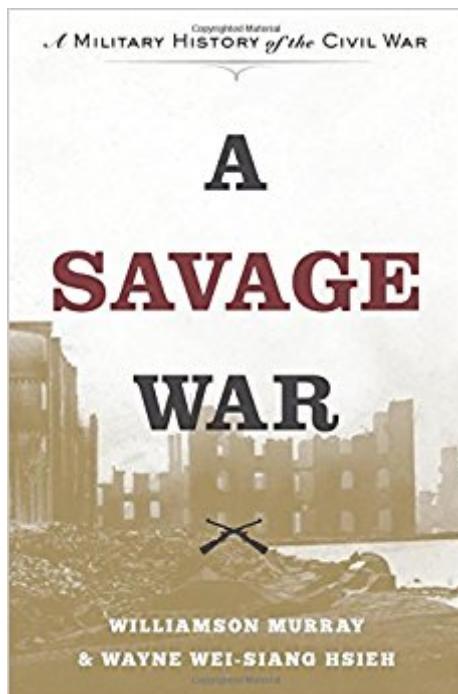


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# A Savage War: A Military History Of The Civil War



## Synopsis

The Civil War represented a momentous change in the character of war. It combined the projection of military might across a continent on a scale never before seen with an unprecedented mass mobilization of peoples. Yet despite the revolutionizing aspects of the Civil War, its leaders faced the same uncertainties and vagaries of chance that have vexed combatants since the days of Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War. *A Savage War* sheds critical new light on this defining chapter in military history. In a masterful narrative that propels readers from the first shots fired at Fort Sumter to the surrender of Robert E. Lee's army at Appomattox, Williamson Murray and Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh bring every aspect of the battlefield vividly to life. They show how this new way of waging war was made possible by the powerful historical forces unleashed by the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution, yet how the war was far from being simply a story of the triumph of superior machines. Despite the Union's material superiority, a Union victory remained in doubt for most of the war. Murray and Hsieh paint indelible portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and other major figures whose leadership, judgment, and personal character played such decisive roles in the fate of a nation. They also examine how the Army of the Potomac, the Army of Northern Virginia, and the other major armies developed entirely different cultures that influenced the war's outcome. A military history of breathtaking sweep and scope, *A Savage War* reveals how the Civil War ushered in the age of modern warfare.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[An] illuminating, ambitious and unsentimental history. . . . Exceptionally lucid."--Fergus M. Bordewich, *Wall Street Journal*"[An] outstanding account of the American Civil War. . . . This expertly written narrative will draw in anyone with an interest in the Civil War at any knowledge level."--*Library Journal*, starred review"A genuinely fresh, persuasive perspective on the Civil War. . . . [A Savage War] will make even readers with a strong knowledge of the war think about how it was fought and why it ended as it did. A winner for Civil War history buffs."--*Kirkus*, starred review"[A] new and interesting military history of the American Civil War."--Francis P. Sempa, *New York Journal of Books*"The best, clearest, and most instructive military history of the Civil War I have ever read. . . . [A Savage War] hit a home run."--Tyler Cowen, *Marginal Revolution*"[F]or those who want to understand the key decisions that determined the outcome of the [Civil War], the organization of the opposing armies and their deployments, the role of logistics and intelligence, and the moments of inspired generalship (and missed opportunities), it is hard to imagine a better book than this."--Lawrence D. Freedman, *Foreign Affairs*"Widely published and respected military historians Murray and Hsieh produce a fresh look at the US Civil War. . . . An important, impressive book."--*Choice*"Murray and Hsieh offer keen insights on the crossroads of social, political, and technological drivers that produced what the authors call the first modern war. . . . The mini-portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, and William T. Sherman sprinkled throughout that narrative are superb, and the critiques of Jeff Davis and the hapless Henry Halleck are devastating. . . . [A] stimulating contribution to the field that will captivate readers. [A Savage War] belongs on the shelf of students of war, right next to their worn copy of McPherson's classic, *Battle Cry of Freedom*."--Lt. Col. F.G. Hoffman, *Marine Corps Gazette*"Hsieh and Murray illuminate the broader political and cultural forces that shaped the [Civil War's] course while also giving due credit to the impact of contingency and human action. . . . A Savage War will appeal to both academic and popular audiences with its resonance, accessible prose, and fresh treatment of the events that still captivate America's public consciousness over 150 years later."--Lt. Andrew L. Hargroder, *Civil War Book Review*

"If you think that there is nothing new to write about the Civil War, this book will prove you wrong."--H. R. McMaster, author of *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*"More than just another narrative of the Civil War, this thoughtful and often provocative book is an engaging analysis of the leadership, personalities, and strategies of both sides during America's great nineteenth-century trauma."--Craig L. Symonds, author of *Lincoln and His Admirals*"A Savage War is not just a riveting military narrative

of the American Civil War written by two military historians with singular pragmatic experience, but a rare and much needed strategic assessment of the aims and methods of the Union and the Confederacy--highlighted with incisive, blunt--and persuasive-- appraisals of all the major generals and supreme commanders."--Victor Davis Hanson, author of *Carnage and Culture* and *The Savior Generals*"A Savage War offers a splendid overview of the greatest military trauma in United States history. The authors explore Union and Confederate martial culture, navigate with a sure step through campaigns and battles, and assess leaders convincingly--all the while challenging hoary misconceptions about the conflict. Readers new to the topic, as well as more veteran students, will turn to this book with profit."--Gary W. Gallagher, author of *The Union War*"A Savage War is a marvelous book. Iconoclastic, endlessly fascinating, and wide-ranging, this work is a singular achievement, something sure to delight Civil War buffs. A must-read."--Jay Winik, author of *1944 and April 1865*"Murray and Hsieh bring verve, insight, and originality to their account of the Civil War. In a crowded field, *A Savage War* still stands out as a book of required reading even for specialists."--Allan R. Millett, author of *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*"[A] very important new history of the American Civil War by two important historians."--Newt Gingrich"A genuinely fresh set of insights about the Civil War. Murray and Hsieh have crafted a military narrative that goes well beyond anything else in the literature."--James McPherson, Pulitzer Prize--winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*"Forceful and convincing. Murray and Hsieh have succeeded in producing a very accessible book about a very complex series of events . . . A model of how to write military history."--John Gooch, author of *Mussolini and His Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922--1940*

Major General H.R. McMaster's academic and professional qualifications notwithstanding, I found myself skeptical after reading an extract from his pre-publication review stating Williamson Murray and Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh have brought to light an important new perspective on an admittedly done to death subject.I was wrong to be skeptical. A quick glance disclosed that this book delivers far more than McMaster promised. In fact, Murray and Hsieh make a strong case throughout the book that our Civil War represented the first truly modern military-industrial-nation conflict and thus had a global impact.I have not read the whole book yet but its consistently heading on a positive trajectory as I progress through the narrative. The post battle assessments are IMHO without parallel as the authors point out the rights and wrongs of opposing commanders but they do so using methods in line with contemporary military processes, such as discussing not only the gaining of intelligence information, but also its perceived and actual value, when commanders received it,

how they acted or didn't act on it, whether they embraced it or remained hesitant, and what impact their actions ultimately had on the ensuing battle, which is a method of analysis that I am far more familiar with. That revelation appeared on the first page I opened in the book - which discussed the Second Bull Run - and has not proved to be an exception to the rule. Another example appears on page 268 when the authors discuss the results of Chancellorsville, writing "Who Won Chancellorsville? The obvious answer is Lee and the Confederates. Certainly, in considering the slashing attacks he, Jackson, and Stuart had launched against a superior enemy, who had in the first hours caught them completely by surprise, their performance stands out as one of the great pieces of generalship in the Civil War. Yet the casualty figures on the two sides were nearly equal: a bill the Union with its superior population could afford to pay. but which the Confederacy in the long term could not. Moreover, throughout the battle, Lee had taken chances that had placed his army on the brink of defeat. Perhaps the battle's most significant result was that Lee gained the impression his troops could achieve anything against impossible odds, an estimation that had a disastrous impact on his conduct of the battle the next July at Gettysburg." I feel that since the authors have had to explain past battles to an audience of field grade officers (who sometimes have a hard time visualizing the link between past battles and today's brand of warfare) in an academic setting, they have gained insights into presenting that material in not only an interesting fashion, but have included details that resonate with modern soldiers seeking (or not) to link today with the past. I enjoyed seeing that style displayed to the fullest because I have sat in one of those classrooms and as such, the language is familiar and I believe their analysis a bit more informed as a result. The book is organized with thirteen chapters, each running anywhere from 25 - 35 pages in length. They are presented as follows: 1.) The Origins, 2.) The War's Strategic Framework, 3.) "And the War Came," 4.) First Battles and the Making of Armies, 5.) Stillborn between Earth and Water: The Unfilled Promise of Joint Operations, 6.) The Confederacy Recovers, 1862, 7.) The Confederate Counter-Offensives, 8.) The War in the East, 1863, 9.) The War in the West, 1863, 10.) The Killing Time: The War in the East, 1864, 11.) Victory in the West, 1864, 12.) The Collapse of the Confederacy, and 13.) The Civil War in History. There are no less than 51 maps! The maps adequately depict important subjects/events at both tactical, operational, and strategic levels. However, the large number of maps may have come at the cost of photographs, of which there are none. That said, this reviewer does not believe a lack of photographs detract from the overall story. I must admit to being glad that *A SAVAGE WAR* did not come out before now, as the tremendous work by both authors would have seriously dampened my enthusiasm for previously published works on this same topic. If there is ONE volume to read on this conflict, I would strongly

recommend A SAVAGE WAR as my choice. My only caution is that this book should not be considered a populist history per se. If you are more interested in the experiences of individual soldiers and their leaders, then perhaps other fare would meet your needs.

A Savage War is a detailed military history of the American Civil War (1861-65) which:

- a. Covers the political background to the war with the enactment of such legislation as the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854, John Brown's slave freeing futile raid on Harpers Ferry and other important players and events in this time frame.
- b. The authors look at the two disparate cultures of the North and South in the antebellum period.
- c. The book includes succinct but well explained details of all the major battles of the war. Kudos to the authors for giving the Western theatre of the Civil War equal coverage with the eastern battles. The War was won in the West under the leadership of Grant at Fts. Henry and Donelson, Shiloh and Vicksburg before he moved eastward to challenge Lee in the victorious Overland Campaign.
- d. The political situation of both belligerents during the conflict is covered.
- e. greatest figure, according to the authors, to emerge from the Union victory was our Abraham Lincoln our nation's greatest president.
- f. The war cost upwards of 750,000 deaths with most due to disease and inadequate medical treatment. Both authors have had military experience and their analysis of the combat is sage making their comments a good reason to read this book. This is not the same old boring recounting of well known battles but gives the reader a fresh perspective on the war. This is an excellent book which I am proud to add to my extensive Civil War book collection. Highly recommend to experts and neophytes of the war. Read and learn!

Superb military history of the Civil War - recommended for specialists and educated readers of all kinds, not least for what it says of the retrograde condition of the American South.

How the north ever won the war with the poor quality of early officer's and their failure to execute orders is unbelievable. But the same plague occurred in the south's officers. Because of this disrespect the war was prolonged; maybe by years and additional lost lives.

Great book ! A little dry on the writing but went into the thinking and actions of the key players. It didn't talk about the battles as much as it shows the thinking involved in choosing or how they fought these battles. Very informative ! It put you right there .

A masterful analysis of the Civil War without the romantic myths that have so often altered our

understanding of why the North won, why the South lost, and the generalships of Grant and Lee.

Having read a number of Civil War histories I can say this is one of the best. I love that these guys don't mince words about the main players of the war. By placing the war as the start of what we call 'modern warfare' they place it in a context that has relevance to today. My only complaint is that the maps were pretty worthless in the digital edition. Surely they could have found better ones.

In teresting focus

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