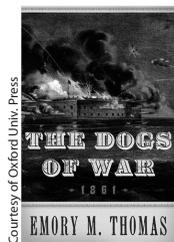


# Review Essay

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## A Peoples' Contest: What Caused the Civil War? How Was It Fought? Should It Have Been Fought?

ALAN CATE

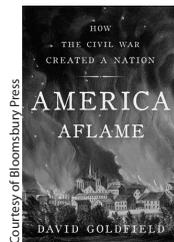


*The Dogs of War: 1861*  
by Emory M. Thomas

New York: Oxford Univ. Press,  
2011

128 pages

\$14.95

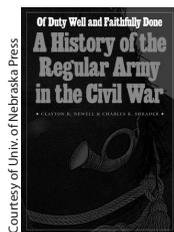


*America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation*  
by David Goldfield

New York: Bloomsbury Press,  
2011

640 pages

\$35.00

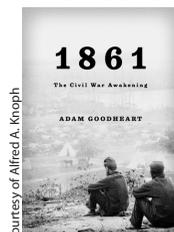


*Of Duty Well and Faithfully Done: A History of the Regular Army in the Civil War*  
by Clayton R. Newell and  
Charles R. Shrader

Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska  
Press, 2011

424 pages

\$75.00

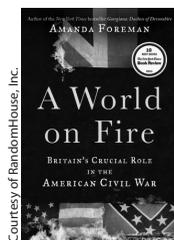


*1861: The Civil War Awakening*  
by Adam Goodheart

New York: Alfred A. Knopf,  
2011

460 pages

\$21.97



*A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War*  
by Amanda Foreman

New York: RandomHouse,  
Inc., 2011

958 pages

\$35.00

The Civil War fascinates Americans and understandably so; it remains the pivotal event in our history. Shortly after it ended, a retired Harvard professor marveled that the war marked a “great gulf between what has happened before in our century and what has happened since, or what is likely to happen hereafter.”<sup>1</sup> By far our bloodiest conflict—640,000 dead, North and South—it

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*Colonel (Ret.) Alan Cate teaches at the University School in Cleveland, Ohio. A US Military Academy graduate, he holds a Masters Degree in history from Stanford University. In addition to his command and staff assignments, he served as an assistant professor of history on the West Point faculty. Cate has published more than 80 articles and book reviews, and authored Founding Fighters: The Battlefield Leaders Who Made American Independence, a book on military leadership in the American Revolution.*

settled the two fundamental issues that had bedeviled the republic since its founding: the nature of the union and the existence of slavery. Before 1865, people often rendered "United States" as a plural noun. Afterward, it became singular. The United States *is* (not *are*) "one nation indivisible," not a confederation of sovereign states. And the war destroyed the peculiar institution.

Yet Walt Whitman, that most authentically American of our poets, famously observed "the real war will never get in the books."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps not, but that hasn't deterred authors from trying. More has been written about the Civil War than any other episode in our national saga—by some reckonings well over 70,000 books, plus countless articles and manuscript collections.<sup>3</sup> Since we are currently commemorating the Civil War sesquicentennial, that steady stream of publications threatens to turn into a flood. This essay examines five recent titles that collectively illuminate important questions regarding the causes, conduct, and consequences of this American epic.

### ***An Irrepressible Conflict . . . or An Unnecessary One?***

William H. Seward, a prominent Republican politician and future Secretary of State, memorably warned of "an irrepressible conflict" between the nation's free and slave-holding sections in an 1858 speech.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, by the end of the 1850s many of his contemporaries above and below the Mason-Dixon Line similarly exhibited an almost fatalistic sense about the "impending crisis" as calamitous events unfolded in fearfully rapid succession: Bleeding Kansas, the Dred Scott decision, and John Brown's raid among them.<sup>5</sup> Most people today, if they bother to think about it, exercise a sort of twenty-twenty hindsight that also regards the Civil War as the all but inevitable sequel to this crisis.

Yet two very different books, Emory Thomas's *The Dogs of War: 1861* and David Goldfield's *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation*, take a contrary view. As his title indicates, Thomas focuses on a single year, while Goldfield's narrative spans from the 1830s to the nation's centennial in 1876. But both see the Civil War as far from inevitable, let alone even necessary or justified to resolve the great questions that ultimately tore the union apart. Rather, they depict it as the product of ignorance and folly on both sides. Essentially, each offers an update on the now largely discredited mid-twentieth century "repressible conflict" thesis. Advanced by some historians, it held that the Civil War was brought on by a "blundering generation" of politicians who—unlike their immediate predecessors such as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster—let resolvable issues spin out of control.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas is an emeritus professor at the University of Georgia, a leading expert on the Confederacy, and a biographer of Robert E. Lee and J. E. B. Stuart. *The Dogs of War*, a stimulating, occasionally quirky little volume—an extended 92-page essay really—claims to offer a revisionist interpretation of the war's causes. Thomas asserts that he asks "new questions of essentially well-known facts" only to conclude with "yet another question: What were they thinking?" He maintains that the Civil War broke out in April 1861 "because nearly no one" on either side "had a clue about what they were doing."<sup>7</sup>

Thomas isn't an unreconstructed Southern apologist. He acknowledges that the South's unshakable commitment to slavery as the economic and cultural underpinning of its society is what drove it to secession. This widely shared modern scholarly consensus essentially echoes Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address, which matter-of-factly noted that slavery was "somehow, the cause of the war."<sup>8</sup> In this regard, then, Thomas differs from the older "repressible conflict" school, which held slavery to be an artificial problem inflated out of all proportion by fanatical southern "fire-eaters" and northern abolitionists. For Thomas, slavery was indeed a central issue, but leaders on both sides failed to work hard enough to find common ground because they were "absurdly ignorant" and guilty of "downright stupidity" about how costly war would be.<sup>9</sup> He dwells on the idea of unintended consequences so extensively that a fitting epigraph for this book would be Livy's maxim: "Nowhere do events correspond less to men's expectations than in war."

Thomas argues that in 1861—at what he calls "the martial moment"—decisionmakers and the broader public on both sides tragically deluded themselves that any conflict would be brief and decisive. For instance, while recognizing Lincoln as a great man who demonstrated an enormous capacity to learn and grow, Thomas insists that he suffered from a significant blind spot. He never grasped "the depth and breadth of secessionist conviction among the mass of white Southerners," or their deference to the planter class and willingness to fight for the Confederacy.<sup>10</sup> This isn't a new insight, but Thomas does a good job illustrating the irony involved—Lincoln was born in the South—as well as the tenacity with which he clung to this misapprehension right up to the war's end.

Interestingly, Thomas treats the often disparaged Jefferson Davis as one of the few politicians in 1861 possessing a realistic awareness of the situation from the start. According to Thomas, Davis "got it."<sup>11</sup> He understood that any war between the North and South would be long and hard, and that his side faced heavy odds. Nevertheless, like most leaders who choose or accept war, he thought he could win. Davis counted on what Thomas labels "offensive defense"—that is, a strategic defense combined with a judicious resort to operational offense under the right conditions. Under this conception, the South would allow northern armies to penetrate the Confederacy, and then make use of interior lines to attack and defeat them. In an aside, Thomas points out that Davis and his principal subordinate Lee were not in "perfect accord" over this "offensive defense."<sup>12</sup> The Army of Northern Virginia's commander was much more offensively inclined and repeatedly sought a decisive battle of annihilation. Thomas opines that had Davis realized this, he would likely have relieved Lee.

This short book's best chapter is also its worst. On the positive side, it furnishes a fascinating sample of opinions about the war's likely course expressed during the secession winter of 1860-61 by soldiers destined to rise to high command in both armies. In a few broad, sure strokes Thomas neatly captures his subjects. George McClellan "was a queer amalgam of martial bombast and...limited war." William T. Sherman "saw the conflict as one of order versus anarchy" destined to involve immense destruction.<sup>13</sup> Stonewall Jackson

believed in making every effort to avoid war and, if that failed, putting up “terrific resistance—even to taking no prisoners.”<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, Thomas serves up some extremely forced and tendentious parallels between unexpected battlefield developments after 1861 and the “unknown unknowns” the United States confronted after invading Iraq in 2003. Most are simply annoying, but one induces a double take. Comparing the abuses inflicted upon detainees at an American facility in Iraq to the most notorious Confederate prison camp, Thomas astonishingly writes “Abu Ghraib makes Andersonville seem like a summer camp.”<sup>15</sup> To that, one can only ask, dumbfounded, how many died at each?

*America Aflame* also makes the case that the Civil War was avoidable. More than that, author Goldfield argues that it *should* have been avoided. The war stands as “America’s greatest failure.”<sup>16</sup> “There may have been other means” to preserve the Union and abolish slavery besides a costly war. Like Thomas, Goldfield’s stance is not pro-southern. Rather, he avers, “It is anti-war, particularly the Civil War.”<sup>17</sup>

Questioning the war’s necessity, he points out that the United States was the only nineteenth-century country that required a civil war to end slavery. The most frequently invoked parallel here—the “repressible conflict” historians cited it—is with Tsarist Russia, which eliminated serfdom in 1860 and freed 20 million souls without any bloodshed, while it took us well over half a million deaths to liberate four million. Of course, this comparison isn’t as telling as it might appear. Forced servitude was a national, not sectional issue in Russia. There were no constitutional restrictions on the Tsar’s absolute power, or a liberal tradition in Russia that held private property, including slaves, as almost sacred. Serfdom was an economic loser in Russia, but slavery was a winner in the American South. And there was no racial dimension to contend with in Russia.

Goldfield doesn’t blame the politicians, however. Rather, he identifies evangelical Christianity, a result of the broad-based religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening that swept the country starting in the early nineteenth-century, for polarizing antebellum American politics. More specifically, in his interpretation, it was evangelical fervor and self-righteous certitude that transformed policy disagreements into moral questions, and turned political opponents into mortal sinners. As a result, “Reality fled.” Northerners conjured up nonexistent Slave Power conspiracies and Southerners became falsely convinced that northern abolitionists were intent upon “subjugating them while simultaneously instigating a race war.”<sup>18</sup> An overabundance of religious faith drove the nation to an entirely avoidable war of extermination.

Although Goldfield discusses examples of religious extremism on both sides, northerners draw most of his attention and condemnation. For instance, Seward believed the nation required an abiding faith in God to settle difficult political questions. Although the Founders’ Constitution sanctioned slavery, “There is a higher law than the Constitution,” thundered Seward on the Senate floor in 1850.<sup>19</sup> Goldfield censures this “higher law” doctrine—the notion that individuals should consult their religious beliefs before deciding whether to obey the law—as a recipe for anarchy and strife. He lauds Seward’s older, and

presumably wiser, colleague Webster, as well as Georgia congressman and later Confederate vice president Alexander Stephens, for their opposition to mixing religion and politics. Alert readers will detect more than a trace of presentism in Goldfield's approving treatment of this approach.

Many northern abolitionists were evangelical Christians and the most influential of them all was Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the 1852 blockbuster antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Upon meeting her a decade later, Lincoln is supposed to have exclaimed, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!"<sup>20</sup> Goldfield's exegesis of Stowe's—for some reason, he patronizingly and repeatedly refers to her as "Harriet"—book makes plain how she steeped it in religious sentiment, thus helping it to resonate with millions of her countrymen in the North. It didn't really start the war, as Goldfield recognizes, but it did cause northerners "to think more deeply about the implications of slavery for family, society, and Christianity."<sup>21</sup> And it enraged southerners.

Goldfield teaches at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and has authored many books on southern history. His provocative exploration of religion's role in nineteenth-century American political life from the Age of Jackson through the Gilded Age is often brilliant. Ultimately, however, his assertion "that the political system established by the Founders would have been resilient and resourceful enough" to resolve the sectional crisis "without the tragedy of a civil war" is not only unprovable, but also unpersuasive.<sup>22</sup> For one thing, it contradicts his contention that the infusion of religion into the public sphere fatally "poisoned the democratic process."<sup>23</sup> More broadly, Goldfield—and anyone else who argues that the "political system" could somehow have worked to prevent violence—overlooks that secessionists' refusal to accept the legitimate results of the 1860 presidential election constituted a resounding rejection of that system and set the nation on the path to war.

### ***A Remorseless Revolutionary Struggle***

Lincoln's first State of the Union message has not been long remembered; a clerk read it to Congress on 3 December 1861. Its most arresting line expressed the president's determination that the eight-month-old war to preserve the union should "not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle."<sup>24</sup> Here Lincoln expressed his intention to wage war with the least possible amount of death and destruction, and particularly not to seek the elimination of slavery. But within 12 months, after Shiloh and Antietam and the Emancipation Proclamation, the war had turned exactly into what Lincoln had hoped to avoid. Nevertheless, in a July 4th address to Congress earlier that year, he had foreshadowed this by explicitly declaring that the war was "essentially a People's contest" with the goal of "maintaining in the world, that form . . . of government, whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men."<sup>25</sup> With the stakes so high, could the war have been anything other than what it became?

In his gripping *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, Adam Goodheart makes the reason for this transformation plain. He depicts the Founders' old republic dying and a new, democratic nation being born. Unlike Thomas and Goldfield,

who lament the inability to compromise in 1860-61, Goodheart scorns the leaders from an earlier political generation they so much admire. Men such as Clay and Webster were “trimmers” committed to keeping “the fragile union of states together at any price,” to include countenancing the monstrous injustice of slavery.<sup>26</sup>

Intriguingly, he observes that Whitman’s prediction about the “the ‘real war,’” by which he meant the squalor of hospitals and blood-drenched battlefields” has, in fact, proven incorrect.<sup>27</sup> By and large, that’s all we remember today, as we gaze at Matthew Brady’s prints or lose ourselves in the evocative *tristesse* of Ken Burns’s powerful Civil War documentary.<sup>28</sup> The poet wrongly assumed that posterity’s celebration of Union heroism in pursuit of its glorious cause would obscure the fearful cost. Goodheart wants to remind us the Civil War had “a right side and a wrong side” and to recover the heroism of “a new generation of Americans” who had the courage and moral sensibility “to throw aside the cautious ways of its parents” to embrace a new birth of freedom.<sup>29</sup>

Goodheart, an accomplished journalist and the director of Washington College’s C. V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, begins his story at Fort Sumter. But it’s not the war’s first shot on 12 April 1861, that opens the action. Rather, he dramatically recounts Major Robert Anderson’s decision to move his tiny command of federal troops from crumbling Fort Moultrie to the stouter, more defensible position in Charleston Harbor in late December 1860 under the unsuspecting noses—and guns—of well-armed, secessionist South Carolinians.<sup>30</sup> For Goodheart, Confederate cannon fire led to nothing but a failed rebellion. Anderson’s raising of the Stars and Stripes, however, portended “a nationwide revolution” that would ultimately sweep away the nation’s “accommodation of slavery.”<sup>31</sup> For in the North, news of the Confederate bombardment unleashed what Ralph Waldo Emerson called a “whirlwind of patriotism” and outrage akin to what later Americans experienced on 7 December 1941 and what readers of this essay might have felt on 11 September 2001.<sup>32</sup>

From Sumter, Goodheart ranges not to the hallowed ground of so many battlefields to explore this second American revolution in “hearts and minds.” Instead, he transports readers “to the slums of Manhattan and the drawing rooms of Boston, to Ohio villages and Virginia slave cabins.”<sup>33</sup> There we meet an extraordinary collection of individuals. Among them are the colonel of a colorful New York volunteer regiment, the enigmatic Elmer Ellsworth, whose death in May 1861 made him an early martyr; the fiery abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who publicly burned a copy of the Constitution to protest its countenancing of slavery; an idealistic future major general and president, James Garfield, for whom Sumter ended “the days of politics as equivocation”; and a courageous runaway slave, Lucy Bagby.<sup>34</sup> Goodheart’s canvas even stretches out west to show how people in St. Louis and San Francisco responded to events back east, and saved Missouri and California for the Union.

In a book full of marvelous vignettes, the most engaging centers on the Union General Ben Butler. An extremely controversial figure in a war filled

with them, he is frequently reviled as a spectacularly incompetent political general and especially loathed by southerners for his strict administration of occupied New Orleans. But he was also a clever lawyer who, after just five weeks in uniform, in May 1861 found himself commanding Fortress Monroe, Virginia, a key base in the heart of rebel territory. Three slaves stole away from their master, a Confederate colonel, and made their way to Union lines. Their aggrieved master, under a flag of truce, demanded from Butler their immediate return. What should he do? The Fugitive Slave Act was still on the books and the Emancipation Proclamation undreamed of. In the absence of higher guidance Butler devised an ingenious solution. If rebels insisted that blacks were property, then he would treat them as such and “confiscate” them as “contraband” of war.

Goodheart concludes his book on Independence Day, 1861. Both sides observed the Fourth that year. He contrasts the stirring message composed by Lincoln with the “lackluster, shopworn rhetoric” of Jefferson Davis’s effort. Lincoln’s words reflected “his faith in the power and necessity . . . of arguments, of explanations, in a democratic system.” Davis’s pedestrian address to the Confederate Congress “was not merely a failure of aesthetics, but proof of the intellectual poverty and moral laziness” underpinning the southern cause.<sup>35</sup> In his address, Lincoln scorned the Confederates for adopting “Some Declarations of Independence” that omitted the phrase “all men are created equal” and a national constitution whose preamble left out “We, the People.”<sup>36</sup>

Even with more than three and a half years of hard war ahead, Lincoln had already decided whether he should fight and “what he was fighting for.” The smaller questions of how to fight, Goodheart notes, would necessarily answer themselves.<sup>37</sup>

### ***The Cousins’ War***

Amanda Foreman provides an absorbing account of the often neglected British dimension of our sectional struggle in *A World on Fire: Britain’s Crucial Role in the American Civil War*. Foreman is uniquely suited to explore this topic. She was born in London, reared in Los Angeles, and educated in both countries, earning a doctorate in history from Oxford. Foreman employs what she calls “history-in-the-round,” borrowing the theatrical technique of multiple characters and rapidly changing scenes in order to create an “all-enveloping experience” for readers.<sup>38</sup> She pulls this off with consummate artistry, effortlessly shifting between Washington, Richmond, London, and dozens of other locales. The result resembles a sprawling Dickensian novel as she follows some 200 British and American “dramatis personae”—politicians, diplomats, soldiers, journalists, and ordinary people—on both sides of the Atlantic.

Conditioned by twentieth century talk of a “special relationship” forged in two world wars and gentle jibes about “cousins” separated by a common language, we forget how hostile Anglo-American relations were in the nineteenth-century. The United States fought its first two major wars against England, disputed John Bull over control of the Great Lakes and Oregon territory, and contained a large Irish immigrant population that despised Great Britain. That

perceptive French observer of antebellum America, Alexis de Tocqueville, “never encountered hatred more poisonous than that which Americans felt for England.”<sup>39</sup> Most Britons reciprocated, regarding Yankees as “vulgar, violent, and vainglorious.”<sup>40</sup> Foreman reminds us of this, while simultaneously noting how entwined the two countries were on the eve of the Civil War. Besides ties of blood and language, Britain received 80 percent of its cotton—crucial to the textile industry that employed five million workers—from the American South. Forty percent of her export trade was with the United States and in 1860 two and a half million British expatriates lived here.

When the war came, the South consciously emulated the revolutionaries of 1776, whose diplomatic successes were instrumental in winning independence. The Confederates, desperately craving foreign recognition and aid, hoped to persuade England, as well as France, to intervene on their side. Instead, Her Majesty’s Government proclaimed neutrality, but recognized both the Confederacy’s belligerency and the legality of the Northern blockade. It also invoked legislation that made it a crime for subjects to fight for North or South, and for British firms to sell warships to either side. France followed England’s lead. This officially neutral stance *de facto* favored the more populous, industrialized North.

Individual Britons, however, were deeply divided. The British Empire had abolished slavery in 1833—*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was a bigger bestseller in England than in the United States—but initially the North fought only to preserve the Union, not to end slavery. Meanwhile Confederate agents courting Great Britain soft-pedaled the peculiar institution and emphasized their fight for independence. Southern supporters in England argued that the real moral issue was how to end the bloody carnage in America and the suffering in Lancashire, where the “cotton famine”—the interruption in the flow to English mills caused by the war—exacted tremendous hardship on working families. They managed to convince themselves that after a Southern victory, slavery would somehow simply die out. Abraham Lincoln’s momentous decision in 1862 to transform the war into a contest for emancipation considerably diminished British enthusiasm for the Southern cause. Additionally, the failure of the South’s “King Cotton diplomacy”—by 1863, cotton from India and Egypt made up the shortfall—and Northern battlefield successes ended any hope of England rescuing the Confederacy.

Foreman expertly explains the diplomatic struggle, but the book’s real pleasure resides in its vivid characters. Despite legal impediments, tens of thousands of Britons volunteered for the Union or the Confederacy out of idealism or a spirit of adventure. Others were virtually kidnapped or “crimped” into service. At least one fought for both sides; Henry Morton Stanley (later of “Dr. Livingstone, I presume” fame) enlisted in the Dixie Grays, was captured and turned coat to escape captivity. He subsequently deserted, rationalizing “There were no blackies in Wales.”<sup>41</sup> His inglorious career conjures up that fictional eminent Victorian bounder Harry Flashman, protagonist of George M. Fraser’s hilarious *Flashman*—who also managed to wear blue and gray—historical novels. Then there were Sam and Mary Hill, Anglo-Irish twins who lived in New Orleans. Sam

was a dreamy milksop, who nevertheless volunteered for the South. His sister was another story, a woman who had lots of what used to be called “sand.” The formidable Mary resigned herself to her brother’s “folly,” decided that “he would sadly want a woman’s care,” and followed his regiment to Virginia.<sup>42</sup>

Deftly written and lavishly illustrated with contemporary *Punch* cartoons and drawings from American and British newspapers, Foreman’s volume admirably achieves her “hope of immersing the reader in the British-American world of the Civil War.”<sup>43</sup>

### ***One Grand Muster Roll***

On Memorial Day, 1897, Secretary of War Russell A. Alger spoke at West Point to dedicate a new monument. Inscribed with the names of 2,230 officers and men of the Regular Army who died in the Civil War, the towering Battle Monument dominates Trophy Point and the Hudson River below it. While virtually every northern city, town, and village boasted a memorial to the hundreds of thousands of volunteers who had rallied to the Union cause, the Regulars had nothing. A group of Regular Army veterans set about rectifying this situation, raising money, in part, from subscriptions paid by serving soldiers. It was “altogether well and worthy,” remarked Alger, that these fallen heroes’ names appear “in one grand muster roll.”<sup>44</sup> Clayton Newell’s and Charles Shrader’s *Of Duty Well and Faithfully Done: A History of the Regular Army in the Civil War* is, as the eminent military historian Edward Coffman writes in the book’s forward, “another worthy monument” to their service.

Newell and Shrader, both now retired, each at one time held the post of chief of the historical services division at the US Army Center of Military History. As one might expect from anyone associated with that estimable organization, their work is meticulously researched, expertly organized, and clearly written. This is institutional history—a term that won’t get many hearts pounding—at its finest. The rattle of musketry, thunderous cannonades, and hell-or-glory cavalry charges are all distinctly absent from these pages. But the book rewards readers with a surprisingly engrossing account of how a small, scattered pre-war force with no experience of large-scale operations transformed itself to play a vital role in suppressing the South’s rebellion.

The authors start with a revealing portrait of the “Old Army.” It numbered barely 16,000 in 1860 and was organized into staff and field (the Line of the Army) components. The various staff departments were mainly centered in Washington, and were responsible for administrative and logistical support to the field army. The fighting forces consisted of 19 regiments (10 infantry, 4 artillery, 5 mounted), which were almost entirely stationed west of the Mississippi in company or smaller detachments. Promotion was agonizingly slow. With no retirement system, the Old Army was really old. Regimental colonels averaged 63 years of age (one was 80). They were relatively spry; the heads of the staff departments were even more ancient. Only two of the Army’s officers had ever led a unit as large as a brigade in combat. One of them was 75-year-old Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, hero of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. Since 1841, he had

held the extralegal position of general in chief, although his authority *vis-à-vis* the Secretary of War and the staff department chiefs was unclear.

There was no “war plans bureau,” much less any contingency blueprint for a conflict with eleven southern states. Formulating military strategy was the general in chief’s task, and the authors neatly explain Scott’s strategic thinking and contrast it with that of his wartime successors: George McClellan, Henry Halleck, and Ulysses S. Grant. One of the major policy decisions taken early on was to fight the war almost exclusively with volunteers raised by the states; over two million were mustered. The Regular Army reorganized and expanded somewhat; its strength peaked at around 26,000 in 1864. A total of 67,000 regulars served throughout the war.

Although a number of former regulars returned from civilian life to lead the citizen-soldiers—Grant, McClellan, and Sherman to name just three—the Regular Army remained separate, instead of being cannibalized to cadre volunteer units. While some subsequently argued “that the Union would have been better served by dismembering the Regular Army and distributing its officers” and NCOs to train the volunteers, Newell and Shrader raise numerous practical objections.<sup>45</sup> They further observe that “Keeping the Regular Army intact proved fortuitous,” since after the war the volunteers quickly demobilized and the federal government “faced two formidable tasks that required military force: occupying the South and protecting settlers in the West.”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, for one of the few times in our history, Congress actually increased the Regular Army’s size following a war. The Army also reorganized again, marking two “transformations” in the space of five years.

Significant criticism has also been leveled—at the time and since—against the performance of the Regular Army staff departments. Newell and Shrader reject such judgments as “generally unfounded.” Without any expansion at all commensurate with the functions required, the Army’s staff kept an enormous—one million strong in 1865—far-flung force better armed, supplied, paid, and fed than in any previous war. Each department and bureau gets examined in turn; each section contains informative nuggets. Did you know that in November 1864, the armies in the field had some 221,000 horses and mules, or slightly more than one for every two troopers? Or that the Army of the Potomac’s beasts consumed 37,000 bushels of grain and 1,150 tons of hay per day during the winter 1863-64? The book is rich in photographs, as well as easily readable tables and figures chock full of data. When they finish this superb reference book, readers are likely to agree with its conclusion that while “The Regulars did not win the Civil War . . . without them, all might have been lost.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Conclusion—So Nobly Advanced**

Obviously, the five books discussed above do not definitely answer the questions posed at the beginning of this review. After all, history is an “argument without end.” They do, however, furnish a resounding “yes” to another question often asked about the Civil War. After so many years and so many books, is it still possible to say anything fresh and interesting about it? Goldfield’s and

Goodheart's efforts stand out especially, but all these volumes merit a place on any Civil War student's bookshelf.

## NOTES

1. George Ticknor, quoted in James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 861.
2. Walt Whitman, "The Real War Will Never Get in the Books" in *Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: The Library of America, 1982), 778.
3. Put another way, that is more than one book a day since the Civil War ended—more books than soldiers at the first battle of Bull Run.
4. William H. Seward, quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 198.
5. The best single volume on the sectional crisis leading to the Civil War is David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
6. The leading exponents of this thesis were Avery Craven and James G. Randall. See Avery Odelle Craven, *The Repressible Conflict: 1830-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939); Avery Odelle Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1942); James G. Randall, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath & Co., 1937).
7. Emory M. Thomas, *The Dogs of War: 1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), ix.
8. Abraham Lincoln, quoted in David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 566.
9. Thomas, *The Dogs of War: 1861*, 7-8.
10. *Ibid.*, 18.
11. *Ibid.*, 68.
12. *Ibid.*, 66.
13. *Ibid.*, 29.
14. Thomas J. Jackson, quoted in Thomas, *The Dogs of War: 1861*, 30.
15. Thomas, *The Dogs of War: 1861*, 36.
16. David Goldfield, *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 1.
17. *Ibid.*, 3.
18. *Ibid.*, 7.
19. Seward, quoted in David Goldfield, *America Aflame*, 67.
20. Lincoln, quoted in David Goldfield, *America Aflame*, 79.
21. Goldfield, *America Aflame*, 83.
22. *Ibid.*, 15-16.
23. *Ibid.*, 3.
24. Lincoln, quoted in James McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 80.
25. Lincoln, quoted in Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 362. This address was also read by a clerk. In that simpler, more republican time, it was thought unseemly for presidents to prorogue Congress. Not until Woodrow Wilson would the modern habit of chief executives personally speaking in front of Congress become standard.
26. Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, 26.
27. *Ibid.*, 19.
28. Ken Burns, "The Civil War," PBS, September 23-27, 1990.
29. Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, 20, 22.
30. *Ibid.*, 12. One of the handful of South Carolina Unionists who didn't support secession offered this rationale: "South Carolina is too small for a republic, and too large for a lunatic asylum."
31. *Ibid.*, 18.
32. Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, 181.
33. Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, 20.

34. Ibid., 123.
35. Ibid., 357-358.
36. Ibid., 359-360.
37. Ibid., 361.
38. Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2011), xxv.
39. Alexis de Tocqueville, quoted in Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 28.
40. Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 29.
41. Henry Morton Stanley, quoted in Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 254.
42. Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 112-113.
43. Ibid., xxv.
44. *History of the Battle Monument at West Point* (West Point, NY: 1898), 100. [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com),
45. Clayton R. Newell and Charles R. Shrader, *Of Duty Well and Faithfully Done: A History of the Regular Army in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 310.
46. Ibid., 311-312.
47. Ibid., 312.