

"The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Air Force, Department of Defense or the US Government."

US Air Force Academy Harmon Memorial Lecture #2
"The Military Leadership of the North and the South"
Professor T. Harry Williams, 1960

Generals and their art and their accomplishments have not been universally admired throughout the course of history. Indeed, there have been some who have thrown the sneer at even the successful captains of their time. Four centuries before Christ, Sophocles, as aware of the tragedy of war as he was of the tragedy of life, observed: "It is the merit of a general to impart good news, and to conceal the bad." And the Duke of Wellington, who knew from experience whereof he spoke, depreciated victory with the bitter opinion: "Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won." It is unnecessary to remind this audience that in our Civil War generals were not considered sacrosanct but were, in fact, regarded as legitimate targets of criticism for anyone who had a gibe to fling. Senator Wigfall was exercising his not inconsiderable talent for savage humor, usually reserved for the Davis administration, on the military when he said of John B. Hood: "That young man had a fine career before him until Davis undertook to make of him what the good Lord had not done-to make a great general of him." One can understand Assistant Secretary of War P. H. Watson's irritation when the War Department could not locate so important an officer as Joe Hooker on the eve of Second Manassas, while also noting Watson's patronizing attitude toward all generals in a letter to Transportation Director Haupt stating that an intensive search for Hooker was being conducted in Willard's bar. "Be patient as possible with the Generals," Watson added, "some of them will trouble you more than they will the enemy."

And yet, in the final analysis, as those who have fought or studied war know, it is the general who is the decisive factor in battle. (At least this has been true up to our own time, when war has become so big and dispersed that it may be said it is managed rather than commanded.) Napoleon put it well when he said, perhaps with some exaggeration: "The personality of the general is indispensable, he is the head, he is the all of an army. The Gauls were not conquered by the Roman legions but by Caesar. It was not before the Carthaginian soldiers that Rome was made to tremble but before Hannibal. It was not the Macedonian phalanx which penetrated to India but Alexander. It was not the French Army which reached the Weser and the Inn, it was Turenne. Prussia was not defended for seven years against the three most formidable European Powers by the Prussian soldiers but by Frederick the Great." This quotation may serve to remind us of another truth about war and generals that is often forgotten. That is that tactics is often a more decisive factor than strategy. The commander who has suffered a strategic reverse, Cyril Falls emphasizes, may remedy everything by a tactical success, whereas for a tactical reverse there may be no remedy whatever. Falls adds: "It is remarkable how many people exert themselves and go through contortions to prove that battles and wars are won by any means except that by which they are most commonly won, which is by fighting. And those are often the people who are accorded the most attention.

If, then, the general is so important in war, we are justified in asking, what are the qualities that make a general great or even just good? We may with reason look for clues to the answer in the writings of some of the great captains. But first of all, it may be helpful to list some qualities that, although they may be highly meritorious and desirable, are not sufficient in themselves to produce greatness. Experience alone is not enough. "A mule," said Frederick the Great, "may have made twenty campaigns under Prince Eugene and not be a better tactician for all that." Nor are education and intelligence the touchstones to measure a great general. Marshal Saxe went so far as to say: "Unless a

man is born with a talent for war, he will never be other than a mediocre general." And Marmont, while noting that all the great soldiers had possessed "the highest faculties of mind," emphasized that they also had had something that was more important, namely, character.

What these last two commentators were trying to say was that a commander has to have in his make-up a mental strength and a moral power that enable him to dominate whatever event of crisis may emerge on the field of battle. Napoleon stated the case explicitly: "The first quality of a General-in-Chief is to have a cool head which receives exact impressions of things, which never gets heated, which never allows itself to be dazzled, or intoxicated, by good or bad news." Anyone who knows the Civil War can easily tick off a number of generals who fit exactly the pattern described next by Napoleon: "There are certain men, who, on account of their moral and physical constitution, paint mental pictures out of everything: however exalted be their reason, their will, their courage, and whatever good qualities they may possess, nature has not fitted them to command armies, nor to direct great operations of war." Clausewitz said the same thing in a slightly different context. There are decisive moments in war, the German pointed out, when things no longer move of themselves, when "the machine itself"-the general's own army-begins to offer resistance. To overcome this resistance the commander must have "a great force of will." The whole inertia of the war comes to rest on his will, and only the spark of his own purpose and spirit can throw it off. This natural quality of toughness of fiber is especially important in measuring Civil War generalship because the rival generals were products of the same educational system and the same military background. As far as technique was concerned, they started equally and differed only in matters of mind and character. It has been well said: "To achieve a Cannae, a Hannibal is needed on the one side and a Terentius Varro on the other" And one may add, to achieve a Second Manassas, a Lee is needed on the one side and a John Pope on the other.

When Marshal Saxe enumerated the attributes of a general, he named the usual qualities of intelligence and courage and then added another not commonly considered in military evaluations, health. It is a factor that deserves more attention than it has received. Clifford Dowdey has recently reminded us of the effects of physical and mental illness on the actions of the Confederate command at Gettysburg. A comparison of the age levels of leading Southern and Northern officers in 1861 is instructive. Although there are no significant differences in the ages of the men who rose to division and corps generalships, we note that of the officers who came to command armies for the South, Albert Sidney Johnston was 58, Joseph E. Johnston and Lee were 54, Pemberton was 47, Bragg was 44, and Beauregard was 43. Of the Union army commanders, Hooker was 47, Halleck and Meade were 46, Thomas was 45, Buell was 43, Rosecrans was 42, Sherman was 41, Grant was 39, Burnside was 37, and McClellan was 34. Hood and Sheridan at 30 represent the lowest age brackets. Youth was clearly on the side of the Union, but obviously it cannot be said, with any accuracy or finality, that the generals in one particular age group did any better than those in another. Nevertheless, when Grant thought about the war in the years after, he inclined to place a high premium on the qualities of youth, health, and energy and doubted that a general over 50 should be given field command. He recalled that during the war he had had "the power to endure" anything. In this connection, it may be worthy of mention that during the Virginia campaign of 1864, Lee was sick eleven of forty-four days, while Grant was not indisposed for one.

The Civil War was preeminently a West Pointers' fight. Of the sixty biggest battles, West Point graduates commanded both armies in fifty-five, and in the remaining five a West Pointer commanded one of the opposing armies. What were they like in 1861, the men who would direct the blue and gray armies? How well trained were they for war? What intellectual influences had formed their concepts of war and battle? A glance at the West Point curriculum reveals that it was heavy on the side of engineering, tactics, and administration. The products of the Academy came out with a good grounding in what may be termed the routine of military science. They knew how to train and administer a force of troops; or, to put it more accurately and to apply it specifically to the Civil War, they had the

technical knowledge that enabled them to take over the administration of a large force without imposing too much strain on them or their men. It should be emphasized, however, that none of the West Pointers had had before 1861 any actual experience in directing troops in numbers. Not a one had controlled as large a unit as a brigade, and only a few had handled a regiment. Except for a handful of officers who had visited Europe, the men who would lead the Civil War hosts had never seen an army larger than the 14,000 men of Scott or Taylor in the Mexican War.

One subject was not emphasized at West Point, and that was strategy, or the study of the higher art of war. The comparative subordination of strategy may be explained by the youth of the cadets and the feeling of the school's directors that it was more important to impart a basic knowledge of tactics and techniques to the boys. Nevertheless, strategy was taught at the Academy, and many of the graduates enlarged their knowledge of the topic by reading books on military history while stationed at army posts. The strategy that was presented at the Point and that was studied by interested graduates came from a common source and had a common pattern. It was the product of the brilliant Swiss officer who had served with Napoleon, Antoine Henri Jomini, universally regarded as the foremost writer on the theory of war in the first half of the nineteenth century. Every West Point general in the war had been exposed to Jomini's ideas, either directly by reading Jomini's writings or abridgments or expositions of them or indirectly by hearing them in the classroom or by perusing the works of Jomini's American disciples, of whom more will be said later. The influence of Jomini on the Civil War was profound, and this influence must be taken into account in any evaluation of Civil War generalship. There is little exaggeration in Gen. J. D. Hittle's statement that "many a Civil War general went into battle with a sword in one hand and Jomini's Summary of the Art of War in the other."

Obviously, in a paper of this space it is impossible to attempt more than a summary of Jomini's ideas and writings. Essentially his purpose was to introduce a rationality and system into the study of war. He believed that in war rules prevailed as much as in other areas of human activity and that generals should follow these rules. He sought to formulate a set of basic principles of strategy for commanders, using as his principal examples the campaigns and techniques of Napoleon. We may approach Jomini by looking at the four strategic principles that he emphasized most, the four principles that many Civil War generals had memorized and could recite:

- (1) The commander should endeavor by strategic measures to bring the major part of his forces successively to bear on the decisive areas of the theater of war, while menacing the enemy's communications without endangering his own.

- (2) He should maneuver in such a way as to engage the masses of his forces against fractions of the enemy.

- (3) He should endeavor by tactical measures to bring his masses to bear on the decisive area of the battlefield or on the part of the enemy's line it was important to overwhelm.

- (4) He should not only bring his masses to bear on the decisive point of the field but should also put them into battle speedily and together in a simultaneous effort.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to remark that much of this was not new. Xenophon had said about the same thing to the Greeks, and the definition of strategy as the art of bringing most of the strength of an army to bear on the decisive point has been fairly constant in the history of war. But it should be noted that Jomini envisioned the decisive point as the point where the enemy was weakest. This is often true but not always. There are occasions in war when the decisive point may be the strongest one, as Epaminondas demonstrated at Leuctra and the American strategists in the cross-Channel attack of World War II.

To explain how his principles should be applied in war Jomini worked out an elaborate doctrine based on geometrical formations. He loved diagrams, and devised twelve model plans of battle; some Civil War generals actually tried to reproduce on the field some of these neat paper exercises. In all Jomini's plans there were a theater of operations, a base of operations, a zone of operations, and so forth. The smart commander chose a line of operations that would enable him to dominate three sides

of the rectangular zone; this accomplished, the enemy would have to retire or face certain defeat. Jomini talked much of concentric and eccentric maneuver and interior and exterior lines, being the first theorist to emphasize the advantage of the former over the latter.

At times, especially when he discussed the advantage of the offensive-and he always stressed the offensive-Jomini seemed to come close to Clausewitz's strategy of annihilation. But a closer reading of his writings reveals that he and the German were far apart. Although Jomini spoke admiringly of the hard blow followed by the energetic pursuit, his line of operation strategy allowed the enemy the option of retiring. In reality Jomini thought that the primary objectives in war were places rather than armies: the occupation of territory or the seizure of such "decisive strategic points" as capitals. He affected to be the advocate of the new Napoleonic ways of war, but actually he looked back instead of forward. It has been rightly said of him: "By his emphasis on lines of operation Jomini, in effect, returned to the eighteenth-century method of approaching the study of war as a geometric exercise. . . . In emphasizing the continuance of traditional features he missed the things that were new. There can be no doubt that this interpreter of Napoleonic warfare actually set military thought back into the eighteenth century, an approach which the professional soldiers of the early nineteenth century found comfortable and safe."

Jomini confessed that he disliked the destructiveness of the warfare of his time. "I acknowledge," he wrote, "that my prejudices are in favor of the good old times when the French and English guards courteously invited each other to fire first as at Fontenoy. . . ." He said that he preferred "chivalric war" to "organized assassination," and he especially deplored as particularly cruel and terrible what he called wars of "opinion," or as we would say today, of "ideas." War was, as it should be, most proper and polite when it was directed by professional soldiers and fought by professional armies for limited objectives. All this is, of course, readily recognizable as good eighteenth-century doctrine. This could be Marshal Saxe saying, "I do not favor pitched battles . . . and I am convinced that a skillful general could make war all his life without being forced into one." Eighteenth-century warfare was leisurely and its ends were limited. It stressed maneuver rather than battle, as was natural in an age when professional armies were so expensive to raise and maintain that they could not be risked unless victory was reasonably certain. It was conducted with a measure of humanity that caused Chesterfield to say: "War is pusillanimously carried on in this degenerate age; quarter is given; towns are taken and people spared; even in a storm, a woman can hardly hope for the benefit of a rape." Most important of all, war was regarded as a kind of exercise or game to be conducted by soldiers. For the kings, war might have a dynastic objective, but in the thinking of many military men it had little if any relationship to society or politics of statecraft.

Many West Pointers-McClellan, Lee, Sherman, and Beauregard, among others-expressed their admiration of Jomini and usually in extravagant terms. Halleck devoted years to translating Jomini's works, and his own book on the elements of war was only a rehash of Jomini, in fact, in parts a direct steal. Hardee's manual on tactics reflected Jominian ideas. But the American who did more than any other to popularize Jomini was Dennis Hart Mahan, who began teaching at West Point in 1824 and who influenced a whole generation of soldiers. He interpreted Jomini both in the classroom and in his writings. At one time Jomini's own works had been used at the Academy but had been dropped in favor of abridgments by other writers. In 1848, Mahan's book on war, usually known by the short title of *Outpost*, became an official text. Most of the Civil War generals had been Mahan's pupils, and those older ones who had not, like Lee, were exposed to his ideas through personal relationships or through his book. Probably no one man had a more direct and formative impact on the thinking of the war's commanders.

Mahan, of course, did little more than to reproduce Jomini's ideas. He talked much of the principle of mass, of defeating the enemy's fractions in succession, and of interior lines. But it should be emphasized that his big point, the one he dwelt on most, was the offensive executed by celerity of movement. Mahan never tired of stressing the advantage of rapidity in war-or of excoriating "the slow

and over-prudent" general who was afraid to grasp victory. "By rapidity of movement we can . . . make war feed war," he wrote. "We disembarrass ourselves of those immense trains...." There was one operation that could change the face of a war, he said. When one's territory was invaded, the commander should invade the territory of the enemy; this was the mark of "true genius." (This passage makes us think immediately of Lee and Jackson.) Jominian strategy as interpreted by Mahan then was the mass offensive waged on the battlefield, perhaps with utmost violence, but only on the battlefield. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that Mahan, like his master, made no connection between war and technology and national life and political objectives. War was still an exercise carried on by professionals. War and statecraft were still separate things.

The Jominian influence on Civil War military leadership was obviously profound and pervasive. But before we proceed to consider its manifestations, it may be helpful, in clearing the way, to dispose of a number of generals who do not meet the criteria of greatness or even of acceptable competence. This perhaps too brutal disposal will be performed by means of some undoubtedly too sweeping generalizations. These generals fell short of the mark partly because, as will be developed later, they were too thorough Jominians, and partly because they lacked the qualities of mind and character found in the great captains of war. Of the generals who commanded armies we can say that the following had such grave shortcomings that either they were not qualified to command or that they can be classified as no better than average soldiers: on the Union side, McClellan, Burnside, Hooker, Meade, Buell, Halleck, and Rosecrans; on the Confederate, Albert Sidney Johnston, Beauregard, Bragg, Joe Johnston, and Kirby Smith.

McClellan will be discussed later, but here we may anticipate by saying that he did not have the temperament required for command. Burnside did not have the mentality. Hooker was a fair strategist, but he lacked iron and also the imagination to control troops not within his physical vision. Meade was a good routine soldier but no more, and was afflicted with a defensive psychosis. Buell was a duplicate of McClellan without any color. Halleck was an unoriginal scholar and an excellent staff officer who should never have taken the field. Rosecrans had strategic ability but no poise or balance; his crack-up at Chickamauga is a perfect example of Napoleon's general who paints the wrong kind of mental picture. A. S. Johnston died before he could prove himself, but nothing that he did before his death makes us think that he was anything but a gallant troop leader. Beauregard probably was developing into a competent commander by the time of Shiloh, but his failure to win that battle plus his personality faults caused him to be exiled to comparatively minor posts for the rest of the war. Bragg, the general of the lost opportunity, was a good deal like Hooker. He created favorable situations but lacked the determination to carry through his purpose; he did not have the will to overcome the inertia of war. Kirby Smith made a promising start but seemed to shrink under the responsibility of command and finally disappeared into the backwash of the Trans-Mississippi theater. The stature of Joe Johnston probably will be argued as long as there are Civil War fans to talk. But surely we can take his measure by his decision in the Georgia campaign to withdraw from a position near Cassville that he termed the "best that I saw occupied during the war" merely because his corps generals advised retiring. A great general, we feel, would have delivered the attack that Johnston originally planned to make. Johnston undoubtedly had real ability, but he never did much with it. It is reasonable to expect that a general who has sustained opportunities will sometime, once, achieve something decisive. Certainly Johnston had the opportunities, but there is no decisive success on his record.

Of the lesser generals, it is fair to say that Longstreet and Jackson were outstanding corps leaders, probably the best in the war, but that neither gave much evidence of being able to go higher. Longstreet failed in independent command. Jackson performed brilliantly as commander of a small army but probably lacked the administrative ability to handle a large one. In addition, he was never fairly tested against first-rate opposition. Thomas and Hancock stand out among Union corps generals. Thomas also commanded an army, but his skills were of a particular order and could be exercised only in a particular situation. He excelled in the counter attack delivered from strength. Stuart, Sheridan,

Forrest, and Wilson were fine cavalry leaders, but we cannot say with surety that they could have been anything else. On the one occasion when Sheridan directed an army he displayed unusual ability to handle combined arms (infantry, cavalry, artillery), but he enjoyed such a preponderant advantage in numbers over his opponent as to be almost decisive. He was never really subjected to the inertia of war. In the last analysis, the only Civil War generals who deserve to be ranked as great are Lee for the South and Grant and Sherman for the North.

We can now turn to an examination of the influence of Jominian eighteenth-century military thought on Civil War generalship, first directing our attention to the first Northern generals with whom Abraham Lincoln had to deal. It is immediately and painfully evident that in the first of the world's modern wars these men were ruled by traditional concepts of warfare. The Civil War was a war of ideas, and, inasmuch as neither side could compromise its political purposes, it was a war of unlimited objectives. Such a war was bound to be a rough, no-holds-barred affair, a bloody and brutal struggle. Yet Lincoln's generals proposed to conduct it in accordance with the standards and the strategy of an earlier and easier military age. They saw cities and territory as their objectives rather than the armies of the enemy. They hoped to accomplish their objectives by maneuvering rather than by fighting. McClellan boasted that the "brightest chapters" in his history were Manassas and Yorktown, both occupied after the Confederates had departed, because he had seized them by "pure military skill" and without the loss of life. When he had to lose lives, McClellan was almost undone. The "sickening sight" of the battlefield, he told his wife after Fair Oaks, took all the charms from victory. McClellan's mooning around the field anguishing over the dead may seem strange to the modern mind, but Jomini would have understood his reactions. Buell argued, in the spirit of Marshal Saxe, that campaigns could be carried out and won without engaging in a single big battle. Only when success was reasonably certain should a general risk battle, Buell said, adding: "War has a higher object than that of mere bloodshed." After the Confederates retired from Corinth, Halleck instructed his subordinates: "There is no object in bringing on a battle if this object can be obtained without one. I think by showing a bold front for a day or two the enemy will continue his retreat, which is all I desire." Meade, who confessed shame for his cause when he was ordered to seize the property of a Confederate sympathizer, thought that the North should prosecute the war "like the afflicted parent who is compelled to chastise his erring child, and who performs the duty with a sad heart."

With an almost arrogant assurance, Lincoln's first generals believed that war was a business to be carried on by professionals without interference from civilians and without political objectives. It is no exaggeration to say that some of the officers saw the war as a kind of game played by experts off in some private sphere that had no connection with the government or society. Rosecrans gave a typical expression of this viewpoint when he resisted pressure from Washington to advance before the battle of Stone's River: "I will not move until I am ready! . . . War is a business to be conducted systematically. I believe I understand my business. . . . I will not budge until I am ready." But, as might be expected, the classic example is McClellan. He refused to retain General Hamilton in his army when Lincoln requested him to, even after, or more accurately, especially after, the President emphasized that there were weighty political reasons for assigning Hamilton a minor position. When McClellan conceived his Urbana plan, he did not tell Lincoln about it for months. He did not seem to know that it was his job to counsel his political superior on his plans; in fact, he did not seem to know that there was any relationship between war and politics. In the winter of 1861-62, Lincoln implored McClellan to make a move, even a small or diversionary one, to inspire public opinion with the belief that more decisive action was contemplated later. McClellan refused on the grounds that he was not yet completely prepared. That the public might become so discouraged that it would abandon the war impressed McClellan not at all. With him the only question was when the professionals would be ready to start the game.

Lincoln's early generals also accepted blindly the Jominian doctrine of concentration. As they interpreted it, it meant one big effort at a time in one theater. McClellan's proposal to mass 273,000

troops in the eastern department in 1861, a physical and military impossibility at that time, was a typical piece of Jominian thinking. Of course, each commander was convinced that the one big push should be made by him, and each one demanded that other departments be stripped of troops to strengthen his own army. It could be possible to argue that the apparent caution of every Union general in the first years of the war, and the consequent inaction of Union armies, was the result of each commander's conviction that he did not possess enough strength to undertake the movements recommended by Jomini. But this feeling of the generals brought them into conflict with their commander-in-chief, who was no Jominian in his strategic notions, and their differences with Lincoln will be discussed later.

When we examine the psychology of the Northern generals, the thought immediately occurs that the Southern generals are not like this, and inevitably we ask, why not? Had the Southerners freed themselves from Jomini's dogma? Were they developing new ways of war? The answer to both questions is no. The Confederates were, if possible, more Jominian than the Federals. They simply gave a different emphasis to the traditional pattern of strategic thought. Whereas the Federals borrowed from Jomini the idea of places as objectives, the Confederates took from him the principle of the offensive. Moreover, the Southern generals were fortunate in being able to make enemy armies the object of their offensives because Confederate policy did not look to the acquisition of enemy territory. The influence of Mahan, with his doctrine of celerity and the headlong attack, is also apparent in Confederate strategy, especially as it was employed by Lee. In addition, the poverty of Southern resources had the effect of forcing Southern generals to think in aggressive terms. They could not afford to wait for a big build-up in men and equipment, but had to act when they could with what they had. Paradoxically, the industrial Revolution, which would have so much to do with bringing about the advent of total war with all its destructiveness, had the immediate consequence of making the Northern generals less inclined to deal out instruction. They could secure material so easily that they refused to move until they had received more than they needed-after which they were often so heavily laden they could not move.

Far from departing from Jomini, the Confederates were the most brilliant practitioners of his doctrine. If we look for successful applications of the principles that Jomini emphasized-the objective, the offensive, mass, economy of force, interior lines, and unity of command-we find them most frequently in the Confederate campaigns and most particularly in the Virginia theater. Lee, the Confederacy's best general, was also its greatest Jominian. Probably it is because Lee embodies so precisely the spirit of traditional warfare that he has been ranked so high by students of war. Military historians are likely to be as conservative as generals. The English writers, who have done so much to form our image of the war; have been especially lavish in their praise. It may be suspected that their attitude stems in part from a feeling that Lee was a gentleman, English style, although for long the British, when they faced a possible combination of superior continental powers, studied Lee's strategy because of its application of the principle of interior lines. Cyril Falls said that Lee was a master combination of "strategist, tactical genius, leader of the highest inspiration, and technician in the arts of hastily fortifying defensive positions superbly chosen." Falls added: "He must stand as the supreme figure of this survey of a hundred years of war." Colonel Burne was more restrained, but spoke admiringly of Lee's audacity, his use of the offensive, and his skill at concentration. Earlier, Henderson and Wolseley had said much the same thing and in the same terms.

Let us concede that many of the tributes to Lee are deserved. He was not all that his admirers have said of him, but he was a large part of it. But let us also note that even his most fervent admirers, when they come to evaluate him as a strategist, have to admit that his abilities were never demonstrated on a larger scale than a theater. Cyril Falls, after his extravagant eulogy of Lee, falls on his face in attempting to attribute to his subject gifts for "large-scale strategy": the only example he can find is Lee's redeployment of forces between the Shenandoah Valley and Richmond during the Peninsula campaign! Lee was preeminently a field or a theater strategist, and a great one, but it remains unproven

that he was anything more or wanted to be anything more. "In spite of all his ability, his heroism, and the heroic efforts of his army," writes General Fuller, "because he would think and work in a corner, taking no notice of the whole, taking no interest in policy or in the economic side of the war, he was ultimately cornered and his cause lost." For his preoccupation with the war in Virginia, Lee is not to be criticized. He was a product of his culture, and that culture, permeated in its every part by the spirit of localism, dictated that his outlook on war should be local. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that his restricted view constituted a tragic command limitation in a modern war. The same limitation applied to Southern generalship as a whole. The Confederates, brilliant and bold in executing Jominian strategy on the battlefield, never succeeded in lifting their gifts above the theater level.

In many respects Lee was not a modern-minded general. He probably did not understand the real function of a staff and certainly failed to put together an adequate staff for his army. Although he had an excellent eye for terrain, his use of maps was almost primitive. He does not seem to have appreciated the impact of railroads on warfare or to have realized that railroads made Jomini's principle of interior lines largely obsolete. His mastery of logistics did not extend beyond departmental limits. In February 1865, he said that he could not believe Sherman would be able to move into North Carolina. The evidence of Sherman's great march was before him, and yet he was not quite sure it had really happened.

But the most striking lack of modernity in Lee was his failure to grasp the vital relationship between war and statecraft. Here the great Virginian was truly a Jominian. Almost as much as McClellan, he thought of war as a professional exercise. One of his officers said admiringly that Lee was too thorough a soldier to attempt to advise the government on such matters as the defense of Richmond. When late in the war a Cabinet member asked Lee for his opinion on the advisability of moving the capital farther south, the General replied: "That is a political question . . . and you politicians must determine it. I shall endeavor to take care of the army, and you must make the laws and control the Government." And yet what could be a more strategic question than the safety of the capital? Lee attained a position in the Confederacy held by no other man, either in civil or military life. There was little exaggeration in the statement Gen. Mahone made to him: "You are the State." But Lee could not accept the role that his eminence demanded. He could never have said as Pitt did: "I know that I can save the country and that no one else can." It has been said that Lee never tried to impose his will on the government because of his humility of character, and this may well be true. But it would also seem to be true that he did not know that a commander had any political responsibility.

Lincoln's first generals did not understand that war and statecraft were parts of the same piece. But none of the Confederate generals, first or last, ever grasped this fact about modern war. The most distinguishing feature of Southern generalship is that it did not grow. Lee and the other Confederate commanders were pretty much the same men in 1865 that they had been in 1861. They were good, within certain limits, at the beginning, and they were good at the end, but still within the original limits. They never freed themselves from the influence of traditional doctrine. The probable explanation, David Donald has suggested, is that the Confederates won their first battles with Jominian strategy and saw no reason to change and that the Southern mind, civil and military, was unreceptive to new ideas. The North, on the other hand, finally brought forward generals who were able to grow and who could employ new ways of war. Even so doctrinaire a Jominian as Halleck reached the point where he could approve techniques of total war that would have horrified the master. But the most outstanding examples of growth and originality among the Northern generals are Grant and Sherman.

The qualities of Grant's generalship deserve more analysis than those of Lee, partly because they have not been sufficiently emphasized but largely because Grant was a more modern soldier than his rival. First, we note that Grant had that quality of character or will exhibited by all the great captains. (Lee had it, too.) Perhaps the first military writer to emphasize this trait in Grant was C. F. Atkinson in 1908. Grant's distinguishing feature as a general, said Atkinson, was his character; which was controlled by a tremendous will; with Grant, action was translated from thought to deed by all the force

of a tremendous personality. This moral strength of Grant's may be news to some present-day historians, but it was overpoweringly apparent to all who were thrown into close association with him. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., like all his family not disposed to easy praise, said that Grant was really an extraordinary person, although he did not look it. In a crisis, Adams added, all would instinctively lean on Grant. Lincoln saw this quality in Grant clearly: "The great thing about Grant, I take it, is his perfect coolness and persistency of purpose. I judge he is not easily excited, which is a great element in an officer. . . ." But the best tribute to Grant's character was paid by the general who knew him best. In a typical explosive comment to J. H. Wilson, Sherman said: "Wilson, I am a damn sight smarter than Grant. I know a great deal more about war, military history, strategy, and administration, and about everything else than he does. But I tell you where he beats me, and where he beats the world. He don't care a damn for what the enemy does out of his sight, but it scares me like hell. "On the eve of the great campaigns of 1864, Sherman wrote to Grant that he considered Grant's strongest feature was his ability to go into battle without hesitation, doubts, or reserve. Characteristically Sherman added: ". . . it was this that made me act with confidence."

In this same letter Sherman confessed to a reservation that he had had about Grant: "My only points of doubt were as to your knowledge of grand strategy, and of books of science and history; but I confess your common sense seems to have supplied all this." Common sense Grant had, and it enabled him to deal with such un-Jominian phenomena as army correspondents and political generals. Unlike Sherman, Grant accepted the reporters-but he rendered them harmless. "General Grant informs us correspondents that he will willingly facilitate us in obtaining all proper information," Junius Browne wrote S. H. Gay, then added significantly that Grant was "not very communicative." Unlike McClellan, who would not accept Gen. Hamilton for political considerations urged by Lincoln, Grant took McClernand at the President's request. He could not imagine why Lincoln wanted a command for McClernand but assumed that there must be some reason important to his civil superior. He put up with McClernand until he found a way to strike him down to which Lincoln could not object. In this whole affair Grant showed that he realized the vital relation between politics and modern war.

It was Grant's common sense that enabled him to rise above the dogmas of traditional warfare. On one occasion a young officer, thinking to flatter Grant, asked his opinion of Jomini. Grant replied that he had never read the master. He then expressed his own theory of strategy: "The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike at him as hard as you can and as often as you can, and keep moving on." After the war Grant discussed more fully his opinion of the value of doctrine. He conceded that military knowledge was highly desirable in a commander. But he added: ". . . if men make war in slavish observance of rules, they will fail. No rules will apply to conditions of war as different as those which exist in Europe and America. . . . War is progressive, because all the instruments and elements of war are progressive." He then referred to the movement that had been his most striking departure from the rules, the Vicksburg campaign. To take Vicksburg by rules would have required a withdrawal to Memphis, the opening of a new line of operations, in fact, a whole new strategic design. But Grant believed that the discouraged condition of Northern opinion would not permit such a conformity to Jominian practice: "In a popular war we had to consider political exigencies." It was this ability of Grant's to grasp the political nature of modern war that marks him as the first of the great modern generals.

The question of where to rank Sherman among Civil War generals has always troubled military writers. He is obviously not a Jominian, and just as obviously he is not a great battle captain like Grant or Lee. Col. Burne points out that never once did Sherman command in a battle where he engaged his whole force and that he never won a resounding victory. Conceding that in the Georgia campaign Sherman displayed imagination, resource, versatility, broadness of conception, and genuine powers of leadership, all fundamental traits of a great commander, Burne still contends that Sherman exhibited two serious failings: that of pursuing a geographical rather than a military objective and that of avoiding risk. Liddell Hart, on the other hand, depicts Sherman as the greatest general of the war

because more than any other commander he came to see that the object of strategy is to minimize fighting. Part of this evaluation can be written off as an attempt by Liddell Hart to glorify through Sherman the British strategy of the "indirect approach." And yet he is right in saying that Sherman had the most nearly complete grasp of the truth that the resisting power of a modern democracy depends heavily on the popular will and that in turn this will depends on economic and social security. Sherman, a typical Jominian at the beginning of the war; became its greatest exponent of economic and psychological warfare. Nobody realized more clearly than Sherman the significance of the techniques he introduced. Describing to Grant what he meant to do on his destructive march, he said: "This may not be war, but rather statesmanship. . . ." At the same time we must recognize that Sherman's strategy by itself would not have brought the Confederacy down. That end called for a Grant who at the decisive moment would attack the enemy's armed forces. As Burne puts it: "Sherman might help to prepare the ground, but it was Grant who struck the blow." The North was fortunate in finding two generals who between them executed Clausewitz's three objectives of war: to conquer and destroy the enemy's armed forces, to get possession of the material elements of aggression and other sources of existence of the enemy, and to gain public opinion by winning victories that depress the enemy's morale.

It remains to touch on the military leadership of the North and the South at the highest levels where strategy was determined-at the rival Presidents and the command systems they headed. In supreme leadership the Union was clearly superior. Lincoln was an abler and a stronger man than Davis. The Northern President illustrated perfectly the truth of Clausewitz's dictum that "a remarkable, superior mind and strength of character" are the primary qualifications of a director of war. The North developed at an early date an over-all plan of strategy, and it finally devised a unified command system for the entire military machine. The South was unable to accomplish either one of these objectives. But its failure should not be set down as the result of a shortage of brains among its leaders. Here again we need to remind ourselves that ways of making war are always the product of cultures. For the nationalistic North it was comparatively easy to achieve a broad view of war. Conversely, it was natural for the localistic South to adopt a narrow view and to fight a conservative war. Confederate Strategy was almost wholly defensive and was designed to guard the whole Circumference of the country. In military jargon, it was a cordon defense. Probably the South's best chance to win its independence by a military decision was to attempt on a grand strategic scale the movement its generals were so good at on specific battlefields-the concentrated mass offensive. But the restrictions of Southern culture prevented any national application of the one Jominian principle that might have brought success.

Just as cordon defense was the worst strategy for the South, a cordon offense was the best strategy for the North. This was the strategy that Lincoln had pressed upon his generals almost from the beginning of the war-to make enemy armies their objective and to move all Federal forces against the enemy line simultaneously. An offensive along the entire circumference of the Confederacy would prevent the enemy from moving troops from the threatened point to another and would inevitably achieve a breakthrough. It was an eminently sensible strategy for the side with the greater numbers and the superior lines of transportation and for a war fought over such a vast theater. When Lincoln proposed his plan to general after general, it met with polite scorn. It violated the Jominian principle of concentration in one theater for one big effort. It was the product of a mind that did not know the rules of war. Not until he found Grant did Lincoln find a general who was original enough to employ his strategy. Grant's master design for 1864 called for an advance of Federal armies all along the line. It was, incidentally, the operation that broke the back of the Confederacy. When Grant explained his plan to the President, he remarked that even the smaller Federal forces not fighting would help the fighting by advancing and engaging the attention of the enemy. We have dealt much with maxims in

this paper, and we may fittingly conclude with one. Lincoln grasped Grant's point immediately and uttered a maxim of his own. At least for the Civil War it had more validity than anything written by Baron Jomini. "Those not skinning can hold a leg," said the Commander in Chief.

Professor T. Harry Williams is Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University. Few historians in this country can match his record of achievement in the study of the Civil War. His Lincoln and the Radicals, Lincoln and his Generals, and P.G.T. Beauregard are internationally recognized standard works. In the fall of 1960, this lecture will be published by the Louisiana State University Press in the work Why the North Won. After getting his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, Professor Williams taught at that university, the University of West Virginia, and the University of Omaha. In 1941, he joined the Louisiana State University faculty where he was awarded the Boyd Professorship in 1953. Dr. Williams has served as a lecturer at the Air War College and Air University, and in 1957 he held a Guggenheim Fellowship.

"The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Air Force, Department of Defense or the US Government."