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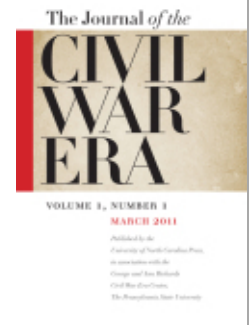
Union Combined Operations in the Civil War (review)

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The Journal of the Civil War Era, Volume 1, Number 1, March 2011, pp.
120-121 (Review)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cwe.2011.0018>



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Union Combined Operations in the Civil War. Edited by Craig L. Symonds. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010. Pp. 240. Cloth, \$45.00.)

Professor emeritus at the U.S. Naval Academy Craig Symonds has written or edited some dozen books. In the span of only a few years, he has established himself as one of the foremost historians of the Civil War at sea. In his latest book, *Union Combined Operations in the Civil War*, Symonds brings together a series of essays by well-known scholars treating Union army-naval cooperation or lack thereof during the war. The book does not cover all such operations but is limited to those along the seacoast. Notably absent here are such strategically important combined operations on western waters as those against Forts Henry and Donelson, Island No. 10, and Vicksburg.

Unfortunately the early Union seacoast operations were designed simply to secure coastal enclaves for coaling, supply, and repair facilities to support the blockade of the Confederate coastline, itself the major Union naval effort of the war. As a result, the locations picked by the so-called Blockade Board were selected for their ability to defend against land attack as opposed to facilitating offensive operations to the interior. As Rear Admiral Francis Du Pont pointed out, there were opportunities early in the war to take major Confederate cities from the sea, but these would have entailed large commitments of ground troops, and, once taken, the cities would have to have been held. The notable exception to this Union strategy was Major General George B. McClellan's Peninsula campaign, launched up the Virginia Peninsula from Union-held Fortress Monroe with the goal of capturing Richmond. It was, however, doomed by McClellan's own shortcomings as a commander, most notably his inability to take risks and his lack of offensive spirit.

The operations discussed in the book and their authors are as follows: operations in Pamlico Sound (David E. Long); Brigadier General Ambrose P. Burnside's North Carolina campaign (David C. Skaggs), Brigadier General William B. Franklin's assault at Eltham's Landing on the York River during the Peninsula campaign (Mark A. Snell); the first battle at Drewry's Bluff (Robert E. Sheridan); operations along the Texas Gulf coast (John P. Fisher); against Charleston (Francis J. DuCoin); on the James River in 1864 (Craig Symonds); and against Wilmington (Chris E. Fonvielle Jr.). The last two chapters look at British assessments of Union combined operations (Howard J. Fuller) and lessons learned and forgotten from combined operations in the war (Edward H. Wiser).

Symonds points out that despite a plethora of books treating the Civil

War, combined operations have been largely ignored. He is rightly critical of the single other book devoted to the subject, Rowena Reed's *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (first published in 1978), which is deeply flawed in that it is largely a paean to General McClellan. Reed reached the unusual conclusion that, had Union leaders only followed McClellan's strategy, the war would have been won in 1862.

As Symonds notes in his introductory essay, there was no tradition of combined operations at the start of the war. Despite the experiences of the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War (1846–48), training manuals failed to address the subject, and the army and naval departments had no means of effecting cooperation. Each service jealously guarded its own independence, and officers of one service were under no obligation to accept orders from officers of another. They also tended to ignore differences in rank. President Abraham Lincoln was the only person on the Union side who actually had command authority over both army and navy and could order cooperation. His presence at Hampton Roads in the spring of 1862 led to his "suggestion" of an operation against Sewall's Point that brought the capture of Norfolk.

Success in combined operations rested largely on individual army and navy commanders working in harmony. Where this occurred, and where there was sound planning and adequate support, success was likely. Without close cooperation, defeat invariably followed, as in the Red River campaign and at Fort Fisher. At Fort Fisher in December 1864, Rear Admiral David D. Porter and Major General Benjamin Butler were at loggerheads and the Union landing came to naught. Yet the replacement of Butler with Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, who worked closely with Porter, brought success at that same location only a few weeks later.

This is a fascinating little book, and Symonds and his coauthors have gone a long way to giving Union combined operations their due. *Union Combined Operations in the Civil War* is a cautionary tale that should be required reading for the U.S. military. Only 151 pages of text, it is a quick read, especially as its chapters are uniformly well written. If he is not already at work on such, Symonds might want to consider a book of similar size and format that would explore Union operations in the western and trans-Mississippi West theaters.

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