

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Military Legacy of the American Civil War in Europe

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Luvaas, Jay	<i>The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance</i> . Chicago, IL: Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988.

Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year. “Title,” in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
De Chanal, Francois Victor Adolphe	<i>The American Army in the War of Secession</i> . Leavenworth, KS: George A. Spooner, 1894.
Dubrulle, Hugh	<i>Ambivalent Nation: How Britain Imagined the American Civil War</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, forthcoming 2018, chap. 5.
Lecomte, Ferdinand	<i>The War in the United States: Report to the Swiss Military Department</i> . New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1863.
Reid, Brian Holden	“A Signpost That Was Missed? Reconsidering British Lessons from the American Civil War” in <i>Journal of Military History</i> 70 (April 2006): 385-414.
Russell, William Howard	<i>My Diary North and South</i> . Boston/New York: T. O. H. P. Burnham/O. S. Felt, 1863.

Scheibert, Justus, Frederic Trautmann, trans. and ed.	<i>A Prussian Observes the American Civil War: The Military Studies of Justus Scheibert</i> . Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001.
Tal, Nimrod	<i>The American Civil War in British Culture: Representations and Responses, 1870 to the Present</i> . New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, chap. 2.

Organizations

Web Resources

Other Sources

Scholars

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Topic Précis

The American Civil War occurred during an eventful and violent period in European history. The experience and study of the European wars that occurred between 1853 and 1871 occupied European military thinkers and meant that the experience of the American Civil War exerted less influence on Europe than might otherwise have been the case. Another important factor that limited the relevance of the Civil War military experience was the widespread recognition that American political and social conditions did not resemble those in Europe. At the same time, the theaters of operations in America differed from what Europeans were accustomed to at home. The best study of what Europeans learned from the American conflict is Jay Luvaas' *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance*, first published in 1957. The American Civil War's legacy was perhaps weakest in Austria; links between the two countries were tenuous, and the Austrian army showed a decided reluctance to reform throughout this period. The effect of the American Civil War on Russia also appears to have been negligible. While the American conflict raged, the Russian Empire turned inward as it embarked on an ambitious modernization program in the wake of its defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856). Like Russia, Prussia also underwent a number of important military reforms during this period. Although Prussia became a model for military reformers across Europe due to its

remarkable victories over Austria and France, that did not stop Prussian officers from taking heed of the American conflict. The French submitted the American Civil War to somewhat closer inspection. This interest seems to have stemmed from the fact that France was a “military nation” where the Second Empire promoted military values associated with the cult of Emperor Napoleon I. It also originated in the understanding that all was not well with the French army in the late 1860s; concerns about the army’s inadequacies began to turn to panic after Prussia’s rapid victory over Austria in 1866. These concerns were justified by the outcome of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. It is only in Britain where one can claim the American conflict enjoyed an enduring legacy—one that stretched well into the 20th century. British interest was stimulated by cultural affinity with the United States, great material interests in North America, and the fact that Britain was the European great power was most likely to find itself drawn into a war with the United States during this period. After World War I, the study of the Civil War was taken up in Britain by what became its two leading military intellectuals of the 20th century, J. F. C. Fuller and B. H. Liddell-Hart. But in the nineteenth century the American Civil War never really changed the course of European military doctrine or thought. This was partly because events in Europe after the Civil War minimized American innovations and a widely held belief that the Civil War was unlike any war Europeans had experienced or expected to see. Though European governments were willing to reform their armies it could not have been clear to European leaders that the American Civil War pointed to the future in a way that European conflicts did not.
