
Thomas J. Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862: Theoretical Origins and Execution

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In war, the skin of the fox is at times as necessary as that of a lion, for cunning may succeed when force fails.

—Frederick the Great

Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign is remembered as one of the most brilliant campaigns of the American Civil War and rates favorably among the great campaigns of history. In the spring of 1862, Jackson turned the strategic fortunes of the Confederacy with a relatively small army employed in decisive fashion upon sound principles.

In March 1862, Union General George B. McClellan landed an army of 100,000 men on the Virginia Peninsula formed by the York and James Rivers. His objective was the Confederate capital of Richmond. Richmond was also the rail hub of Virginia and served as a primary manufacturer of munitions for the Southern armies. The city’s capture would precipitate the fall of Virginia and open the road to the Carolinas and the Deep South. Landing on the Peninsula allowed McClellan to bypass the rivers that provided Richmond with natural lines of defense.

To support his move up the Peninsula, McClellan detailed General Nathaniel P. Banks with 23,000 men to secure Manassas Junction and the lower Shenandoah Valley. The Valley was a natural invasion route to the north and Manassas Junction offered control of the rail lines in Northern Virginia. The posting of Banks blocked any potential Confederate move toward Washington and protected the rail link on McClellan’s right flank. Once McClellan invested Richmond, and Washington was deemed secure, Banks would then move on the Confederate capital from the north. Banks was supported by General John C. Fremont’s 15,000 men in the Allegheny Mountains west of Staunton in the upper Valley.¹

To counter the Federal invasion, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston commanded 57,000 men on the Peninsula and around Richmond. Also under Johnston's command were Jackson’s forces in the Shenandoah, numbering

4,600 men, and General Richard Ewell's division of 8,000 men positioned just east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A force of 2,800 men under General Edward Johnson kept watch on Fremont in the mountains.² Finally, a 2,500-man brigade under General Charles Field was positioned to watch the Rappahannock River crossing at Fredericksburg.³

Jackson received orders from Johnston to protect the left flank of the main Confederate Army by interposing himself between Richmond and any Federal thrust south from Washington. With his small numbers, Jackson was aware that he stood little chance of blocking a determined move toward Richmond by Banks. With this in mind, and encouraged by Confederate President Jefferson Davis's military advisor, Robert E. Lee, Jackson laid plans for an "offensive-defensive" strategy to occupy Banks in the Valley.⁴

On 11 March 1862, Banks moved on Winchester, where Jackson had spent the winter. Withdrawing before the Federal advance, Jackson held a council of war, where he planned a night attack before Banks could get settled in the town. Thanks to miscommunication among his officers, the attack was never carried out, causing Jackson to decide never to hold another council of war. He held to this decision, to the later detriment of his operations.⁵

After withdrawing from Winchester, Jackson fell back forty-two miles to Mount Jackson to observe Banks. Discerning the size of Jackson's force, Banks decided to split his army, leaving 9,000 men under General James Shields, while moving with the rest of his force toward Manassas to entrain for Richmond. Hearing of the movement, Jackson force-marched his men down the Valley Pike toward Winchester to attack Shields.

Why would Jackson launch an attack against an enemy who possessed twice his strength? The answer may be found not only in Jackson's natural aggressiveness, but in his training at West Point. The primary theoretical influence on American military thought at the time was the Swiss theorist Antoine Henri de Jomini. His works on warfare were taught at West Point through the interpretations of Dennis Hart Mahan and Henry Halleck.⁶ Mahan is best known for his advocacy of battlefield fortifications, but Jomini and Halleck stressed the idea of initiative, which they roughly defined as taking the offensive in a given operation.⁷ By taking action, Jackson set the tone of the engagement and provided himself with options.

The idea of initiative is best expressed within the Jominian concept of the "offensive-defensive." Jackson was well-aware of the advantages of such a strategy. Jomini wrote, "This plan . . . promises many chances of success, but only when the general has the good sense not to make the defense passive: he must not remain in his positions to receive whatever blows may be given by his adversary; he must, on

the contrary, redouble his activity, and be constantly on the alert to improve all opportunities of assailing the weak points of the enemy.” Furthermore, a commander who adopts such a strategy “can with hope of success take the initiative, and is fully able to judge when and where to strike.”⁸

Jackson arrived at the village of Kernstown, four miles south of Winchester, on 23 March, his force reduced by the fast pace of the march to 3,000 men. His cavalry commander, Turner Ashby, informed Jackson that Shields was withdrawing to Winchester and only a small rearguard was left at Kernstown. Jackson attacked immediately, but was eventually repulsed. Ashby’s information had been wrong. Jackson had faced Shields’s entire division and was forced to retire.⁹

Kernstown, though a tactical defeat, proved to be a strategic victory. Convinced that Jackson would not have attacked unless he had superior numbers, Shields reported as much to Washington. Lincoln responded by ordering Banks to return to Winchester and transferred 7,000 men to Fremont in Western Virginia.¹⁰ Lincoln also held General Irvin McDowell’s force of 40,000 men in Washington despite McClellan’s calls that it be sent to the Peninsula.

On the concept of initiative, Halleck wrote: “A commander who [takes the initiative], knowing all the value of acting on the offensive, shakes, by vigor and address of his first movements, the moral as well as the physical force of his enemy, —who . . . confounds his antagonist by enterprises equally hardy and unexpected.”¹¹ The confusion of Shields and the subsequent actions of Lincoln show this to have been the case in Jackson’s attack at Kernstown.

Many accounts of the campaign mistakenly attest that Lincoln held McDowell after Kernstown out of fear for the safety of Washington. Careful analysis, however, shows that Lincoln retained McDowell to adequately protect Manassas Junction as well as occupy the lower Shenandoah. Lincoln had insisted upon this arrangement to McClellan, who felt Banks could accomplish both tasks, during the operation’s planning stages. Lincoln overruled his commander and so retained McDowell. There is no evidence to suggest that Lincoln feared for the safety of Washington in the immediate wake of Kernstown.¹²

Nevertheless, Jackson accomplished his goal of holding Banks in the Valley. His activities had the added benefit of reinforcing Lincoln’s inclination to hold McDowell’s 40,000 men and the move to strengthen Fremont. Even though he suffered a tactical defeat, Jackson’s decision to attack at Kernstown had effectively diverted the attention of nearly 80,000 enemy troops.¹³

After being repulsed at Kernstown, Jackson conducted a month-long fighting withdrawal up the Valley, eventually halting in Swift Run Gap in the Blue

Ridge east of Staunton. Here he rested and refitted. Jackson's primary goals at the time were to prevent Banks and Fremont from joining their commands into a force too large to deal with and to protect Staunton, his base of supply and the transportation hub of the upper Valley.¹⁴

These immediate goals were achieved by concentrating the Confederate forces as prescribed by Halleck, who wrote that, "Concentration requires the main body to be in immediate and supporting reach."¹⁵ Jackson's main force was ensconced at Swift Run Gap with Ewell just to the east and Johnson to the west in the Alleghenies. Any attempt on Staunton by Banks would result in an immediate attack by the Confederate forces on his flanks. Likewise, Jackson was positioned to move in support of Johnson if Fremont advanced on Staunton from the west. If necessary, Jackson could also exit the Valley to the east to support Ewell or even Johnston at Richmond.

The position at Swift Run Gap also met Jomini and Halleck's requirements for an unassailable base. Such a base, according to both men, should provide shelter, contain the possibility of supply and reinforcement, and be situated in such a way as to provide cover for the surrounding theater.¹⁶ Swift Run Gap, with its proximity to Staunton and access to Richmond, met those criteria.

Even before his arrival at Swift Run Gap, Jackson began to recruit, eventually increasing his ranks to 6,000 men whom he drilled hard. One of the new recruits proved instrumental in the Confederate success of the next two months and beyond. Jedediah Hotchkiss was a self-taught cartographer, known to Jackson through his service with Lee in the latter's Western Virginia Campaign of the previous year.

With the addition of Hotchkiss to his staff, Jackson gave himself the capability to efficiently accomplish the aim of strategy according to Halleck: "Strategy . . ." he wrote, "selects the important points in [a] theater, and the lines of communication by which they may be reached."¹⁷ Simply put, the commander that possesses superior knowledge of the terrain and roads in a given theater will have an advantage of initiative over his opponent.

On 26 March, Jackson ordered Hotchkiss to create a detailed map of the Valley from Harper's Ferry to Lexington with "all the points of offense and defense to those points." At the same time, Jackson had tables prepared that showed the precise distance between any two points in his military district.¹⁸ Banks had no such advantages.

On 21 April, word reached Robert E. Lee that McDowell's army was moving to the Rappahannock River opposite Fredericksburg. The Federal advance guard of 5,000 men had already arrived, prompting Field's brigade to burn the river

bridges and withdraw behind several water barriers south of the town. Opposing the troops of McDowell, Banks, and Fremont, Lee had Field's brigade, Jackson's 6,000, Johnson's 2,800, and Ewell's division, now numbered at 8,500, just east of the Blue Ridge near Gordonsville.¹⁹

Douglas S. Freeman wrote that 21 April, 1862 represented the greatest opportunity for a Northern victory that was to be offered them prior to the winter of 1864-65. With Johnston tied down in front of McClellan on the Peninsula, a determined thrust by Banks and Fremont against Jackson and Ewell would have isolated Field at Fredericksburg against McDowell. Field would have been no obstacle to McDowell, who would have had an open road to Richmond, sixty miles to the south. Johnston would have been forced to withdraw precipitately from the Peninsula while being pushed from the front and left flank by superior Federal forces.²⁰ Once forced into Richmond's fortifications, all opportunity for maneuver would have been irrevocably lost.

Lee saw the clear need for a strategic move to hold McDowell at Fredericksburg. Only Jackson and Ewell were capable of such a move at the time. It has been suggested that Lee intended for Jackson to threaten Washington in the belief that Lincoln would panic, but there is no evidence to support such an assertion. Neither Lee nor Johnston considered such a possibility until later in the campaign.²¹ With Jackson not being formally under his command, Lee suggested a move against either McDowell or Banks. In reply, Jackson requested, and received, the attachment of Ewell to his force, and launched the opening moves of his remarkable campaign.

On 2 May, Jackson moved Ewell into the Swift Run Gap position on Banks's left and marched his command south to Port Republic. From there, in full view of Federal scouts, he turned east through the Blue Ridge and exited the Valley via Brown's Gap. This move immobilized Banks as he tried to ascertain Jackson's destination, which he assumed to be Richmond to reinforce Johnston. Banks's assumption was fueled by his belief that Jackson had been seeking to abandon the Valley via Gordonsville for some time. Dispatches to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton on 19 and 22 April stated this belief, with the latter communication expressing the opinion that Jackson had left "permanently."²²

Upon being informed by Banks that Jackson was "bound for Richmond," Stanton ordered McDowell to hold at Fredericksburg until Jackson's intentions became known. Stanton also ordered Banks to send Shields's division to reinforce McDowell. This move reduced Banks's strength to 14,000 men, while Ewell's presence gave Jackson a rough numerical parity in the Valley. Jackson's move halted McDowell once more while denuding Banks of his numerical superiority.²³

Jomini's concepts were based in part on the wars and writings of Frederick the Great of Prussia. In his celebrated *Instructions* to his generals, Frederick wrote, "When our troops are on the point of assembling, we counter-march them in a variety of ways, to alarm the enemy, and conceal from him the spot where we really wish to assemble and force a passage."²⁴ With this in mind, Frederick would have recognized Jackson's initial move of 2 May, as well as subsequent actions in the coming days.

Jackson marched to Meechum's Station on the Virginia Central Railroad line just east of the Blue Ridge. There he entrained his less mobile troops for Staunton, with the rest following close behind by road, arriving on 4 May. Here Jackson linked up with Johnson, who had withdrawn to within a few miles of Staunton before Fremont's advance guard under General Robert Milroy. On 8 May, Jackson's reinforced command attacked Milroy at McDowell, Virginia. While incurring nearly twice as many casualties as Milroy, Jackson forced the Federals to withdraw to Franklin, which the Confederates seized the next day. Fremont was forced back into the mountains to regroup.²⁵

Jackson now turned on Banks, who had advanced cautiously toward Staunton with 10,000 men. Facing Jackson's 17,000, with no immediate support, Banks hastily withdrew to Strasburg, fifty miles down the Valley, where he fortified the approaches from the south. To protect the railroad line to Manassas, Banks detached 1,000 men to Front Royal, ten miles east at the mouth of the Luray Valley.

Jackson then executed his second masterful march of the campaign. Despite being told by Johnston that Banks should be "left in his works," Jackson had a plan to drive Banks out of the Valley altogether. He had received intelligence from Ewell regarding the isolated command at Front Royal. A strike there would render Banks's position at Strasburg untenable and position Jackson to sever the Federal lines of communication.²⁶

With this decision, and the manner by which he would execute it, Jackson showed that he not only understood Halleck's point regarding the importance of a commander's knowledge of the decisive points in his theater of operations, but that he possessed what Frederick referred to as "*Coup D'oeil*"—the ability "to distinguish at first sight all the advantages of which a space of ground is capable."²⁷ Jackson was making the best possible use of Hotchkiss's map.

Dispatching Ewell down the Luray Valley, Jackson sent Ashby's cavalry to demonstrate before the Federal fortifications at Strasburg and screen off Banks's scouts. Convinced that Jackson was rushing down the Valley Pike behind his aggressive cavalry screen, Banks dug in and prepared to meet the expected frontal assault. Jackson, however, turned east at New Market and moved through the Luray

Gap, the only such pass through Massanutten Mountain, to link up with Ewell at Luray.

On the morning of 23 May, Jackson's entire force, its movement screened by the long ridge of Massanutten, descended on the 1,000-man garrison at Front Royal. The Confederates captured 700 enemy soldiers, the rest becoming casualties or fleeing toward Strasburg.²⁸ The news stunned Banks into inaction. Aware of Ewell's advance toward Front Royal, he still believed Jackson to be in his front. Not comprehending the threat to his flank Banks waited until the next day to order a hasty withdrawal. Even then, his justification to Stanton was that Ewell meant to interpose himself between Strasburg and Winchester while Jackson attacked his front.²⁹ While Banks looked south, Jackson was now poised to strike at Winchester with his entire army and cut Banks off completely. Seemingly uncharacteristically, he held back.

Jackson's decision not to immediately move toward Winchester had a firm theoretical basis. Halleck's commentary on Jomini contained the admonition that "It may be well to remark that it is not enough merely to gain the extremity and rear of the enemy, for in that case it may be possible for him to throw himself on our communications and place us in the very dilemma in which we had hoped to involve him."³⁰ While there was probably not much danger of Banks moving to threaten Jackson's communications, there was another concern that fell under the same principle.

Jackson reasoned that a precipitous move on Winchester would open the route for Banks to move via Front Royal toward McDowell or to Washington, actions that could not be permitted.³¹ Therefore, acting according to Halleck's principle, he moved more slowly, sending Ashby's cavalry toward Winchester to cut off Banks while Jackson pursued with his main force. The plan likely would have succeeded but for Jackson's obsessive secrecy.

It has been noted that Jackson took no counsel from his subordinates, nor did he make his plans known to them until absolutely necessary. In this critical area, Jackson heeded Jomini and Halleck both too well and not at all. This paradoxical statement is not made lightly. Jackson was a man of stark contrasts for whom there was very rarely a gray area of opinion. Jomini and Halleck both warned against a commander holding councils of war to reach a decision. They asserted that such councils should only be undertaken among officers who agreed with the commander and could make suggestions to boost his confidence toward his stated objective. Councils serve the positive role of providing the means by which the commander clearly communicates his intentions to his subordinates.

The negative result of Jackson's council of war during the withdrawal

from Winchester in March led him to two primary conclusions. First, that he alone should make command decisions, a conclusion with which Jomini and Halleck would have agreed. Second, councils of war should be dispensed with entirely since he would be the sole decision-maker. This conclusion ran counter to Halleck and Jomini's assertion that subordinate commanders should have intimate knowledge of the plan of action. The communication of such knowledge was crucial to ensure the proper implementation of the commander's designs. This second conclusion made communication of his plans much more difficult and led to confusion where there might otherwise have been clarity.³²

When dispatching Ashby, Jackson merely told him to harass Banks without revealing to him the entire concept of his plan. As a result, Ashby's cavalry engaged in widespread looting of abandoned Federal material, especially horses, which many of the cavalymen rounded up and led to their homes before returning two or three days later. Thanks to this miscommunication, Banks reached Winchester in relatively good order, though Jackson snapped up much of his service and supply train during the pursuit.³³

Though he had arrived at Winchester safely, Banks's position was desperate. He was outnumbered and his men were demoralized. Though he attempted to hold the town on 25 May, Jackson's force was too strong and scattered Banks's troops to the north. Had Ashby's cavalry been present in any strength, Banks may have been bagged right there. In their absence, Jackson had to settle for inflicting approximately 3,000 losses, mostly prisoners, on the Federal force.³⁴

On 16 May, prior to the move against Front Royal, Lee had written to Jackson saying, "Whatever movement you make against Banks, do it speedily, and if successful drive him back toward the Potomac, and create the impression, as far as practicable, that you design threatening that line." It is here that Lee's concept of threatening McDowell's communications along the Potomac River line may be seen. Lee understood that such a threat would hold McDowell at Fredericksburg or even force him to withdraw entirely.³⁵

The concern over communications should not be overlooked. As long as the rail link to Washington could be maintained, McDowell could be reasonably certain that his daily supply needs would be met. If the rail line were cut, he would have to rely upon wagon trains, as well as provide for their security. McDowell's logistical needs were not inconsiderable. The Army of the Potomac standard for the time was approximately three pounds of rations per day for the men and twenty-six pounds per horse. To meet this need, approximately forty-five wagons were required per 1,000 men. The further the force marched from its base of

supply, in this case Washington, the more wagons would be required to compensate for those in transit. These figures do not include the wagons needed for other requirements such as ammunition and medical supplies. Thus, the operational mobility of a Civil War army was determined by the security of its connections to its base of supply. The sixty miles between Fredericksburg and Richmond could become perilous indeed with uncertain communications.³⁶

When Banks dispatched Shields to Fredericksburg, Johnston had advocated Jackson's shadowing of the Federal division along the way to eventually settle in front of McDowell. Lee demonstrated a deeper understanding of Jominian concepts. A "decisive strategic point" is defined by Jomini as a point "whose importance is constant and immense."³⁷ It must be remembered that Jackson's objective was to deny McClellan the support of Banks and McDowell. Lee had identified the Potomac River crossings as decisive in terms of threatening McDowell's lines of communication. Such a threat offered the opportunity to influence McDowell's army in a much more profound way than merely interposing Jackson's command between McDowell and Richmond.

Johnston, to his credit, altered his view after learning of the results at Winchester. He had received news that McDowell had crossed the Rappahannock and was moving south. McClellan had taken Mechanicsville, five miles from Richmond, and was extending his right wing past Hanover Courthouse to link up with McDowell. The trap was closing and Johnston, like Lee, saw Jackson's as the only command that had an opportunity to stop it. The urgency of the situation is evident from two letters to Jackson on 27 May, in which Johnston said, "If you can threaten Baltimore and Washington, do so," and, more ominously,

You cannot, in your present position, employ such an army as yours upon any enterprise not bearing directly on the state of things here—either by preventing the reinforcements to McClellan's army, or by drawing troops from it by divisions. These objects might be accomplished by the demonstrations proposed above [that is, crossing the Potomac], or by a movement upon McDowell, although I fear that by the time this reaches you it will be too late for either.³⁸

By the time this correspondence reached Jackson he had arrived on the Potomac, the tasks set before him by Johnston already accomplished.³⁹

On 28 May, Johnston learned from General J.E.B. Stuart that McDowell had halted his southward advance and was returning to Fredericksburg. This was

the result of an order from Lincoln, originating on 24 May, to send Shields back to the Valley to support Banks. Jackson's aggressive moves had now stopped McDowell for the third time. Lincoln also ordered Fremont to move on Harrisonburg to cut Jackson's avenue of retreat. It has been common to assert that Lincoln issued these orders out of fear for the safety of Washington but their issuance on 24 May, before Banks was routed from Winchester, shows this to have not been the case.⁴⁰ It is clear that Lincoln's orders were aimed at overwhelming Jackson in the Valley.

Jackson, acting on the suggestions of Lee, pursued Banks's beaten army from Winchester all the way to the Potomac at Harper's Ferry. In the wake of the Federal defeat at Winchester and the pursuit to Harper's Ferry, Lincoln and Stanton became concerned that Jackson might threaten Washington, though the capital was not sent into a panic, as has been suggested by some. In fact, on 28 May, Lincoln inquired of McDowell as to the feasibility of renewing his march to the south. McDowell declined, stating that it would be unwise to advance only part of his force and to leave Fredericksburg "other than strongly held, which could not be done as the troops are now posted." With that decision by McDowell, Jackson accomplished once and for all his goal of preventing McDowell's army from joining McClellan.⁴¹

Though Lincoln did not panic, his concern for Washington gave him pause. The threat to the Federal lines of communication did the same for McDowell. As Frederick wrote, "You will be sure of creating jealousy in the enemy, if you threaten places that either communicate with the capital or serve as depots for his provisions."⁴² Jackson had provided such a threat to both Lincoln and McDowell.

Jackson took receipt of Johnston's letters on 30 May. Aware of the movements of Shields and Fremont, now aiming to cut him off, Jackson dispatched a courier to Richmond asking for reinforcements to bring his strength to 40,000 men. Only with such a force could he credibly threaten the cities of the North, an opportunity that had now presented itself. At the same time, he had his army moving south with its captured stores to escape the trap being closed by the two Federal columns, who he expected to link up at Strasburg.⁴³

Though Jackson's forces had much further to travel than the Federals, on 1 June he pushed the last of his men through Strasburg and up the Valley Pike toward Staunton. Jackson's escape, literally under the eyes of Federal advance units, was due as much to the slowness of Fremont as to the alacrity of the now-weary Confederate troops. Instead of advancing on Harrisonburg, Fremont held to the protection of the Alleghenies and moved further north to strike at Strasburg.⁴⁴

Jackson's advance to the Potomac had led the Federals to once again overestimate his strength, so neither Shields nor Fremont was willing to oppose him alone. This caution caused further delays as the two commands tried to coordinate their advances.⁴⁵

Jackson, awaiting word from Richmond, moved up the Valley toward his old bolt hole of Brown's Gap above Port Republic. Fremont pursued him closely. As a precaution, Jackson burned the bridges over the South Fork of the Shenandoah River to block Shields, who was pursuing south through the Luray Valley. Jackson won the race to Port Republic, barely, but instead of retiring to defensive positions in Brown's Gap, decided to turn and fight.

The resulting 8-9 June Battles of Cross Keys, against Fremont, and Port Republic, against Shields, were effectively tactical draws. Jackson fought Fremont to a standstill on 8 June before wheeling to strike Shields the next morning. Jackson's force flanked Shields at Port Republic, inflicting heavy casualties, pushing the Federals nine miles down the Luray Valley to the north. Jackson did not pursue because of the threat of Fremont to the west.

Jackson's 8 June plan was based conceptually on Napoleon's practice of operating on interior lines to destroy one foe before turning on the other. While a good plan on paper, it was poorly executed on the tactical level in terms of the movement of troops across the river, leading to the aforementioned stalemate.⁴⁶ Fremont's dispatches indicate that his men fought well at Cross Keys but, without Shields, he was unwilling to press his perceived advantage.⁴⁷

Though authorized to stay if he felt he had a chance to defeat Jackson, Shields soon withdrew on the excuse that he was expected to march on Richmond with McDowell. Fremont, seeing the withdrawal of Shields and harassed by Confederate cavalry, moved north to Middletown, ten miles south of Winchester, where he joined Banks's reconstituted command. Thus, Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign came to a quiet close.

Elsewhere in Virginia its effects were still being felt. Lee, now in command of the Confederate army before Richmond, wrote Jefferson Davis on 5 June regarding Jackson's request for reinforcements. Lee believed that such an action could "change the character of the war," but felt that he could not spare troops from Richmond for the effort, a notion with which Davis concurred. The reinforcement of Jackson on such a scale would require the transfer of troops from the Carolinas and Georgia, leaving the coast all but defenseless. Lee settled for sending Jackson eight regiments to enable him to clear the upper Valley and then move quickly to Richmond.⁴⁸ Thus, the tactical draw at Cross Keys-Port Republic became a strategic victory for the Confederacy, as Lee was able to relegate Banks

and Fremont to the lower Valley while adding Jackson's force to the upcoming assault on McClellan.

Thanks to Jackson's efforts to halt McDowell at Fredericksburg, McClellan's right flank was unsupported, giving Lee the opportunity to move on this flank at the outset of the Seven Days Battles. McClellan was eventually forced off the Peninsula, though at the cost of 20,000 Confederate casualties. Robert E. Lee rightfully receives credit for the Confederate victory over McClellan, but it was Jackson who provided him the opportunity in the first place.

The reasons for Jackson's success may be framed using Jomini's Fundamental Principle of War.⁴⁹ Jackson employed strategic maneuver to place the full weight of his army on the decisive points and lines of communication of the enemy. Such was the case in the defense of Staunton when Jackson concentrated first on Milroy, then on Banks. It was the case at Front Royal, which forced the evacuation of the Strasburg fortifications and led to the victory at Winchester. In addition, Jackson employed this principle on multiple occasions to threaten Federal communications with the result of holding McDowell away from Richmond.

Jackson used maneuver to concentrate superior numbers against weaker portions of the Federal forces arrayed against him, for example the battles at McDowell, Front Royal, and Winchester. Even at the Battles of Cross Keys and Port Republic, Jackson won a strategic victory due to his ability to keep his adversaries separated and mass against a single opponent. Finally, Jackson repeatedly demonstrated his understanding of the need to strike quickly in order to gain the initiative and attack with positive energy. The application of this concept alone caused, on two separate occasions at Kernstown and Harper's Ferry, the halt of McDowell's force. His lone failure was Ashby's inability to stop Banks from reaching Winchester.

Jackson's long study of the principles of war stood to the forefront during his celebrated Shenandoah Valley Campaign. His sound theoretical base allowed him to develop a theater-wide strategy, which turned the tide of the war, despite being significantly outnumbered by the forces opposing him. This is not to say that Jackson, or Lee, employed Jomini as a battlefield instructional manual. Rather, Jackson and Lee understood their craft so well that they applied Jominian principles on an intuitive level as the circumstances demanded. Banks, a so-called "political general," simply lacked the training and experience of two supremely talented professional soldiers. By seizing the initiative from Banks, Jackson forced the Federals to react to his movements, tying down as many as five times his own number and likely extending the duration of the war by at least two years.

Halleck wrote, “Not infrequently, the results of a campaign depend more upon the strategic operations of an army, than upon its victories gained in actual combat. Tactics . . . is therefore subordinate to the choice of positions.”⁵⁰ The tactics employed by Jackson during the campaign, though beyond the scope of this work, were not responsible for securing his ultimate victory. Rather, it was his application of strategic principle. Halleck perhaps had it right when he referenced Napoleon’s maxim “That success is oftener due to the genius of the general, and to the nature of the theatre of war, than to the number and bravery of the soldiers.”⁵¹

Notes

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2. *Ibid.*, 129.
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4. *Ibid.*, 37.
5. Robert G. Tanner, *Stonewall in the Valley, Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s Valley Campaign, Spring, 1862* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 110.
6. Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare; Ideas, Organization, and Field Command* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 3-16.
7. Antoine Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. G.H. Mendell and W.P. Craighill (El Paso: El Paso Norte Press, 2005), 56.
8. *Ibid.*, 57.
9. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1881-1901), vol. 12, pt. 1, p. 379. (Hereinafter cited as OR; except as otherwise noted, all references are to Series I).
10. Alexander, 129.
11. H. Wager Halleck, *Elements of Military Art and Science* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1862), Chapter 2.
12. Tanner, 303.
13. Alexander, 129.
14. Walter P. Lang, Jr., J. Frank Hennessee, and William E. Bush, Jr., “Jackson’s Valley Campaign and the Operational Level of War,” *Parameters, Journal of the Army War College* Volume XV, No 4. (1985): 48-58.
15. Halleck, Chapter 2.
16. Jomini, 61-64.
17. Halleck, Chapter 2.

18. Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, Volume I, Manassas to Malvern Hill* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 321-322.

19. Freeman, *Lee, Vol. II*, 33-34.

20. *Ibid.*, 33-34.

21. *Ibid.*, 38, 62.

22. OR, vol. 12, pt.1, p. 446.

23. Alexander, 131.

24. Frederick the Great, *Instructions for His Generals*, translated by Thomas R. Phillips, New York: Dover Publications, 2012, 287.

25. OR, vol. 12, pt.1. p. 10.

26. Freeman, *Lee, Vol. II*, 55.

27. Frederick, 261-262.

28. OR, vol. 12, pt. 1, pp. 701-703.

29. *Ibid.*, 526-528.

30. Halleck, Chapter 2.

31. OR, vol. 12, pt. 1, p. 703.

32. Jomini, 44-45.

33. OR, vol. 12, pt. 1, p. 704.

34. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants, Vol. I*, 395-407.

35. Freeman, *Lee, Vol. II*, 62.

36. Hagerman, 44-46, 60-61.

37. Jomini, 67.

38. Tanner, 291-292.

39. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants, Vol. I*, 415.

40. *Ibid.*, 407-409.

41. *Ibid.*, 409, 410.

42. Frederick, 289.

43. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants, Vol. I*, 414-419.

44. OR, 11-12.

45. Alexander, 136-137.

46. Lang, Hennessee, and Bush, 56.

47. OR, vol. 12, pt. 1, pp. 654-655.

48. Freeman, *Lee, Vol. II*, 83-84, 94-95.

49. Jomini, 55. Jomini's Fundamental Principle of War consists of four points: 1. To throw by strategic movements the mass of an army, successively, upon the decisive points of a theater of war, and also upon the communications of the enemy as much as possible without compromising one's own. 2. To maneuver to engage fractions of the hostile army with the bulk of one's forces. 3. On the battlefield, to throw the mass of the forces upon the decisive point, or upon that portion of the hostile line which it is of the first importance to overthrow. 4. To so arrange that these masses shall not only be thrown upon the decisive point, but that they shall engage at the proper times and with energy.

50. Halleck, Chapter 2.

51. *Ibid.*, Chapter 2.

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