



The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War

Donald Stoker

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Despite the abundance of books on the Civil War, not one has focused exclusively on what was in fact the determining factor in the outcome of the conflict: differences in Union and Southern strategy. In *The Grand Design*, Donald Stoker provides for the first time a comprehensive and often surprising account of strategy as it evolved between Fort Sumter and Appomattox. Reminding us that strategy is different from tactics (battlefield deployments) and operations (campaigns conducted in pursuit of a strategy), Stoker examines how Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis identified their political goals and worked with their generals to craft the military means to achieve them--or how they often failed to do so. Stoker shows that Davis, despite a West Point education and experience as Secretary of War, ultimately failed as a strategist by losing control of the political side of the war. Lincoln, in contrast, evolved a clear strategic vision, but he failed for years to make his generals implement it. And while Robert E. Lee was unerring in his ability to determine the Union's strategic heart--its center of gravity--he proved mistaken in his assessment of how to destroy it. Historians have often argued that the North's advantages in population and industry ensured certain victory. In *The Grand Design*, Stoker reasserts the centrality of the overarching plan on each side, arguing convincingly that it was strategy that determined the result of America's great national conflict.

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