

History 225

Re: Notes for Early Mobilization/Early Months of War

Dealing w/ original excitement and early predictions of a short war. Early expectations and uncertainties about what the future held. Typical.

Note that previous American wars would provide no grounds for judgment.

Revolutionary War and 1812 were fought with small units. Mexican War, the closest in experience was 16 months and relatively few casualties. (Some saw the coming conflict as long and costly-- J. Davis/ Sherman, etc).

[May want to check w/ McPherson, BCF

In addition to length of war there were other relevant questions:

1. Would the war remain strictly a domestic struggle? Or would it become entangled with foreign intervention? Civil wars have a tendency toward involving foreign intervention;

2. Where would the battle lines be drawn? What would be the fate of the Border States.

Pull together a Vital stats sheet for South on eve.

Grounds for So. Optimism:

Southerners did not see a long war of attrition ahead of them. Where God would be on the side of the largest divisions.

(1) The South's war aim was to secure her independence it did not need anything like a total victory. It had no designs on northern states and therefore did not need to conquer them. That would presumably be the North's war objective.

Southerners can be excused their ^{Excluding the Territories} optimism on this point because the South w/ Texas was a land area larger in square miles than the area making up the Northern states. The North faced the prospects of conquering this area and occupying it. The burden of offensive war to rest on the Union forces.

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Re: Reasons for Southern Optimism

Addendum (Source: Hattaway/Jones, Why the North Won)

Significant factors that did favor the South:

The South did have a good railroad system east of the Mississippi that would allow for interior lines for defense.

It had a coastline of 3,500 miles embracing 189 harbors and navigable river mouths. The Confederacy also possessed an open-land border w/ Mexico. (The Union would not be able to close off completely the South's access to the outside world.)

More significant, the CSA's size made it a formidable military obstacle. 750,000 square miles of territory exceeded the land area of present-day UK, West Germany, France, Italy and Spain combined. Actually, the CSA held a territory about as large as Russia from Moscow to the western border w/ Poland, etc. *And large (than the North (w/ Texas))*

Confederate Secretary of War George W. Randolph had it right when he noted that this was a daunting prospect for the North bent on total victory and occupation of the South.

"They may overrun our frontier states and plunder our coast but, as for conquering us, the thing is an impossibility. There is no instance in history of a people as numerous as we are inhabiting a country so extensive as ours being subjected if true to themselves." (Implies genuine Southern nationalism).

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Re: Notes w/ Early Mobilization

ranked alongside the defense of slavery and states rights. We will see that this unexamined optimistic assumption proved basically incorrect or was mismanaged by Confederacy diplomacy. It never transpired.

Rebuttals to CSA optimism/assumptions:

1. A war of defense on South's part could mean a war of long duration and attrition which the CSA could not hope to win.

2. CSA never attempted to play on any crack in Northern will by deploying a strategy to incite and/or accerbate this weakness.
(Perhaps should see this as a late development if CSA was planning to kidnap Lincoln)

3. Because a powerful opposition to Lincoln ad. did exist in the North, Southerners waited passively to destroy their enemy from within while the seeds of political division were allowed to grow unchecked within the CSA and a bitter and negative destructive opposition crippled the Confederate war effort.

4. Because Cotton was King by divine right of laws of supply and demand, it was not supported by a specific and practical policy to sustain its authority.

5. Like the North, the South was soon confronted by a massive conflict that had no past experience to draw upon. But unlike the North, the CSA leadership was not able to adjust to the new challenges that war presented.

✓ Southern grounds for confidence in 1861 were not altogether unrealistic, but the practical politics for converting assumptions into achievements often were, if indeed they existed at all.