactics and even some of the strategic lessons carried into the Civil War by those men who had fought in the Mexican War would have to be changed. But generals are always fighting the last war. It takes a long time for them to realize that conditions have changed. I think some of the heavy casualties from frontal assaults, even flank attacks such as those at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg or Chickamauga in the Civil War were in part the consequence of the wrong lessons learned by the commanders in the Mexican War.

- James McPherson, [interviewed](#) in Humanities magazine

Opposition to the government's war policies was a significant factor in both North and South. In the South, most of the people who opposed the war effort were those people who lived in regions where slavery was not an important part of their society and the economy: Western Virginia, which actually detached itself from the rest of Virginia and became the new state of West Virginia in the middle of the war; eastern Tennessee, which was mostly small farmers without slaves; western North Carolina, the Ozark plateau in Arkansas, and other parts of the South. These areas, if not Unionist, were for the most part reluctant supporters of the Confederacy. There was opposition to the draft and to other measures in these regions, and a lot of Unionism that manifested itself in overt antiwar acts-sabotage, resistance, and so on.

In the North, a large portion of the Democratic Party, which had been allied politically with the South before the Civil War, became increasingly alienated from the Lincoln Administration's concept of total victory as a way to restore the Union. These became known as the Peace Democrats or, more pejoratively, the Copperheads. Northern Republicans likened them to the poisonous copperhead snake that struck in the dark to undermine the Northern effort to win this war and preserve the nation. These Copperheads or Peace Democrats were not necessarily disloyal in the sense that they supported Confederate victory in the war. Rather, they opposed the effort to restore the Union by military victory and called for some armistice and peace negotiations. But, any kind of armistice or peace negotiations would be tantamount to a de facto recognition of the Confederate states of America as a legitimate government and contrary to what the North was fighting for.

The Peace Democrats were probably a more powerful factor in weakening the Northern war effort than were the antiwar faction in the South. I happen to think that the people in the eleven states that formed the Confederacy were probably more united and more determined in support of their government's war efforts than were the people in the North in support of the Lincoln Administration's efforts.

- James McPherson, [interviewed](#) in Humanities magazine

The occurrence of a presidential election in the midst of war has not been unique in American history. Six times the quadrennial date for balloting has arrived during a war. On four of these occasions (1812, 1864, 1944, and 1972) the war policies of an incumbent President seeking re-election have been important campaign issues; in each case the incumbent won. In the other two elections (1952 and 1968) voters overturned the party in power partly because of the unpopularity of its war policies — and indeed, of the war itself. But despite the centrality of war issues during these elections, in only one of them did voters perceive the survival of the US to be at stake: in 1864. That election was seen as a referendum on whether the Union should continue fighting the Civil War to unconditional victory. The result of this political campaign did as much to determine the outcome of the war as did events on the battlefield. But military campaigns, in turn, decisively influenced the election.

Optimism prevailed in the North in the spring of 1864. The victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga the previous year had sent the Confederacy reeling... Grant and Sherman intended by a series of flanking movements to threaten Confederate communications and force the southern commanders Lee and Johnson into open-field combat, where superior Union numbers and firepower could be used to greatest advantage. The southern strategy, by contrast, was to block the Union's flanking movements and force northern armies instead to assault defenses entrenched on high ground or behind rivers, where fortifications and natural obstacles would more than neutralize superior numbers...

In order to 'win' on their terms, the Confederates, like Americans in the Revolution or North Vietnam in the 1960s, needed only to hold out long enough to inflict sufficient punishment on the enemy to force him to give up his effort to annihilate resistance. This was a strategy of political and psychological attrition — of wearing down the other side's will to continue fighting. Many historians have mistakenly argued that Grant pursued a military strategy of attrition in 1864 — of using the North's greater numbers and resources to grind down the South's ability to resist. It turned out that way, but not because Grant initially intended it. Rather, the near

success of the southern strategy of psychological attrition forced the North into a campaign of military attrition. The crucial turning point of both strategies was the Union presidential election of 1864. Confederate strategy sought to influence the outcome of that election... They sought ways to promote a Democratic victory in the Union election. Southern military leaders planned their operations around the objective of holding out until November.

- James McPherson, from his "War and Politics" essay

By August 1864 the crucial question was not what policy to pursue toward the South once the war was won, but whether it could be won at all... The President came under enormous pressure to drop emancipation as a condition of peace negotiations. Lincoln bent but did not break under this pressure. His Emancipation Proclamation had promised freedom, "and the promise being made, must be kept." "I should be damned in time & in eternity," said Lincoln, if I were "to return to slavery the black warriors" who had fought for the Union. "The world shall know that I will keep faith to friends & enemies, come what will."

...With their presidential nomination the Democrats revealed their own party rift. The nominee was George B. McClellan, removed by Lincoln from command of the Army of the Potomac two years earlier and now seeking vindication via politics. But McClellan was a War Democrat. He recognized that an armistice and negotiations without prior conditions would constitute a Confederate victory, making restoration of the Union impossible. Thus in his letter accepting the nomination McClellan constructed his own platform specifying re-union (but not emancipation) "as the one condition of peace". Though the Democrats seemed to be sending a muddled message — a war candidate on a peace platform — jubilant southerners celebrated McClellan's nomination. The Democratic nominee's election on this platform "must lead to peace and our independence," declared the Charleston Mercury, if "for the next two months we hold our own and prevent military success by our foes."

It didn't go that way. Three days after the Democrats adjourned, telegraph wires brought news of Sherman's capture of Atlanta and electrified the North... For Lincoln and the Republicans, military triumphs transformed electoral prospects from darkest midnight to bright noonday. A gray, ominous twilight settled over the South... By October, the political signs pointed to a Republican landslide. The most remarkable part of this phenomenon was the soldier vote. Having won the military victories that turned the war around, these citizens in uniform prepared to give Lincoln a thumping endorsement at the polls.

...For most soldiers, their honor as fighting men was at stake. They had gone to war for flag and country, and they meant to bring home the flag of a united country with all of its 35 stars in place. To vote Democratic, to admit that the war was a failure and their sacrifices had been in vain, to march home with a flag shorn of 11 stars would plunge their country and its manhood to the depths of shame. "We want peace too," wrote an Ohio officer, a former Democrat turned Republican, "honorable peace, won in the full light of day at the bayonet's point, with our grand old flag flying over us as we negotiate it, instead of cowardly peace purchased at the price of national dishonor."

These were the convictions that reelected Lincoln by a margin of 212 to 21 in the electoral college... It was a powerful endorsement of Lincoln's iron-willed determination to fight on an unconditional victory. The election demonstrated to a British war correspondent that the North was "silently, calmly but desperately in earnest... in a way the like of which the world never saw before... I am astonished the more I see and hear of the extent and depth of determination... to fight to the last."

- James McPherson, from his "War and Politics" essay

So, my message to you today is: Take heart. These are perhaps not the best of times to graduate. But neither are they the worst of times. Most of your student days have been lived in the shadow of 9/11. But from that experience you have gained the perspective to endure both the good and the bad times that will come in the future. Twenty years after the American Civil War Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who was wounded three times in that conflict and went on to become one of our greatest Supreme Court justices, said in a Memorial Day address: "The generation that carried on the war has been set apart by its experience. Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire. It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing." I would certainly not go so far as to describe 9/11 as your "great good fortune." But it did touch your hearts with fire and teach you that life is a profound and passionate thing. Generations that have gone before have been similarly touched. They responded to the challenges with courage and creativity. I am confident that you will do the same.

- James McPherson, 2004 Princeton Baccalaureate Address

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