MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

“UNCONQUERABLE STRONGHOLD OF LOYALTY”: INVASION, OCCUPATION, DEVOLED COMMAND AND THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND ON THE TUALLHOMA CAMPAIGN

A THESIS PROPOSAL

SUBMITTED TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE MASTER’S DEGREE IN PUBLIC HISTORY

BY

STEVE T. PHAN

MURFREESBORO, TN
JANUARY 2017
On 24 July 1863, Major General William S. Rosecrans, commander of the Union Army of the Cumberland, concluded his after-action report of the Tullahoma Campaign to the War Department in Washington DC with justifiable pride. “Thus ended a nine days' campaign, which drove the enemy from two fortified positions and gave us possession of Middle Tennessee, conducted in one of the most extraordinary rains ever known in Tennessee at that period of the year, over a soil that becomes almost a quicksand.” Although Mother Nature prevented the army from gaining possession of the enemy’s communication and forcing a major, decisive battle, the “results were far more successful than was anticipated and could only have been obtained by a surprise as to the direction and force of our movement.”

Rosecrans’ success hinged on several factors: audacious maneuver to dislodge his opponent; deception through feints and rapid marches; command and control; and organizational ingenuity. But, far away from army, corps, division and even brigade headquarters, the soldiers on the ground experienced a different war; a conflict difficult to define and discern. Rapid invasion into hostile territory and the subsequent occupation of towns and had altered the very nature of the war as early as 1862. But as the Federal government took an increasingly harder approach to the war, both through official policies and unofficial responses to specific issues, it was the commanders on the ground who enforced Union rule.

In his official report to the Army of the Cumberland’s headquarters (Murfreesboro) from Gallatin, Tennessee dated February 1, 1863, Brigadier General Eleazer E. Paine vividly detailed the issues pressing Federal soldiers as invasion and occupation degraded into a violent struggle between the Union army and an unruly populace, and how to properly respond:

---

At dusk last evening an outlaw by the name of Peddicord, with 40 men, tore up four or five rails in the Richland Woods, about 14 miles from here. They were attempting to burn a cattle guard on the road, when 15 men of the One hundred and twenty-ninth Illinois approached. The rebels ran. They were dressed in our overcoats. I have 350 men after them, and I expect to hear that the rebels fell off their horses and broke their necks. Fifty or more citizens collected at the place with the rebels, to look on, aid, and assist. I propose to make an example of some of them. The trains are running.\(^2\)

The garrison commander’s candid report provides both the indiscernible forces waging irregular warfare on Union occupation forces and the brutal but necessary response needed to pacify the region. Paine referred to outlaws and rebels indistinguishably. This was an intentional description and classification of the forces waging irregular war on Paine’s garrison. Whether the outlaws disrupted and destroyed rail lines or dressed in blue uniforms, Federal response to the perpetrators was rapid and deadly. Military justice, served without trial and jury, was delivered not only to the rebel outlaws, but directed at their supporters as well. Paine’s call to make an example of the citizens was a visible warning to the outlaws or anyone suspected of harboring them. Furthermore, General Paine’s active role reveals commanders crafting and enforcing responses to their situation, whether invasion or occupation. In the words of Robert Hunt, the detached division and “brigade commanders were effectively determining war policy, and were doing so with something other than a spirit of charity toward the enemy.”\(^3\)

Command and control of the army devolved to front-line soldiers at the garrison and brigade level and far-below (regiment, battalion, company, squad, pickets, forage-details). For the men, every decision made had its consequences. This breakdown of command was both deliberate and a practical reality to the situation at hand. The organization of Civil War armies


\(^3\) Robert Hunt, _The Good Men Who Won the War: Army of the Cumberland Veterans and Emancipation Memory_ (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 13.
necessitated decentralized command to effectively move and supply men. On campaign and occupation duty the breakdown of command was necessitated by the need to guard bridges, supply routes, railroads, and garrison captured territory and towns—as the report from the Paine to headquarters affirmed—as the army continued to move toward its objective.

The thesis examines issues pressing Federal soldiers—their responses, both practical and in accordance to an evolving Federal policy—during Union occupation of Middle Tennessee from 1862 through the Tullahoma Campaign in the summer of 1863. The work will emphasize the army’s experience during invasion as their rapid movement destabilized the boundary between the battlefront and home front, and blurred the tenuous relationship between civilian and soldiers. Further, the army’s incursion and subsequent occupation of southern Tennessee generated an opportunity for thousands of enslaved African Americans to seek refuge and employment within Union forces. Detached commanders and their front-line soldiers were forced to make decisions (food, shelter, medical support) often without the authorization and oversight of superiors.

Lastly, invasion dissolved the already fluid and tenuous issues of waging war against a hostile populace. The experience during the Mexican War provided a blueprint on how to properly conduct a grand campaign of invasion and occupation. Army Regulars comprised the main force as undisciplined volunteers were sent home, and the strict orders protected civilian life and property. That was not applicable during the Civil War as civilian turned temporary soldiers comprised the massive armies. Combat was irregular and intermittent. Soldiers spent a large percentage of their time in garrison and occupation duty, and their responses to events and contact with civilian and irregular forces varied from. By examining the campaign—invasion, occupation, intermittent combat—at the division and brigade level, commanders and their men
reveal the Civil War far more complicated than the wide-flanking marches, maneuver and the march to Chattanooga and Chickamauga. Rather, it divulges war and devolved command far from the grand battlefields recorded in history, one centered on the life and death decision making of detached commanders and citizen soldiers.

The historical literature examining the Union armies’ invasion, occupation, and destruction of the Confederacy “began in the shadow of World War II when writers on the Civil War tended to see in the nineteenth-century conflict the beginnings of the economic production, technological innovation, and heartless doctrines of destruction that characterized the great ‘total wars’ of the twentieth century,”4 contends historian Mark E. Neely Jr. In his work, *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction*, Neely correctly asserts that the Civil War armies did not possess the technological, motivation, or standard doctrine to inflict total war on the enemy and populace. He argues that America’s involvement in the Vietnam War was critical to the proliferation of total war scholarship and fueled interest in guerrilla warfare. Further, Neely states that the “zeal for studying the guerrilla conflict in the Civil War persisted”5 after the conflict in Southeast Asia due to interest in the home front. “What drove further studies toward the subject of guerrilla conflict in the Civil War was essentially a methodological imperative: the interest and methods of the New Social History.”6

---


5 Neely, Jr., *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction*, 204.

6 Neely, Jr., *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction*, 204.
While Neely’s argument on the war’s destructiveness is accurate, his dismissal of guerrilla warfare “having much of an effect on Union conduct” does not reflect the reactions and responses from Union soldiers. Their experience demonstrated that invasion and occupation did shift the war’s character and direction. Clay Mountcastle describes the transition as one “centered on the Union’s willingness to abandon conciliatory policies and include civilians in the hardships of war.” Mountcastle terms Federal response as punitive war due to the complexity of defining guerilla warfare by the combatants and historians, writing: “the war’s most blatant displays of aggression toward noncombatants and their property little to do with feeding soldiers or starving the opponent;” rather “there were about punishment.” He continues, “The Union waged a punitive war against the people of the South in conjunction, if not always in concert, with its effort to defeat the Confederate Army on the battlefield.” The Army of the Cumberland’s operations in 1863 reflect the dual objectives of punitive war: defeat the Confederate armies and subdue irregular warfare and hostile citizens.

The soldiers turn against conciliation included the disruption of the peculiar institution. As James Oakes asserts, the Federal government, including President Abraham Lincoln and Republicans, “had endorsed military emancipation,” specifically “masters whose slaves are ‘employed in hostility to the United States,’” as early as the emergency Congressional special session in July 1861.” Further, Oakes states that the basic outlines for the emancipation “would

---


remain in place until superseded by the Second Confiscation Act and the Emancipation
Proclamation,” and hinged on two distinct acts: “First, all slaves coming within Union lines from
any seceded state were immediately emancipated, regardless of the loyalty or disloyalty of their
owners. However—and this was the policy’s second aspect—Union soldiers were prohibited
from enticing slaves from peacefully operating farms and plantations in the south.”12 Union
commanders in Kentucky, Middle Tennessee, and Northern Alabama quickly realized that many
enslaved people did not need enticement to escape to Federal lines; rather, they simply needed an
opportunity, employment, and protection that Union armies afforded.

Mark Grimsley contends that the Union’s “conciliatory and hard-war policies both
possessed a strategic dimension.”13 In The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward
Southern Civilians, 1861-1865, Grimsley dissects the dimension into three parts. “Each sought to
detach Southern civilians from their allegiance to the Confederate government—the first through
respect and magnanimity, the second through intimidation,” and third, “a pragmatic interlude in
which Union policy toward noncombatants had little strategic purpose.”14 Grimsley’s assessment
of guerrilla warfare’s effect aligns with Mark Neely. He contends that the during the interval,
“Union commanders sought victory exclusively on the battlefield; their stance toward civilians
tended to be whatever seemed best calculated on the battlefield.” They retaliated against
guerrillas when necessary, “but otherwise viewed civilians peripheral to their concerns.”15

13 Mark Grimsley, The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward South Civilians, 1861-1865 (New
14 Grimsley, The Hard Hand of War, 3.
15 Grimsley, The Hard Hand of War, 3.
Mountcastle acknowledges the “contentious issue with Civil War historians” concerning the influence of irregular war on Union policies, but argues that there is a common link between “the most influential leaders and events in evolution of Union military policy . . . experience with facing a guerrilla threat.”\textsuperscript{16}

Anne Marshall argues that the war must be expanded to include a broad dissemination of invasion in “The Future of Civil War Era Studies: The Southern Home Front,” for the \textit{Journal of the Civil War Era}. Marshall moves beyond Neely’s description of the “great social movement” that “brought the comment and the whole pluralist community in the pages of the academic history books,”\textsuperscript{17} with a critique of home front scholarship. Marshall states that “historians of the Civil War era are beginning to argue that there was no such thing as a southern home front and that any sort of easy distinction between military and civilian Civil War participants may not be useful or even valid anymore.”\textsuperscript{18} The historiography has moved past hard-war or Sherman’s March to the Sea. Rather, historians are now looking in detail at how invasion set in motion several factors. Further, Marshall references several Civil War historians—Stephanie McCurry, LeeAnn Whites, Alecia P. Long, and Lesley A. Schwalm—who contend “that groups of people (white and black women or slaves, for example) historians traditionally considered ‘civilians’ on the southern home front were actually full-fledged combatants.” Historians’ reframed the home front to include government recognition, both Federal and Confederate. Marshall defined it as the blur “between the home front and battlefront and between the political and private

\textsuperscript{16} Mountcastle, \textit{Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals}, 5.

\textsuperscript{17} Neely, Jr., \textit{The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction}, 204.

dimensions of civilian life.”19 Lastly, Marshall describes the growth in scholarship of four major issues that will be address in the work: irregular warfare, retaliatory guerrilla warfare, localized combat, and the destabilization of the battlefront/home front boundary.20

Anne Marshall describes historians’ focus on the four issues as a reversal “within the so-called new military history that, in the past thirty or so years has tried to integrate the military aspects of war within society’s larger social, political, and economic, and cultural context.”21 Instead, “the recent scholarship of the southern Civil War experience does the opposite,” and “turns everyone into a combatant.”22 By 1862, the Federal incursion into Tennessee transformed immediate invasion into extended occupation. The situation placed Union soldiers into dual roles as pacifiers/occupiers and subjugators exposed to hostile civilians, irregular warfare, and guerrilla attacks. Marshall describes the predicament facing soldiers and civilians alike in a conflict where everyone was a combatant, “It reveals that every town, home, and personal interaction was a potential stage for conflict to which both Union and Confederate military and governments were forced to respond with policy, threats, and even force.”23

The work’s focus will expand the historical scholarship of the so-called new military history. In a sense, it is an advance from what Gary Gallagher describes as the academic retreat from military history. Gallagher correctly asserts that “nearly all nineteenth-century Americans avowed the centrality of military affairs and experienced daily interconnection between war front

---

and home front.” Further, he argues that contemporary historians, both of academia and the public sphere, “should remind ourselves that the wartime generation knew things historians should deem fundamental to grasping the full meaning of the conflict.” Included in the things historians should know, Gallagher writes, was “the difference between professional soldiers (regulars), federal volunteers and members of state militias—and that the second category, the citizen-soldiers of the United States and the Confederacy, composed the overwhelming majority of those mustered by both combatants. Further, and of central important to the thesis, was “that an absolute majority of all soldiers who served both nations were true volunteers, men who entered service before conscription and whose sense of belonging to a republic tradition of citizen-soldiers meant a great deal and profoundly shaped how civilians viewed them and their service.” Lastly, Gallagher defines military history as an investigation of the relationship between “military institutions and the societies from which they sprang.” The thesis will reveal that Union commanders and soldiers never lost touch of the society they came from even as the war in the West devolved from conciliation to irregular warfare.

The Army of the Ohio (later Cumberland) personified the tradition of citizen-soldiers. Led by a mix of Regular and volunteer officers, the volunteer army, with a small contingent of Regular regiments, experienced the “blurring between home front and battlefront” as invasion transformed into extended occupation. Their campaigns in Kentucky, Middle Tennessee, and

---

25 Gallagher, “Coming to Terms with Civil War Military History,” 488.
26 Gallagher, “Coming to Terms with Civil War Military History,” 488.
27 Gallagher, “Coming to Terms with Civil War Military History,” 490.
Northern Alabama demonstrated the rapid reversion from conciliation to hard-war. Federal soldiers quickly realized that the Union would not be restored by their mere presence. Occupation meant pacification of towns and the countryside. Further, commanders were detached from the main Union post, Nashville, and directed to occupy towns from the state capital south to Alabama. Command and control devolved from army headquarters to officers at the division and brigade level. The garrison commanders, often detached miles away from support or direct guidance, experienced and responded to the issues triggered by occupation on a base by base, person by person basis. Lastly, the work explores both static and active occupation in-the-midst-of invasion during Federal campaigns into southern Tennessee and Northern Alabama in 1862 and 1863.

The scope of this thesis will be geographically centered on the Department of Ohio/Cumberland from April 1862 during the command of Don Carlos Buell through the Tullahoma Campaign and south central Tennessee under William S. Rosecrans in summer 1863.

This thesis is divided into six main sections: an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction establishes the historiography of the topic and discusses the work’s in the placement of Civil War history. The second chapter Major General Don Carlos Buell command of the Army of Ohio and the occupation of Middle Tennessee in 1862. Buell’s tenure is marked by the army, notably division and brigade commanders, turn way from conciliation toward hard-war. The third chapter discusses Major General William S. Rosecrans command of the reorganized/renamed Army of the Cumberland in early 1863 after the Battle of Stones River. Rosecrans’s army occupies Middle Tennessee in force with garrisons detached to occupy towns and strategic territory often without direct guidance from headquarters (Murfreesboro). The next chapter details the Army of the Cumberland’s grand invasion of Middle Tennessee in late June
1863, Tullahoma. The campaign will explore rapid invasion and immediate occupation as the army drives Confederate forces back toward Chattanooga. As the army move forward, detachments are left behind to occupy territory and towns. How does immediate invasion and occupation differ from extended occupation? How do commanders respond to the necessary devolvement of command and control as the advance continues? The final chapter will summarize findings and providing concluding remarks.

My timeline for completing the thesis writing and research is as follows:

- **August-December 2016**: Formalize thesis topic and write proposal as a requirement for Historical Research Methods (Chapter 1 completed, Fall 2016). Research for thesis was initiated in Spring 2016; topic was formalized in Fall.
- **January 2017**: Continue historiographical research and primary-source based work.
- **February 2017- March 2017**: Continued research, Chapter 3, William S. Rosecrans Era, 1863
- **March 2017**: Continued research, complete Chapter 3 and begin Chapter 4, Tullahoma Campaign
- **March-April 2017**: Complete Chapter 4 and Conclusion.
- **March-April 2017**: Finalize Chapters and Conclusion; Proofread, edit, revise, and discuss chapters with thesis committee.
Bibliography

**Primary Sources**


Halleck, Henry W. *Elements of Military Art and Science; or, Course of Instruction in Strategy, Fortification, Tactics of Battles, &c.; Embracing the Duties of Staff, Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Engineers; Adapted to the Use of Volunteers and Militia*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1846.


**Secondary**


**Databases/Academic Journals**

*Civil War History*

Tennessee Civil War Sourcebook (Tennessee State Library and Archives)

*Journal of the Civil War Era*