

AN OVERVIEW OF CIVIL WAR MILITARY CAMPAIGNS AND BATTLES

The war begins

- 4 March 1861: By the time Lincoln becomes president, seven southern states have seceded (S.C., Ga., Fla., Ala., Miss., La., Tex.)
- Lincoln's view of secession and the CSA
 - Secession is impossible; there is no CSA; Southern US is rebelling against federal authority that Lincoln has the duty of enforcing
 - (cf. southern position is that is no longer part of the USA; it is an independent country, the CSA)
 - Lincoln therefore decides to hold (and eventually resupply) Ft. Sumter
- 12 April 1861: **Ft. Sumter**, Charleston Harbor, South Carolina *CS victory*
 - Southern forces open fire to capture/reduce the fort before it is resupplied
- Mobilization: As a result of the attack on Fort Sumter, Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers to subdue the South
 - LINCOLN'S GOAL IS MERELY REUNIFICATION OF THE NATION—**NOT** THE DESTRUCTION OF SLAVERY
- Second wave of secession: As a result of Lincoln's call for troops, four more states secede (Va., Tenn., Ark., N.C.) and join CSA

Overview of resources and strategy

- Resources: North has a huge advantage
 - North has more (sometimes far, far more) of the following
 - Population
 - Industry
 - Money
 - Railroads
 - Nearly all of the navy
- Strategy: South has something of an advantage
 - No compromise is possible: war will win either with Southern independence or with reunion
 - North has to win; South merely has to survive
 - Northern strategy: The Anaconda Plan
 - Designed by Gen. Winfield Scott, USA, just before he retires
 - Designed to take advantage of North's greater resources
 - Blockade entire Southern coastline
 - Seize Mississippi River
 - These steps will seal off the South from outside resources and crush it the way an anaconda crushes its prey
 - But this plan will take a few years to have full effect, and Northern public is clamoring for immediate action

- Two main areas, or theaters, of operations
 - Western Theater, between Mississippi River and Appalachians
 - Open spaces, good for maneuver
 - Big sources of Southern supplies
 - Eastern Theater, from Appalachians to Atlantic Ocean
 - Narrower, especially in Va., Md., and Pa., where mountains come closer to the ocean—less maneuvering room
 - Both capitals but both hard to get at by direct assault because of intervening rivers—flanking attacks are easier

1861: opening gambits: the shock of war

- Eastern Theater: “On to Richmond” (not)
 - *July 1861: First Bull Run (First Manassas)* CS victory
 - Union army moves to capture important rail junction in Va. just south of DC as a preliminary to moving towards confederate capital of Richmond—Confederate army moves to block it
 - First major battle of the war
Chaotic—“a clash of two armed mobs”
 - CS wins but both armies in a shambles; CS unable to finish off US forces
 - Size of battle and number of casualties make both North and South realize for the first time that this will be a major war

1862: The war turns serious

- Western Theater: Union victories; Anaconda begins to tighten
 - Feb. 1862: **Forts Henry and Donelson** *US victory*
 - US forces under Ulysses S. Grant capture important river forts in Tennessee, forcing CS forces out of Nashville
 - April 1862: **Shiloh** *US victory*
 - Large CS attempt to destroy Grant’s ultimately fails, but not before causing frightful casualties on both sides
 - More combat casualties at Shiloh than in all previous US wars combined—and Shiloh will be relatively small in terms of later Civil War battles
- Eastern Theater: US tries in vain to capture Richmond while beating off Southern offensives
 - Peninsula Campaign/Seven Days Battles
 - April-June: **Peninsula Campaign** *indecisive*
 - Gen. George B. McClellan, commander of all Union armies and field commander of the Army of the

- Potomac (100,000 + men), advances up the Virginia Peninsula from Atlantic Ocean towards Richmond; opposed by Army of Northern Virginia (ANV), 75,000 men
- McClellan constantly drags his feet and asks for more troops, but does manage to come within a few miles of Richmond
 - 31 May: Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, commander of ANV, wounded
 - 1 June: Robert E. Lee takes command of ANV
 - LEE'S STRATEGY: DESTROY THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC IN A DECISIVE BATTLE WHILE THE ODDS ARE RELATIVELY GOOD, BEFORE THE NORTH CAN FULLY MOBILIZE ITS VAST RESOURCES
 - June: **Seven Days' Battles** *CS victory*
 - Lee seizes initiative and drives McClellan back to Chesapeake Bay and off the Peninsula, but takes heavy casualties
 - Aug: **Second Bull Run (Second Manassas)** *CS victory*
 - Lee moves ANV north to destroy Gen. John Pope's army before it can rendezvous with McClellan
 - ANV soundly defeats Pope's army and forces its retreat into Washington, but fails to destroy it
 - September: **Antietam (Sharpsburg)** *tactical draw but US strategic victory*
 - Lee invades Maryland
 - Lee's goal is to move war away from Va., draw support of Maryland, threaten Washington, and destroy Army of the Potomac
 - McClellan forces Lee to retreat without achieving any of these goals, but ANV still intact afterward
 - The bloodiest single day of the war: 25,000 casualties
 - Lincoln finally fires McClellan for chronic refusal to be more aggressive
 - Major diplomatic and domestic results
 - Lee's broken-off invasion fails to become the Confederate "Saratoga"—Great Britain continues to wait for a truly decisive southern victory before recognizing the CSA, and as things turn out, that victory will never occur
 - The respectable performance of the Army of the Potomac heartens northern voters; in the 1862 elections, they tend to vote against northern candidates favoring peace

- Lincoln seizes this lukewarm northern victory as the occasion for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, which would have looked like pure desperation if McClellan had lost outright
- THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION MEANS THAT THE NORTHERN GOAL IS NOW REUNIFICATION OF THE NATION **AND** THE DESTRUCTION OF SLAVERY
- December: **Fredericksburg** *CS victory*
 - New Union commander (Burnside) marches towards Richmond, ending in disaster with Burnside's massive, wasteful frontal assault on ANV-held high ground at Fredericksburg, VA.
 - The occasion of Lee's famous statement: "It is well that war is so terrible; otherwise we would grow too fond of it"

1863: The high tide of the Confederacy: the Union effort hits its stride

- Western Theater: Completion of the Anaconda Plan
 - 4 July: **Vicksburg** *US victory*
 - by early 1863, Vicksburg, Mississippi is the only place on the Mississippi River that US forces don't yet control
 - Capture of Vicksburg would thus cut the Confederacy in two and be huge step towards completion of the Anaconda Plan
 - mid-1863, Grant conducts masterful maneuvers in Tenn. and Miss. that bring his army to outskirts of Vicksburg despite fierce CS resistance
 - May, Grant lays siege to Vicksburg
 - On 4 July, with Vicksburg starving, CS forces there surrender to Grant
 - September-November:
 - Heavy fighting around Chattanooga as a preliminary to a Union drive on Atlanta: this fighting includes the Battles of
 - **Chickamauga** (*CS victory*) and
 - **Chattanooga** (*US victory*)
 - Year ends with US forces in control of Chattanooga and most of Tennessee, facing a large CS army in North Georgia defending Atlanta.
- Eastern Theater: Lee's greatest victory—and greatest defeat
 - May: **Chancellorsville** *CS victory*
 - Gen. Joseph Hooker, US, attempts drive on Richmond with hopes of soundly defeating ANV

- Lee and his greatest corps commander, Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, throw Hooker off balance and come very close to destroying the Army of the Potomac
- Jackson wounded by friendly fire, throwing southern movements into confusion; as a result, Army of the Potomac escapes intact, though soundly defeated
- Jackson dies a few days later, forcing high-level command reorganization on Lee shortly before his next invasion of the North
- 1-3 July: **Gettysburg CS loss**
 - The bloodiest battle of the war: 50,000 casualties in three days of fighting
 - Lee invades Pennsylvania to gather supplies for his army and threaten Washington, hoping to force Army of the Potomac into a decisive battle
 - Armies stumble across each other due to poor intelligence-gathering; Army of the Potomac wins the high ground in first and second days’ combat
 - The third day: 3 July, Lee tries to split the Union center and destroy the Army of the Potomac with a massive frontal assault (Pickett’s Charge); the assault fails, killing and wounding 7,500 of the South’s finest soldiers, who can’t be replaced due to lower southern population
 - Gen. George Meade, Union commander, fails to cut off ANV’s retreat to Va.
 - ANV still capable of strong resistance, but no longer has offensive capability; from here on out, ANV will be totally on the strategic defensive

1864: The beginnings of modern American warfare

- New Union strategy: the “blunt instrument” approach
 - Beat and bleed southern armies and war effort to death with superior numbers of men, superior weaponry, and better supply
 - Coordinate large-scale offensives in Western and Eastern Theaters
 - Grant becomes General-in-chief of all Union armies; travels with and directs Meade and Army of the Potomac in Va. personally
 - Grant replaced in Western theater by his main lieutenant, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman
- Lee’s new strategy: attrition
 - Large-scale offensive now impossible for heavily outnumbered, outgunned, and outsupplied ANV
 - Make Army of the Potomac pay heavily for every inch of ground it conquers
 - But at all costs stay between Army of the Potomac and Richmond

- Goal is to make North sick of fighting and quit before southern ability to resist collapses
- Eastern Theater: bloodbath—the emergence of the American doctrine of annihilation
 - May 1864: **The Wilderness** *CS victory*
 - Grant marches toward Richmond: Lee catches him on the march (i.e., not deployed for battle) in very rough forest country, negating Grant’s advantages
 - A bloody, disorganized battle in a burning forest
 - Lee has to take casualties he can’t afford
 - Grant can no longer push forward—but he begins a flanking movement and, **UNLIKE EVERY PRIOR GENERAL TO FIGHT LEE, HE KEEPS MOVING TOWARDS RICHMOND AFTER LOSING THE BATTLE, FORCING LEE TO FIGHT HIM AGAIN AT . . .**
 - May: **Spotsylvania Court House** *CS victory*
 - Lee has to take casualties he can’t afford
 - Grant attacks well-constructed Southern lines, taking large losses—but again tries to flank ANV, forcing Lee to move and fight him again at . . .
 - June: **Cold Harbor** *CS victory*
 - Lee has to take casualties he can’t afford
 - Grant makes several bloody assaults on well-constructed Southern lines—at one point 7,500 Union soldiers die in half an hour
 - Grant now being called “a butcher”—by the NORTH—but Grant, and North, can afford to lose men and Lee can’t
 - Grant again fails to destroy ANV, but again tries to flank it, forcing Lee to entrench around the town of . . .
 - **Petersburg:**
 - A town just south of Richmond, protecting the only remaining rail line into the capital—ANV must hold it or Richmond will fall
 - Grant lays siege to the ANV in Petersburg—and settles down to wait. Meanwhile . . .
- Western Theater: the emergence of modern total war
 - Spring 1864, Sherman, commanding the Army of the Cumberland, sets out from Tennessee, marching towards the major east/west rail junction of Atlanta
 - Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, commander of the CS Army of Tennessee, trades space for time, forcing time-eating maneuvers on Sherman
 - Sherman averaging one mile per day
 - Johnston’s hope: to forestall capture of Atlanta until after 1864 elections in hopes that the growing peace party in the North will vote Lincoln out of office

- July: President Davis, believing Johnston too timid and disapproving of his strategy, replaces him with the more aggressive Gen. John B. Hood, who plays into Sherman's hands by attacking and losing
- August: Army of the Cumberland captures Atlanta
- November-December: **The March to the Sea**
 - Sherman and the Army of the Cumberland make a cross-country march from Atlanta to Savannah, living off the land and destroying all food, supplies, and dwellings they encounter in an attempt to weaken the confederate war effort and demoralize southern civilians.
 - December, Sherman captures Savannah and offers it to Lincoln as a Christmas present
- TOGETHER, GRANT'S AND SHERMAN'S CAMPAIGNS SHOW THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN AMERICAN MILITARY DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATION: USE OF OVERWHELMING FIREPOWER (NOT COMPLEX MANEUVER) AND WARFARE AGAINST ALL OF AN ENEMY'S RESOURCES (NOT *MERELY* ITS ARMY) TO BRING ABOUT A DECISIVE DEFEAT-THIS IS THE FIRST TRUE EXPERIENCE OF TOTAL WAR IN US, AND POSSIBLY WESTERN, HISTORY

1865: Coda—Union victory

- Western Theater: The West come east in a strategic pincer movement
 - Jan-April: Sherman marches through the Carolinas nearly unopposed, performing an encore of his march through Ga., burning Columbia S.C., and moving north towards Petersburg to help prevent ANV's escape
- Eastern Theater: The surrender
 - March 1865, the stretched Confederate lines around Petersburg, held by starving soldiers, breaks; US forces capture Richmond
 - Lee retreats southwest, hoping to rendezvous in N.C. with what's left of the Army of Tennessee under Gen. Johnston and continue to offer resistance
 - Grant cuts him off near Appomattox Court House
 - Lee, now out of food and vastly outnumbered, surrenders to Grant
 - Although Johnston doesn't surrender to Sherman for a few more weeks, and a few other inconsequential CS forces continue fighting in the far West until June, Lee's surrender signals the real end of the war and any hope of significant resistance