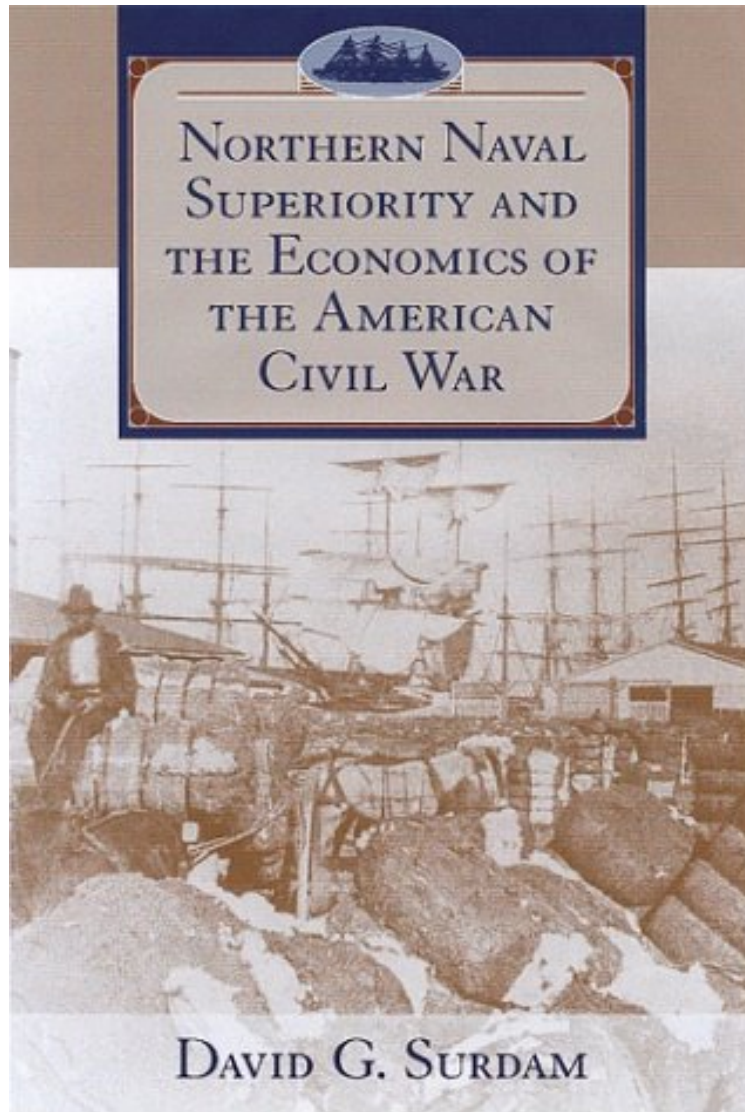


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# Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War

*David G. Surdam*

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ADDRESSING AN ASPECT of the Civil War that has long been a source of controversy among historians, David G. Surdam offers an unconventional analysis of the Union's naval blockade. He questions common methods of evaluating the strength of the 3,500-mile siege line, disputes widely held interpretations of its impact, and explores previously unexamined aspects of the blockade as he presents a case for the effectiveness of the Union naval effort. Surdam seeks to explain the failure of the Confederacy to wage war and sustain independence despite an apparently sufficient supply of raw cotton to trade with Europe and Canada for war materiel and enough beef and corn to feed its troops. To do so he expands the traditional approach to the blockade, finding that a focus on the number of goods that slipped past Union ships overlooks two of the blockade's most important achievements: disrupting intraregional trade and denying the Confederacy badly needed revenue from the export of raw cotton and other staple products. Explicating the blockade's indirect yet devastating results, Surdam examines the degradation of railroad lines, collapse of specific internal markets, and effect on the exportation of cotton. He also explores how the blockade affected the cross-country movement of crops to hungry soldiers and civilians and how costs associated with the blockade consumed most of the higher prices that Europeans paid for Southern cotton.

About the Author DAVID G. SURDAM is a visiting assistant professor of economics at the Graduate School of Business of the University of Chicago and at the University of Oregon in Eugene. The recipient of the Edward S. Miller History Prize and the Ernest M. Eller Prize in Naval History, Surdam lives in Chicago.