ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Union and Confederate Military Leadership

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Throughout the Civil War, both the Union and Confederate militaries drew leadership from common education, tradition, and political and military organizations that dated back to the American Founding. Thus, the belligerent armies and navies retained and utilized similar organizations and methods throughout the conflict. The Union and Confederate militaries employed leadership cadres of varied abilities and backgrounds—both military and civilian. While Confederate leadership in the eastern theater early in the war displayed remarkable talent and enjoyed marked success, mediocre or poor civilian and military leadership in other theatres counterbalanced their efforts. In contrast, Union leadership overcame problematic personalities and early reversals in every theater of war and rose to the challenges of high command. Union leadership, both civilian and military, persevered through failures until experience and promotion brought superior leaders to the fore.

Both the Union and Confederate militaries followed precedents established during the American Revolution, codified in the Constitution of the United States, and solidified in the decades prior to the outbreak of sectional hostilities in 1861. American military ranks and organization were themselves modeled after European precedents but differed in that they were strictly and constitutionally subordinated to civilian control. Accordingly, Union and Confederate military leadership both contained civilian and military elements which responded to the will of the citizens of each government as expressed through elected representatives. Indeed, successful military leadership on both sides throughout the conflict often required both political and military skills.

Ratified in 1789, the Constitution of the United States codified civilian command and control over the military. Under Article II Section 2 of the Constitution, the President of the United States exercises leadership of the army and navy as "commander-in-chief" and appoint officers with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate. In both the Union and Confederacy, the president generally controlled the army and navy through a cabinet secretary for each branch of service—the army through the Secretary of War and the navy through the Secretary of the Navy. Under Article I Section 8 of the Constitution, Congress had power to declare war, "raise and support armies…to provide and maintain a navy," and regulate the military, and call out militia to suppress

insurrections and repel invasions." Under the same section, Congress also had power to make rules to govern, discipline, and regulate the military. Thus, military leadership responded, and was responsible to, the President, Congress and, through them, to the American people. Following the secession of the states of the lower South in the winter of 1860-1861, Confederate representatives wrote and ratified a constitution of their own. Closely modeled on the U.S. Constitution, the Confederate president and congress held the same powers over the military and its leadership at those of the government of the United States.

As commander-in-chief of the nation's armed forces, each president had responsibility for the oversight of five functions: policy (national political goals), national strategy (mobilization of political, natural, and military resources to fulfill policy), military strategy (plans for military action to win the war), operations (military movements in specific campaigns to achieve policy), and tactics (military formations and movements on the battlefield).[1] [2] As both head of state as well as military commander-in-chief, the president was the only member of the high command concerned with all of these functions, which straddled military and political spheres; however, generals and admirals were essential as both advisors and executors of the these functions.

While Abraham Lincoln had little military experience prior to his election as President of the United States, he had the advantage of being a quick learner, and he took an active role in military matters throughout the conflict. Lincoln articulated simple but fundamental war goals. Secession was a fundamental threat to national existence, and Lincoln believed it must be ended by the defeat of southern will to resist U.S. authority. As that proved increasingly difficult to achieve, and as the costs of war increased during the second year of conflict, emancipation of slaves also became a major goal – both as a means to strike at secession and, eventually, as a war aim in its own right. Lincoln read works of military strategy, shuffled army commanders, and even became involved in operational and tactical matters when commanders proved either unwilling or unable to take necessary action.[3] Early in the war, Lincoln clearly articulated his conception of Union strategy and war aims, and he continuously strived to assemble a winning team of generals and admirals to execute it. He searched "for officers who were 'zealous and efficient,' [and] he became more zealous and efficient" himself throughout the conflict.[4] By February of 1862, Lincoln favored a strategy in which the Union armies would utilize their superior numbers by launching multiple, simultaneous attacks on the Confederacy. Such a strategy offered the possibility of negating the Confederacy's advantage of interior lines and maximizing Union

[1] James M. McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 5.
[2] James M. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis as Commander in Chief.* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014), 9.
[3] McPherson *Tried by War*, 1-8.
[4] Harold Holzer, *Lincoln on War: Our Greatest Commander in Chief Speaks to America*. (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2011), 10-11.

strengths.[5] By the end of the year, Lincoln added the targeting of Confederate resources and seizure of slaves in Confederate-controlled areas to the strategy, which ultimately resulted in the defeat of the Confederacy by the spring of 1865.[6]

In contrast to Lincoln whose experience while extensive was limited to the political sphere, Jefferson Davis brought a wealth of political and military experience to the job of president. A graduate of the West Point class of 1827, Davis served as a lieutenant of dragoons on the frontier before his resignation from the army and return to Mississippi in 1835. Following a brief career in the U.S. House of Representatives, he resigned his seat to become Colonel of the Mississippi Rifles and served in the Mexican American War, most notably at the Battle of Buena Vista on February 22-23, 1847, in which his unit famously helped repel a Mexican cavalry charge. Wounded in the battle, and after his regiment's discharge that summer, Davis returned to the United States and was thereafter elected to the U.S. Senate. In 1853, he became Secretary of War in the Franklin Pierce Administration, after which he again served as a U.S. Senator from Mississippi until January of 1861. Following the secession of his state, he resigned and returned home, whereupon he was appointed major general of the Mississippi militia. Charged with preparing both his state and its troops for war, he briefly served in that capacity until his election as President of the Confederate States of America in February 1861.

Davis was not pleased with his election because he hoped to serve as the general-in-chief of the new nation's army; however, he dutifully accepted his election, which was the result—at least in part—of his impressive military experience.[7] Because victory merely required Union failure rather than outright Confederate military success (a stalemate was all the Confederacy needed to win independence), Davis adopted a strategy based on two elements. First, the people of the individual Confederate states expected defense of all their territory, so Davis was obliged to spread southern troops along both the land frontier from Virginia to Missouri and along the southern coastline. This constituted a static defense, one which permitted the Union to retain the strategic initiative because it sacrificed concentration of resources in favor of defense of territory in-total. Second, Davis himself favored an offensive-defensive strategy in which invading Union armies deep in southern territory, which operated far from their bases of supply and reinforcement, might be attacked when opportunity and local conditions favored Confederate forces. In this way, tactical and operational offensives supported the overall defensive Confederate strategy. Union victories in early 1862 demonstrated the futility of static defense, but Davis retained large garrisons at several coastal locations even as the Confederacy increasingly turned to the offensive-defensive strategy along the land frontier with the Union. The result of this division of military resources limited the feasibility of both elements of Confederate strategy, and it handicapped the Confederate

[5] McPherson, *Tried by War*, 70-71.
[6] Ibid., 7-8.
[7] Steven E. Woodward, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West.* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas,1990), 4-15.

high command throughout the conflict because it required the execution of two often-conflicting goals.[8]

In both governments, the secretary of war served immediately under the president and served as the civilian link between the army and its civilian commander-in-chief. Two men served as Secretary of War of the United States during the Civil War. Appointed on March 5, 1861, Simon Cameron oversaw the mobilization of the U.S. Army during the early months of the conflict before running afoul of Lincoln due to charges of corruption. He resigned on January 14, 1862, and was thereafter appointed U.S. Minister to Russia. Edwin McMasters. Stanton was confirmed as Secretary of War on January 15, 1862, and continued in office throughout the remainder of the conflict. To assist the Secretary of War with the operation of the drastically increased army, six men were appointed to the post of "assistant secretary of war" at various times throughout the conflict.[9] A total of five men served as Secretary of War of the Confederate States during the Civil War. Leroy Pope Walker served as Secretary of War in the Provisional Government from February through September 1861. Judah Philip Benjamin then served as Secretary of War under the Provisional Confederate Government until the permanent Confederate government was seated on February 22, 1862, after which he served in the same capacity until March 23, 1862, when he was replaced by George Wythe Randolph of Virginia. James Alexander Seddon was the longest-serving Confederate Secretary of War. He replaced Randolph on November 21, 1862, and served until February 6, 1865. Major General John Cabel Breckinridge became the last Secretary of War and served until the capture of the Confederate Government in May of 1865. Like its Union Counterpart, the Confederate War Department authorized the office of Assistant Secretary of War, and four men filled that position throughout the conflict.[10]

The highest-ranking commissioned officer of the U.S. Army served as the general-in-chief. Appointed by the president, the general-in-chief was charged with command of all Union armies and, in collaboration with the president and secretary of war, development of strategy to achieve national objectives. Four different men served as general-in-chief at one time or another during the Civil War. At the outbreak of the conflict, Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott served as the general-in-chief of the U.S. Army. Though mentally and intellectually capable, Scott was too old and physically unfit for field command and retired on November 1, 1861, to make way for a younger officer. Major General George Brinton McClellan occupied the post of general-in-chief until March 11, 1862, when Lincoln relieved him to focus on command of the Army of the Potomac, which McClellan had been exercising concurrently to that time. McLellan was overly cautious, excessively conservative, and increasingly out of step with Union political goals and military policy, and Lincoln believed McClellan lacked the personality, drive, and strategic vision to lead the Union armies to victory. Following McClellan's removal, the office of general-in-chief

[8] Woodward, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, 18-19.
[9] John H. Eicher and David J. Eicher. *Civil War High Commands*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 7.
[10] Ibid., 8.

remained vacant, with all Union army commanders reporting directly to the secretary of war. Following Union reversals in Virginia and stagnation in Tennessee and Mississippi, Major General Henry Wager Halleck was appointed general-in-chief on July 23, 1862. A skilled military bureaucrat with only limited ability for field command, Halleck failed to do more than manage the various army commanders, while they each pursued individual goals in their separate departments. The result was a lack of coordination of Union armies in the fall of 1862 and throughout 1863. Despite his shortcomings, Halleck remained general-in-chief until March 9, 1864, when he was replaced by the Union's most successful field commander, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant.[11] In contrast with all of his predecessors except the brilliant Winfield Scott, Grant assumed the office of general-in-chief with an overall strategy and plan to win the war. Orienting and coordinating all Union armies toward a common goal of destruction of enemy armies and resources, coupled with concurrent movements, Grant's strategy effectively utilized all of the Union's resources to maximum effect and resulted in the collapse of Confederate armies and complete Union victory in the spring of 1865.

While the general-in-chief exercised command over the combat arms, they often had little or no control over the various staff bureaus which operated directly under the control of the Secretary of War. For example, the chief of ordinance, adjutant-general, and commissary-general almost always answered directly to the Secretary of War rather than the general-in-chief, while the combat arms of infantry, artillery, and cavalry answered to the general-in-chief who answered to the secretary of war. This system applied to both U.S. and C.S. armies. The result was limited or no control by department or field commanders over the bureaus which supported the combat arms. The division of command resulted in a power struggle between the civilian secretary of war and the general-in-chief, both of whom received their orders from the president.[12] The issues of divided authority remained unresolved until the early 20th Century.

In the Confederate Army, General Samuel Cooper topped the list of five soldiers initially appointed to the grade of full general, thus making him the South's senior soldier, though he never exercised field command. The Confederate States Army had no formal general-in-chief until January 31, 1865, when General Robert E. Lee was confirmed to the post.[13] The primary reason for the delayed creation of the post of general-in-chief was the determination of President Jefferson Davis to fulfill most of those responsibilities himself. The effect of Lee's appointment as general-in-chief was minimal, since he did not receive the appointment until the final year of the conflict. He simultaneously retained command of the Army of Northern Virginia, which occupied most of his time and attention until its surrender on April 9, 1865, removed both Lee and his army from Confederate service.

[11] Clayton R. Newell and Charles R. Shrader. *Of Duty Well and Faithfully Done: A History of the Regular Army in the Civil War*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 57.
[12] Eicher and Eicher, *Civil War High Commands*, 40.
[13] Ibid. 69.

The commanders-in-chief and generals-in-chief exercised command of the combat units of the United States and Confederate States Armies though commanders of geographical units designated districts, departments, and military divisions. Districts were the smallest units and consisted of areas sometimes as small as a fraction of a state or territory, several of which could be grouped together to form a department. Departments leaders generally answered directly to the general-in-chief or to the Secretary of War; however, multiple departments were sometimes grouped together to form military divisions, the commanders of which effectively functioned as theater commanders.

The commander of a district, department, or military division was responsible for the military governance of the physical territory under his command as well as the various artillery batteries, regiments, brigades, divisions, corps, and field armies which operated within the territorial limits of the command. Often, the commander of a department exercised simultaneous command of a field army assigned to the geographical unit and thus served as an administrator as well as a commander of troops. For example, in the fall of 1862, Major General Ulysses S. Grant commanded both the Department of the Tennessee and the Army of the Tennessee which served in that department.

Occasionally, command disputes erupted when troops of one department or army crossed into the boundary of another. Such disputes were resolved either by appealing to the War Department for clarification or by forming a military division, the commander of which held authority to control all operations within designated boundaries of multiple departments. For example, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman held command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, territory which stretched from the Mississippi River in the west to the Appalachian Mountains in the east. That command included three different departments, each of which also included a field army. Sherman's field force was composed of three separate armies during the Atlanta Campaign of 1864—the Army of the Tennessee, the Army of the Cumberland, and the Army of the Ohio, all of which operated together as a single unit. Each of these three armies constituted the principle field force of the department of the same name, but boundaries were not an issue since Sherman commanded these forces in-person.[14] This is important to point out because the Union Army of the Tennessee's geographical department was in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi, the Army of the Ohio's department was located in Kentucky and eastern Tennessee, and the Army of the Cumberland's department was located in central and southern Tennessee. Which jurisdiction Sherman's army group in northern Georgia operated within was of little consequence, since they all acted under the direct control of the commander of the military division of which the various departments were a part.

Each of the two governments followed similar processes for filling positions in their high commands. The president nominated all general and flag officers, who then had to be confirmed

[14] Ibid., 819.

by the senate before they received a formal commission in either the army or navy. Throughout the conflict, military leadership on both sides shifted along with the composition of field armies, fleets, and the geographical areas they served. Changes in the Union and Confederate high command, both in civilian and military leadership, were common throughout the Civil War, and they occurred for a variety of reasons; however, the principal reasons were military and political success or failure.

As a rule, the citizens on both sides expected military victory, and failure in a single, significant battle or campaign was often cause for a change in leadership, composition of armies, or geographical boundaries of field commands. High command in either army depended on several primary factors: possession of a professional military education at either the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York or the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland; political connections, ability, or control of a significant voting bloc; and military success in the field. While no non-professional on either side ever permanently led a major field army or fleet, possession of a professional military education did not necessarily ensure a leader's success. On the other hand, while most political generals were mediocre at best, a small number on each side demonstrated superior ability in high command and gained promotion to the rank of major general. While not always the most important factor, both professional and political generals might gain promotion based on success in battle.

Generals on both sides held either commissions in the temporary, volunteer army—raised only for the duration of the war, or in the permanent, professional, regular army. When volunteers and regulars served together, regular rank took precedence.[15] Most Union generals held commissions in the volunteer army, while a small number held regular commissions. The Confederacy authorized a small regular army styled the "Army of the Confederate States of America," into which a small number of general officers were commissioned. While the C.S. regular army did field a small number of units, usually recruited at the state level, the C.S. regular army never achieved even skeleton formation as a complete organization in its own right. Consequently, like the Union, most Confederate generals held commissions in the temporary army.[16]

A total of 583 men served as substantive generals in the United States Army during the Civil War (those who held command and responsibilities as a general officer), and another 1,367 officers gained the "brevet" rank of general (those who held permanent rank in a lower grade but who could be called to serve in their higher, brevet grade of general when deemed necessary by the President of the United States).[17] Of the 583 Union generals, 47 were killed in combat or succumbed to wounds, and an additional 18 died from disease or from accidental causes.[18] Due

[15] Ibid., 33.
[16] Ibid., 66.
[17] Newell and Shrader, *Of Duty Well and Faithfully Done,* 56.
[18] Ibid., 62.

to a variety of reasons, including the collapse of the Confederate States of America at the end of the war and the resulting lack of senate confirmation of some presidential appointments for general officers, it is difficult to arrive at a conclusive number or men who served as substantive generals in the Confederate States Army. One recent study maintains 402 men served as substantive generals in the Confederate States Army during the Civil War,[19] while another recent study provides a statistic of 426, of which 80 were killed in combat and another 12 died from disease.[20]

As with the army, in both the Union and Confederacy, the president controlled the navy through a civilian secretary of the navy. Throughout the conflict, Gideon Welles served as the U.S. Secretary of the Navy and Stephen Russell Mallory served as the Confederate Secretary of the Navy. While Welles led a department with a long history and organization, Mallory faced the daunting task of building a Confederate Navy from scratch. In both the Union and the Confederacy, the Secretary of the Navy controlled combat elements through commanders of groupings of vessels known as "squadrons," though the term "fleet" was sometimes used as a less formal designation. Throughout the course of the Civil War, the U.S. Navy organized nine different fleet organizations. Six fleets were designated "blockading squadrons" assigned to duty off the coast of the Confederate States on either the Atlantic seaboard or the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to these formations, the U.S. Navy operated three fleets on major rivers – the Mississippi River Squadron, the Potomac Flotilla, and the James River Flotilla.[21] These formations were usually commanded by either a "commodore" or a "rear admiral," both of which grades were created in 1862.[22] Over the course of the war, 19 men served as Rear Admirals, the highest naval rank that existed during the war, and 44 served as commodores.[23]

Likewise, the Confederate States Navy organized nine squadrons,[24] though most of these did not rise to the dignity of a "fleet" in terms of either numbers or quality. In only two cases were these formations under the command of an admiral. Indeed, throughout the Civil War, the Confederate States Navy Department only commissioned two individuals in the rank of admiral: Admiral Franklin Buchanan and Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes.[25] While the naval leadership of both sides played major roles in the course of the war, the weakness of the Confederate navy in comparison with its Union counterpart, and the absence of major fleet actions resulted in less-glamourous and more stable leadership than that of the armies.

The United States (Union) began the conflict with a military establishment already in place, though it was weakened by the defection of roughly a third of its officer corps to the Confederacy. The Union Army was led by 87-year-old Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, who served

[19] Eicher and Eicher, *Civil War High Commands*, xvii.
[20] Theodore J. Saclarides, "Morbidity and Mortality of the Confederate Generals During the American Civil War," *The American Surgeon* (Aug. 2007): 760-763. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17879680/
[21] Eicher and Eicher, *Civil War High Commands*, 864-866.
[22] Ibid., 74.
[23] Ibid., 784-786.
[24] Ibid., 893.
[25] Ibid., 84.

as general-in-chief. While too old and overweight for field service, Scott's military mind remained sound, and he masterminded the so-called Anaconda Plan and oversaw the initial mobilization of the Union Army and the opening battles of the conflict before retiring from service in November of 1861. Brigadier General Irvin McDowell led the army around Washington D.C. until his relief following the Union disaster in the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. His replacement was Major General George B. McClellan, who had previously served as commander of Ohio's troops and oversaw operations in western Virginia. A master organizer, trainer, and administrator but a conservative and timid field commander, McClellan rebuilt and reorganized the Union forces around Washington and renamed them the Army of the Potomac.

McClellan was elevated to general-in-chief, replacing Scott in November of 1861, while retaining direct command of the Army of the Potomac at the same time. Ever concerned about direct, forward movements, McClellan transferred his army to the York-James Peninsula in the spring of 1862 for operations against Richmond, after which Lincoln relieved him as general-in-chief to allow him to focus on that campaign (or so Lincoln claimed), though the general's conservative politics and nature likely played a role in the removal as well. The position of general-in-chief remained vacant until July, when Major General Henry W. Halleck was selected to fill the post.

The Union high command in the west was divided, with flamboyant and ineffective Major General John C. Frémont in command of the Department of Missouri and Brigadier General Robert Anderson in command of the Department of Kentucky. A combination of incompetence, corruption, and insubordination resulted in Frémont's relief and replacement with academic but overly cautious Major General Henry W. Halleck, and Anderson's declining health resulted in his retirement and replacement with Brigadier General William T. Sherman. Sherman, following what may have been a nervous breakdown, based at least in part on overestimation of Confederate numbers and aggression, was replaced by Brigadier General Don Carlos Buell in the fall of 1861.

While a competent field commander, Buell always moved slowly, and he failed to take advantage of the weakened Confederate army to his front. Union field forces in the vicinity of Cairo, Illinois under the command of the ever-aggressive and confident Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant, together with the Union naval flotilla under the equally aggressive Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote, pierced the Confederate defensive line in the west by taking Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and, later, Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River, simultaneously transforming those waterways into invasion routes and outflanking the Confederate bastion at Columbus, Kentucky. Grant was promoted to Major General and remained in command of what would eventually become the Army of the Tennessee, and Buell was shortly thereafter promoted to the same rank and remained in command what became the Army of the Ohio. Grant's Army of the Tennessee fought a desperate battle at Shiloh in April 1862, during which it was reinforced by a part of Buell's Army of the Ohio to repel a massive Confederate attack on its positions on the Tennessee River near Pittsburg Landing. A separate Union army under Brigadier General John

Pope operated on the Mississippi River and captured the Confederate position at Island 10. Halleck was given command of all three Union armies in the west in March of 1862 and led the combined force in a snail-paced campaign to capture Corinth, Mississippi. After the fall of Corinth, Halleck was selected as general-in-chief in July of 1862, and the Union Armies of the Tennessee and Ohio once again became independent, with the Pope's army merged into Grant's forces in northern Mississippi.

Meanwhile, events in the east turned against the Union high command in the Peninsula Campaign. McClellan's army was defeated in a series of tactical offensives known as the Severn Days' Battles. While most of the battles were tactical Union victories, they increased McClellan's caution and pessimism, and his army backed away from the Confederate capital of Richmond and clung to its base of supplies on the James River, where it remained through July. After Halleck's transfer to the east and assumption of command of the Union's armies in Washington, Major General John Pope was also called east and appointed to lead a new Union force, the Army of Virginia, which was comprised of three corps stationed in northern Virginia. McClellan's army was withdrawn from the Peninsula and sent, piecemeal, to reinforce Pope, who was shortly thereafter badly defeated in the Second Battle of Bull Run in late August of 1862 and relieved of command.

McClellan took command of the combined Union armies of the Potomac and Virginia around Washington and, after a lackluster, but ultimately successful campaign in Maryland and a bloody battle at Sharpsburg along Antietam Creek on September 17, 1862, was relieved for the final time and replaced with the aggressive but unimaginative Major General Ambrose Everts Burnside in November of 1862. While Burnside had done well in amphibious operations on the North Carolina coast in the spring of 1862, his performance as a corps commander at Antietam was lackluster at best. A promising start for Burnside in his new role as McClellan's successor ended in disaster for the Army of the Potomac at the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. Burnside's unsuccessful Mud March in January 1863 resulted in his removal from command and replacement with boastful but limitedly competent Major General Joseph Hooker.

Hooker skillfully restored the morale of the Army of the Potomac and improved unit esprit through the adoption of distinctive badges for each corps and division of the army. While the defeat of Hooker's army at the Battle of Chancellorsville on May 1-4, 1863, did not immediately result in his removal from command, Lincoln had lost confidence in his leadership, and he was either unwilling or unable to get along with Halleck. All of this contributed to his removal in late June of 1863, just as the Army of the Potomac crossed into Maryland and toward Pennsylvania in an attempt to stop the Confederate invasion of the North.

Solid, competent, and irascible, Major General George Gordon Meade was not the senior corps commander in the Army of the Potomac, nevertheless, he was ordered by Lincoln to take command of the army on the eve of the costliest battle of the war. While the Battle of Gettysburg was a clear Union victory, Meade's refusal, or inability to attack and capture the defeated

Confederates before they crossed the flooded Potomac River back into Virginia disappointed Lincon, though he retained Meade in command of the Army of the Potomac.

Thus, the Union high command in the east changed frequently during the first two and a half years of the Civil War, as Lincoln and his advisors searched for a commander who had the aggression, determination, and confidence to destroy the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and end the war.

In the west, Major General Don Carolos Buell was relieved from command of the Army of the Ohio after a botched battle at Perryville, Kentucky followed by a glacial pursuit of Bragg's defeated Confederate army. The sporadically able Major General William Starke Rosecrans replaced Buell in command of what were re-named the Army and Department of the Cumberland. While Rosecrans was a slow, cautious commander with some of the failings McClellan exhibited, once he felt prepared, and after he learned of the transfer of a Confederate infantry division away from his front, he moved decisively to meet the Army of Tennessee near Murfreesboro. While the Battle of Stones River was a close call and resulted in the highest percentage of losses in the Civil War relative to opening strength, Confederate retreat from the battlefield allowed Rosecrans to claim a victory—indeed the only major Union victory in what was otherwise a depressing December and January for Union arms.

After months of failed attempts to bypass the town, the aggressive and strategically flexible Major General Ulysses S. Grant carried out his masterful campaign to take Vicksburg, Mississippi during April and May of 1863, penned the Confederate Army in the town, and after a siege, captured the position and its defending army on July 4, 1863. For this victory, Grant was promoted to Major General in the regular army, which made him one of the highest-ranking soldiers in United States service.

Rosecrans' brilliant Tullahoma Campaign gained middle and southeastern Tennessee for the Union without a major battle and drove the Confederate Army of Tennessee out of Chattanooga, but his campaign ended with a major defeat at Chickamauga just south of the Tennessee/Georgia state line on September 19-20, 1863, and the Army of the Cumberland was penned up in Chattanooga. In October 1863, the Union high command in the west was reorganized into the Military Division of the Mississippi, which combined the Departments of the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Ohio into a single command under Major General Ulysses S. Grant. For the first time in more than a year, the Union had the military advantage of a unified command in the west, and, in Grant, it also had a commander who was willing to maximize that advantage. Rosecrans was replaced with the slow but solid and capable Major General George Henry Thomas, reinforcements arrived from Virginia and Mississippi, and the siege of Chattanooga was lifted in late November following a series of battles on and around the heights surrounding the town.

In March of 1864, Ulysses S. Grant was promoted to Lieutenant General and elevated to general-in-chief. In an echo of Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan, Grant envisioned a single, grand

campaign which would utilize the Union's superior manpower to advantage by advancing all Union armies simultaneously toward a common center. Under Grant's overall leadership, Meade's Army of the Potomac would destroy the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, using Richmond as an anvil against which to crush it. Fiery, determined Major General William T. Sherman now commanded the Military Division of the Mississippi. Sherman's army group, consisting of Major General James Birdseye McPherson's Army of the Tennessee, Major General George H. Thomas' Army of the Cumberland, and Major General John McAllister Schofield's Army of the Ohio would destroy the Confederate Army of Tennessee and obliterate Confederate logistics in the interior of the South. These two main thrusts would be supplemented by three secondary advances. A political general of mediocre ability, Major General Franz Siegel would drive Confederate troops from the Shenandoah Valley and threaten the Confederate left flank. Another political appointee, Major General Benjamin Franklin Butler, would lead the Army of the James up the York-James Peninsula, threaten the Confederate right flank and, if possible, take Richmond. Finally, mediocre political appointee Major General Nathaniel Prentiss Banks would utilize troops from his Department of the Gulf to seize Mobile, Alabama. The strategy was sound, but failed due, in part, to failure among the high command of the secondary advances. Banks became bogged down along the Red River in Louisiana and the campaign for Mobile never got under way, Sigel was beaten at New Market in the Shenandoah, and Butler failed to press his advantage on the Richmond-Petersburg front and was penned up at Bermuda Hundred southeast of Richmond.

Meade's Army of the Potomac, with Grant close at hand, fought a series of battles with the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and afterwards pinned it down in a siege at Petersburg, Virginia which lasted 10 months. A new Union Army, the Army of the Shenandoah was organized in the valley of the same name and placed under the command of the ever aggressive and energetic Major General Philip Henry Sheridan, who was ordered to destroy Confederate forces in the area as well as the valley itself as an area for Confederate supply.

Sherman's army group took Atlanta in September of 1864, after which he sent the Army of the Ohio and one corps of the Army of the Cumberland back to Tennessee under Thomas, who was subsequently reinforced from various locations to form a new army which defeated and largely destroyed the Confederate Army of Tennessee at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville in November and December of 1864.

While retaining simultaneous command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, Sherman led the Army of the Tennessee, now under Major General Oliver Otis Howard, together with the newly formed Army of Georgia under Major General Henry Warner Slocum on a march through the Confederate heartland—first through Georgia and later through the Carolinas. Sherman's two armies faced little organized opposition in their marches through Georgia and the Carolinas until March of 1865, when they fought a sharp battle at Bentonville, North Carolina by a composite Confederate force under General Joseph Eggleston Johnston made up from elements

of the Army of Northern Virginia, the Army of Tennessee, and garrison troops from coastal cities and fortifications in Georgia and the Carolinas.

Despite frequent changes in the composition of the officers in command of its field armies, the Union high command achieved victory in April 1865 with the surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, Virginia on April 9, 1865 and the composite Confederate army in North Carolina at Durham Station, North Carolina on April 26, 1865.

While the Confederate high command went through many changes throughout the war, its leadership at the Army level was generally more stable than that of its Union counterpart. In the spring of 1861, the Confederate government organized two armies in northern Virginia – one in the Shenandoah Valley under General Joseph E. Johnston and another near Manassas under General Pierre G.T. Beauregard. These two armies cooperated in the defeat of Union General Irvin McDowell's army at the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, following which they were reorganized into a new army under Johnston's command. Following months of relative inactivity, Johnston's army was recalled to the Richmond vicinity to face McClellan's Union Army of the Potomac in the Peninsula Campaign. After Johnston was badly wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines, Virginia on May 31, 1862, Confederate President Jefferson Davis selected General Robert E. Lee as his replacement. Lee absorbed the various smaller commands in coastal Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley into Johnston's old army and renamed the new force "The Army of Northern Virginia." While various changes in the organization and composition of the unit were made over the subsequent three years, Lee remained in command of this principle eastern field army for the remainder of the war until it ceased to exist following the surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

The Confederacy's high command in its western armies experienced frequent failure and thus, more change over the course of the war. Dedicated to a dispersed defensive strategy in 1861 and into the spring of 1862, a series of small corps-sized armies were formed to protect the coast and frontiers of the Confederacy, and each operated with relative independence of the others. Northern-born General John Clifford Pemberton led a small army to protect Charleston, South Carolina, talented but fractious General Braxton Bragg and a small army guarded the Gulf Coast from Pensacola to New Orleans, aggressive but mediocre General Earl Van Dorn led a force intended to drive Union troops from Arkansas, and incompetent General Leonidas Polk had charge of troops sent to protect the Mississippi River Valley with a principal base at Columbus, Kentucky. Reliable General William Joseph Hardee's troops defended Bowling Green, Kentucky, and a smaller force nominally under the poor leadership of General George Bibb Crittenden protected eastern Kentucky and Tennessee.

In the fall of 1861, General Albert Sydney Johnston, perhaps the Confederate general with the highest military reputation of all, was given command of all Confederate forces in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arkansas and charged with defending the Confederacy's northwestern frontier with

the Union states. After a string of defeats at Forts Henry and Donelson in February, the loss of Nashville, Tennessee, and the collapse of Confederate positions in Kentucky in the winter and spring of 1862, Johnston unified all the western commands in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Mississippi River Valley into one field army. Reinforced by Bragg's troops from the Gulf coast, this new force was renamed the Army of Mississippi. Following defeat at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862, and the death of Johnston, imaginative but limited General Pierre G.T. Beauregard took command of the Army of Mississippi, which was later augmented by Van Dorn's troops from Arkansas. Beauregard oversaw the defense of Corinth, Mississippi and was relieved from command following the retreat from that city and replaced by General Braxton Bragg. Both the Union and Confederate high command in the West were unified during this period, though Bragg divided the 60,000 soldiers of his army into two components which became, in time, two separate field armies – a force of 30,000 troops in Mississippi sometime styled "The Army of Vicksburg" and the balance under his direct command which he named the "Army of Kentucky." Bragg took the force under his direct control into eastern Tennessee, where they united with Confederate troops already there to invade Kentucky. Following defeat at the botched Battle of Perryville in October 1862, Bragg's forces retreated to central Tennessee. At this point, Bragg renamed the force directly under his command the Army of Tennessee, which it remained for the remainder of the war.

The Confederate military leadership in the west was bifurcated into armies in Mississippi and central Tennessee in late 1862 and the spring of 1863. While touchy and overly-cautious General Joseph E. Johnston was assigned to command all Confederate forces in the West following recovery from his Seven Pines wound in late 1862 with the hope he would manage the cooperation of the armies utilizing interior lines, he failed to fulfill his responsibilities to the satisfaction of President Jefferson Davis.

Infighting among the generals in the Army of Tennessee led to calls for Bragg's removal, but Johnston chose to retain Bragg in command. Meanwhile, General John C. Pemberton was assigned command of all Confederate forces in Mississippi and eastern Louisiana with principal responsibility for the defense of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Following clashes with Jefferson Davis, Johnston was reduced to the command of reinforcements sent to cooperate with Pemberton in the defense of Mississippi, with the result that the Confederacy had three, separate field armies in the west and no longer had unified leadership in that theater of operations.

Following both the loss of Vicksburg and Pemberton's army to Union forces in July 1863, the Confederacy retained two principal armies in the West: Johnston's Army of Mississippi and Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Bragg's Army of Tennessee won the only major Confederate victory in the west at the Battle of Chickamauga on September 19-20, 1863, but he failed to follow up the success and destroy the opposing Union army. Following the failure to transform tactical into strategic success, Bragg again faced infighting among his generals and repeated calls for his removal, which were eventually granted in December 1863, following Confederate losses in the

battles around Chattanooga, Tennessee. Though reluctant to do so, Jefferson Davis had few generals of sufficient rank and experience with which to replace Bragg, and he settled on his personal enemy, General Joseph E. Johnston. A rift opened between the two men early in the war over a squabble regarding Johnston's lower rank relative to Robert E. Lee on the list of full generals, and it widened following Johnston's failure to relieve Pemberton's army in the weeks leading up to the surrender of Vicksburg. Thus, Johnston's selection to lead the Army of Tennessee was controversial.

When Union General William T. Sherman began his advance on Atlanta, Georgia in the spring of 1864, the Confederate Army of Mississippi was again merged with the Army of Tennessee and two forces remained unified through the remainder of the war. Having failed to arrest Sherman's armies in their advance on Atlanta or to give offensive battle to the enemy in any major action, the cautious Johnston was replaced with the aggressive, but unimaginative General John Bell Hood, who led the Army of Tennessee in a series of failed attacks on the larger Union armies of Sherman in the late summer and early fall of 1864. Hood continued in command of the Army of Tennessee following the fall of Atlanta, but overall Confederate military leadership in the West was again unified under General Pierre G.T. Beauregard, who supervised Hood and all other remaining troops in the field throughout the region. Hood led his army to Tennessee in a desperate bid to change the course of the war in the West by taking Union-held Nashville and invading Kentucky. However, Hood destroyed the offensive capability of his army in the pyrrhic Confederate victory at the Battle of Franklin in November of 1864 and presided over the destruction of the remainder of his army in the Battle of Nashville in December. Hood was removed from command, and the Army of Tennessee was broken up and parceled out among commands on the Gulf Coast, with more than 5,000 transferred to the Carolinas, where they joined the composite Confederate Army organized by General Joseph E. Johnston, who had been once-again restored to command at the behest of Robert E. Lee, who had been appointed as the General-in-Chief of Confederate Armies in February 1865.

Both the Union and Confederate military leadership operated with similar organizations and methods throughout the Civil War. Despite the remarkable success of Confederate General Robert E. Lee and his principal subordinates in the Army of Northern Virginia, most Confederate military leadership at the army level and higher civilian officers failed. In contrast, Union military leadership at the highest level overcame initial reverses and personality problems, and it dramatically improved as the war progressed. In part, this is attributable to hidden talents in the Union's initial mid-level leadership which were revealed as the war progressed and merit-based promotions brough the best men to the top – men such as Grant, Sherman, Meade, Sheridan, and Thomas, who led the Union to victory in the costliest war in American History.

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