

Larry J. Daniel. *Conquered: Why the Army of Tennessee Failed.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. 456 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4696-4950-4.

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Since the end of the American Civil War historians have theorized why the Army of Tennessee did not find more success on its many battlefields. Groundbreaking studies like Stanley Horn's 1941 *Army of Tennessee: A Military History* and Thomas Connolly's two volumes, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (1967) and *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (1971), focus largely on the western army's battles, commanders, and leadership deficiencies as the keys to its ultimate failure. While leadership quirks, favoritism, and infighting certainly played a significant role in its struggles, author Larry J. Daniel offers a number of additional thought-provoking ideas in his recently published *Conquered: Why the Army of Tennessee Failed*.

Off the bat, Daniel identifies several primary issues that emerged soon after the western Confederate force was established, at that time under the name the Army of the Mississippi. A primary disadvantage was a lack of professionally trained leaders. Few of the divisional, brigade, and regimental officers had significant military experience before 1861. Lawyers were in abundance but few brought a recognized martial training background with them. Another early disadvantageous factor that developed in the army was internal sectionalism. Men from the Deep South had some reservations about their comrades from the

Upper South, who were often perceived as less committed and more cautious about secession and later mobilization. These southern sections were even more suspect about the loyalty of men from the Appalachian mountain regions. This lack of intra-army trust might seem fairly benign on the surface, but Daniel shows that it contributed to undermining the all-important esprit de corps within the army.

Another chief hindrance that Daniel and other historians have shown to have figured prominently into the Army of Tennessee's lack of success was the vast geographical area and the problematic topographical features (primarily rivers) that the Army of Tennessee was expected to protect. Stretching a defensive line virtually from the west side of the Appalachian Mountain range to the Mississippi River was no small challenge. A reluctance from western men to enlist after 1861-62, especially in border states like Kentucky, also hurt the Army of Tennessee in terms of military manpower. In fact, Daniel states that "the need for raw numbers created a vicious cycle—men's reluctance after 1861 to volunteer led to poor-quality conscripts, which led to rising rates of desertion that frequently resulted in brutal forms of coercion and increased executions" (p. 115). This deadly spiral zapped army morale, reduced effectiveness on the battlefield, and thus continued to

spread disillusionment in the army and on the home front. Additionally, Daniel is fairly damning of the Army of Tennessee's cavalry, especially its leader, Joseph "The War Child" Wheeler. This branch of service, other than Nathan Bedford Forrest's on-again, off-again, relationship with Confederate military leadership in the West, was a constant hindrance.

In the preface to *Conquered*, Daniel states that he "partially adapted" models of his study in "topical and narrative approach" to Joseph Glatthaar's *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (p. xi). One intriguing and prominent point in Glatthaar's book that I wish Daniel had also covered is a statistical sample of soldiers who came from slaveholding families. Glatthaar found that about 44 percent of the soldiers in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia came from slaveholding families.[1] It would have been interesting to see the Army of Tennessee's statistical figures as comparison and an interpretation on how that may have influenced commitment and fighting effectiveness.

Where I found *Conquered* at its best is its ongoing examination of the western army's soldiers' experiences, largely derived from Daniel's previous work, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army* (1991). Soldier life topics, such as punishments, religion, furloughs, training, camp life, medicine, logistics, arms and ammunition, and even camp slaves, are found throughout the book and all have ties into why the Army of Tennessee experienced the war as it did.

As one would expect, the actions and decisions of the Army of Tennessee's commanders, Albert Sidney Johnston, Braxton Bragg, Joseph E. Johnston, John Bell Hood, and Joseph E. Johnston, receive a significant amount of critical examination in Daniel's chronological coverage. Daniel acknowledges the arguments of past scholars, both distant and recent, about the leaders' decisions and fighting styles. Some he accepts, some he re-

jects. However, his examinations of command issues help show the author's depth of knowledge and familiarity with the historiography of his subject.

The book's thorough endnotes and bibliography provide ample evidence of Daniel's strong research in both primary and secondary sources. In addition, his analysis, interpretation, and writing style make this study a pleasure to read. The only pesky drawback I found in the book is a few scattered errors, particularly in reference to individual's names: Stephen Hulbert instead of Hurlbut, William Helm instead of Benjamin Hardin Helm, and Edwin Ruffin instead of Edmund Ruffin. Nevertheless, *Conquered* is a worthy and welcome new addition to the expanding literature on the Confederacy's primary western theater fighting force and updates previous scholarly studies about the Army of Tennessee.

Note

[1]. Joseph Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 20.

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