**American Civil War - Prelude**

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**Prelude #1 (Slide 2)**

**Dates of State Secession from the Union**

Seceded Before Ft. Sumter (7 states)

South Carolina December 20, 1860

Mississippi January 9, 1861

Florida January 10, 1861

Alabama January 11, 1861

Georgia January 19, 1861

Louisiana January 26, 1861

Texas February 1, 1861

**Ft. Sumter attacked, April 12, 1861**

When the first seven Confederate states succeeded they seized all US property within their borders. Ft. Sumter, surrounded by water in the middle of Charleston harbor was harder to sieze without a serious fight. It remained in Federal hands because its commander refused to surrender. When Lincoln made a decision to re-provision (not reinforce) the fort instead of turning it over as the Confederates demanded, Confederate artillery opened fire. The fort finally surrendered after thirty-four hours of artillery bombardment. This blatant act of warfare compelled Lincoln to make a military response and call-up 75,000 militiamen. It was this call for troops that turned sentiments towards the Confederacy in four more southern states that had initially voted against secession.

Seceded After Ft. Sumter (4 states)

Virginia April 17, 1861

Arkansas May 6, 1861

North Carolina May 20, 1861

Tennessee June 8, 1861

**Prelude #2 (Slide 2)**

**The Border States** (See McPherson, 276-307, for discussion of each border state’s relative value to each side)

Delaware – The smallest of the border states; less than 2% of the population were black slaves; 90% of Delaware’s blacks were free; most of the state’s Confederate sympathizers were in the southern most portion of the state and had economic and agricultural ties to other Maryland and Virginia Eastern Shore agricultural communities. While the state permitted slavery, there really was no risk that it would join the Confederacy because the political consensus to do so did not exist.

Maryland - Surrounded Washington, D.C. on three sides; All lines of communication (LOCs) from Union leadership to the Northern states passed through Maryland; Thus it was essential that the Union held this state at all costs. Maryland consisted of two -distinct regions: the tidewater and Eastern Shore region was tobacco growing and slave owning; the uplands were grain growing small family farms. The economic health of the state depended on the rail and steam ship “carrying” trade and as a result, Maryland’s economic interests went strongly against secession. Much of Baltimore and several prominent citizens openly voiced pro Confederate sympathies, but strong arm legal maneuvers (the suspension of the right of *habeas corpus)* and cautious military positioning suppressed them and ensured that Maryland was persuaded to remain in the Union.

Kentucky - Like West Virginia, Kentucky had the most extensive Ohio River shoreline, with over 500 miles. From both side’s perspective, possession of Kentucky would strongly influence the outcome in their favor. In every respect it was the most evenly divided state with regards to sympathies, hardly surprising as the state was bordered by 3 free and 3 slave states. Most of the population did not want to choose sides and took great pride in their conciliatory history and the role of their leading citizen, Henry Clay, as the “Great Compromiser.” Strategically, the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and the Louisville & Nashville Railroad with its rail terminal in Columbus, KY, were key features of great value to the side that possessed them as they provided unparalleled access straight into the heart of Tennessee. Lincoln recognized the geographic importance and the delicate dynamic at work in the state. He wisely waited for a special election to be held June 20, 1861, which many of the Confederate sympathizers boycotted. Their boycott placed five out of six of the congressional seats into unionist control making it difficult for the state to continue with either compromise or neutral positions. This provocation spurred Confederate general, Leonidas Polk, to seize the desirable rail terminal at Columbus. In the process of violating Kentucky’s sovereignty, Polk alienated the neutrality seeking state legislators and drove the state into the Union camp while Grant responded by occupying Paducah and Smithland. By the end of the year, three-quarters of the state was held by Union troops while the southwest quarter was occupied by Confederate forces.

Missouri – “Manners and custom” tied much of the rural areas of the state to the South. While slave owning was practiced throughout the state, and in the Missouri River valley in particular, it was never as extensive as it was in the states of the deeper South. A vigorous and growing German immigrant community in St. Louis was strongly pro-Union. Interestingly, three-quarters of the white men in Missouri served on the Union side, despite a long-simmering conflict with the “free-soilers” to their west in Kansas. Missouri’s internal demographics of small farm freeholds, slaveholders and Unionist immigrant city dwellers as well as strong economic ties going both north and south along the Mississippi proved to be a ripe mixture for a brutal and enduring guerilla war. To the east and north of St. Louis, the state bordered Illinois, a state with decidedly Unionist sentiments. St. Louis was also the home of the largest Federal arsenal in the state which held over 60,000 modern muskets- a prize for the side that could field them first. Another smaller arsenal was located at Liberty, outside of Kansas City.

Wilson’s Creek (10 August 1861) - For several months Missouri suffered a series on-going provocations which started in April when Missouri secessionists seized the small US arsenal at Liberty and then established a camp outside St Louis, complete with four smuggled cannon—hoping to get the St Louis arsenal too. The commander of the St. Louis Arsenal, Captain Nathaniel Lyon was not about to cede Federal authority to the secessionist governor of Missouri, Clairborn Jackson and his Confederate force under Sterling Price. After taking on the rebels’ encampment, Lyon pursued the rebels throughout the state for much of the summer and finally caught them at Wilson’s Creek. There Lyon was killed and his forces beaten back allowing the Confederates to hold the western portion of the state for a time. By October, John C. Fremont, commander of the Western Department rallied to the occasion and with Samuel Curtis’s army, pushed Price’s forces into northern Arkansas, where they fell under Van Dorn’s command.

Pea Ridge (6-8 March 1862) – In the spring Van Dorn took his force, now numbering 20,000, north and attacked Curtis’s army at Pea Ridge. Hoping to flank Curtis’s army, Van Dorn conducted a long round-about march only to find that savvy Union scouts had discovered his maneuver in time to warn Curtis. Curtis was then able to reposition his forces to meet the onslaught and deliver a suitably devastating response. By the second day, the Confederates’ logistics faltered and failed to deliver essential artillery ammunition while seven-thousand Union reinforcements arrived to deliver a well placed infantry assault into what was left of Van Dorn’s flank. Confederate forces were routed and scattered. After Pea Ridge, Missouri as a state was held in the Union camp by military force, while a vicious guerrilla war simmered for the duration between neighbors in the countryside.

West Virginia (then part of Virginia) - Thirty-five counties west of the Shenandoah Valley held a quarter of the state of Virginia’s white population and very few slaves. The cultural and economic orientation of the region was towards the Ohio River Valley, western Pennsylvania and the cities of Wheeling and Pittsburgh. Residents of this region resented the “Tidewater aristocrats” whose slave “property” was taxed at one-third its real value, while all the uplanders’ property was taxed at the full rate of value. Voters in the region rejected secession 3:1.

In June 1861, the Unionists from the western portions of the state held their own convention in Wheeling to find a way to get around the legal requirement for the Confederate legislature to consent to the formation of a new state out of Virginia lands. Their solution was simple; they branded the Richmond government the illegal one and formed a “restored government of Virginia.” Lending force to the Virginia Unionists’ political efforts was a small Union army that had moved in to secure the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad south of Wheeling. After a series of sharp fights throughout July, the ill-prepared Confederate forces attempting to hold on to this key terrain were driven to the lowlands of the state. With the Union army securely in place, a referendum was held sanctioning the creation of the new state of West Virginia in May 1862, which was followed by final admission into the Union on June 20, 1863. For the Union, control of this region was essential because over 200 miles of Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks and navigable Ohio River waterway ran through it and were the most direct and important links to the Union states of the upper Midwest.

**Prelude #3 (Slide 3)**

**Comparative Advantages: North vs. South**

**Population**

Union 22,000,000

Confederacy 9,500,000 of which 3,500,000 were slaves

Discussion: The Union had an overwhelming 2:1 advantage in manpower. As the conflict evolved into a “war of attrition” this was an increasingly significant statistic. While not direct military assets, the 3.5 million slaves in the Confederacy were available for agricultural work and to a large extent, they initially released substantial white manpower for military service. This changed in 1862 when the Union Army started to accept blacks into the ranks and news of this new opportunity filtered south. Another advantage for the Union was the 800,000 immigrants that arrived in the North between 1861 and1865, many of which were single males suitable for military service. (See Millett & Maslowski, 162-163; Doughty, Gruber, et al., 106-107.)

**Manufacturing Establishments**

Union 110,000

Confederacy 18,000

Discussion: While the number of establishments does provide one type of quick “snap-shot” of industrial economic potential, the *value* of the goods and services such firms produced is also informative: On the eve of the Civil War, the four most industrially productive Confederate states of Virginia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi together produced manufactured goods worth $85 million. During the same period, the state of New York, alone produced over $380 million worth of manufactured goods. (See Millett & Maslowski, 164; Doughty, Gruber, et al., 107; Long, 725-726.)

**Pig Iron (tons)** (during the year proceeding June 1, 1860)

Union 951,000

Pennsylvania alone 580,049 tons

Confederacy 36,790

Discussion: Pig iron was the raw stock that was necessary for the production of a wide variety of modern military goods from horse shoes to wagon wheel rims, buckles straps, railroad rails and numerous rolling stock parts. Without access to this material, development of militarily useful industry was pointless. (See Millett & Maslowski,164; Doughty, Gruber, et al., 107.)

**Warships**

Union 90

Confederacy “a few barges and steam boats”

Discussion: The U.S. Navy and the merchant marine were dominated by New Englanders and virtually all American ship building capacity was found in northern states. Of the U.S. Navy’s 1,554 officers at outbreak of the war, 373 joined the Confederate cause as did only a very few of the 7,600 enlisted seamen. Of the few who went south, one of the most able was Stephen R. Mallory, who realizing the overwhelming odds against him in creating a Navy from scratch and pursued novel “asymmetric” options such as commerce raiding and the construction of “torpedoes” and “ironclads.” (See Doughty, Gruber, et. al., 108; McPherson, 313-315. McPherson provides a very good short discussion of the capacities, options and personalities affecting the Naval operations of both sides during the Civil War.)

**Prelude #4 (Slide 4)**

**Comparative Advantages**

**Railroads**

Miles of track

Union 22,000

Confederacy 9,000 miles of track

Locomotives

Union 451 manufactured in Union states in 1860

Confederacy 19 manufactured in Confederate states in 1860

Discussion: The Union not only had a more than 2:1 numerical advantage in miles of railroad track, it also had a qualitative advantage:

* A higher degree of integration and capability for interchangeability of rolling stock; greater standardization of track gauges and equipment. Most southern railroads were short single-track lines with limited service. Few lines inter-connected even when terminating in the same cities as gauging on the different varied widely.
* Virtually all railroad maintenance and manufacturing capacity was found in the northern states.

Other comparative differences included:

* The Union readily used Federal powers to compel private railroad company’s to provide maximum support to Union forces; January 1862, U.S. Congress creates the United States Military Railroad to take over the operations of any railroads not sufficiently cooperative to the military effort.
* The Confederacy was never able to achieve the same degree of efficiency or level of cooperation in railroad operations due to political pressures to respect “states” and individual “rights,” until the last year of the war, 1865.

(See Millett & Maslowski, 164-164; McPherson, 319; Gabel, 13.)

**Prelude #5 (Slide 5)**

**Confederate Courses of Action**

The Confederacy had several strategic courses of action it could follow if it was to hold on to its de facto independence (See McPherson, 337-346; Doughty, et. al, 106)

(Note to Instructor: Have cadets try to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each course of action.)

Attack – Conduct an attack into the border states or even those of the Union

Advantages: (All remote possibilities)

* Might gain some sympathizers in the border states
* Might show credibility as a national entity and gain foreign (European) recognition and support

Disadvantages: Not a real option because:

* Did not advance political objectives of “being left alone” to *de facto* independence
* Confederate logistics not capable of large pushes into enemy territory; had to build most logistics capability from scratch
* Might really stir-up and anger the Union to pursue and “all-out” war effort

Passive Defense – Allowed penetration of Confederate state borders and attack Union forces through use of raids and guerilla warfare

Advantages:

- Preserved the moral high-ground by making Union military incursions look like disproportionate aggression

Disadvantages: Not a real option because:

* Political pressures demanded more: popular confederate sentiment “did not want to wait to respond” to Union attacks
* Without external support, allowing Union forces to occupy the southern states would seriously inhibit the Confederacy’s ability to wage war.
* Inevitable Union incursions would disrupt stability and order required for slavery to persist

Active Defense – (What the Confederacy actually did)

Concentrated forces against invaders as their intentions became known; highly dependent on skillful maneuver by military commanders

Advantages:

* Took advantage of interior lines
* Transitioned to the offense whenever opportunities presented
* Best strategy for convincing foreign powers that the Confederacy was viable and that intervention would be beneficial to them
* Best strategy to inflict substantial losses on the Union and convince them that the cost of war was too high.

“The offensive-defensive”

“It is [as] impossible for [the enemy] to have a large operating army at every assailable point in our territory as it is for us to keep one to defend it. We must move our troops from point to point as required, and by close observation and accurate information the true point of attack can generally be ascertained… Partial encroachments of the enemy we must expect, but they can always be recovered, and any defeat of their large army will reinstitute everything.”

Robert E. Lee, 1863.

(As cited in Doughty, et. al., 107)

Disadvantages: If you read the enemy’s intentions wrong, you can really take a beating…

**Prelude #6 (Slide 6)**

**Union Courses of Action**

The union needed a careful offensive strategy that would isolate the rebellious states from any source of international support, cut them off from each other, and compel the citizens to restore their allegiance to the Union. This last action would be the most difficult to achieve militarily as it was essentially a political objective.

The Anaconda Plan (Attrition)

* Blockade Southern ports
* Send a strong column down the Mississippi River (hold this line of communication and supply); Cut the Confederacy off from supplies and support from Texas and the trans-Mississippi west.
* Wait – for economic stranglehold to make Confederates rethink their choices

Advantage: This plan did not heavily trample on Southern soil and it tried to avoid stirring up greater Southern hostility

Disadvantage: This plan would take time to get results. The longer the Confederacy endured the greater its legitimacy.

Attack – attack into the Confederacy

Advantage: Allows the Union to take advantage of early short term enlistments; potentially shortens duration of the Confederacy and quashes the legitimacy it could gain over time by simply enduring

Disadvantage: Union loses the moral high ground and is perceived as the aggressor; risks drawing in foreign intervention and aid to the Confederacy; Must go into the Confederate states and find the Confederate forces at the substantial risk of causing even greater alienation from the Union

Combination (Attrition and Attacks) – (What the Union actually did)

Advantage: Does something while waiting for “stranglehold” measures to produce economic effects; Lets Confederacy know that secession will not be allowed to stand without military consequences; takes advantage of early manpower gains

Disadvantages: Still risks greater alienation of Southerners from the Union