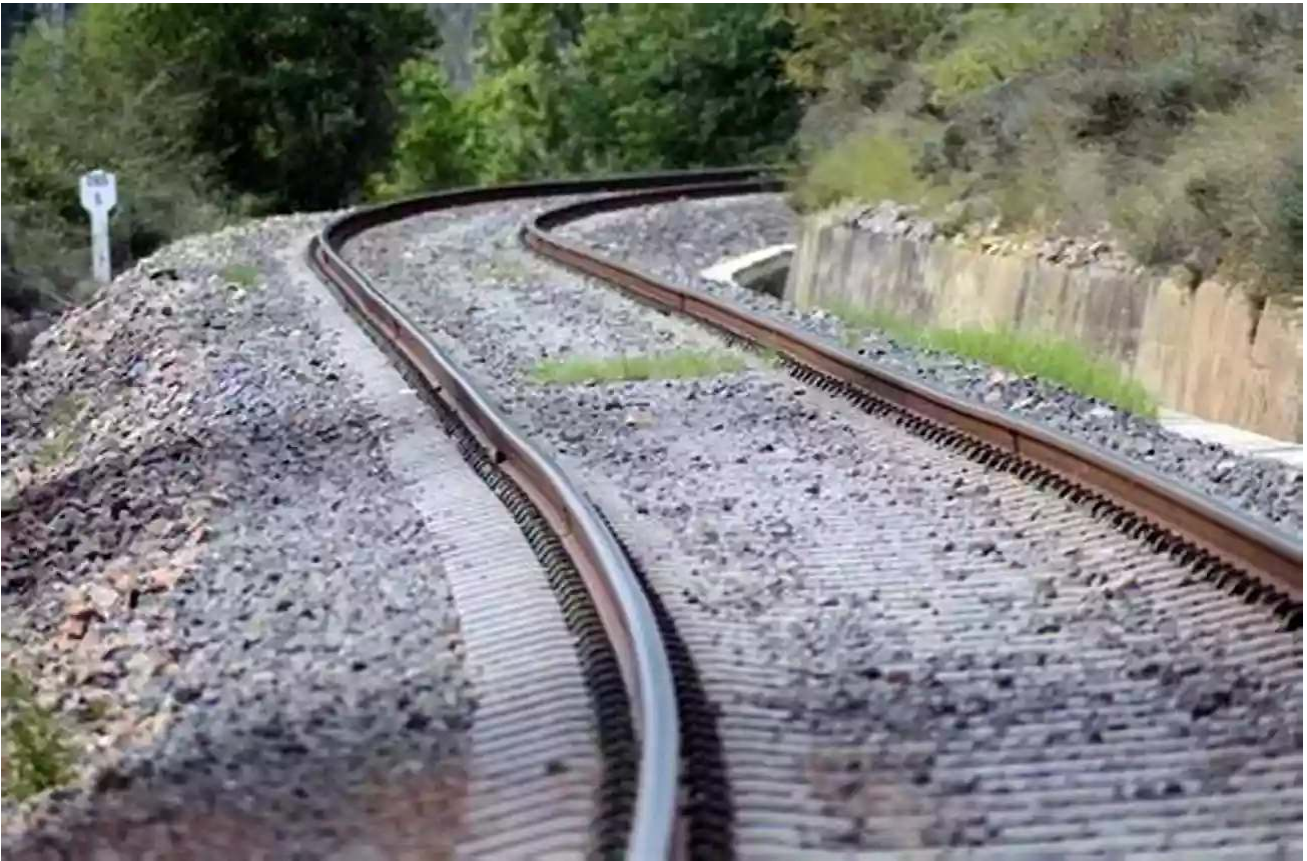


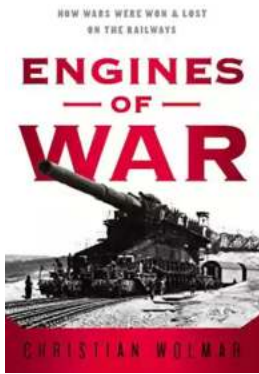
# How Wars Were Won & Lost On The Railways



War has always been a testament to human innovation and strategy. Throughout history, battles have been fought on land, in the sea, and in the air. But what about the railways? Yes, you heard it right. Railways have played a significant role in deciding the outcome of several wars.

## **Railways and Their Strategic Importance**

When we think of railways, we often associate them with transportation and economic growth. However, their influence on warfare is often overlooked. Railways offer a unique advantage during times of conflict by providing a fast, safe, and efficient means of moving troops, weapons, and supplies.



## Engines of War: How Wars Were Won & Lost on the Railways by Christian Wolmar(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 7338 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 370 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



During the 19th century, railway technology rapidly progressed, stretching across continents and connecting nations. This infrastructural development led to a paradigm shift in military strategies, making railways an integral part of war planning.

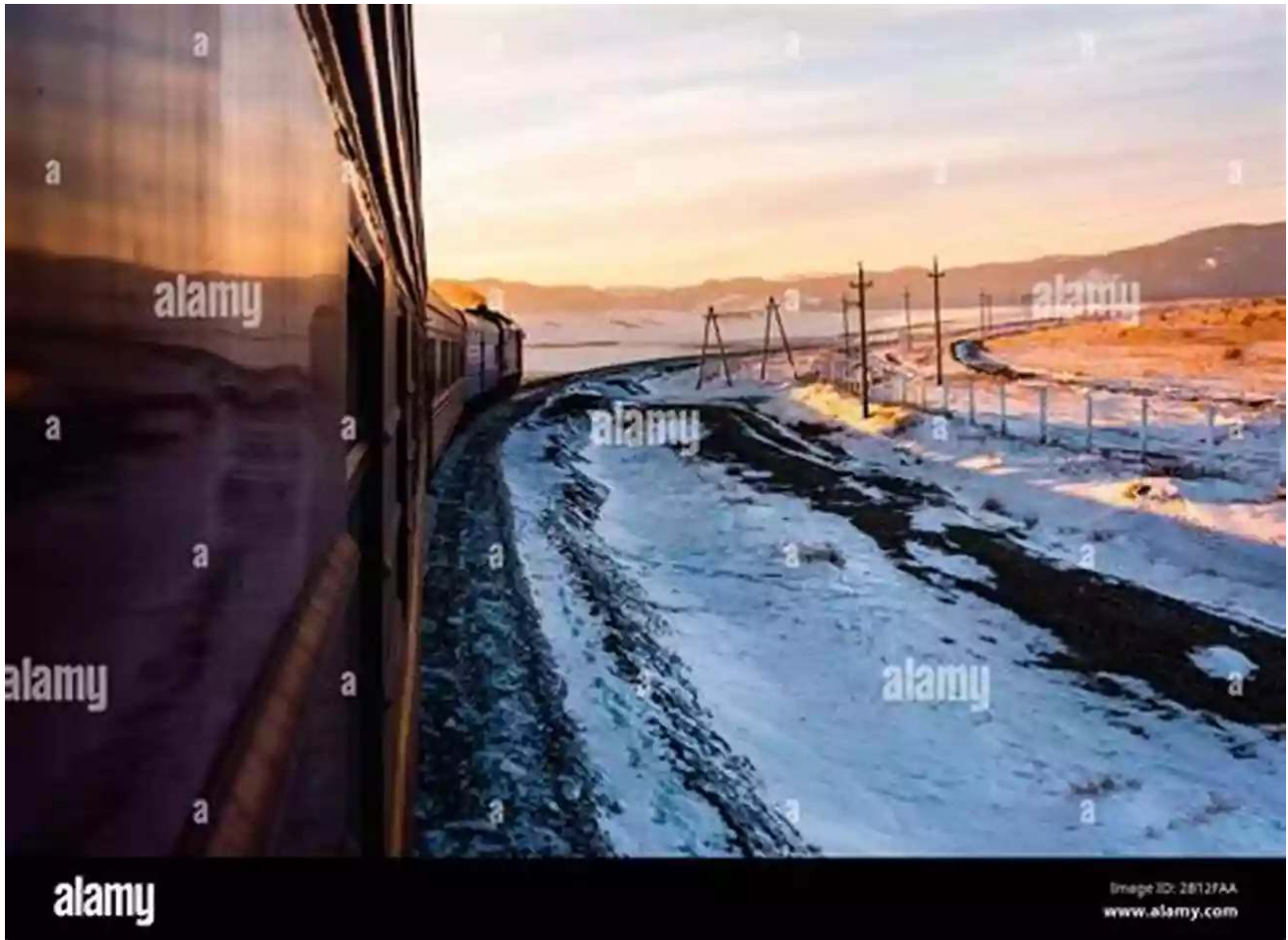
### The American Civil War

One of the first conflicts where railways played a defining role was the American Civil War. The Union and Confederate armies heavily relied on railways to transport troops and supplies to the front lines. The control and disruption of rail lines were crucial tactics employed by both sides.

General William Sherman's infamous "March to the Sea" during the American Civil War was made possible by his effective use of railways. By cutting off Confederate supply lines and destroying rail tracks, Sherman's troops disrupted the Southern economy, significantly weakening their ability to wage war.

### The Trans-Siberian Railway in WWI

World War I witnessed an even greater reliance on railways. The Trans-Siberian Railway, completed in 1916, was a lifeline for the Russian Empire. It served as a crucial supply route, aiding the transportation of troops and essential resources during the war.



However, the strategic value of the Trans-Siberian Railway was also recognized by the Central Powers. German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of wars were utilized to construct and maintain railways in the Eastern Front, enabling quick transportation of troops and resources to the battle lines.

## **World War II and the Blitzkrieg**

World War II witnessed the most significant utilization of railways for military purposes. The lightning-fast German strategy known as the Blitzkrieg heavily

relied on railways to achieve its success.

Hitler's military planners recognized the strategic importance of rail lines. By establishing a vast network of railways across occupied territories, the Germans could quickly deploy troops and supplies wherever they were needed.



The French, despite having one of the most extensive railway networks in Europe, were caught off guard by the Germans' lightning mobility. The German forces would often bypass heavily fortified French defenses by diverting through less fortified areas using railways, allowing them to encircle the enemies and penetrate deep into enemy territory.

### **The Impact of Railways Today**

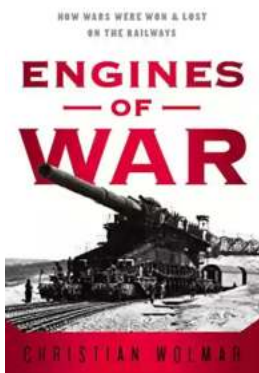
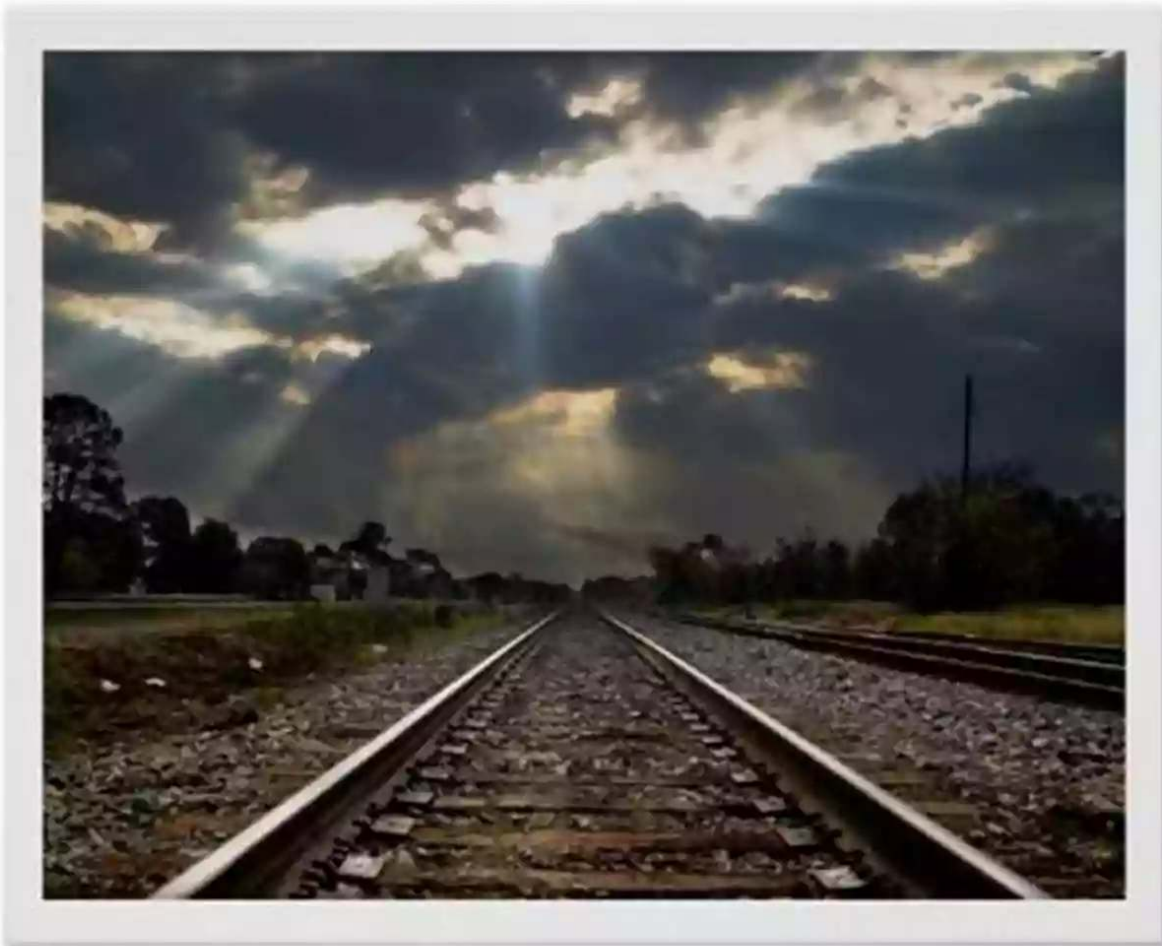
Although rail transportation may not have the same level of impact on modern warfare as it did in the past, railways continue to play a vital role in military

logistics. Many armed forces around the world rely on railways to transport troops, equipment, and supplies.

Moreover, railways still possess immense strategic value during peacetime. Countries invest heavily in securing vital rail lines as they are the backbone of their transportation infrastructure. Any disruption in rail connectivity can have severe consequences, affecting the economy and security of a nation.

From the American Civil War to World War II, railways have proven to be influential factors in the outcome of conflicts. The ability to transport troops and supplies quickly and efficiently has provided significant advantages to those who controlled the rail lines.

As technology advances and warfare evolves, the role of railways in future conflicts may change. However, the impact of railways on war cannot be negated. They stand as a testament to human ingenuity and the ability to leverage infrastructure in the pursuit of victory.



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The birth of the railway in the early 1830's revolutionized the way the world waged war. From armored engines with swiveling guns, to the practice of track sabotage, to the construction of tracks that crossed frozen Siberian lakes, the "iron road" facilitated conflict on a scale that was previously unimaginable. It not only made armies more mobile, but widened fighting fronts and increased the power and scale of available weaponry; a deadly combination.

In *Engines of War*, Christian Wolmar examines all the engagements in which the railway played a part: the Crimean War; the American Civil War; both world wars; the Korean War; and the Cold War, with its mysterious missile trains; and illustrates how the railway became a deadly weapon exploited by governments across the world.



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