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STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Strategic leadership in the American Civil War

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Thesis: President Lincoln, in his role as the Commander in Chief, provided the strategic vision and direction which ultimately led to the reunification of the United States.

Discussion: The Civil War provides an example of the successes that can be achieved when a President uses his influence to successfully manage civilian and military leaders. During the Civil War, President Lincoln provided his subordinate leaders with an achievable strategic concept, strategic direction by ensuring that his cabinet and congressional leaders provided the support required to accomplish the mission. Finally, he selected a General Officer who was capable of applying the Operational Art of war, using the Single Battle Concept. Although, the President had to rapidly learn how to effectively execute a war, he learned to overcome adversity, replace inadequate Generals who failed to apply the operational art and provided the political will to win the war and bring the Union back together.

Conclusion: The lessons learned from these experiences are relevant today and should be considered by all leaders when preparing to plan the next war. Although it is obvious today that the military has a more thorough knowledge than the legislative branch when it comes to foreign policy and how to leverage our National assets against an objective, our civilian leaders must take their rightful place as leaders in war. They must possess the knowledge and courage to make decisions, question military leaders and replace military Commanders when necessary. The Civil War showed countless examples for today’s military leaders on what is good and what is bad and should remain a source of education for future military and civilian leaders.
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Introduction:

Throughout the history of the United States, there have been numerous wartime Presidents who have helped secure the nation's standing as the World's super-power. The country has witnessed strong leaders who effectively changed the outcome of both World Wars as well as ineffective leaders who were unable to manage military and political issues during wars, which ultimately led to a prolonged effort, stalemate or defeat. During the past few decades, the world has been in constant conflict in which the majority of the nation's political leaders do not have military experience. This lack of experience has caused current leaders to turn to history for examples of how to effectively lead during war. The United States is fortunate to have one of the greatest statesmen in the history of the world, who successfully led a nation during a civil war, which is arguably the most difficult form of warfare. President Abraham Lincoln, in his role as the Commander in Chief, provided the strategic vision and direction which ultimately led to the reunification of the United States.

During the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln displayed the civilian leadership that a nation requires during a time of crisis. Lincoln's conduct as Commander in Chief ranged from that of a well meaning but inexperienced experimenter in 1861 to that of a master war director by 1864. He accomplished his vision by providing the strategic concept to civilian and military leaders, effectively shaping and defining national policy, providing the strategic direction throughout the conflict, and supported General Ulysses S. Grant with the manpower and flexibility to apply the operational art of war.
As Commander in Chief, specific plans changed from time to time, but the strategic end state of a Confederate total surrender and a restoration of the Union were maintained through five years of conflict and seven commanders. Politically, the President was responsible for pushing the authority granted to the executive branch to the limits of the law and getting some of the most historical pieces of legislature through Congress such as the Emancipation Proclamation. Due to the constraints limiting this body of work to twenty pages of text, this paper will concentrate primarily on the civil/military relationship, Lincoln’s direction and accountability of his military leaders and the policy that was implemented in support of the military’s ability to accomplish a strategic end state.

American Civil War Political and Military Context

The period between election and the beginning of the Civil War was filled with numerous obstacles for the incoming president. As Abraham Lincoln began his presidential campaign, the Republican’s core policy was the non-extension of slavery into the new territories. The Democratic Party looked at this policy as the government denouncing popular sovereignty. Abraham Lincoln took office on 4 March and walked right into a looming crisis. Fortunately, President Lincoln was a man who did not worry about critics, had the ability to learn quickly and was bold enough to rely on his own judgment. His willingness to listen to advice and ability to compromise with others provided the flexibility required to achieve his objective. All of these traits would be tested in his role as the Commander in Chief.
Throughout President Lincoln’s childhood and through his rise in politics, this self educated man worked hard, communicate effectively and compromise with his political allies and adversaries. President Lincoln was determined to restore the Union as it was designed by the Founding Fathers. Arguably one of the greatest communicators in history, he appealed to the strength of his party and reminded them that “God has never forsaken this people or this land” and that he would be “happy in deed to be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty” while fighting this great struggle.\(^2\)

When it came to filling the cabinet, which the President realized would play an important role in his ability to achieve his vision, he planned a balanced cabinet that was capable of addressing the needs of all those involved in the political process. He surrounded himself with experienced and talented people in the party. Although this proved to be a lot of work in the future, he was determined to have a balanced cabinet of ex-Whigs, Democrats, quasi-abolitionist radicals, and moderates.

President Lincoln understood that although his period as the President would be difficult, he had to endure the struggle to ensure that he accomplished his strategic vision which included the survivability of the Nation. Slavery was the primary conflict at hand in causing secession, but for President Lincoln, his number one priority was restoration of the country, no matter the cost.

**Strategic Vision**

When a country is at war, military and political leaders look to the President to provide the leadership to direct the nation. Although he did not have previous military experience, President Lincoln understood the complexity of the issues looming over the
nation when he took the office. In his inaugural address he stated "you have an oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it."

Throughout the war when implementing policy that may have been construed as unconstitutional, or military decisions to achieve strategic results, the President kept his strategic vision in mind. All decisions that were made while fulfilling his duties as Commander in Chief were consistent with the reunification of the Union. From the decision to call up the state militia in 1861 to the decision of granting amnesty in 1865, President Lincoln kept his strategic vision in mind and saw it through to the end. Current military and political leaders can benefit by studying and applying President Lincoln's courage and willingness to present a Strategic Concept that is attainable and the dedication to see it through at all cost to personal gain.

**Union Strategic Concept**

The Civil War began at 0430 on 12 April 1861, with the firing of a single mortar at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. President Lincoln immediately began looking at the strategic concept for ending the political stalemate. The President was tested militarily and would soon learn how military actions would have an effect on the politics. The President's call for 75,000 militia men, to put down the rebellion, caused four additional states to secede, including Virginia, who was the most vital state for the Confederacy.

The succession of Virginia provided the Confederate States of America (CSA) with a Naval Base, additional manpower, and leadership, which ultimately turned them into a much stronger adversary. The succession also presented an immediate threat to Washington D.C. and Maryland. The states that belonged to the Union demonstrated the
willingness to support the President in order to obtain a quick and decisive victory and overwhelmingly demonstrated that the potential strength for the North was enormous.\textsuperscript{6}

Once the President survived the initial threat of an attack on Washington D.C. and it became apparent that the Union would not lose its capital, attention began to shift toward the capture of the enemy capital before the beginning of the next session of Congress.\textsuperscript{7} Although the President did not have a significant military background, he was a quick study. He read and absorbed works on military history and strategy, he observed the mistakes of his own Commanders and the enemy’s and drew apt conclusions.\textsuperscript{8} The original plan developed by General Winfield Scott, who was at the time, the Commanding General of the Army, called for an Army of approximately 300,000 in order to achieve a blockade of the southern coast, seize the Mississippi river, prevent the confederates from obtaining resources and then to wait them out. This plan, known as the Anaconda Plan, was modified by Lincoln. Lincoln’s strategy called for expanding the naval blockade, maintaining the Federal hold on the Virginia peninsula, ensuring the loyalty of the population of Baltimore, securing Union control of the Mississippi, and preparing offensives from Cairo, Illinois toward Memphis and from Cincinnati toward east Tennessee.\textsuperscript{9} The President realized that he had a significant advantage in his ability to raise and maintain the personnel required in the war. If the North recruited and enlisted the same proportion of its available population as the South, he would always outnumber them 4 to 1. However, he also realized the advantages of the Confederate Army, if they utilized their interior lines and natural choke points in the defense.
General Winfield Scott, who at age 75 and not fit for field duty, recommended Joseph K. F. Mansfield for the assignment of leading the Federal Army. The President displayed the fortitude to make decisions early in the campaign, and chose General Irvin McDowell to lead the Federal army into Virginia against the Confederate Army in the first Battle of Bull Run (Manassas). After taking the largest and best equipped army in the history of the American republic, he would have to stagger back to Washington after taking casualties in the neighborhood of ten percent. While these numbers were low compared to future battles, the initial military contact did not favor the Union, which caused political problems for the President. As soon as July 1861, it had become clear that McDowell was in over his head and General Scott appointed General George McClellan to Command the Army of the Potomac. Within 3 months, after the retirement of the aging General Scott, General McClellan was appointed the general-in-chief. Nevertheless, in spite of his high hopes, his troops were defeated in his first battle as a Commander in the Battle of Bulls Bluff. Even with an early setback, the President was clear on what his Strategic Concept would entail. In order to achieve victory in this war, the only acceptable solution was the total surrender of Confederate forces with restoration of all states returning to the Union.

Shaping and Defining National Policy

As the President of the United States, one of the most controversial issues are the powers granted the president by the Constitution. The Constitution gives Congress the sole power to declare war, a power that has only been exercised on five occasions that do not include the American Civil War. It is in the role as Commander in Chief that has
contributed to Presidents committing the nation to battle. President Lincoln also used his title as Commander in Chief to implement Operational Authority to institute a series of military actions including a naval blockade of the south, arrest of suspected traitors, activation of state militia, establishment of military courts and suspension of habeas corpus. Suspending the writ of habeas corpus, permitted arrests and court martials, resulting in over 20,000 people jailed without their full constitutional rights. He also implemented new passport restrictions and went along with forcible seizure of private citizens' property. To avoid any obstruction of his actions, he refused to call Congress into session until July 4th. Congress rubber stamped his actions and tacitly approved his already grasped “war powers” When opponents of the President took these decisions to the Supreme Court, The Supreme court approved his deployment of troops in the absence of a declaration of war and gave executive discretion to determine the extent of force required and when the emergency existed and supported the policies that were implemented as the Commander in Chief.

Although the President believed that his role as Commander in Chief granted him greater authority than would be granted in peace, he did not claim the right to free the slaves with a stroke of the pen. President Lincoln was quoted as saying “we didn’t go to war to put down slavery, but to put the flag back,” however, he was willing to work politically to purchase each freed slave for an incentive to the states under a program of Emancipation Compensation. He had hoped that the Border States would agree to these conditions and then the other states would follow. The President realized that it was substantially cheaper to purchase the slaves, then to fight the war to end slavery. In a letter to James A McDougall, the President worked out the math showing that it was
cheaper to purchase all the slaves in Delaware, Maryland, D.C, Kentucky and Missouri, then fighting the war for eighty-seven days.\textsuperscript{21} Subsequent to emancipation compensation was emancipation proclamation. In order for Lincoln to issue the proclamation, he believed that he must be sure that it did not violate the Constitution. The President brought a young lawyer on staff which had the reasoning that he was looking for. In January 1862, William Whiting arrived to be the new legal counsel of the War Department. He convinced Lincoln that the Constitution had to be “interpreted by common sense” and that it required presidential and legal powers to meet the evolution of a nations needs.\textsuperscript{22}

Between January and September 1862, the President along with the leadership in Congress, which was now primarily Republican, passed an additional article of war, forbidding members of the Army and the Navy from returning fugitive slaves to their owners and on 10 April financial aid was given to any state that began gradual emancipation.\textsuperscript{23} Shortly after Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia with compensation to loyal owners and appropriates funds for the voluntary removal of former slaves in Haiti, Liberia, or other countries.\textsuperscript{24} In June, Congress adopted legislation enforcing the Direct Tax Act of 1861 in the seceded states.\textsuperscript{25} This act allowed the federal government to seize the land of owners who failed to pay the tax and for its sale or lease; however this act was never implemented. They also passed a bill prohibiting slavery in the territories. In July, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act and Militia Act, which freed slaves of persons engaged in or assisting the rebellion and authorizes the president to employ persons of African descent in any capacity, including the Army and Navy to suppress the rebellion. Finally after all of the political
ground work had been established, in September the President issued a Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. It announced that all slaves in those states or portions of states still in rebellion as of January 1, 1863, will be declared free, pledges monetary aid for slave states not in rebellion that adopt either immediate or gradual emancipation, and reiterates support for the colonization of freed slaves outside the United States. Critics of President Lincoln are quick to point out the fact that the President failed to free all of the slaves within the Union. However, the President realized that if he could have lost key states within the union over the slavery issue and he needed the manpower from those states to fight the war. Once again, he made the hard decisions to achieve his strategic vision.

**Emancipation Proclamation**

Manpower was the number one priority for leaders in Washington during 1863. Recruiters were having a hard time making the War Department’s quotas, causing them to take anyone who could stand up and take the oath. By 1863, the President believed that he had no other choice besides conscription, which had powerful supporters in Congress. This was the first time the United States had ever employed conscription and it ran against many underlying assumptions about a democracy at war. The Enrollment Act passed in March, required draft registration of males between the ages of twenty to forty-five and would require these men to serve for three years.26 When the draft commenced in New York City on 11 July, a massive riot broke out causing 300-1000 deaths. Another manpower initiative created by the War Department was the invalid corps. This was a unit comprised of wounded men who were no longer fit for combat,
but willing to stay with the Army. These men were able to fill numerous administration and logistics billets to free up manpower for the front lines. By the summer of 1863, the Union Army had Negro regiments that were prepared for combat operations. While initially, these units were assigned to menial labor details, many blacks eventually saw significant combat, fighting in 449 engagements, including 39 major battles. The political actions taking by President Lincoln, who was willing to challenge the very nature of what it means to be a democracy at war, provided the Union with the manpower required to ultimately win the war.

Lincoln’s Political Generals

As the Commander in Chief, the President had the responsibility of appointing general officers. Unlike the military leadership of today, most of the military leaders during the 19th century had little to no combat experience, with the exceptions of the few who had fought Indians and in the Mexican War, and many had political aspirations beyond their military careers. As an example of the political nature of generals of that era, fourteen Union general officers ran for President and six won. Lincoln appointed many prominent politicians with little or no military training to the rank of brigadier and major general. Although many historians deplore the abundance of political generals, the President made them to appease different political parties and ethnic groups in order to maintain the required manpower to fight the war. One of the most controversial leaders of the Union Army was General George B. McClellan. McClellan had a solid reputation and credentials. He was excellent at organization and administration and was successful in the transformation of the Army of the Potomac, from a demoralized and
undisciplined group of men into a well organized and highly motivated Army. However, as the President would soon learn, he was not an effective leader in combat. He often over analyzed and was unwilling to commit his forces into battle.

The President learned a lot from the first two years of the war and his ability to adapt to the situation and overcome his General's failures gave him the confidence to succeed during the last two years of the conflict. After McClellan had been in command for three months without an engagement, the President issued Special War Order number 1 to spur the Army of Potomac into action. The order directed that the army seize Manassas Junction. After another month of inaction from McClellan, the President reorganized the army by creating the Department of the Mississippi under General Henry Hallek and the Mountain Department under General John C. Fremont. This was a radical change to the organization of the U.S. military, but was necessary in order to reduce some of McClellan's responsibilities as well as to direct the war from three different fronts with three separate commanders. The biggest political move that had effects on military operations was the President's General Order number 3, which required McClellan to leave a force to protect Washington, as well as appointing James Wadsworth as the Military Governor to the District of Columbia. Wadsworth loathed McClellan, as Lincoln surely knew, and cooperation between them might prove problematical, but Lincoln was not going to leave the District's security entirely to McClellan.

The Union continued to struggle in the east where McClellan failed to assume the offensive attack that Lincoln wanted on Richmond. Instead he maneuvered his Army via boats southeast of the capital and failed to attack on the belief that he was out numbered.
After losing the initiative and the President’s General Order No. 3 forced him to split his forces to protect Washington, McClellan at last decided to attack Richmond. He met the Confederate force in Mechanicsville where Lee had moved about 65,000 troops in a gamble that left Richmond vulnerable. After seven days of fighting, the Confederates held their ground and McClellan was discredited. Shortly after, the Union Army would have another embarrassing lost at the Second Manassas. McClellan would remain in command long enough to take the Union army against General Robert E. Lee’s forces one more time at Antietam.

General Lee had moved into Maryland after his victory at Second Manassas in hopes of rallying a pro-slavery population into voting for a shift in favor of the Democratic Party in Congress who would negotiate for peace. McClellan got lucky when one of his soldiers found a copy of the invasion plan. McClellan once again, overestimated the opposing army and failed to take the initiative to attack Lee at the time of his choosing. When McClellan finally attacked, he did show signs that he could make good tactical decisions. He attacked Lee on both flanks and sent his reserves on a frontal assault. Just as the Union Army was about to have success, Confederate reinforcements arrived. Lee survived the attack and began to withdraw, where McClellan failed to attack them as Lee retreated south, allowing Lee’s units to survive for future attacks.

On 7 November, the President finally realized that General McClellan was not capable of winning the war and relieved him of his duties as commander. McClellan was replaced by General Ambrose Burnside. Unlike McClellan, Burnside was eager to attack and on 13 December, he mounted a frontal attack on a well defended Fredericksburg, Virginia. The attack ended after fourteen charges against a virtually impregnable
Confederate hilltop position. General Lee, who was stunned by the display before him was quoted as saying "it is well that war is so terrible or we would grow too fond of it." The last hope for Union progress before the end of the year was with General William S. Rosecrans and the Army of the Cumberland. Both sides planned an early morning assault, but the Confederates initiated the attack first. In the end, the Union held its ground and declared a victory after suffering more than 15,000 casualties. After a long string of Federal disasters, Lincoln accepted Rosecrans' message of victory with far more enthusiasm than it warranted. In a dispatch from Lincoln to Rosecrans a few months later, Lincoln wrote "I can never forget, while I remember anything, that about the end of last year and beginning of this, you gave us a hard earned victory which, had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over." From an operational standpoint, the first two years of the war was almost tragic, however, the war proved to be moving in the right direction politically.

**Strategic Direction**

One of the most difficult and challenging responsibilities as a nation's Commander in Chief is providing the strategic direction to accomplish the strategic end state. The Department of Defense terms dictionary defines strategic direction as the "common thread that integrates and synchronizes the activities of the Joint Staff, combatant commands, Services, and combat support agencies." What the United States learned through the first 3 years of Operation Iraqi Freedom, is that the President must ensure that this integration takes place to ensure that all instruments of national power are put towards winning the war. Although, President Lincoln took a few years to get his arms
wrapped around the situation and to appreciate his responsibilities as Commander in
Chief, once he took the reins, he kept them until he finally found a General Officer who
took them back.

January of 1863 found the Army of the Potomac struggling with leadership issues
and preparing for another attempt at Fredericksburg. As they finished their planning and
prepared for an assault, a drastic change in the weather made it extremely difficult to
make any significant progress. By the 22nd, General Burnside realized that an attempt on
Fredericksburg would not be possible and pulled his forces back. Failing to take
responsibility for the failure, Burnside called for the removal of his subordinate
commanders. The Army of the Potomac was struggling with leadership and motivation
issues. President Lincoln called for a meeting with General Burnside on the 27th and
relieved him of his command. It is obvious that the President had learned from his
mistakes from the past and came to the conclusion that he must make bold and timely
decisions regarding the military leadership. It was at this time that General Burnside was
replaced by General Joseph Hooker:

When General Hooker took command, the Army of the Potomac was a de-
moralized and unorganized outfit. Hooker was a brave, skillful, and somewhat of an
abrasive man, who had made a comment about the Union requiring a dictator to be
successful. Prior to being selected to lead the Army of the Potomac, the President wrote
him a letter in which he stated that “Only those generals, who gain success, can set up
dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship.”
General Hooker went to rebuilding the Army. He was able to improve the diet to include
fresh vegetables and soft bread, get the men their back pay that they had earned and
reinstituted drill and reviews that McClellan had popularized. In order to instill pride in one’s unit as well as an easy way to identify deserters, he designated color coded badges for each unit. Within a short time frame, General Hooker had a well disciplined and motivated army. General Hooker designed a campaign plan for the spring that would have a portion of his unit fix Lee at Fredericksburg, while he conducted a turning movement that would put half of his force in between Lee and Richmond. This plan would turn out to the Battle of Chancellorsville.

His goal was to force Lee to attack him on the ground of his choosing. The plan was good and his men achieved the initial surprise and success that it demanded. However, General Hooker made three errors with significant operational impact. He lacked the courage to exploit initial success, his decision to de-centralize his artillery before the attack preventing him from holding Hazel Grove by massing his fires, and he failed to issue a counter attack on the last day of fighting. Chancellorsville was comprised of leaders who failed to take action, leaders who failed to exploit success, and of course there were leaders who were derelict in their duties. Because of General Hooker’s his failure at Chancellorsville, the President relieved him of command.

If there was a single battle that most likely turned the tide of the war, it was Gettysburg. After General Lee had success at Chancellorsville, he was prepared to once again move into northern territory. While there is significant debate on his intentions of invading the north, there were numerous possibilities from needing to move the fight away from Virginia to get supplies as well as needing to force civilians in the north to feel a big enough threat to call for an end of the war. On the 1st of July, A.P. Hill’s cavalry would engage Confederate forces. General Meade placed his army in a defensive
position at Gettysburg. After 3 days of fighting, the Union successfully repelled the Confederates attack. Although there is speculation as to whether or not General Meade should have ordered a counter-attack, he allowed General Lee to retreat and leave Virginia intact.

The Confederacy, with defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, coupled with the loss of over 30,000 prisoners after a six week siege, led President Davis to say that “the clouds are truly dark over us”. The dramatic first few days of July permanently changed the course of the war. The Confederates had suffered almost 70,000 wounded, captured or killed, representing more than 1/3 of their entire available force. After this enormous defeat, the CSA realized that they must have a substantial win in the Western Theater. The Confederate Secretary of War and General Longstreet once again proposed an attack into Federal Forces threatening Chattanooga and Atlanta. This plan had been advised against by Lee in the past, but this time Jefferson Davis approved the idea. The operation turned out to be the Confederates biggest success story in the Western theater, despite costing them almost 20,000 casualties. However, the Confederates were unable to exploit success due to subordinate commanders failing to accomplish their assigned tasks. This battle could have been a decisive victory, had General Braxton Bragg been able to force the surrender of Chattanooga from Union forces. The siege of Chattanooga and relief of Rosecrans’ forces would bring General Ulysses S. Grant to the stage and finally give Lincoln a General that could win the war.
Partnership in Victory

Two years into the war and countless engagements later, the President needed a General who could implement a strategy and had the determination to finish the fight. General Ulysses Grant, after the win in Chattanooga, had the reputation and showed the military expertise to accomplish the mission. Grant possessed the military intellect and resolve to succeed on the battlefield. However, without Lincoln’s statesmanship, Grant’s strategic insight and implacable will would have been wasted, as had the talents of many promising soldiers during the war⁴¹. In January, General Grant designed a campaign plan for the entire Union Army. He called for the Army in the Western front to attack Mobile, Alabama and for the Eastern Theater, an attack into North Carolina. The President disagreed with General Grant on both issues. However, the President’s objections to the North Carolina campaign did not diminish the esteem in which he held the Victor of Chattanooga⁴².

When the President and Grant had their first meeting in Washington they had an opportunity to discuss the war and politics. The President was comfortable with Grant and happy to have a General who at the time was not interested in politics. According to Grant, Lincoln went on to say that “all he wanted or ever had wanted was someone who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all the assistance needed, pledging himself to use all the power of the government in rendering such assistance.”⁴³ The President also told him that “he did not pretend to know anything about the handling of troops, and it was with the greatest reluctance that he ever interfered with the movements of Army Commanders: but he had sense enough to know that celerity was absolutely necessary” Grant once remarked that of all the headquarters visitors he ever
had, Lincoln was the only one (except for Secretary Edwin M. Stanton) who had the right to ask what his plans were, and that Lincoln was the only one who never asked about them. 

The plan developed by Grant to achieve victory against the Confederates in the east was something that he and Sherman had worked on prior to Grant going to Washington. They understood that the Army of the Potomac would need to concentrate on the destruction of Lee’s army. The destruction of Lee’s army is something that President Lincoln had realized from the beginning, but had trouble finding a General to execute. Sherman would conduct operations in the west to destroy all of Lee’s re-supply routes and to keep Lee’s army from the resources that it required for survival. Sheridan would begin the destruction of the railway in order to prohibit supplies from reaching Confederate forces.

For command and control, Grant would stay with the Army of the Potomac who was the Main Effort. He also knew that Sherman was capable of accomplishing his mission without supervision. Sherman began his campaign towards Atlanta. After taking Atlanta, Sherman realized that he could not stay there, or else he may become encircled and trapped just has Rosecrans had been in Chattanooga. With Mobile no longer an option, Sherman requested to Grant that he be allowed to attack towards Savannah and be allowed to execute his campaign using “total war”. Sherman would destroy every resource that the Confederate Army was using for supplies. He burned crops, killed livestock and destroyed infrastructure. President Lincoln had just won re-election and believed that if there ever was a time to take the political gamble, the time was now. He authorized Sherman’s total war. Sherman completed his march by the 23rd of December.
1964. In January, Sherman began his movement into South Carolina, where the brutality increased. Sherman’s forces began burning down cities on the way to the capital. After two months, he reached Columbia. Although, many will argue on whether or not the brutality was required, Sherman and his forces proved that sometimes in an insurgency, winning hearts and minds is not all that is required. In order to create significant damage to the Union supply resources, most of this destruction was required.

With the war developing into a war of attrition, the President realized that the Union Army would require an increase in personnel to achieve the ultimate victory. On 1 February, the President issued a draft calling for 500,000 men, excluding blacks, who were not considered to be citizens. The President took on the political pressures associated with this call. When a number of congressmen urged him to wait until after the election, he said that was impossible and “what is the Presidency worth to me if I have no country.” When the initial draft did not produce enough men, Lincoln decided to allow the War Department and Congress dictate the next round of conscript, which signed into law a call up of another 500,000. As the manpower problem continued through the losses of Union soldiers during the Wilderness campaign, the President issued an order to enlist rebel prisoners. When the Secretary of War challenged the President, Lincoln simply responded that “it will have to be done”. Although the President was willing to go to drastic measures in finding ways of recruiting the force, he rarely signed off on executions for deserters or those who refused to fight.

As the Union Army approached 1864, the continuing concept of operations for the Army of the Potomac was to simply follow and attack Lee’s army. In May of 1864 Union forces engaged Lee’s army in what became to be known as the Overland
Campaign. Although the Army of the Potomac lost an initial tactical victory, instead of pulling back to regroup as Commanders in the past had done, Grant continued the attack against Lee’s forces. After two battles, the Union had lost almost twice as many men as the Confederates, but they had the manpower to sustain the fight. Grant continued to attack towards Richmond where once again Confederate forces were able to hold off a futile attack. However, unlike previous Union Commanders, Grant did not leave Richmond in order to regroup and think of a new strategy. He turned his sites towards taking Petersburg and cutting off the supply line to Richmond, forcing the Confederate Army to move out of their defense.

Between 5 May 1864 and 2 April 1865 during the Petersburg Campaign, the Union Army stayed in contact with the CSA. The Union Army would suffer over 65,000 losses due to killed, wounded, prisoners of war or missing in action. The CSA would lose approximately 44,500. Although the Union lost significantly more men, the manpower initiatives of President Lincoln, allowed the Union Army to replenish their losses. On 3 April after Lee’s line had been broken, which resulted in the ultimate defeat of Lee’s Army and the CSA.

Conclusion

Currently the United States of America is the world’s only remaining super power. This status comes with enormous responsibility for Civilian and military leaders at the strategic level. These leaders must be prepared to take the required action in order to achieve a nations strategic objectives, regardless of their own political or military goals. War as an extension of politics, requires that all military actions must be in
concert with the desired political outcome. The leadership within the United States must implement policy that promote the nations values and allow for the required economic growth to maintain our status as a world superpower. Political fighting must be set aside in order for a nation to prevail in conflict. The Civil War was an example of such a policy. While their remained an acceptable amount of political struggle, the President, Senate, Congress and cabinet members were able to pass the necessary legislature and laws to support the war effort. Although President Lincoln did not know a lot about the tactical or operational level of war, he was quick to learn what needed to be accomplished in order to achieve his strategic end state and did not hesitate to take the appropriate action against military leaders who failed in their responsibilities. The leadership at the strategic level of the Civil War continues to serve as a positive example for today’s military leaders and politicians and will remain a source of education for future military and civilian leaders.
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6 Brooks, Victor and Robert Hohwald *How America Fought Its Wars: Military Strategy from the American Revolution to the Civil War*, page 277
8 James M. McPherson, *Lincoln as Commander in Chief: A self-taught strategist with no combat experience, Abraham Lincoln saw the path to victory more clearly than his Generals* (Smithsonian, Jan 2009)
18 Marc Landy and Sidney M. Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* (University Press of Kansas, 2000), 142
20 Geoffrey Perret, *Lincoln’s War: The untold story of America’s Greatest President as Commander in Chief* (Random House, NY 2004), 197
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38 The Civil War Almanac (World Almanac Publications, NY 1983), 162
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