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Abraham Lincoln: Strategist of Union victory

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN: STRATEGIST OF UNION VICTORY

A Thesis

by

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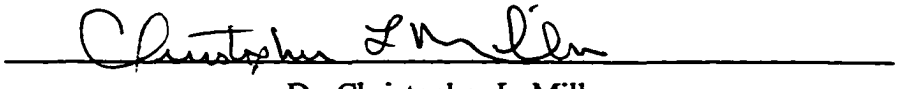

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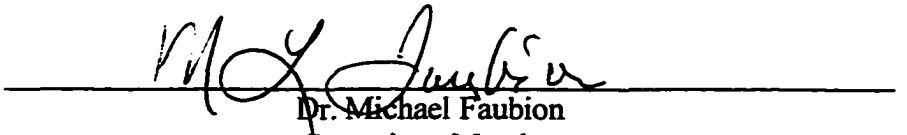

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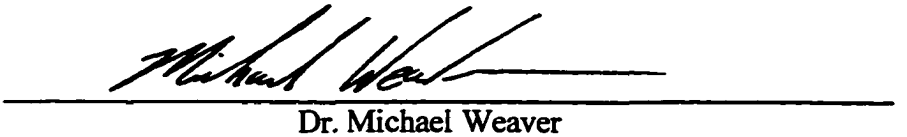

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Military strategy can be divided into two major categories. First, national strategy which shapes and defines a nation's political goals. Second, operational strategy which is the instrument for achieving those goals. Most studies of Abraham Lincoln's military strategy during the American Civil War are too narrow in focus, because they mainly look at operational strategy. But operational strategy can not be truly understood or judged unless there is a firm understanding of national strategy, for which operational strategy is a mere tool. As a national strategist, Lincoln was largely responsible for Union victory.

DEDICATION

To Leticia, Carmen Linda, and Rolando Daniel

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INTRODUCTION

> National strategy is the shaping and defining of a nation's political goals in time of war. Military strategy is the use of armed forces to achieve those goals. Most studies of Lincoln and his generals focus mainly on this second kind of strategy--that is, military or operational strategy. And that is the problem. For it is impossible to understand military strategy without also comprehending national strategy--the political war aims--for which military strategy is merely the instrument.[1]

Both Abraham Lincoln and General George B. McClellan had very definite opinions on how to run the Civil War, and these opinions seldom matched up. As a consequence, historians became divided in allegiances between McClellan's and Lincoln's strategic abilities. Some military historians have criticized Lincoln's appointment of political generals, while others have failed to see the value of emancipation as either an effective war measure or a diplomatic weapon. Lincoln is at times even blasted by his own defenders for perceived military mistakes. However, all of these criticisms are shortsighted because they fail to take Lincoln's grand strategy into account. It is only through a full understanding of Lincoln's national strategy that the rationale behind his military strategy can be truly appreciated.

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[1]James M. McPherson, "Lincoln and the Strategy of Unconditional Surrender," in *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 69-70.

In his Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture entitled "Lincoln and the Strategy of Unconditional Surrender," delivered at Gettysburg College in 1984, Civil War Historian James M. McPherson drew upon Carl von Clausewitz, the most influential theorist of war, for a more precise definition of war strategy. According to McPherson, war strategy can be divided into two parts: "First, national strategy (or what the British call grand strategy); second, military strategy (or what the British call operational strategy)."[2] According to McPherson, most military "studies are based on too restricted a definition of strategy."[3]

McPherson's lecture points out a problem, or hole, in war strategy scholarship. The lecture remained relevant enough to be published as a chapter in his *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* in 1991 (with minor changes). Editor Gabor S. Boritt was also impressed enough with the lecture to publish it as a chapter in his book titled, *Lincoln, the War President* in 1992 (with minor changes).[4] The republication of McPherson's lecture not only demonstrates its importance, but also the fact that the problem remains a problem.

Application of McPherson's new perspective results in a new interpretation of Lincoln's performance in military strategy, the political appointment of generals, and the Emancipation Proclamation. The purpose of this present work is to fill that gap in historiography using McPherson's lecture as a starting point.

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[2]Ibid., 69.

[3]Ibid.

[4]James M. McPherson, "Lincoln and the Strategy of Unconditional Surrender," in *Lincoln, the War President*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY

> My dear Sir [Secretary of State William H. Seward]: Since parting with you I have been considering your paper dated this day [April 1, 1861], and entitled "Some thoughts for the President's consideration...." Upon your...proposition that "whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it..." and "either the President must do it himself...or devolve it on some member of his cabinet..." I remark that if this must be done, *I* must do it.[1]

If Secretary of State William H. Seward had any ideas of taking charge over the Lincoln administration, the president's answer to an early memorandum set the record straight. Abraham Lincoln was going to take the helm, and would remain there until his assassination in 1865. Although Lincoln sounded confident of his leadership, historians have had differing views on his leadership style. Early biographers felt that Lincoln could do no wrong, single handedly freeing the slaves, and personally leading the Union to victory. Southern historians greatly disagreed with this assessment. They presented Lincoln as a puppet of the Radical Republicans who had been made to force his will on the

[1]Roy P. Basler, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1990), 590-1.

South as a dictator. The Progressives and Consensus schools of thought made an attempt to completely destroy the Lincoln hero image that had been established by early biographers, but they were unsuccessful. The civil rights movement led to Lincoln being labeled a racist, while the Richard Nixon scandal led to a return to the dictator question. But, the backlash against affirmative action that began in the 1970s signaled a return in Lincoln literature to the Great Emancipator and Savior of the Union images.

In connection to the Savior of the Union image historians have also portrayed Lincoln as a military strategist. Early biographers praised Lincoln for saving the union, but the first serious studies on Lincoln's military strategy came from England. Also, in an effort to vindicate himself, George B. McClellan wrote his own memoir. Since this time, historians have been divided over the superiority of Lincoln's and McClellan's strategic decisions.

The crisis of the American Civil War and Lincoln's assassination served to deify the man and added him to the ranks of the "Founding Fathers." Biographies written shortly after Lincoln's death present him as a pure and good man without a shred of human frailty. He is a man who could do no wrong. His suspension of civil liberties and the very controversial creation of the military draft were overlooked, because, according to this view, Lincoln did all this for the good of the Union, and, since he was successful in preserving the Union, the ends justified the means. Republican politics played an important role in casting a saintly Lincoln image. For, it was advantageous for the Republican Party to claim association with such a great man. Consequently, Lincoln was exalted as the Great Emancipator of the slaves and the Savior of the Union.

One of the Lincoln's earliest biographers, his former Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, took it upon himself to extol Lincoln's virtues. His *Lincoln and Seward* (1874) came about as a response to a eulogy that Charles Francis Adams (American Minister to Britain during the Civil War) gave for William H. Seward in which he gave Seward *all* of the credit for running Lincoln's administration. Welles defined the Emancipation Proclamation as the crowning achievement of the administration and said that Seward had nothing to do with it. "Mr. Lincoln," on the other hand, "was the pioneer and responsible author."[2]

John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Lincoln's personal secretaries, also defended Lincoln. As a matter of fact, they spoke well of Lincoln in all matters. In their Lincoln biography, Nicolay and Hay said that Lincoln wanted to save the Union and secure rights for all citizens by amending the U.S. Constitution.[3] Lincoln's former law partner, William H. Herndon, also did his part in praising Lincoln's intentions in his *Herndon's Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*, which was first published in 1888.[4] It contains an account that makes up many of the Lincoln myths that are still prevalent today.

After the Civil War, some historians who belonged to the Democrat Party began to criticize Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus during the war. Had Lincoln seized too much power during this time of crisis? Had he become a dictator? These historians saw Lincoln's actions as calculated assaults on the Democrats by the Republicans who were in power. An excellent example of this point of view can be

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[2]Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward* (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1874), 208.

[3]John G. Nicholay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 10 vols. (New York: Century, 1890).

[4]William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Clarke and Co., 1889).

found in John A. Marshall's *American Bastille* (1869).[5] Marshall saw the restriction of the civil liberties as excessive and wrong. By the early 1900s, Southern historians began their full-scale assault on Lincoln's great man image. Writing under the pseudonym "George Edwards," Elizabeth Avery Meriwether published *Facts and Falsehoods Concerning the War in the South, 1861-1865* (1904) in which she accused Lincoln of being a puppet of the Radical Republicans who had completely stolen the rights away from the South.[6] Five years later, George L. Christian joined Meriwether in classifying Lincoln as a dictator, emphasizing that he had violated his pledge to the South of not interfering with slavery by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation.[7] Although such views might be dismissed as the bitter utterances of defeated Southerners, it is worth noting that the question of whether Lincoln seized too much power during the Civil War still remains an important issue in recent scholarship.

The Progressive movement exerted its influence during and after World War I. In *The Presidents in American History* (1935), Charles A. Beard attacked the "Great Man" view of the presidents.[8] He wrote that events, such as crisis situations, make men seem great. But most importantly, Beard was concerned with the influence of economic factors on human behavior. In *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913), Beard wrote, "Whoever leaves economic pressures out of history is

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[5]John A. Marshall, *American Bastille*, (Philadelphia: Thomas W. Hartley, 1869).

[6][George Edwards], *Facts and Falsehoods Concerning the War in the South, 1861-1865*. (Memphis, n.p., 1904).

[7]George L. Christian, *Confederate Veteran* 17 (1909): 153-154.

[8]Charles A. Beard, *The Presidents in American History* (New York: Julian Messner, 1935).

in mortal peril of substituting mythology for reality...."[9] According to this view, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison were all motivated by their own property interests. None of them were altruistic.

The Progressive historians had a profound influence on the way in which American history was written and subsequent historians attempted to stray away from hero worship when they wrote about Lincoln, but, as a noted Lincoln scholar points out, this has never been easy to do. In *The Man Behind the Myth* (1984), Stephen B. Oates attempts to capture the "real" Lincoln, but admits that, in his opinion, Lincoln will always remain America's greatest hero. Oates affirms that "as long as we believe in America, we will have towering Father Abraham as our greatest mythical hero. And as long as he is that hero, he will remain a powerful presence to be reckoned with."[10]

Following World War II, the advent of the Cold War and mainstream Americans' fear of Communism gave rise to a new historiographical movement. Feeling the need for unity in a time when an outward foe was a perceived threat, historians turned away from Beard's emphasis on conflicts between the rich and the poor and emphasized the similarities in the American experience instead. This Consensus school of historians wrote about stability and were very fearful of ideologies and moral motivations, which were seen as dangerous. For example, James G. Randall proclaims the image of the Great Emancipator to be a myth in his *Lincoln the President* (1945-1955). Randall says that events controlled Lincoln. He had no choice. Lincoln issued the Proclamation only

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[9]Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan,1913), xvii.

[10]Stephen B. Oates, *The Man Behing the Myth* (New York, 1984), 30.

as a "military necessity" which offered, at best, "a limping freedom."[11] Another Consensus historian, Richard Hofstadter, says that Lincoln was a reluctant emancipator. Hofstadter wrote, that Lincoln was "a follower and not a leader of public opinion." In Hofstadter's opinion, Lincoln was morally callous and the Emancipation Proclamation had "all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading." "Beyond its propaganda value," Hofstadter wrote, "the Proclamation added nothing to what Congress had already done in the Confiscation Act." Ultimately, according to this view, Lincoln "turned liberator in spite of himself."[12] Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves, therefore, was described by Consensus historians as merely a practical venture with no moral implications.

The next major shift in presidential historiography was a direct product of the civil rights movement in the United States. As a result of this new movement, historians began to criticize the past presidents as racists. These historians believed that racism was deeply rooted in American culture and "great" men were no exception to this rule. According to this view, if Lincoln, the liberator of the slaves, was racist, then everyone else must have been also. On the occasion of the United States bicentennial, historians reflected on the civil rights movement and the role that United States presidents had played in Black freedom. Joseph Carpenter's "The Bicentennial and the Black Revolution: Is it a Myth or a Reality?" (1976) says that both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were slave holders and self-admitted racists.[13] In "The Bicentennial:

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[11]James G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945-1955), II: 189.

[12]Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage, 1948), 169-171.

[13]Joseph Carpenter, "The Bicentennial and the Black Revolution: Is it a Myth or a Reality?," *Negro History Bulletin* 39, no. 1 (1976): 496-99.

Contradictions in American Democracy," (1976) O. C. Bobby Daniels says that throughout American history Blacks have served as guardians of the Constitution, and have earned their freedom by fighting for it. Daniels also sets out to attack all the United States presidents, especially Jefferson and Lincoln, as being racists.[14] This is by far the school of thought that has done the most damage to Lincoln's Great Emancipator image. For example, Leon F. Litwack's *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (1961) says that the Lincoln era was one of universal racism and that Lincoln was a product of his era and "accurately and consistently reflected the thoughts and prejudices of most Americans" of that time in his words and actions.[15] These historians saw Lincoln as a racist who did not really believe in equality, as early biographers had claimed.

The discovery of lies during the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, and President Richard Nixon's resignation were the most influential events on presidential historiography since the World Wars. To some extent, the Nixon legacy can still be felt today. Suddenly, everything had to be reassessed. Trust in the government was gone and historians began to see conspiracies everywhere. Some drew upon contemporary speculation concerning a purported conspiracy in the recent assassination of John F. Kennedy to suggest a similar conspiracy in the shooting of Abraham Lincoln.[16] A very popular example of this type of conspiracy literature is *The Lincoln Conspiracy* (1977) by

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[14]O.C. Bobby Daniels, "The Bicentennial: Contradictions in American Democracy," *Black Scholar* 7, no. 10 (1976): 2-6.

[15]Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), 276.

[16]Michael L. Kurtz, *Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination from a Historian's Perspective* (Tennessee: University of Tennessee, 1982).

David Balsinger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr.[17] This work, however, has been battered down by many scholars. Thomas R. Turner's, "Public Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln," (1976) for example, denies a conspiracy in that Civil War era contemporary opinions did not share in this view. Turner later expands his argument in *Beware the People Weeping: Public Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (1982).[18]

Moreover, after the Nixon scandal, the question of presidential power became an important factor in presidential historiography. Since a corruption of power had led to Nixon's abuses and consequent downfall, it became obvious to scholars that the presidency had too much power. In *The Imperial Presidency* (1973), Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. said that the presidency had gotten "out of control and badly need[ed] new definition and restraint."[19] Still feeling the shock waves of the Nixon legacy, Fawn M. Brodie, in "The Presidential Hero: Reality or Illusion," (1981) looks at the image presidents try to project. Brodie shows that in 1976 Jimmy Carter promised, "I will never lie to you." Also, Ronald Reagan claimed that his best qualification for the presidency was that "[He] was not smart enough to lie." Brodie concludes that there have never been

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[17]David Balsinger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr., *The Lincoln Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: Schick Sunn Classic Books, 1977).

[18]Thomas R. Turner, "Public Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln," *Lincoln Herald* 78, no. 1 (1976): 17-24; *Beware the People Weeping: Public Opinion and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

[19]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), x.

any presidential heroes, and that even the Founding Fathers were human and had human weaknesses.[20]

Dwight Anderson's *Abraham Lincoln: The Quest for Immortality* (1982) is a psychoanalysis of Lincoln. Anderson bases his assumptions on an interpretation of Lincoln's "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions: Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois" which was delivered in 1838. Anderson concludes that Lincoln was a dictator who ran over the Constitution merely to gratify his own selfish ambition.[21] In the address, delivered over twenty years before Lincoln became president, Lincoln explained his philosophy of government. Lincoln stated that, in order to maintain political institutions, it was necessary for a strong leader to modify and correct them. In Lincoln's opinion, this strong leader needed to have ambition that went beyond "a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or presidential chair." For, "*such belong not to the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle.*" Lincoln continued:

> What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or Napoleon?--Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path.... It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freedmen.[22]

After the backlash to Civil Rights movement, historians attempted to reestablish Lincoln as the Great Emancipator and savior of the Union. According to James McPherson, the American Civil War was fundamentally about slavery and freedom, and, therefore, fundamentally about emancipation. Saving the Union came first to Lincoln, of

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[20]Fawn M. Brodie, "The Presidential Hero: Reality or Illusion," *Halcyon* (1981): 1-16.

[21]Dwight G. Anderson, *Abraham Lincoln: The Quest for Immortality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 5, 61, 193.

[22]Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, 76-85.

course, but getting rid of slavery came in as a very close second among Lincoln's priorities. In his Pulitzer Prize winner and national bestseller *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988), McPherson develops the idea of a "Second American Revolution." He says that the war caused a revolutionary change in southern and northern society. African Americans became free and the federal government gained power in enforcing civil rights. McPherson further expands on this idea in *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (1991).[23]

Similarly, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (1992), by Gary Wills, is a very influential work aimed at overthrowing revisionism and restoring Lincoln's Great Emancipator image. Wills says the "new birth of freedom" that Lincoln spoke about at Gettysburg showed that he was truly committed to equality. According to Wills, the speech was Lincoln's way of "correcting the Constitution itself without overthrowing it." The Gettysburg Address stressed the principles of equality found in the Declaration of Independence instead of the right to property found in the U.S. Constitution.[24] In "Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties: A Reappraisal" (1974), Charles P. Poland, Jr. also defends Lincoln. Poland says that Lincoln violated the Constitution in order to save the Union. Poland feels that emergency situations--rebellion or invasion--cannot be judged in the same way as peace time situations.[25] In "Lincoln reacts to the Civil War" (1979), Roger D. Bridges claims that Lincoln's infringement of

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[23]James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[24]Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America,* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 147.

[25]Charles P. Poland, "Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties: A Reappraisal," *Lincoln Herald* 76, no. 3 (1974): 119-132.

individual rights, and the confiscation and destruction of private property were the only way of saving the future of Democracy in the face of Civil War.[26]

Mark E. Neely, Jr. also defended Lincoln's record on civil liberties in his 1992 Pulitzer Prize winning and extremely influential work, *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (1991). Neely considers the claims made by the Democrat historians shortly after the Civil War and digs deeply into the war arrest records. He concludes that Lincoln did what he had to do, but that there was no calculated plan against the Democrats. The war was filled with a lot of confusion and injustices. Neely says, "war and its effect on Civil liberties remains a frightening unknown."[27] According to Neely, Lincoln was not a dictator. On the contrary, he was the savior of the Union. Neely says that historians have been "embarrassed by Lincoln's record on the Constitution," and, therefore, "shied away from the subject."[28] The lack of scholarly treatment of this subject, he says, has opened the door to "irresponsibly cynical and iconoclastic popular theories." Neely goes on to affirm that "the dominant popular view today had been forged outside the historical profession," and he sets out to put the record straight.[29] According to Neely, Lincoln's extraordinary measure were called for in the extraordinary crisis of Civil War. If Lincoln had not done what he did, the Union would not have been saved.

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[26]Roger D. Bridges, "Lincoln Reacts to the Civil War," *Lincoln Herald* 81, no. 2 (1979): 63-77.

[27]Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 235.

[28]Ibid., 232.

[29]Ibid., 231.

As with his handling of political and legal matters, historians have, with good reason, also inquired into Lincoln's military leadership. Speaking before Congress in 1848, Lincoln himself disparaged his military experience. "By the way, Mr. Speaker," Lincoln began, "did you know I am a military hero?"

> Yes, sir, in the days of the Black Hawk war, I...bled, and came away.... It is quite certain I did not break my sword, for I had none to break; but I bent a musket pretty badly on one occasion....by accident.... If [General Cass] saw any live fighting Indians, it was more than I did, but I had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitoes....[30]

If this anecdote is any indication of Lincoln's true experience in the war, it is safe to say that when Lincoln took office he had no military experience whatsoever. Lincoln did, however, take his role as Commander-in-Chief very seriously, and he quickly set out to banish his ignorance. He borrowed military books from the Library of Congress and studied intensively. He asked his generals and cabinet members questions on military matters. He spent much of his time at the telegraph office receiving and sending messages. He visited the front on several occasions. On July 23, 1861, he penned his first memorandum of military policy.

As the war waged on, it became apparent that Lincoln learned about military strategy. Most historians, however, find fault with some of Lincoln's military strategies. Even his most adamant defenders have pointed out some perceived Lincoln "mistakes" in military strategy. Some of Lincoln's military strategies fail to make sense to historians, because these scholars do not see Lincoln's military strategy as a part of a greater national strategy. While it is true that Lincoln was a student of military strategy, he was very well

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[30]Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, 242.

versed in the political arena and had a firm grasp of his national strategy to save the Union.

The earliest appraisals of Lincoln's prowess as a military strategist came from his close friends. John Hay, Lincoln's personal secretary, wrote a letter to John Nicolay, another of Lincoln's personal secretaries, on September 11, 1863, in which he expressed a hearty admiration for Lincoln's abilities. Hay wrote, "some well-meaning newspaper advise[d] the President to keep his fingers out of the military pie.... The truth is, if he did, the pie would be a sorry mess."[31] Throughout the war, Hay worked very closely with Lincoln and was impressed by the president's hands-on approach to all war matters. Hay wrote of Lincoln, "the old man sits here and wields like a backwoods Jupiter the bolts of war and the machinery of government with a hand equally steady & equally firm."[32]

The very first multi-volume biography of Lincoln was written by these two personal secretaries and published in 1890. Both Hay and Nicolay were great fans of the sixteenth president and their Lincoln biography still remains valuable for its treasure of first-hand accounts.[33] Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of War, wrote a series of articles after the war in *Galaxy Magazine* in which he praised Lincoln for his military as well as his national strategy. Lincoln, according to Welles, handled the Fort Sumter Crisis wonderfully. But, in the Secretary of War's opinion, the Emancipation Proclamation was

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[31]Tyler Dennet, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939), 91.

[32]Ibid.

[33]John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 10 vols. (New York: Century Co., 1890).

Lincoln's finest stroke of genius. These articles were compiled and published in book form in 1874.[34]

The first scholarly appraisals of Lincoln's military strategy, however, came from England. The Industrial Revolution brought about many innovations in the art of war. Not only did the Industrial Revolution make the rapid production of war materials possible, it also enabled new technologies, such as stronger and more accurate fire-power, which helped lead to trench warfare. Industrial inovation also enabled military use of the railroad as a new tool of war. Since the American Civil War was the world's first full-scale war after industrialization, it was also the first war in which these new developments and others were used. Because of this, many European military observers came to America during the Civil War and took note of the new strategies that were, of necessity, devised and employed. The most prolific of this group of observers were the British.[35]

British Field Marshall Viscount Wolseley, who later became Great Britain's highest army officer, recalled the "breathless interest and excitement with which from month to month, almost day to day...English soldiers read and studied every report that could be obtained of the war as it proceeded."[36] Wolseley, who both visited the Civil War in 1863 and wrote extensively on the lessons that he gained from it, argued that, since the American Civil War had effectively used a large number of volunteer troops, all of its

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[34]Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1874).

[35]Jay Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), 226-233; Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization, and Field Command* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), xi-xviii.

[36]Field Marshall Viscount Wolseley, *The American Civil War: An English View*, ed. James A. Rawley (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 1964), xiii.

campaigns were "replete with instruction for...auxiliary forces, as well as for [the] army" that "a large number of volunteer officers...should study."[37] Before and after Wolseley became the Commander-in-Chief of the British army, he remained a constant spokesperson of the American Civil War's world significance as a modern war. It seems that, "Wolseley was not held spellbound by the dazzling successes of the Prussian army," and understood the value of "studying other wars as well."[38] Wolseley had a deep desire to introduce young British officers to the serious study of the Civil War, and his high position gave him the power to make it a reality. Wolseley's ardor in this respect led to his appointment of British Professor Colonel G.F.R. Henderson to the British Staff College. Henderson's *The Campaign of Fredericksburg, Nov.-Dec., 1862: A Tactical Study for Officers* (1891) is, by far, his most famous book on Civil War military strategy.[39]

At this point in time, Lincoln formed only a small part of British strategic studies. Wolseley admired Lincoln's abilities as a political leader, but found him quite lacking in military matters. Revealing his own professional biases, Wolseley's objections stemmed from his view that Lincoln was "meddling" in military affairs. According to Wolseley, Lincoln was a politician, and politicians should leave military affairs to military men. Sir Frederick Maurice, in *Statesmen and Soldiers of the Civil War* (1926), was in agreement

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[37]Ibid., 80.

[38]Luvaas, 51.

[39]G.F.R. Henderson, *The Campaign of Fredericksburg, Nov.-Dec., 1862. A Tactical Study for Officers*, 3d ed. (London: Gale & Polden, Ltd., 1891).

with Wolseley on this matter. According to Maurice, Lincoln as a war leader, in a general sense, rather than in a strictly military sense.[40]

It was not until 1926 when British historian Colin R. Ballard published his very influential book, *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, that the negative opinion of Lincoln's military strategy began to change. Ballard's new evaluation of Lincoln was that of a self-taught military strategist. In Ballard's opinion, Lincoln grew in military knowledge as the war raged on, and his understanding of military strategy eventually became better than many of his generals in the field. According to Ballard, Lincoln's general military strategy was to destroy the opposing army, not to capture enemy territory. It was not until Lincoln found the generals to carry out his military vision that the war was won. Ballard does, however, state that as soon as Lincoln found capable men, like General William T. Sherman and General Ulysses S. Grant, to carry out his plans, he took his hands off the war and let these men take full responsibility for it.[41]

Domestic analysis of Lincoln's generalship began with General George B. McClellan's spirited effort to vindicate his own military reputation. Throughout the war, McClellan and Lincoln disagreed publicly and privately about the proper military course to take. Such disagreements, along with McClellan's failure to win any decisive victories on the battlefield, finally led Lincoln to fire the general as the head of the Union Army. McClellan struck back in 1887 when he published *McClellan's Own Story: The War for the Union, the Soldiers Who Fought It, the Civilians Who Directed It, and His*

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[40]Sir Frederick Maurice, *Statesmen and Soldiers of the Civil War* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1926).

[41]Colin R. Ballard, *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

Relationship to It and to Them.[42] Since this time, historians have been split in their allegiances to Lincoln and McClellan. Peter S. Michie's *General McClellan*, which was first published in 1901, defends Lincoln and blames McClellan for military mistakes.[43] On the other hand, Warren W. Hassler, Jr. defends McClellan in *General George B. McClellan, Shield of the Union* (1957).[44]

The works of T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (1952), and Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General: A Military Study of the Civil War* (1949-59), are in-depth studies of Lincoln's military strategies as Commander-in-Chief of the Union army. Although many other books and articles have also explored this subject, these two works still remain the most complete and valuable. These works are in agreement with British historian Colin Ballard's assessment of Lincoln's positive role in military affairs, but, contrary to Ballard, both T. Harry Williams and Kenneth P. Williams argue that Lincoln was very actively involved in military affairs to the very end of the war.[45]

Today, the issue of Lincoln's military strategies is still a source of contention. Even Lincoln's strongest defenders find fault with some of Lincoln's military decisions. Mark E. Neely, Jr., for example, says that before the Peninsular campaign, Lincoln detached

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[42]General George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story: The War for the Union, the Soldiers Who Fought It, the Civilians Who Directed It, and His Relationship to It and to Them* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Co., 1887).

[43]Peter S. Michie, *General McClellan* (New York: Great Commanders Series, 1901).

[44]Warren W. Hassler, Jr., *General George B. McClellan, Shield of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957).

[45]T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,1952); Kenneth P. Williams. *Lincoln Finds a General: A Military Study of the Civil War*, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949-59).

10,000 men to East Tennessee. According to Neely, "the number was too small" to make any difference in East Tennessee, but "large enough to have been a help to McClellan."[46]

In conclusion, perceptions of Lincoln's leadership style has changed over the years. Early biographers portrayed Lincoln as an altruistic Great Emancipator and architect of Union victory. Southern historians took issue with this view and labeled Lincoln a puppet of the Radical Republicans and a dictator who had forced his will on the South. The Progressive, Consensus, and civil rights movement historians unsuccessfully attacked Lincoln's hero image. After the Nixon scandal, the Lincoln literature again returned to the dictator question, but the end of the Cold War led to a serious full scale offensive to reestablish Lincoln as he had begun--as the Great Emancipator and Savior of the Union.

In connection to Lincoln's Savior of the Union image, historians have also examined him as a military strategist. In general, his reputation in this arena in not so sterling. Even those who defend Lincoln in other areas find his military leadership flawed. Although this assessment may be justified in a purely tactical sense, it might be argued that Lincoln's military decision making needs to be reexamined in light of larger, more strategic goals.

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[46]Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 65.

CHAPTER II

LINCOLN AND MCCLELLAN

> For it is impossible to understand military strategy without also comprehending national strategy--the political war aims--for which military strategy is merely the instrument.[1]

As noted in the previous chapter, most historians have found Lincoln's military leadership flawed, often seeming unable to make sense of particular tactical and military decisions. It might be argued, however, that the shortcomings are on the part of the historians, and not on Lincoln's. As James M. McPherson has suggested, historians who have evaluated Lincoln as a war president have neglected the fact that for him, military strategy was only one part of a larger national or "grand" strategy. Only when this national strategy is taken into account can his military decision-making be understood properly. In fact, it might be argued that it was Lincoln's national strategy that ultimately was responsible for Union victory.

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[1]James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 70.

For Lincoln, Union was an obsession. In his First Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1861, he stated that he understood the Constitution to make the Union of the States "perpetual." In his view, "no government...ever had a provision...for its own termination." Once the Constitution had been executed, it would be "impossible to destroy" the Union.[2] Lincoln asserted that disunion would contradict the Constitution, and was, therefore, "absurd." In his view, even under the present conditions of the country, "the Union [was] unbroken."[3] In fact, throughout his entire presidency, he never strayed from this understanding of things. At no time did he ever recognize the Confederate states, but, rather, he often referred to them as Union states that were temporarily in rebellion.

The preservation of the Union formed the foundation of Lincoln's national strategy. Lincoln took his duty to preserve the Union very seriously, and everything else was negotiable. Union was always on his mind. He would enforce whatever kind of military action that would accomplish his goal, and at different points in time of the war different kinds of military action were called for. At first, because of economic and political pressures, Lincoln waged a limited war. Limited strategy included the blockade of Southern ports and strategic attacks against important points. After the Battle of Antietam, however, Lincoln realized that only hard war--total war--could achieve his goal of victory. It was not indecision on his part, for example, to switch generals at different times during the war, but was, in fact, the particular general's ability or inability to form a part in Lincoln's broader vision that was the deciding factor in appointments or

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[2]Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 4: 252.

dismissals. In fact, many other seemingly unrelated or difficult to understand military decisions make sense when Lincoln's national strategy is taken into account.

Expressing his political view, a Radical Republican wrote Lincoln on April 3, 1861, "give up [Fort] Sumter, Sir, & you are...dead politically....You have got to fight."[4] But, Lincoln did not want to fight. In fact, he did everything he could to avert war. And once war began, he made every effort to end it as quickly and as painlessly as possible. The Firing of Fort Sumter sparked the start of the Civil War and Lincoln dealt with it without calling Congress into session. Lincoln's cabinet offered him conflicting advise on several occasions about how to handle the Fort Sumter Crisis, but Orville H. Browning, Illinois Senator and a close Lincoln friend, recorded in his diary that Lincoln "himself conceived the idea, and proposed sending supplies, without an attempt to reinforce giving notice of the fact to Gov. Pickins of S.C." According to Browning, "the plan succeeded. [The South] attacked Sumter--it fell, and thus, did more service than it otherwise could."[5] Browning was impressed with how Lincoln proved to the seceding states, and to the world, that there would be no war unless it was brought about by the South. Not reinforcing the Fort may seem like a poor military strategy on Lincoln's part, but it was an evident master stroke of his national strategy. Northern aggression would have garnered more support for the Southern cause and made reunion more difficult.

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[3]Ibid., 253.

[4]Harlod Holzer, ed., *Dear Mr. Lincoln: Letters to the President* (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 144.

[5]Orville Hickman Browning, *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*, ed. Theodore C. Pease & James G. Randall (Ill.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1933), 1: 597.

Once the South had demonstrated its aggressive stance, Lincoln continued a policy of moderation. The Anaconda Plan, suggested to Lincoln by General Winfield Scott, is a prime example of this kind of limited war strategy. It was a blockade of Southern ports intended to isolate the South both economically and diplomatically from Europe. Slowly but surely, the blockade would choke trade and the South's economy would suffer. This economic hardship brought on by isolation would then allow cooler heads in the South to prevail. It was hoped that the Confederacy would be no more, and the seceded states would clamor for reunification. Along this same line of reasoning, the limited strategic strikes were intended to either protect the Union from invasion or attack certain points that would weaken the South. In all of these instances, Lincoln wanted to demonstrate to moderate Southerners, Northern Democrats, and foreign diplomats that his was the side of reason and forbearance.

After Fort Sumter, Lincoln knew that he had to prepare for war. "The White House is turned into barracks," wrote John Hay on April 18, 1861. "All day the notes of preparation have been heard at the public buildings and Armories."[6] Lines were being drawn. Lincoln offered command of the Union Army to Robert E. Lee, but Lee declined the honor and went home to fight for the Southern cause. Two days after the surrender of Fort Sumter, Lincoln called for 75,000 three month volunteers from the states to protect Washington. At this point in time, Lincoln, or almost anybody else, did not believe that the rebellion would last longer than 90 days. In early July of 1861, Lincoln learned that the Confederate Congress was scheduled to meet in Richmond on July 20. He became

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[6]Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War In the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1939),1-2.

convinced that he had to stop this meeting before the Confederacy could gain organizational strength. As a consequence, Lincoln ordered raw and undisciplined troops into action.

Just before the First Battle of Bull Run, General McDowell commented to British Reporter William Howard Russell, "I declare I am not quite easy at the idea of having your eye on me, for you have seen so much of European armies, you will, very naturally, think little of us, generals and all."[7] As it turns out, General McDowell's comment proved to be correct. Russell was not impressed at all with what he saw at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. The Union's "grand debacle" that day, according to Russell's report, was due to the Union's "crude organization" of its troops. Russell was amazed at the willingness of many volunteers to flee rather than fight. Even at his distant observation post on a hill-side, Russell soon found himself "enveloped in the crowd of fugitives."[8] As a direct result of Russell's critical report of the First Battle of Bull Run, the Union Army no longer allowed him to accompany any further major campaigns. Russell returned to England and wrote a diary of his experiences in America during the first nine months of the war. Lieutenant-Colonel Marcel Victor Paul Camille Ferri-Pisani, Napoleon III's Aid-de-Camp, was also very critical of the lack of dependability of America's crude volunteer troops. That same day, this French visitor wrote that "the results of the battle [were] disastrous and even shameful." He exclaimed that, "the

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[7]William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (Boston: T.O.H.P.Burnham, 1863), 441.

[8]Ibid., 454.

volunteers or militia who fled rather than fight at Bull Run...returned home without worrying in the least about the fate of Washington."[9]

The First Battle of Bull Run was an eye opener for Lincoln. He did not expect the North to lose as badly as it did, and, in an effort to glean something positive from a colossal disaster, he took it upon himself to figure out lessons that could be learned from the defeat. Lincoln's "Memoranda of Military Policy Suggested by the Bull Run Defeat" was an attempt to do just that. He ordered the "plan for making the Blockade effective " to be "pushed forward." He ordered that the volunteer forces "be constantly drilled, disciplined, and instructed." He ordered the forces in the West and East to "act," and he ordered the Army to seize and permanently hold Manassas junction so that "an open line from Washington to Manassas" could be utilized.[10] Clearly, this early memorandum shows that Lincoln had a broad strategic plan for the Union war effort. His zeal to expedite the implementation of the Anaconda Plan was an effort to isolate the South, and render it diplomatically and economically handicapped. His call for disciplined troops shows that he was very much aware of deficiency in this respect. Lincoln's memorandum also shows that he was convinced that the war had to be waged on two fronts, and he was aware of the great importance of railroad transportation.

Lincoln spent the majority of his working hours in the telegraph office sending orders or waiting for news from the battlefields.[11] In desperation, he visited the front a

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[9]Lieutenant-Colonel Cammille Ferri-Pisani, *Prince Napoleon in America, 1861; Letters from His Aide-de-Camp*, trans. Georges J. Joyaux (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 65-66.

[10]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 4: 457-458.

[11]David Homer Bates, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office* (New York: Century Co., 1907).

few times when things were not moving as fast as he would have liked. His military involvement, however, had a very strong political tone. He was faced with a radical faction of abolitionists who wanted the complete destruction of the South and its institution of slavery, and a Copperhead faction that was completely against any destructive war. Lincoln successfully maneuvered between these two extreme factions.

On January 13, 1862, Lincoln sent copies of a letter to both General Don C. Buell and General Halleck in which he expressed his view of the best general operational military strategy that should be followed:

> In the midst of my many cares....I state my general idea of this war to be that we have the *greater* numbers, and the enemy has the *greater* facility of concentrating forces upon points of collision; that we must fail, unless we can find some way of making *our* advantage an over-match for *his*; and that this can only be done by menacing him with superior forces at *different* points, at the *same* time; so that we can safely attack, one, or both, if he makes no change; and if he *weakens* one to *strengthen* the other, forbear to attack the strengthened one, but seize, and hold the weakened one, gaining so much.[12]

Lincoln's letter shows that he was aware of the great advantage that numbers gave the North over the South. He once commented to his personal secretary William O. Stoddard that the war was just a matter of "arithmetic." In Lincoln's opinion, if big battles were "fought over again, every day, through a week of days...the army under Lee would be wiped out to its last man...[and] the war would be over...." Stoddard concluded that "no general yet found [could] face the arithmetic, but the end of the war [would] be

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[12]Ibid., 98-99.

at hand when he [should] be discovered."[13] The letter also illustrates Lincoln's departure from Baron Antoin Henry Jomini's principles. While Jomini stressed a concentration of forces for an offensive, Lincoln advocated multiple simultaneous offensives.

As a rule, all West Point graduates were expected to be familiar with Jominian principles. Dennis Hart Mahan, who taught military strategy at West Point for almost fifty years, made sure to include Jomini in his courses. Moreover, Henry W. Halleck's *Elements of Military Art and Science* (1848) was basically a translation of Jomini and was used as a textbook at West Point. It is also worth pointing out that General George B. McClellan, who followed Jominian strategy very closely, was largely unsuccessful. Ulysses S. Grant, on the other hand, who did not do very well at West Point and confessed to never having read Jomini, did very well on the Civil War battlefields.[14] Essentially, while McClellan was to run a protracted war, Grant was to be the general who could face and carry out Lincoln's concept of war "arithmetic."

Following the First Bull Run campaign, Lincoln took steps to insure the training of the ill prepared troops of the Army of the Potomac. The president highly valued McClellan's talent for organization, and assigned him the task of organizing the raw and undisciplined troops into an efficient fighting machine.[15] McClellan fulfilled his assignment to Lincoln's satisfaction, and, after General Winfield Scott was forced into retirement, Lincoln placed McClellan in command of the entire Union Army in

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[13]William O. Stoddard, *Inside the White House in War Times*, (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1890), 64.

[14]McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 331-2.

[15]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 5: 149-150.

November 1861 .[16] After Lincoln was satisfied that the Army of the Potomac was ready, he ordered McClellan to launch an offensive against the South. Lincoln's plan called for McClellan to move the Army of the Potomac "directly to a point on the Railroad South West of Manassas." Lincoln's plan called for quickly transporting a superior number of troops on the railway and destroying a smaller army. After the defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run, Lincoln knew that the Union desperately needed a victory in order to maintain support for the war effort of reunification. McClellan strongly disagreed with Lincoln's plan and preferred a Peninsula approach with the object of capturing the Confederate capital at Richmond. Lincoln wrote McClellan a letter listing his objections to McClellan's plan. "Does not your plan involve a greatly larger expenditure of time...than mine?," asked Lincoln.[17] Three months after McClellan was appointed as General-in Chief, he still did not feel ready to launch an offensive. Lincoln grew anxious, and, on January 27, 1862, he issued "General War Order Number 1," which ordered "a general movement of the Land and Naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces."[18] But, McClellan stuck to his guns, and appealed to Secretary of War Stanton with a twenty-two page letter in which he explained the benefits of his plan.[19] Such was McClellan's persistence that Lincoln gave in to his plan with the condition that he attack soon and "leave Washington secure."[20] But, Lincoln's order of troop movement had no effect on McClellan. By March 1862, McClellan had still not engaged the enemy. As a

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[16]Ibid., 9-10.

[17]Ibid., 118-119.

[18]Ibid., 111.

[19]Ibid., 119-125.

[20]Ibid., 157.

consequence, on March 11, Lincoln demoted him as General-in-Chief, and left him only with the command of the Army of the Potomac.

Lincoln's strategies often were not informed by military training, but they were more practical and made more political sense than McClellan's plans. While Lincoln's plan called for the destruction of the rebel army at Manassas, McClellan's plan called for the capture of the Confederate capitol. Making his professional military training evident, McClellan moved his massive army by water on the Chesapeake Bay to the tip of the Virginia Peninsula and then began to march toward Richmond. In this way, McClellan's flanks were protected by the York and the James Rivers. Unfortunately for McClellan, hard rains began falling which created mud that considerably slowed his advance. On June 4, 1862, McClellan sent Lincoln a telegram in which he described the rainy conditions. "Terrible rain storm during the night and morning--not yet cleared off," wrote McClellan, "Chickahominy [River] flooded, bridges in bad condition....[so] I have to be very cautious now."[21] Lincoln acknowledged the "continuous rains" that McClellan had to contend with and admonished him to make sure that the "line of communication" was not cut because of it.[22]

Two weeks later, McClellan wrote Lincoln telling him that some ten thousand troops were being sent out of Richmond to reinforce General Stonewall Jackson. Lincoln wrote back telling McClellan that his information was correct, for it had been corroborated by a dispatch from General Rufus King.[23] The next day, Lincoln wrote

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[21]Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence 1860-1865* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1989), 288.

[22]Ibid., 257.

[23]Ibid., 276.

McClellan again expressing his gratitude and his views. "If large re-enforcements are going from Richmond to Jackson," Lincoln wrote, "it proves one of two things, either that they are very strong at Richmond, or do not mean to defend the place desperately."[24] Unfortunately for McClellan, it also convinced Lincoln that General Jackson might be preparing for an attack on Washington. As a consequence, Lincoln ordered 23,000 troops away from McClellan and back to protect Washington. The order read: "The President, deeming the force to be left in front of Washington insufficient to insure its safety, has directed the McDowell's army corps should be detached from the forces operating under your immediate direction."[25]

At this point, McClellan completely stopped his forward advance, protested the removal of some of his troops, and made it very clear that he could not continue unless he was reinforced. On April 5, 1862, McClellan wrote Lincoln, "the Enemy are in large force along the front....I beg that you will reconsider the order detaching the first Corps from my Command."[26] One day later, McClellan again repeated his "urgent request" to Lincoln that "his division" be returned to him.[27] The next day, McClellan appealed to Secretary of War Stanton, and greatly under-estimated his numbers.[28] Lincoln wrote back to McClellan two days later about his under estimate on troop strength. "There is a curious mystery about the *number* of troops now with you," Lincoln wrote,

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[24]Ibid., 277.

[25]*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.* [CD-ROM] (Indiana: Guild Press of Indiana, 1996), Series 1, Volume XI, Part 3, p. 66.

[26]Sears, 228.

[27]Ibid., 231.

[28]Ibid., 232.

"I...obtained...a statement...from your own returns...making 108,000...with you...[but]...you now say you have but 85,000....How can the discrepancy...be accounted for?" Lincoln ended his letter by telling McClellan that he "must strike a blow," and that "by delay the enemy [would] relatively gain...*fortifications* and *re-enforcements*...." He then repeated that it was "indispensable...that [McClellan] strike a blow." Stressing his will yet a third time, Lincoln reminded him that he "*must act.*"[29] McClellan wrote Mary Ellen McClellan, his wife, "I have raised an awful row about McDowell's Corps....The President...telegraphed me yesterday that he thought I had better break the enemy's lines at once! I was much tempted to reply that he had better come & do it himself."[30]

McClellan failed to take Richmond, and he was recalled to Washington. On July 7, 1862, he wrote Lincoln a letter in which he offered advice on how to run the war. McClellan wrote that "the time has come when the government must determine upon a...military policy covering the whole ground of our national trouble."[31] In essence, McClellan failed to see his slow military movements, which allowed the Confederates ample time to prepare for the attack, as a problem and blamed the campaign's failure on Lincoln's lack of effective military and national leadership.

In early September of 1862, the Confederate Army began to march toward Washington. In the face of a Southern attack, Lincoln ordered McClellan to take charge of the Army of the Potomac and defend the capital. Lincoln had doubts about McClellan's disposition to attack, but he had still not lost hope in McClellan's ability to

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[29]Basler, *The Collected Works*, V: 184-185.

[30]Sears, 234.

[31]Ibid., 344-345.

organize an effective defense. Lee's army crossed the Potomac River north of Washington. As luck would have it, Union soldiers stumbled on a paper wrapped around a few cigars. On close examination, it was determined that this paper was, in fact, a copy of General Lee's orders for the campaign. The paper was rushed to McClellan. That same day, McClellan wrote Halleck that, in his opinion, the paper which was addressed from Lee to General D. H. Hill which had "accidentally come into [his] hands" was authentic, and it disclosed "some of the plans of the enemy."[32] McClellan boasted to Lincoln that Lee had "made a gross mistake and that he [would] be severely punished for it." McClellan assured Lincoln that he would "catch them in their trap."[33] As a consequence of this definite advantage, Lincoln had great expectations for the coming battle. Lincoln instructed McClellan not to let Lee "get off without being hurt," and to "destroy the rebel army, if possible."[34] When the two massive armies met at Antietam, the casualties were so high on both sides that both the Northern and the Southern press claimed victory for their own side. The *New York Times*, for example, proclaimed the battle a "Great Victory" for the North.[35] In contrast, the *Richmond Enquirer* wrote that they had the "gratification of being able to announce that the battle resulted in one of the most complete victories" for the South.[36]

McClellan was very happy with his success in repulsing Lee's invasion. On September 19, 1862, McClellan wrote Halleck informing him that he could "safely claim

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[32]Sears, 456.

[33]Ibid., 453.

[34]Basler, *The Collected Works*, V: 418, 426.

[35]*New York Times*, September 21, 1862.

[36]*Richmond Enquirer*, September 22, 1862.

a complete victory," because the "enemy [was] driven back into Virginia."[37] Lincoln, however, did not see McClellan's success as a "complete" victory, and told him to pursue the enemy. McClellan answered that his men could not march without shoes and fresh horses.[38] Lincoln was furious. He answered, "Are you not over-cautious when you assume that you can not do what the enemy is constantly doing? Should you not claim to be at least his equal in prowess and act upon the claim?...It is all easy if our troops march as well as the enemy, and it is unmanly to say they can not do it."[39] McClellan responded to Lincoln's diatribe by again informing him that he would not move until re-supplied with clothing, horses, and troops.[40] Lincoln grew more and more impatient with McClellan's failure to pursue and destroy Lee's army. After Lincoln had seen to it that McClellan had been equipped with supplies and horses, he wrote, "Is it your purpose not to go into action again until the men now being drafted in the States are incorporated...?"[41] McClellan was insulted by Lincoln's bitter sarcasm. He wrote his wife that he was forced, for "the good of the country...to submit to all...from men whom" he knew "to be greatly [his] inferiors socially, intellectually & morally!"[42] McClellan, in fact, did not start crossing the Potomac until October 26, which was more than a month after the battle of Antietam. On November 7 1862, Lincoln removed McClellan from

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[37]Sears, 490.

[38]Ibid, 495-497.

[39]Basler, *The Collected Works*, V: 460-461.

[40]Sears, 499, 511.

[41]Basler, *The Collected Works*, V: 479.

[42]Sears, 514-515.

command of the Army of the Potomac, and appointed General Ambrose Burnside to the position.

Arithmetic was definitely a point of tension between Lincoln and McClellan. John Hay and John G. Nicolay, in their Lincoln biography, wrote that McClellan was guilty of "vast discrepancy between the force on paper" and the force that actually existed.[43] McClellan had a tendency to over estimate enemy strength and under estimate his own. McClellan's operations were often stalled because of his belief that he very often possessed lesser numbers than the enemy. This frustrated Lincoln to no end. A visitor to the White House once asked Lincoln how many men he thought the Rebel Army had. He replied, "Twelve hundred thousand, according to the best authority....You see...our generals...say the enemy outnumber them from three or five to one, and I must believe them. We have four hundred thousand in the field, and three times four makes twelve. Don't you see it?"[44] Lincoln was very disturbed by McClellan's constant call for reinforcements and excuses for not fighting. Lincoln once told a story that beautifully illustrates his great frustration with McClellan:

> There was once a great war among the animals...and one side had great difficulty finding a commander who had enough confidence in himself to fight. Finally they found a monkey...who said he could command the army if his tail could be made a little longer....So they found some more and spliced it on. This process was repeated many times...that it filled the whole room. Still he called for more tail, and they kept adding by coiling

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[43]John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (New York: The Century Co., 1890). 6: 131.

[44]F. B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 255.

> it around his shoulders and then around his whole body until he suffocated."[45]

While they were still at work on their ten volume Lincoln biography, John Hay wrote John G. Nicolay to give him an update on his progress. Hay wrote, "I have toiled and labored through the chapter over him (McClellan). I think I have left the impression of his mutinous imbecility, and I have done it in a perfectly courteous manner...."[46] In *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, Nicolay and Hay blamed McClellan for "endless delays which wasted the army, exasperated the country, and gave the enemy unbroken leisure...."[47] Military historian Kenneth P. Williams assesses McClellan by saying that he was "merely an attractive but vain and unstable man, with considerable military knowledge, who sat a horse well and wanted to be President."[48]

McClellan had graduated from West Point second in his class. He had served in the Mexican War with honors and then had served as official American military observer of the Crimean War. His reports of his observations in Europe had gained him a great reputation in the Army.[49] This being the case, historian Warren W. Hassler, Jr. puts forth a very intriguing question: "How then was it possible for this man to be accused of gross incompetence, sheer stupidity, and even disloyalty in his military activities during the

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[45]McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 101.

[46]David C. Mearns, ed., *The Lincoln Papers* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 78.

[47]Nicolay and Hay, 189-193.

[48]Kenneth Powers Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General: A Military Study of the Civil War* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949-1959), 2: 479.

[49]Warren W. Hassler, Jr., *General George B. McClellan: Shield of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), xv-xvi.

war?" Hassler, a McClellan defender, claims that, "contrary to the views of most writers on the period, McClellan was not only a most able organizer, drillmaster, and disciplinarian, but was also a soldier of superior strategic and tactical ability as compared with many of the other prominent generals on both sides." Hassler attributes McClellan's mistreatment to "political enmity" by the Radical Republicans who placed pressure on Lincoln to remove McClellan from high command simply because he was a Democrat.[50]

It was, in fact, McClellan who first put forth this explanation for his dismissal in his own personal memoirs, which he published in 1887. McClellan, in his attempt to set the record straight, claims that Lincoln always had the utmost confidence in his abilities. He tells of a secret meeting that took place between Lincoln and himself shortly before his removal from command. According to McClellan, the two men fully discussed the state of affairs, and then the President told him the following:

> He told me that he was entirely satisfied with me and with all that I had done; that he would stand by me against "all comers"; that he wished me to continue my preparations for a new campaign, not to stir an inch until fully ready, and when ready to do what I thought best. He repeated that he was entirely satisfied with me; that I should be let alone; that he would stand by me.[51]

In the light of this secret meeting, McClellan claims that "whatever changes of mind Mr. Lincoln...underwent may with probability be attributed to...his desire to avoid a rupture with the radical wing of his party...."[52]

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[50]Hassler, xvi.

[51]George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story: The War for the Union, the Soldiers Who Fought it, the Civilians Who Directed it, and His Relations to it and to Them* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1887), 627-628.

[52]Ibid., 545.

The truth of the matter is that McClellan is guilty of a selective memory. Lincoln did remove McClellan from command one day after the state and congressional elections, but he surely would have kept him if he would have proven himself a successful general. Lincoln was, indeed, thrilled with McClellan's ability to defend Washington from invasion. Lincoln knew very well that the capture of Washington would be an enormous military, political, and diplomatic set back. But, Lincoln had also begun to see something that McClellan's professional training would not allow him to. From Antietam on, Lincoln would insist to his generals that the destruction of the rebel armies, and not the occupation of Southern territory, should be their focus. McClellan was, indeed, head and shoulders above everyone else in military knowledge at the time of the Civil War. Unfortunately for McClellan, however, his knowledge was outdated. The Industrial Revolution had changed everything. While new technologies seemed beyond McClellan's grasp and offended his traditional military tastes, Lincoln developed a strong interest in industrialized warfare.

Lincoln very often got personally involved in the Union's search for new weapons of destruction that would give the North victory over the South. In 1862, President Lincoln wrote Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton an executive letter recommending the adoption of a machine gun called the "Rafael Repeater."[53] American inventor Christopher Miner Spencer recalls an 1863 interview with President Lincoln concerning Spencer's repeating rifle. As soon as Spencer arrived at the White House, Lincoln took Spencer and the rifle outside and began some target practice. First shooting the gun

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[53]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 5: 365.

himself, Lincoln then asked Spencer to demonstrate his shooting ability.[54] After Spencer left, Lincoln's personal secretary witnessed some more target practice from a White House window and recorded it in his diary:

> This evening and yesterday evening an hour was spent by the President in shooting with Spencer's new repeating rifle. A wonderful gun, loading with absolutely contemptible simplicity and ease with seven balls & firing the whole readily & deliberately in less than half a minute.[55]

According to Spencer, Lincoln was so impressed with the gun that he ordered 150,000 of them.[56] During the Civil War, Lincoln pushed for the development and perfection of small arms, light and heavy artillery, rockets, projectiles, explosives, flame throwers, submarines, naval armor, and land and sea mines. Lincoln was personally "responsible for introducing the machine gun and the breechloading rifles into the Union Army."[57]

Under the circumstances, Lincoln's lack of formal military training proved to be a definite plus. He was not hand tied by a knowledge of how things were supposed to be. Void of a clearly defined script on how war ought to be conducted, Lincoln had a very pragmatic attitude about it. Lincoln saw war as a political device. In part, tensions between General George B. McClellan and Lincoln were grounded in their disagreements on what course of action needed to be followed at any particular time, but, more to the

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[54]Rev. W.A. Bartlett, "Lincoln's Seven Hits with a Rifle," *Magazine of History* 19, extra no. 73 (1921): 72.

[55]Dennett, 82.

[56]Bartlett, 70.

[57]Robert V. Bruce, *Lincoln and the Tools of War*, (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1956), ix.

point, Lincoln had no use for McClellan's formal approach to military matters. Lincoln wanted things done as soon as possible, while McClellan wanted to insure that they were done the right way. The innovations in the art of war had made old strategies obsolete. Lincoln did not want a protracted war, believing that such war did not go well with a democracy. Lincoln was once asked at the White House to assess McClellan's abilities. He responded, "It is doubtless true that he is a good engineer...but he seems to have a special talent for developing a stationary engine."[58] McClellan's failure in the Peninsula Campaign and his inability to destroy Lee's army at Antietam made something very clear to Lincoln: McClellan always thought he knew best, and would not run the kind of war Lincoln wanted, but, rather, the kind of war his military experiences dictated.

Lincoln appointed Henry W. Halleck General-in-Chief on July 11, 1862.[59] Halleck saw his role as General-in-Chief much differently than McClellan had. He allowed Lincoln to take full charge of the war effort and merely saw to it that the President's orders were received and carried out by commanders in the field.[60] Although, realistically, Lincoln functioned as his own General-in-Chief under this arrangement, he did not completely dispense with expert advice. Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton created an agency known as the Army Board that consisted of the heads of the bureaus of the War department. Ironically, Lincoln had taken McClellan's parting advice to provide an effective military and national leadership very seriously, and, for the next three years, he would step up his efforts to insure Union victory.

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[58]Carpenter, 255.

[59]Basler, *The Collected Works*, V: 312-313.

[60]Richard N. Current, *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1958), 151.

CHAPTER III

LINCOLN'S POLITICAL BALANCING ACT

> Each of the political generals represented an important ethnic...or political constituency in the North. The support of these constituencies for the war effort was crucial. Democrats, Irish-Americans, many German-Americans...had not voted for Lincoln in 1860 and were potential defectors from a war to crush the rebels and coerce the South back into the Union. To mobilize their support for this war, Lincoln had to give them political patronage; a general's commission was one of the highest patronage plums. From the viewpoint of military strategy this may have been inefficient; from the viewpoint of national strategy it was essential.[1]

As noted in the previous chapter, Lincoln took active steps to form both a military and national strategy. He knew that he was dealing with a very unpopular war. The press, a multitude of letter writers, and the out break of draft riots made this painfully clear to him. The Copperheads and the Radical Republicans complicated matters even further. Yet, in the midst of all these pressures, Lincoln was able to sustain support for the war effort long enough to win it. In Lincoln's view, his "paramount" object during the Civil War was to

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[1]James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 71.

preserve the Union. This view constituted the foundation of his national strategy.

Those who would criticize Lincoln's appointment of political Generals, for example, fail to see the political pressures that Lincoln had to contend with. Lincoln successfully used this political strategy to achieve Union victory.

There have been many excellent military studies of the Civil War era written over the years, but, unfortunately, they tend to focus too narrowly on the operational aspects of the war. From this narrow perspective, it is understandable that the appointment of unqualified men to high military positions may seem like a mistake on Lincoln's part. According to James M. McPherson, "a good many historians have...deplored the political generals."[2] But, Lincoln knew that he was functioning within a democracy, and, therefore, politics had to be considered.

Politics were both a source of the nation's troubles and an enormously important part of Lincoln's national strategy. In the two decades preceding the Civil War, the population in the North had exploded. Massive waves of immigrants came from Europe to work in Northern factories. The Southerners, on the other hand, were greatly outnumbered by the slaves. Each immigrant, whether or not he voted, was counted toward representation, but, because of the three-fifiths provision in the United States Constitution, the slaves were only counted as three-fifths of a person. Both the House of Representatives and the Electoral College was based on population, and as a consequence, the North had a tremendous edge over the South in the 1860 presidential election. Lincoln's nomination by the Republican Party on May 9, 1860, increased the already existing sectional tensions between the North and the South. The *Boston Herald,*

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[2]Ibid., 70.

a Democratic Newspaper, reported that "the nomination in many respects [was] a strong one, and [would] be difficult to defeat."[3] New Yorker George Tempelton Strong recorded in his diary that, by this point, "Lincoln's election seem[ed] to be conceded." In October, approximately one month before the election, Strong, Treasurer of the Sanitary Commission, observed that "the Board of Brokers [was] in decided panic. Stocks [were] going down." And, the "cause" was "the anticipation of trouble growing out of Lincoln's election."[4] In November, Lincoln did *not* receive a single popular vote at all from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas (ten out of the eleven states that were eventually to form the Confederacy).[5] In the midst of this opposition, Lincoln still arose victorious and became America's sixteenth president.

On February 14, 1861, before Lincoln's inauguration, he received one of many threatening letters. A certain Mr. A.G. Frick warned Lincoln to resign and called him "nothing but a goddam Black nigger." Mr. Frick's closing remarks were, "Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, N. Carolina, and Arkansas [are] going to secede...Glory be to god [sic] on high."[6] Lincoln rode by train to Washington D. C., and his schedule called for him to stop a few times along the way and speak to the citizens. However, an assassination plot was made known to Lincoln on February 22, 1861. Lincoln received a

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[3]*Boston Herald*, May 9, 1860, quoted in Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), 57.

[4]George Templeton Strong, *The Diary of the Civil War, 1860-1865*, ed. Allen Nevins (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 52-53.

[5]Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* (New York: Da Capo Press,1982), 97, 99.

[6]Harold Holzer, ed., *Dear Mr. Lincoln: Letters to the President* (Massachussetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 341.

letter from "A Lady" who wrote, "This may be but one of the thousand threats against you that have emanated from Southerners, but...a league of ten persons" has "sworn that you should never pass through [Baltimore] alive...."[7] As a consequence, Lincoln did not speak in Baltimore as he had previously planned. Instead, he disguised himself, traveled by guarded train under cover of darkness, and arrived in Washington secretly. At his inauguration, Lincoln was heavily guarded. He had received an inauguration day threat from "A young creole" who wrote, "Beware....You will be shot on the 4th of March 1861 by a Louisiana Creole....we are decided and our aim is sure."[8] To the South, Lincoln represented a threat to its very way of life, and he got warnings and threats against his life until his assassination by John Wilkes Booth in 1865. In fact, Lincoln received so much mail of this kind that he eventually instructed his personal secretaries to sort through all of his incoming mail and destroy any of it that "threatened personal violence."[9]

The South perceived Lincoln as a leader who had been elected by the North and exclusively for the North. Therefore, the South set out to establish a new government in which it could have a voice and better representation of its own interests, values, and culture. The *Alexandria Sentinel* wrote, "We of the South have thus imposed upon us a government outside of ourselves, and founded on a sentiment hostile to our social system."[10] The *Baltimore Daily Republican* strongly stated its view. It wrote, "Abraham

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[7]Ibid., 342.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., 337.

[10]*Alexandria Sentinel* quoted in Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), 67.

Lincoln has been voted for and by the North...but it is very doubtful...he will ever be President of the *United* States."[11]

But, in spite of the South's political motivation to secede, Lincoln also had a very strong political motivation to stop the South from seceding. Lincoln recognized that if the South was allowed to secede, it would set a dangerous precedent that would threaten the future of the North itself. Not only would the North be more vulnerable to outside attack, but it would also be unable to stop any more Northern states from seceding in the future. In Lincoln's view, if the South were allowed to secede, it would inevitably lead to the complete destruction of the rest of the Nation.[12]

Not only did Lincoln have to deal with a rebel South, he was also confronted with growing divisions in the North. For example, on April 19, 1861, the Sixth Massachusetts Infantry, responding to Lincoln's call for volunteers, marched through Baltimore on its way to Washington and was "assailed by a mob." The confrontation resulted in several casualties, and made the need for a united war effort very clear to Lincoln.[13] Also, citizens had responded so poorly to Lincoln's call for volunteers that he, out of necessity, put the first military draft in American history in force.

A study of Lincoln's incoming mail reveals that few of the letter writers wanted to fight in the Civil War. One letter writer poetically expressed his views in the following way:

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[11] *Baltimore Daily Republican* quoted in Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), 67.

[12] Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 249-261.

[13] Strong, 126.

> Abraham Lincoln. Put off your shoes now from your feet, for the ground whereon you stand is holy. You stand on the hearts of widows and orphans...and the voice of their wailing goes up to God this day....[14]

Lincoln always sought to gauge public opinion. He read newspapers daily. Among his personal favorites were the telegraphic reports of the *Washington Chronicle*, *Washington Republican*, and the *Washington Star*. In an effort to remain informed of public opinion, he also required his private secretaries to read and summarize editorials from the *Philadelphia Press*, and *North American*; *Baltimore American*, and *Sun*; *New York Tribune*, *Evening Post*, *Independent*, *Times*, *Herald*, and *World*; *Albany Evening Journal*; *Boston Advertiser*, *Journal*, and *Transcript*; *Chicago Tribune*, and *Journal*; *St. Louis Republican*, and *Democrat*; *Cincinnati Gazette*, and *Commercial*.[15] Not only did Lincoln keep daily tabs on newspapers, he also read his incoming mail and made himself available to citizens two times a week in a reception area of the White House. Perhaps he knew that no ruler could long stay in power without public support. In order to address the lack of Northern support for the war effort, from early on in the war, Lincoln began the much criticized practice of appointing Political Generals. Lincoln deemed political support so important that he even appointed men to command positions based on their political or ethnic affiliations.

The *Atlantic Monthly* reported that, from a military stand point, it seemed as if "it made little difference" to the government whom it commissioned. Instead, it seemed as if the choices were merely based on the consideration of which appointment "would

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[14]Holzer, 155.

[15]F. B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 154.

produce the more agreeable consequences at the next election time."[16] Removal of officers was also sometimes criticized for being politically motivated. For example, General George B. McClellan's pending removal was harshly criticized by the *New York Times*. According to the *Times*, the removal of McClellan, a Democrat and Presidential hopeful, was "nothing but political malevolence, and would reflect infinite discredit upon all concerned." It concluded by stating that the practice of "political generalships" was a "very bad policy," since it scarified the success of the war to "political schemes and party apprehensions."[17]

Lincoln had, indeed, felt pressure from his party to remove McClellan, because he was perceived as a political threat. In order to avoid political ramifications, Lincoln did, in fact, wait until the day after the state and congressional elections to remove him, but Lincoln had long before decided to remove him because of his slowness. The elections were held on November 4, 1862, and McClellan was replaced by General Burnside on November 5. But, because of war weariness, the elections did not go well for the Republicans. Democrat Horatio Seymour became governor of New York. Also, Democrats made big gains in New Jersey, Illinois, and Wisconsin.[18] The *New York Times* wrote that election results were a very clear "vote of want of confidence" in the Lincoln administration. The *Times* warned that the North was now "in the presence...of a powerful political enemy, flushed with popular triumphs, and eager to overthrow the

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[16]"Regular and Volunteer Officers," *Atlantic Monthly* 14 (September 1864): 354.

[17]*New York Times*, March 18, 1862.

[18]E.B. Long and Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-1865* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 284.

Administration." It called for unity among Union men and support for "a vigorous prosecution of the war."[19]

One day later, German-American General Carl Schurz wrote Lincoln a letter about the "political military." Schurz did not like Lincoln's political balancing act in military appointments. In fact, Schurz was strongly opposed to the commissioning of Democrats and in favor of their removal. In his opinion, giving Democrats military power had been the cause of the failure on the current elections. He wrote:

> Will you, after the great political defeat we have suffered, listen a moment to the words of a true friend....The defeat of the Administration is the Administration's own fault....It placed the Army...into the hands of its enemy....It forgot...that if you are true to your friends, your friends will be true to you, and you make your enemies stronger by placing there upon an equality with your friends. Is it surprising that the opponents of the Administration should have got into their hands the government of the principal states after they have had for so long a time the principal management of the war....Many of your friends had no longer any heart for the Administration as soon as they felt justified in believing that the Administration had no heart for them.....This was the true cause of the defeat of your government....Let us be commanded by generals whose heart is in the war, and only by such....It is better, that a thousand generals should fall than that the Republic should be jeopardized a single moment.[20]

Lincoln wrote back to the general and related his own understanding of the reasons for the losses in the elections. Lincoln explained:

> Three main causes told the whole story. 1. The democrats [sic] were left in a majority by our friends going to the war. 2. The democrats observed this & determined to re-instate themselves in power, and 3. Our newspaper's, by vilifying and disparaging the administration, furnished them all the weapons to do it with. Certainly, the ill-success of the war had much to do with this.[21]

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[19]*New York Times*, November 7, 1862.

[20]*Abraham Lincoln Papers*, Library of Congress, November 8, 1862.

[21]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 5: 494.

In this letter, Lincoln made it clear that he was aware that "the administration came into power, very largely in a minority of the popular vote." He explained that "notwithstanding this, it distributed to its party friends as nearly all the civil patronage as any administration ever did." Then, the war came and, in order to quell the rebellion, it was necessary to get "assistance outside of its party." For, "it was nonsense to suppose a minority could put down a majority in rebellion."[22] Lincoln was aware of the breakdown in the political system that had occurred in 1860 which was responsible for electing him president. He was, after all, an astute lawyer-politician who most surely kept track of political affairs as a means of political survival. Consequently, he must also have been aware of the absorption of the Know-Nothings by the Republican Party which also had given his party a great edge in the last presidential elections. Historian William E. Gienapp performed a computer statistical analysis of the voters of the 1860 Presidential election and concluded that in the 1860, "the overwhelming backing Lincoln won among former Know-Nothings was perhaps the most important shift that produced his victory."[23]

Lincoln proceeded to explain that, contrary to the German general's opinion, his political appointments were politically sound, since he had the support of other Republicans for this political venture:

> I have scarcely appointed a democrat to a command, who was not urged by many republicans [sic] and opposed by none. It was so as to McClellan. He was first brought forward by the Republican Governor of Ohio, & claimed, and contended for at the same time by the Republican Governor of Pennsylvania. I received recommendations from the

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[22]Ibid.

[23]William E. Gienapp, "Who Voted for Lincoln?" in *Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition*, ed. John L. Thomas (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 77.

> republican [sic] delegations in congress, and I believe every one of them recommended a majority of democrats [sic].[24]

Lincoln concluded by pointing out that even though the general considered all Democrats to be "enemies of the government," they were, in Lincoln's opinion, not fairing any better or worse than Republicans on the battlefields.[25]

General Schurz wrote back to Lincoln and accused him of "entertain[ing] too favorable [a] view" of the causes of the "defeat in the elections." He wrote:

> Let us indulge in no delusions as to the true causes of our defeat in the elections....The people had sown confidence and reaped disaster and disappointment. They wanted a change, and...they sought it in the wrong direction. I entreat you, do not attribute to small incidents...what is a great historical event. It is best that you...should see the fact in its true light and appreciate its significance: *the result of the elections was a most serious and severe reproof administered to the administration....*[26]

In the general's opinion, Lincoln's support of Democratic generals was far worse than their appointments.

> I am far from presuming to blame you for having placed old democrats into high military positions....But it was unfortunate that you sustained them...after they had been found failing;--failing not only in a political but also in a military sense. Was I really wrong in saying that the principal management of the war had been in the hands of your opponents? Or will perhaps anybody assert, that such men as McClellan and Buell and Halleck have the least sympathy with you or your views and principles?--or that their efficiency as military leaders has offered a compensation for their deficiency of sympathy, since...in 18 months succeeded in ...literally nothing except the consumption of our resources...criminal tardiness and laxity endangered even the safety of Cincinnati....You say that our Republican generals did no better....I ask...what Republican General has ever had a fair chance...?[27]

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[24]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 5: 494-495.

[25]Ibid.

[26]*Lincoln Papers*, November 20, 1862.

[27]Ibid.

Lincoln again wrote back to General Schurz and stated the bottom line to the whole affair.

> I certainly have been dissatisfied with the slowness of Buell and McClellan; but before I relieved them I had great fears I should not find successors to them, who would do better; and I am sorry to add, that I have seen little since to relieve those fears. I do not clearly see the prospect of any more rapid movements....I need success more than I need sympathy, and...I have not seen...much greater evidence of getting success from my sympathizers, than from those who are denounced as the contrary. It does seem to me that in the field the two classes have been very much alike, in what they have done, and what they have failed to do....[28]

The truth of matter was that General Schurz was, in fact, a political general himself. Lincoln had appointed him and many other men like him with little or no military experience: Nathaniel Banks, Benjamin Butler, Robert Toombs, and Henry Wise, just to name a few.[29] Many other military men were outraged at Lincoln's practice. Chief of Staff Henry W. Halleck wrote to Lieutenant-General Grant on April 29, 1864 discussing a plan to have General Banks removed out of "military necessity." According to Halleck, General Banks was guilty of a "long delay" which made it impossible for his troops to help out in Mississippi in the spring campaign. Halleck wrote, "I think the President will consent to the order if you insist...but he will do so very reluctantly, as it would give offense to many of his friends...." Halleck pointed out that Banks had "many political friends" that would make the incompetent general's removal difficult.[30] Trying to get as much support as possible for his plan for Banks' removal, Halleck also wrote to Major-

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[28]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 5: 509-510.

[29]McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 70.

[30]*The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. [CD-ROM] (Indiana: Guild Press of Indiana, 1996), Series 1, Vol. XXXIV, Part 3, p. 332.

General W.T. Sherman on the same day. Halleck wrote, "Banks' operations in the West are about what should have been expected from a general so utterly destitute of military education and military capacity." Halleck lamented that it seemed "but little better than murder to give important commands to such men as Banks, Butler,...Sigel, and Lew Wallace, and yet it seem[ed] impossible to prevent it." In his letter to Sherman, Halleck also praised Grant for "very wisely keep[ing] away from Washington, and out of reach of the rascally politicians...."[31] Ironically, both Sherman and Grant, although West Point graduates, were political generals themselves. They too had gained their commands because of the Lincoln patronage system.[32]

When military historians agree with Halleck about Lincoln's "mistake" in appointing political generals, they fail to see, as did Halleck, that Lincoln's national strategy required this type of military move. In the grand scheme of things, Lincoln cared a great deal if his generals were Democrats or Republicans. The political affiliations of his generals were important in that they provided a balance of conflicting interest groups, which was essential to maintaining his control in a politically unstable world. Party affiliation was one of several things that he consciously acted on. Lincoln felt that this balancing act was necessary to keep the army from joining the Radical Republicans or other groups who he perceived to stray from his national strategy of reunification.

Once they had been appointed, however, Lincoln would sustain any winning general. Shortly before the fall of Vicksburg, for example, a self-appointed Radical committee visited Lincoln and requested that Grant be removed from command because

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[31]Ibid., 333.

he drank too much, which, in the committee's opinion, had a negative effect on the morale of the army. "Gentlemen," responded Lincoln, "can either of you tell me where General Grant procures his whiskey? Because, if I can find out, I will send every general in the field a barrel of it!"[33]

The appointment of political generals was just one of many political maneuvers that Lincoln did to insure his grand vision of re-election and reunification. The preservation of the Union was always Lincoln's goal, and he truly believed that if he was not re-elected, the Union would be lost. Just four months before the presidential election of 1864, he sent a letter to his cabinet in which he expressed a sense of urgency in winning the war during his administration. He wrote:

> This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President elect, as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterwards.[34]

Lincoln was also very much aware of the massive waves of immigrants that had flooded the major Northern cities and he knew that he needed their votes if he was to be re-elected in 1864. The Know-Nothing Party, which stood for white Protestantism and a defensive nationalism, had been absorbed into the Republican Party shortly before the 1860 presidential election. This had created a wave of alienation among immigrants, and in the 1860 election, Lincoln had not been very popular in the large cities where

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[32]McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 71.

[33]Carpenter, 247.

[34]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 7: 514.

immigrants tended to concentrate. He lost seven out of the eleven major Northern cities that had a population of 50,000 or greater.[35]

Lincoln once gave a young German a commission in a cavalry regiment, and the happy youth, in an effort to prove that he deserved the honor, saw fit to inform the president that he belonged to an old noble family in Germany. Lincoln responded, "Oh, never mind that, you will not find that to be an obstacle to your advancement."[36] During a meeting between Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton, Lincoln expressed a desire to award a generalship to a German American in order to satisfy the large German ethnic constituency in the North. Looking over the list of German Americans, Lincoln was struck by the name of Alexander Schimmelfenning. When Stanton pointed out to Lincoln that there were many other German Americans who were better qualified, Lincoln insisted on Schimmelfenning. "The very man!," he said. "His name will make up for any difference there may be." Lincoln laughed and walked away repeating the name "Schimmelfenning."[37] This patronage did a great deal for his popularity with many soldiers. After the 1864 presidential nomination, a German American from the Army of the Potomac, for example, is reported to have said, "I goes for Fader Abraham. Fader Abraham, he likes the soldier-boys."[38]

In the Spring of 1864, Reporter J. M. Winchell interviewed the president about "the great political question of the day"--the upcoming Presidential election. At the time of this interview, Lincoln had not yet been nominated as the official Republican candidate

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[35]Neely, *Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 99.

[36]Ibid., 246-247.

[37]McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 70-71.

[38]Carpenter, 231.

and he informed Winchell that "if nominated and elected, he should be grateful to his friends, and consider that they had claims on him....Meantime, he supposed he should be a candidate; things seemed to be working in that direction; and if," Winchell, "could assist him...in [his] State," using the power of the press, "Lincoln should not fail to remember the service with gratitude."[39]

Winchell reported that the attempt to make Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase the Republican candidate had "culminated in disaster," since Chase's supporters had backed down, because they feared Lincoln's political patronage. Winchell says that Lincoln's opposition, "manifested a plentiful lack of nerve or zeal, when the critical question became public." According to Winchell, "so strong was [Lincoln's] prestige with the people, so greatly was his power of patronage feared by the politicians...that...the wire-pullers" were afraid of "committing themselves strongly to any competitor."[40]

After the attempt to nominate Chase as the Republican nominee failed, some Republicans began to support General John C. Fremont for the position. In May 31, 1864, some discontented Republicans held a secret convention in which they nominated Fremont. Fremont was at first encouraged with his father-in-law's support, Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who was one of the most powerful men in Congress. But, eventually, Fremont withdrew from the race before the election. Some historians believe that Lincoln stuck a deal with Fremont: one day after Fremont's withdrawal from the

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[39]J. M. Winchell, "Three Interviews with President Lincoln," *Galaxy* 16 (July 1873): 38, 41.

[40]Ibid., 38.

race, Lincoln removed Postmaster General Montgomery Blair who the Republicans hated[41]

On September 6, 1864, Reporter J.P. Thompson interviewed Lincoln at the White House. Lincoln "spoke with unaffected simplicity of his desire to carry out his policy through a re-election; and in the course of a conversation upon the prospects of the campaign, mention was made of the unanimity of the religious sentiment in the country for himself." Lincoln was aware that this sentiment was founded on the emancipation of the slaves. And Lincoln also explained that "he relied very much upon the religious element for the support of his administration." Thompson "mentioned several prominent ministers who were exerting their influence to secure [Lincoln's] reelection [sic]; among them Dr. Bacon of New Haven." Lincoln confirmed Thompson's comment and expressed his great admiration for Dr. Bacon.[42]

Thompson congratulated Lincoln on the capture of Atlanta. Secretary Dana of the War Office exclaimed that "the victory at Atlanta has wiped out one half of the Chicago platform, and if General Grant will give us Petersburg, that will wipe out the other, and we shall simply go through the form of reelecting [sic] you, Mr. President, by acclamation." Lincoln responded by agreeing that more victories were needed in order to insure reelection.[43]

Thompson observed that, at this point in time, McClellan had not yet accepted the Democratic peace platform. Thompson recalls, "I observed that [McClellan] seemed

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[41]Neely, *Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 31, 120.

[42]J. P. Thompson, "A Talk with President Lincoln," *Congregationalist* (March 30, 1866): 1.

[43]Ibid. The Chicago platform had two major parts. First, it called the war a failure. Secondly, it called for the end to all hostilities.

about as slow in getting upon the platform as he was in taking Richmond." With a twinkle in his eye, Lincoln responded, "I think he must be *intrenching*." According to Thompson, at this point, Lincoln got very serious and assessed McCellan's character. In Thompson's opinion, "there was no maliciousness in his tone, no trace of personal rivalry or animosity. It was the utterance of a deliberate judgment." "Well," said Lincoln, "he doesn't know yet whether he will accept or decline. And he never will know. Somebody must do it for him. For of all the men I have had to do with in my life, *indecision* is most strongly marked in General MClellan;--*if that can be said to be strong which is the essence of weakness*."[44]

The conversation returned to the pending election and Thompson informed Lincoln about an unidentified Irishman who had given him his philosophy on the Presidential contest. "It wasn't myself that made Mr. Lincoln President," this Irishman had told Thompson, "but these rascals down here said he shouldn't be president and I'm bound to fight till he is; and sure I think the jointilman that begun the job is the one to go though with it." Lincoln laughed, and said, "I'm glad to know that any Irishman is going to vote for me, and especially for such discriminating reasons."[45] In the 1864 presidential election, 116,887 soldiers voted for Lincoln while only 33,748 voted for George McClellan. Lincoln also got more popular votes in 22 out of 25 states that voted in the election.[46]

In conclusion, some political generals, including William T. Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant, proved to be very effective in fighting Lincoln's kind of war. All political

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[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Neely, *Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*, 100.

generals, however, formed an effective part of Lincoln's national strategy. Even though his popularity had once been so low that his own party had considered replacing him as the Republican candidate, he was able to get enough popular support to win the necessary electoral votes to be re-elected. Also, his political balancing act had sustained his control of the Union war effort long enough to secure victories on the battlefield. Lincoln had done it. His politics had paid off.

CHAPTER IV

LINCOLN AND TOTAL WAR

> Slaves were the South's most valuable and vulnerable form of property. Lincoln's policy toward slavery became a touchstone of the evolution of his conflict from a limited war to a restore the old Union to a total war to destroy the southern social as well as political system.[1]

Throughout Abraham Lincoln's entire presidency, he had one unchanging view: his paramount duty was to preserve the Union. To Lincoln, this uncompromising principle was the foundation for his national strategy. At first, Lincoln had tried gently to push the rebels back into the Union, but when this failed, he took much more drastic measures which led to total war.[2] In this respect, the Emancipation Proclamation serves as a very obvious sign post in Lincoln's change from a limited to an unlimited war strategy. Lincoln effectively

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[1]James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 81.

[2]A few historians have begun to question whether the American Civil War was a total war. These historians are guilty of defining total war too narrowly. See Mark E. Neely, Jr., "Was the Civil War a Total War?" *Civil War History* 37 (March 1991): 5-28. These historians, however, are in the minority. Most historians continue to define the Civil War as a total war.

used the Emancipation Proclamation as a social and political weapon which was very instrumental in Union victory.

Although it forms a major prop in Lincoln's popular image, most historians overlook the Emancipation Proclamation as a major point of interest. Civil War histories devote a handful of pages to it, and a number of journal articles have been written on the subject, but only one major work examines it in considerable depth: John Hope Franklin's *The Emancipation Proclamation*, which was published in 1963.[3] This small book, which was written by an African American historian, deals with the origins, content, and immediate reactions to the Proclamation. However, this work has one major flaw: the fundamental thesis that Lincoln's chief motivation was to make the black man free. But, this was clearly not the case. Interestingly, in 1989, Franklin revised his thinking on Lincoln's Great Emancipator image. In his essay, "The Two Worlds of Race," Franklin called Lincoln a flawed hero. According to Franklin's new view, "the fight for Union that also became a fight for freedom never became a fight for equality or the creation of one racial world."[4] After twenty-six years, Franklin had come very close to the point of view of other civil rights historians. According to Leon F. Litwack, for example, Lincoln's era was one of universal racism, and Lincoln was a man of his era.[5] Why then did Lincoln free the slaves? Simply, for Lincoln, emancipation was not an end unto itself. Instead, it was only a piece in his much larger picture of Union victory.

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[3]John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963).

[4]John Hope Franklin, "The Two Worlds of Race," in *Race and History: Selected Essays, 1938-1988* (Baton Rouge, 1989), 138.

[5]Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

To the South, slavery was woven into cultural, political, and economic life. Lincoln was aware that slavery, in fact, gave the South its identity. In 1859, he gave a speech at the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in which he explained the advantages and disadvantages of slave labor.[6] In the two decades preceding the American Civil War, the North and the South developed two very different economic systems. The North became increasingly industrialized while the South remained mostly agrarian. This situation forced interdependency between both regions. The North was dependent on the raw materials of the South, and the South was dependent on the consumable and durable goods that the North produced. These distinct economies were joined, according to Lincoln, and could not be separated. The bond was so important that, during the Civil War, it was worth sending men to die in order to preserve it. As a consequence, Lincoln never acknowledge the Confederacy as a legitimate government. He always referred to the inhabitants of the seceded states as rebels of a United America.

In his First Inaugural Address, Lincoln expressed his desire for a "peaceful solution" to the nation's troubles.[7] In his view, it was impossible for the nation to separate:

> Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence, and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile must continue between them.[8]

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[6]Roy P. Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953). 3: 471-482.

[7]Ibid., 583-4.

[8]Ibid., 586.

The North needed the South's raw materials. Without them, the North could not run Northern factories. As a consequence, Lincoln pursued a very moderate approach to the war effort early on. He did not want to destroy the South's raw materials or its railroads that were needed to transport them to the North. An aggressive approach would also alienate the South. Lincoln wanted to be able to continue profitable trade with the South after the "rebellion" was over.[9]

In this respect, the Emancipation Proclamation marked a clear turning point in the war. When Lincoln had waged a limited war, he had promised the rebels that their property and institutions would be respected, but, by waging unlimited war, all of these assurances were forfeited. The Emancipation Proclamation was deemed crucial by Lincoln as a "military necessity." It was intended to weaken the South by attacking the "mudsill" of its society--slavery.

After Lincoln removed General George B. McClellan from the Peninsula campaign, the general took it upon himself to write Lincoln a letter instructing him to continue a moderate war. McClellan wrote, on July 7, 1862, that the war "should be conducted upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization." In McClellan's opinion, "it should not be a war looking to the subjugation of the people of any State....[or] upon population." There should be "no confiscation of property...or forcible abolition of slavery." According to McClellan, "military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude...by...impairing the authority of the master." Instead, "all private property and unarmed persons should be strictly protected," and "all private

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[9]Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, "The Approach of the Irrepressible Conflict," in The *Rise of American Civilization* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 2: 3-

property taken for military use should be paid or receipted for; pillage and waste should be treated as high crimes; all unnecessary trespass sternly prohibited, and...rebuked...." Finally, McClellan warned that "a declaration of radical views, especially on slavery, [would] rapidly disintegrate" the armies.[10]

Many Northerners resented the Emancipation Proclamation, claiming that the war should be for Union and not for the Negro. In 1863, draft riots broke out in New York City. A few days later, Horatio Seymour, Governor of New York, was still tormented by the terrible reminiscence of the riots." Seymour informed John Hay that "the mob...aimed to destroy the great necessities of New York; light, water, & communication." According to Seymour, hundreds of people were killed and troops had to be called in to restore order.[11] Lincoln's suspension of Civil Liberties was also met with much protest. One letter writer had seen this and accused Lincoln of the "usurpation of the Constitution" which had caused a "division of the North."[12]

Bell Irvin Wiley, in *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (1952), concluded that the majority of Union soldiers, like the majority of Northerners, had no "real interest in emancipation."[13] If this is true, James M. McPherson asks, why did Union men continue to fight after Lincoln had made emancipation a cornerstone of

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[10]Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 344-345.

[11]Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1939), 67.

[12]Harold Holzer, ed., *Dear Mr. Lincoln: Letters to the President* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company),169.

[13]Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1952), 40.

the war? In *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (1997), McPherson poured over a little more than one thousand soldiers' letters and diaries (40% Confederate and 60% Union) and came to some conclusions. According to McPherson, the Confederate soldier primarily fought to defend home and family.[14] The Union soldier's "principal sustaining motivations," on the other hand, were "convictions of duty, honor, patriotism, and ideology."[15] Even though religious faith also played a part in motivating men to fight, "as the war went on," these motivations gave way to "darker passions of hatred and revenge."[16] McPherson agrees with Wiley about the issue of emancipation. McPherson says that "a good many Union soldiers strongly opposed the idea of freeing the slaves," because of "racism, conservatism, and partisan politics."[17] As a matter of fact, many Union soldiers "professed to feel betrayed," by emancipation, because "they were willing to risk their lives for Union, but not for black freedom."[18] Also, like Lincoln, the majority of those Union soldiers who favored emancipation were "more pragmatic than altruistic." These Union soldiers believed that "every slave laborer who emancipated himself by coming into Union lines weakened the Confederate war effort," and "also strengthened the Union Army."[19] Some Union soldiers, quite

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[14]James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 120.

[18]Ibid., 122.

[19]Ibid., 119.

pragmatically, simply liked the idea of Blacks in uniform, because they "might stop bullets otherwise meant for them."[20]

But, by mid 1862, Lincoln had realized that a moderate course would not win a war for Union. In July 1862, Congress passed the Militia Act that allowed the use of African Americans as auxiliary and as regular soldiers. Shortly thereafter Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act which allowed for the incorporation of former slaves into the Union Army. In order to blunt the very punitive laws Congress was passing, Lincoln announced and issued his own proclamation that put his personal stamp of approval on the matters at hand. Both the Confiscation Act of 1862 and Lincoln's proclamation made a war of subjugation unavoidable.

Just eight months after McClellan's letter, General-in-Chief H. W. Halleck wrote General Ulysses S. Grant informing him that "the character of the war [had] very much changed within the last year." "The North," wrote Halleck, "must conquer the slave oligarchy." The new policy of the government was to "withdraw from the enemy as much productive labor as possible." Halleck explained that "so long as the rebels retain[ed] and employ[ed] their slaves in producing grains, &c., they [could] employ all the whites in the field." Also, the new policy of the government was "to use the Negroes of the South as laborers...cooks...and...a military force....which would afford much relief" to the Union Army. In a convincing tone, Halleck wrote that it was, indeed, "good policy to use them to the very best advantage" of the Union, for "in the hands of the enemy, they

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[20]Ibid., 126.

[were] used with much effect" against the North. But, to the contrary, in Union hands, they could be used against the rebels.[21]

Halleck was aware, as McClellan had also been, that the Union army would not be thrilled with this new policy. "Whatever may be the individual opinion of an officer in regard to the wisdom of measures adopted and announced by the Government," Halleck warned, "it [was] the duty of every one to cheerfully and honestly endeavor to carry out the measures adopted." "This is the phase which the rebellion has now assumed," Halleck continued, and "the Government, looking at the subject in all its aspects, has adopted a policy, and we must cheerfully and faithfully carry out, that policy." Again he affirmed, "when adopted by the Government, it is the duty of every officer to...do everything in his power to carry the orders of his Government into execution." In this respect, Halleck ordered, "it is expected that you will use your official and personal influence to remove prejudice on this subject, and to fully and thoroughly carry out the policy now adopted and ordered by the Government."[22]

By 1863, Lincoln had surely come a long way from his message to Congress, in April 15, 1861, in which he assured the rebels that his object was "to avoid any devastation...destruction...or interference with, property, or any disturbance of peaceful citizens in any part of the country."[23] In the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln proclaimed the slaves, who were held in the rebel South, free because of a "military

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[21]*The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.* [CD-ROM], (Indiana: Guild Press of Indiana, Inc., 1996), Series 1, Vol. XXIV, Part 3, pp. 157-158. Hereinafter cited as *O.R.*

[22]Ibid.

[23]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 4: 332.

necessity." "By virtue of the power vested as Commander-in-Chief...in time of actual armed rebellion," wrote Lincoln, "and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion....I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free...." The Proclamation also charged the Executive government with maintaining them free, and receiving them "into the armed service...."[24]

Halleck realized that using African Americans against the South forfeited any chance of peaceful resolution, writing that, under these new circumstances, "there could be no peace but that which is forced by the sword."[25] He charged General Nathaniel P. Banks with organizing a large force of Black troops. Halleck explained to General Grant that these troops could "be used to hold points on the Mississippi during the sickly season" which would "afford much relief" to the Union Army. Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase was very much impressed with the effective use of African Americans in the war. Chase informed a friend that General Banks had written to the President informing him that "he could not have taken Port Hudson without his colored recruits." Chase also pointed out that Grant had come to value the "colored regiments" as "indispensable."[26]

Referring to his plans for emancipation, Lincoln remarked to an official of the Interior Department, "the character of the war will be changed....the South is to be

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[24]Ibid., 6: 29-30.

[25]*O. R.*, Ibid.

[26]John Niven., ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1997), 4: 129.

destroyed and replaced by new propositions and ideas."[27] But, for some abolitionists, Lincoln's Proclamation was too slow in coming. For example, a group of Black Chicago Christian leaders visited Lincoln at the White House and urged him to set all slaves free. Lincoln made it painfully clear to this group that they were missing the point. Freeing the Black man, in Lincoln's view, was not an end unto itself. It was merely a tool in achieving his national strategy of the preservation of the Union. Lincoln replied to the group in the following way:

> I admit that slavery is the root of the rebellion....I will also concede that emancipation would help us in Europe, and convince them that we are incited by something more than ambition....But....I think you should admit that we already have an important principle to rally and unite the people in the fact that constituional government is at stake. This is a fundamental idea, going down about as deep as any thing.[28]

Horace Greely, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, complained about the president's slowness to end slavery. In response, on August 22, 1862, Lincoln wrote a letter to Greely explaining his paramount object in the war:

> I would save the Union....If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *save* slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *destroy* slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and it is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do *not* believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do *less* whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do *more* whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to

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[27]James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 558.

[28]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 5: 423-424.

> correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views [29]

One possible explanation for Lincoln's reticence about acting more aggresively, where emancipation was concerned, was his underlying doubt about the potential survival of an interracial society. In his debates with Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln stated:

> I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgement, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality....[30]

On August 14, 1862, Lincoln explained his justification for colonization to a group of black leaders visiting the White House:

> You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physcial difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a reason at least why we should be separated.[31]

Even Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation which was issued on September 22, 1862 advocated the "gradual abolishment of slavery" and the colonization of "persons of African descent...."[32] As late as September 1862 Lincoln was actively promoting colonization as the final solution to the problem of slavery. Also, Lincoln had announced his proclamation months before it was formally issued for a very good reason. It was an ultimatum which gave the South until the first of the year to give up or face the consequences. Regardless of his reservations about emancipation, however, Lincoln

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[29]Ibid., 5: 388.

[30]Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, 445.

[31]Basler, *Collected Works*, 5: 371.

[32]Ibid., 434.

would not hesitate to free the slaves if it was deemed necessary to achieve his national strategy.

After January 1, 1863, Lincoln had, in fact, adopted a new view of the war. From here on out, he was to conduct only hard war to achieve his national strategy of Union victory. He felt that the South had only itself to blame for the impending misery. "They cannot experiment," Lincoln concluded, "trying to destroy the government, and if they fail still come back into the Union unhurt."[33] With this new view in mind, Lincoln sought out new kinds of generals who would carry out his new kind of war strategy. In this respect, Grant and Sherman proved to be very capable. Unlike McClellan, both of these generals agreed with Lincoln's grand strategy of total war, and were very willing to carry it out. After the Battle of Shiloh, General Grant had also been convinced that only hard war would be able to bring down the rebellion. Grant wrote in his memoirs that "up to the battle of Shiloh [he], as well as thousands of other citizens, believed that the rebellion against the Government would collapse suddenly and soon," but, after the battle, he "gave up all idea of saving the Union except by complete conquest."[34] He had come to realize that, in order to win the war, he had to make every effort to "consume everything that could be used to support or supply armies."[35] This, in Grant's view, included the freeing of the slaves. If the South "cannot be whipped in any other way than

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[33]Ibid., 350.

[34]E. B. Long, ed., *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 191.

[35]Ibid., 192.

through a war against slavery," Grant wrote, "let it come to that."[36] General Sherman was, perhaps, the strongest advocate and enforcer of hard war against the South. In his opinion, it was the duty of commanders to take rebel houses, fields, and kick people out of their homes, "helpless, to starve." Sherman reasoned that, "it may be wrong, but that [did not] alter the case." According to him, "in war you can't help yourselves, and the only possible remedy is to stop the war...." He believed his "duty [was] not to build up; it [was] rather to destroy the rebel army and whatever of wealth or property it ha[d] founded its boasted strength upon."[37]

Grant tells of a secret meeting with Lincoln in his memoirs:

> In my first interview with Mr. Lincoln alone he stated to me that he had never professed to be a military man or to know how campaigns should be conducted, and never wanted to interfere in them: but that procrastination on the part of commanders, and the pressure from the people at the North and Congress, which was always with him, forced him into issuing his series of Military Orders"--one, two, three, ect....All he wanted or had ever wanted was some one who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all assistance needed....[38]

Lincoln, in fact, did want a strong general to conduct this new kind of war, but, in his memoirs, Grant gives the impression that Lincoln did not know what he was doing and needed him to do the job correctly. This surely was not the case at all. Lincoln had grown into a great grand strategist, and it was Lincoln, himself, who engineered the successful grand strategy for the last part of the war. Lincoln was adamant about the new character of the war. He told Secretary of War Stanton that it was time to deliver

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[36]John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 3: 227.

[37]*O. R.*, Series 1, Vol. 30, Part 3, p. 403.

[38]Long, 361-362.

"decisive and extensive blows." He affirmed that "the Administration must set an example, and strike at the heart of the rebellion."[39] With emancipation in effect, there was now no way of reconciliation with the Confederacy. In Lincoln's view, it was now "an issue which [could] only be tried by war, and decided by victory."[40]

Shortly after Grant was made General-in-Chief, Lincoln called Grant into his office, took down a large map from the wall and instructed Grant on strategy.[41] Grant insists that he did not follow Lincoln's advice, but all historical evidence indicates that he did.[42] Lincoln wanted Grant to coordinate a multi-point offensive. This was the very thing that he had wanted McClellan to do years earlier, but had been refused because McClellan's training dictated a concentration of force in a single point. But, unlike McClellan, Grant did listen to Lincoln, and his movements gave the President much joy. John Hay wrote in his diary on April 30, 1864:

> The President has been powerfully reminded, by General Grant's present movements and plans, of his (President's) old suggestion so constantly made and as constantly neglected, to Buell & Halleck, etc....to move once upon the enemy's whole line so as to bring into action to our advantage our great superiority in numbers. Otherwise by interior lines & control of the interior railroad system the enemy can shift their men rapidly from one point to another as they may be required. In this concerted movement, however, great superiority of numbers must tell: as the enemy, however successful where he concentrates, must necessarily weaken other portions of his line and lose important positions. This idea of his own, the [President] recognized with special pleasure when Grant said it was his

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[39]Gideon Welles, "The History of Emancipation," *Galaxy* 14 (December 1872): 842-843.

[40]Basler, *Collected Works*, 8: 151.

[41]Long, 362.

[42]Ibid.

> intention to make all the line useful--those not fighting could help the fighting.[43]

Hay records that Lincoln added, "those not skinning can hold a leg."[44] Grant liked this phrase so much that he often used it in his own telegrams. Sherman marched through Atlanta and South Carolina demolishing railroads, bridges, cutting telegraph lines, burning farms, seizing produce and livestock to feed his army, and reducing the South's work force by liberating slaves. When Grant had Petersburg under siege and Sherman was destroying everything in his path, Lincoln telegraphed Grant: "I have seen your dispatch expressing your unwillingness to break your hold where you are. Neither am I willing. Hold on with a bull-dog grip, and chew & choke, as much as possible."[45] Lincoln was much pleased with Grant's tenacity for his task. Once asked about his regard for Grant as a general, Lincoln answered that Grant had "the *gift* of a bull-dog! Once let him get his teeth *in*, and nothing can shake him off."[46]

Historian Colin R. Ballard was the first to recognized Lincoln's military genious. Ballard considered Lincoln's strategic abilities to be far superior to any of his Generals-in-Chief, except for Ulysses S. Grant. In fact, Ballard agrees with Grant's memoirs in that Lincoln took his hands out of war strategy as soon as he put Grant in charge.[47] Other historians, however, have not put as much stock in the memoir as Ballard, and they

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[43]Tyler Dennett., ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1939), 178-179.

[44]Ibid., 179.

[45]Basler, *Collected Works*, 7: 499.

[46]F. B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 283.

[47]Colin R. Ballard, *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

disagree with his assessment. T. Harry Williams, for example very solidly supports that Lincoln was involved in strategic decisions to the very end of the war. Williams does, however, state that Lincoln and Grant worked well together because they agreed on the course the war should take--they were of the same mind.[48] While the argument that Williams puts forth is true to some extent, it misses the target. Closer to the truth would be that, although both men worked together well, Lincoln still remained the chief architect of war strategy. For, while Grant had a very clear view of the necessary operational strategies, Lincoln also had the benefit of his own grand strategy.

Lincoln never took his hands out of the war. For example, he visited with his top generals in the field to discuss strategy shortly before Richmond fell. Captain John S. Barnes of the U.S.S. *Bat* escorted Lincoln from Washington to Richmond in 1865. Upon reaching Grant, Lincoln ordered an official review of his troops. At Grant's headquarters, Lincoln heard news of an ensuing serious battle at Petersburg, and he "expressed a great desire to visit the scene of the action." He was taken to the scene by train, and the battle was still going on when they arrived. "The ground immediately about us," wrote Barnes, "was still strewn with dead and wounded men, Federal and Confederate." "Firing of both musketry and artillery was seen and heard." Lincoln then rode on horseback to an "eminence near by, from which a good view of the scene could be secured."[49]

The next day, Stanton telegraphed Lincoln and protested the President's actions in "exposing himself" to battlefield dangers. Stanton was critical of Lincoln's risks and drew "contrasts between the duty of a 'general' and a 'president,'" but Lincoln answered

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[48]T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952).

that he had been to Petersburg and would next be visiting Richmond. Barnes records that by this point in time everyone at Grant's headquarters "seemed confident that Petersburg must soon fall, and with it Richmond," since, "Sherman would be coming up victoriously from the South and uniting with Grant's army." To Lincoln's delight, it also seemed to all that the end of the war was not far off.[50]

President Lincoln, Generals Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Mead, several others, and Admiral Porter all gathered at Grant's headquarters to discuss war strategy. The next day Sherman returned to his army. Grant received a dispatch announcing that Petersburg was evacuated and that Union troops were in possession of it. The next day, Grant received a telegraph confirming a "rumor which had reached Grant at Petersburg, that Richmond was being evacuated and that General Lee was in retreat and President Davis had fled."[51]

After capturing Richmond, Union troops began destroying the rebel iron clads and setting the city on fire. When Lincoln arrived, Richmond was still "in flames, dense masses of smoke resting over the city." Slaves were everywhere, and, when they found out that the tall man was Lincoln, they crowded around him. Barnes recorded the scene at Richmond:

> It was a scene of indescribable confusion. Confederate bonds of the denomination of $1,000 were scattered about on the grass, bundles of public papers and documents littered the floors, chairs and desks were

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[49]John S. Barnes, "With Lincoln from Washington to Richmond in 1865," (Part 1) *Appleton's Magazine* 9, no. 5, (May, 1907): 515-516, 521.

[50]John S. Barnes, "With Lincoln from Washington to Richmond in 1865," (Part 2) *Appleton's Magazine* 11 (June, 1907): 745-746, 742.

[51]Ibid., 743, 745.

> upset, with every evidence of hasty abandonment and subsequent looting.[52]

But the supreme moment for Barnes of the whole affair was when Lincoln visited the Confederate White House:

> The President entered by the front door....He was then led into a room...which had been Mr. Davis's reception room and office....Mr. Lincoln walked across the room to the easy chair and sank down in it. A few of us were gathered about the door; little was said by anyone. It was a supreme moment--the home of the fleeing President of the Confederacy invaded by his opponents after years of bloody contests for its possession, and now occupied by the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, seated in the chair almost warm from the pressure of the body of Jefferson Davis![53]

In conclusion, at the beginning of the war, Lincoln tried to gently push the rebels back into the Union. By mid 1862, however, he realized that only total war could achieve his grand plan. In this respect, the Emancipation Proclamation serves as a very obvious sign post in Lincoln's change from a limited to an unlimited war strategy. Lincoln launched a full scale war that even attacked the South's most fundamental institution: slavery. In the end, Lincoln's national strategy resulted in Union victory.

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[52]Ibid., 745, 747, 749.

[53]Ibid., 748-749.

CHAPTER V

LINCOLN AND DIPLOMACY

> The Emancipation Proclamation was a cardinal stroke in Northern diplomacy. It robbed the South of its moral cause and elevated the conflict into a holy crusade against human bondage.[1]

Just as the Emancipation Proclamation formed an important part of Lincoln's military and domestic political strategy, it also formed an essential piece in his evolving foreign policy. Abraham Lincoln ran the war like a monumental chess match and, rather than rashly taken, his moves, for the most part, were premeditated and cunningly executed. He was able to steer the North away from a possibly disastrous war with Great Britain and, at the same time, was able to keep the British from recognizing the Confederacy. While men fought with guns and swords on the American battlefields to gain and lose territory, Lincoln, with his own brand of fighting words that took the form of war measures, won battles in both at home and abroad. Lincoln put several very controversial war measures into effect such as conscription and the suspension of

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[1]Thomas A. Baily, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: F.S. Crofts & Co. 1946), 341.

civil liberties, but none of these measures were as effective as the Emancipation Proclamation, which proved to be not only a domestic war measure but also an effective diplomatic weapon.

Because of the British abolitionist movement, "the issues," it is argued in the traditional interpretation, "became sufficiently clear to divide public opinion clean-cut into pro-Union and pro-Southern" camps.[2] This view asserts that Lincoln recognized that the British upper class was generally pro-secession, because they saw it as a way to slow down America's rapid growth, which threatened British superiority as a world power. However, it is argued by these historians that the British working class had other pressing motivations--namely abolitionist tendencies. This situation provided a means of attack for Lincoln. With the Proclamation, he was able to gain so much support for the Union that the governing class became restricted by what had become politically correct in a democratic society.[3]

More recent works, however, have called this interpretation into question. Revisionist, Joseph M. Hernon, for example, claims that the traditional interpretation is too simplistic since it assumes that there were well defined lines in British public opinion between pro-South and pro-North camps--which was simply not the case. After illustrating that some of the British governing class was pro-South because they saw the South's cause as a struggle for self-determination, and that some of the workingmen were against the North because of the cotton famine, Hernon states that "the belief that the Emancipation Proclamation effected a great change in British public opinion appears to

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[2]Jordan Donaldson and Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (Boston, 1931), xi.

be totally fallacious."[4] Also, *Britain & the War for the Union* (1974) by Brian Jenkins states that "the myth of British labor's total support for the Union, despite the suffering the Civil War caused them...has now been dispelled."[5]

While it is true that not all British workingmen favored the North, and not all of the British government favored the South, it is also true that the concept of morality in the Emancipation Proclamation catered to British abolitionist feelings, winning over more supporters for the North and keeping the Southern advocates in check. Moreover, class was, as the traditional interpretation holds, a major determining factor in the reactions to the Emancipation Proclamation. While the governing class and the major British newspapers were, at first, incensed with the Proclamation's perceived hypocrisy, Northern victories, Lincoln's re-election, and, most importantly, the great support among the British working class kept the British out of the war.

Also, the argument that the Emancipation Proclamation did not have as big of an influence on British public opinion as the traditional interpretation affirms, is too narrow in focus. Jenkins only looks at the immediate influence over British public opinion, but the influence was immediate on workingmen and gradual for the rest of Great Britain. This gradual change of public opinion eventually included the governing class and the major British press.

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Joseph M. Hernon, "British Sympathies in the American Civil War: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Southern History* 33, no. 3, (1967): 359.

[5]Brian Jenkins, *Britain & the War for the Union* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 304.

Before the Civil War broke out in 1861, British public opinion was favorable toward the North. The Southern threat of secession (if Lincoln won) was met with scorn by major British newspapers.[6] For example, the *London Times* commented:

> Beaten, as far as it appears at present, in the contest, the Democratic Party [has]...hackneyed threat of breaking up the Union....We confess that our notions of fair-play are much offended by such a threat. Those who enter into an election with the mental reservation that they will not submit to the result unless it be favorable to themselves, are guilty of the same kind of unfairness as those who play at cards with the intention of receiving if they win and refusing to pay if they lose.[7]

However, this early British support for the North was based on the general belief that the war would not last long. At this point in time, Abraham Lincoln had only called volunteers for ninety days in order to quell the rebellion. Fearing economic ramifications from the war, the *London Times* counseled the South that it was in its best interest not to separate since this would leave it vulnerable to invasion. The British newspaper advised the South to give Abraham Lincoln a chance. According to the *London Times*, the South's fears that Lincoln would abolish slavery were unfounded. After all, the *London Times* wrote, presidents are usually a lot more moderate than presidential candidates.[8] But this pro-Union attitude soon changed when, contrary to popular opinion in both America and Great Britain, the war did not end quickly and its economic effects began to manifest themselves.

British editorials took on a very different tone. Now Northern tariffs were criticized, and the South was deemed justified in separating from an economic oppressor.

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[6]Richard Allen Heckman, "The British Press Reacts to Lincoln's Election," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 63, no. 3, (1970): 257-269.

[7]*London Times* quoted in *New York Times*, November 30, 1860.

[8]Ibid.

"The Custom duties of the Union," pointed out the *London Saturday Review*, "are intended for protection...and the whole benefit of monopoly is appropriated by the manufactures of the North."[9] Also, "the hope of establishing free-trade with Europe" was defined as justifiable "reason for separation."[10] The *London Punch* also blasted Lincoln with what it called an "overdue bill" which referred to his inability to end the war quickly.[11] The *London Punch*, as many other British newspapers, depicted the American Civil War as an unnecessary struggle that was spurred along and sustained by irrational "excitement" and "the actions of a frenzied community"[12] that threatened to destroy the Union by landing it in bankruptcy.[13]

On April 1, 1861, William Seward, Secretary of State, wrote a letter to Lincoln containing some thoughts on how to manage foreign affairs. He advised that if, "satisfactory explanation from Great Britain" and other countries were not forthcoming for alleged "hemispheric interference" he should "convene Congress and declare war against them."[14] Lincoln rejected this suggestion and replied that he alone was President and that he would decide the best course of action. Lincoln did, however, accept Seward's suggestion that he appoint Charles Francis Adams as U.S. Minister to England and sent him on his way.

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[9]*London Saturday Review* quoted in *New York Times*, December 28, 1860.

[10]Ibid.

[11]*London Punch*, September 27, 1862.

[12]*London Times* quoted in *New York Times*, December 26, 1860.

[13]*London Punch*, June 7, 1862.

[14]Harold Holzer, ed., *Dear Mr. Lincoln: Letters to the President* (Massachusetts: Addison Wesley, 1995), 240.

Adams arrived in England in May 1861 only to find that Queen Victoria had issued a proclamation that recognized the South as a belligerent. This did not go as far as recognizing the Confederacy as a sovereign nation, but it did make it acceptable, under international law, for the British to trade with the South, assuming that any boats could get past the blockade. Adams believed that the British did not "comprehend the connection which slavery [had] with [the war], because," he said, "we do not at once preach emancipation. Hence they go to the other extreme and argue that it is not an element of the struggle."[15] Adams reported the following about perception of British public opinion:

> The commercial men...look with some uneasiness to the falling off of the exports of goods...to the exclusion from the seaports by blockade, and to the bad debts of their former customers, for all which their sole panacea is settlement, somehow, no matter how. If it be by a recognition of two governments, that is as good a way as any other.[16]

The Queen's proclamation set the tone for all future diplomatic affairs between the two countries during the Civil War. Seward wasted no time. The same month that the queen's proclamation was issued, he penned fighting words for Adams to relay to Great Britain. Lincoln intercepted the dispatch and softened the message for Adams. Even so, Henry Adams, who served as his father's secretary while serving at the Court of St. James, wrote on July 2, 1861:

> America seems clean daft. She seems to want to quarrel with all the world...I cannot imagine why we would keep sarsing [Great Britain]. It certainly is not our interest....Seward's tone has improved very much since that crazy dispatch that frightened me so. If the Chief had obeyed it

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[15]Worthington Chauncy Ford, ed., *A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), 1: 14.

[16]Ibid., 14-15.

> literally, he would have made war in five minutes and annihilated our party here in no time at all.[17]

In 1861, Henry Wikoff, a highly educated pro-Southerner, wrote Prime Minister Viscount Palmerston in an attempt to show the North's economic motivations in the war. After explaining the evolution of slavery in America, Wikoff argued that the "opinions on slavery," between North and South, "varied with its profits."[18]

The Battle of First Bull Run (July 1861) resulted in a Southern victory and McClellan's attack on Richmond was repulsed in June 1862. The North failed to capture the Confederate capital, none of Virginia's soil was under attack any longer, and the Confederacy was on the offensive in the East and in the West. These events on the battlefields prompted British government officials to start pushing for mediation. It was felt that the war had gone on long enough and that it was time to end it by giving the South what it wanted--independence.

The South was aware that Europe needed cotton, and it used this as a bargaining chip. The South's appeal to France for recognition, however, was unsuccessful, because Napoleon III could not afford to wage war against the Union army at a time when Prussia was exhibiting an "unfriendly attitude" toward France.[19] Consequently, the South sent two ministers to Britain to try to encourage recognition. After running the blockade, the two men arrived in Havana and were boarded on a British steamer, the *Trent*. The *Trent*,

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Henry Wikoff, *A Letter to Viscount Palmerston, K.G., Prime Minister of England, on American Slavery* (New York: Ross & Tousey, 1861), 54.

[19]Baily, *Diplomatic History*, 355-7. Possibly fearing an enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine by the United States, France even pulled out its troops from Mexico as the American Civil War drew to a close. In 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out.

however, did not escape the Union Navy. On November 8, 1861, the ship was captured and boarded by the flamboyant Charles Wilkes, who arrested the Confederate officials and ordered them confined as prisoners of war. Although the Trent was not damaged and Wilkes allowed the ship to go on its way, British national honor was severely bruised. This series of events set off the North's first major diplomatic crisis, and the Union found itself on the brink of war. In preparation, Great Britain quickly sent eleven thousand troops to Canada, got the Navy ready, and demanded a release of the two prisoners and a formal apology. Although Great Britain did not want war, it "could not allow its flag to be insulted" in this way.[20] Ambassador Adams assessed the situation, saying, "We have blundered all summer long and now we have capstoned our blunders by blundering into war with England....It will be a wicked and causeless war wantonly brought about by us...."[21] Eventually, the North backed down and the crisis was resolved peacefully with an apology. The Southern ministers were released and allowed to go to Britain to try to win recognition for the South as a sovereign nation.

After the Battle of Second Bull Run (August 1862), which also ended in a victory for the South, British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, cautiously waited for the results of Robert E. Lee's attempted invasion of the North before making any formal announcements about his plans to push for the recognition of the Confederacy. Palmerston and other pro-mediation government officials had cause for caution since premature recognition of the South might cause the North to become an enemy of Great

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[20]Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Queen Victoria* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 422.

[21]Ford, 79-80.

Britain, and the British government's aim, for economic reasons, was to put an end to the American hostilities--not to make problems worse.

The blockade had made it very difficult for the South to supply Great Britain with cotton that it needed for its textile factories. According to Eugene A. Brady's "A Reconsideration of the Lancashire Cotton Famine" (1963), however, the cotton famine was a result of the overproduction of textiles in the years before the American Civil War.[22] Historian Brian Jenkins agrees with this assessment and also points out that this very thing was "argued by the *Economist* and even the *London Times* at that time, but most people continued to hold the American war responsible."[23] Great Britain was not only dependent on the South's cotton, it was also even more dependent on the North's wheat.[24] In the opinion of the *New York Times*, Great Britain would not go to war with the North because of this fact. It pointed out that America "shall send to that country the present year $100,000,000 worth of grain and provisions, and meet a want which can be supplied from no other source." It concluded, "with the loss of cotton, we still remain her best customer."[25]

After the South's attempt to invade the North was repulsed at Antietam (September 1862), Abraham Lincoln announced his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln had already drafted it before the Battle of the Second Bull Run, but he had waited until a Northern victory before he announced it, in part because he did not want it

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[22]Eugene B. Brady, "A Reconsideration of the Lancashire Cotton Famine," *Agricultural History* 37 (July 1963): 156-162.

[23]Jenkins, 304.

[24]Amos Khasigian, "Economic Factors and British Neutrality, 1861-1865," *Historian* 25, no. 4, (1963): 451-465.

to seem to the British as if it was merely an act of desperation. Lincoln was well aware of the very strong British Christian humanitarian movement that had been successful in closing down slavery in other parts of the world. He wished to identify himself with them so that he could gather the necessary support to keep Britain out of the war in spite of current domestic military affairs.

The Lincoln administration cared about and followed the British press closely. On January 6, 1863, Secretary Seward sent Lincoln a copy of the *London Spectator* with a brief note. It read, "I send the *London Spectator*...in which I have marked an article which may be worthy of your perusal. You are aware that the *Spectator* is a Journal of...influence."[26] As it turns out, however, much of the British Press remained unimpressed with Lincoln's Proclamation. The *London Spectator*, for example, criticized Lincoln. It said that Lincoln's Proclamation liberated "the enemy's slaves as it would the enemy's cattle, simply to weaken them in the coming conflict...." It continued, "the principle asserted is not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States."[27] The *London Punch* also criticized. It depicted the Northern cause as a desperate one. Lincoln's Emancipation plan was seen as "Abe Lincoln's last card."[28] According to *Punch*, Lincoln appeared to be very desperate and his only hope was to ask "Sambo" to lend him a hand in the war.[29] The British

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[25]*New York Times*, December 8, 1861.

[26]*Abraham Lincoln Papers*, Library of Congress, January 6, 1863.

[27]*London Spectator* quoted in Thomas A. Baily. *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: F.S. Crofts & Co., 1946), 368.

[28]*London Punch*, October 18, 1862.

[29]Ibid., August 23, 1862; Ibid., August 9, 1862.

Minister in Washington wrote to Foreign Secretary John Russell that "one of the President's motives," in issuing the Proclamation, "must no doubt have been the expectation that it would change the course of public opinion in England...and secure sufficient sympathy to render intervention impossible."[30] He continued, "there is no pretext of humanity about the Proclamation. It is cold, vindictive, and entirely political. It does not abolish Slavery where it has the power to do so; it protects 'the Institution' for friends and only abolishes it on paper for its enemies."[31] Throughout his service, the British Minister frequently commented on Northern instability brought on by Lincoln's institution of the draft and his suspension of civil liberties, but, by far, the main focus of his diligent reports dealt with the outlook of the war, and the outlook was not good for the North.

Even though the situation called for diplomatic caution, Chancellor of the Exchequer William E. Gladstone tipped his hand in a speech that he delivered at Newcastle-on-Tyne on October 7, 1862. He said:

> We know quite well that the people of the Northern states have not yet drunk of the cup--they are still trying to hold it far from their lips--which all the rest of the world see they nevertheless must drink of. We may have our own personal opinions about slavery; we may be for or against the South; but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation.[32]

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[30]James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, eds., *Private and Confidential Letters from British Ministers in Washington to the Foreign Secretaries in London, 1844-67* (London: Associated Press, 1993), 300.

[31]Ibid.

[32]*London Times*, October 9, 1862.

Gladstone summed up his attitude about the situation by saying, "We may anticipate with certainty the success of the Southern States so far as regards their separation from the North."[33] Lord Palmerston called the proclamation "trash." In his opinion, it was "utterly powerless and contemptible."[34] John Russell, Foreign Secretary, noted that it seemed to him that the North simply wanted "revenge" and did this only to invite "acts of plunder" in the South.[35]

In December 1862 Robert E. Lee, at Fredericksburg, gained yet another victory for the South, eliminating any possibility of a Southern surrender by Lincoln's predetermined deadline. In January, as promised in September, the formal Emancipation Proclamation was issued, and in spite of the British government's attitude, the sentiments of the British workingmen were greatly moved by it. Fueled by abolitionist sentiments, mass meetings of workingmen broke out in Britain in support of the Proclamation.[36] According to the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, these mass meetings started in January and lasted well into November of 1863.[37] The British workingmen of London sent a letter to Lincoln through his Foreign Minister Charles Francis Adams concerning a meeting in favor of the North on December 31, 1862, which was also later printed in the *London Daily News* of January 1, 1863:

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[33]Ibid.

[34]Mark E. Neely, Jr., *Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 104-105.

[35]Ibid.

[36]*Anti-Slavery Reporter*, April 1, 1863; July 1, 1863; August 1, 1863; September 1, 1863; October 1, 1863; November 2, 1863.

[37]Ibid.

> We have watched with the warmest interest the steady advance of your policy along the path of emancipation; and on the eve of the day on which your proclamation of freedom takes effect, we pray God to strengthen your hands, to confirm your noble purpose, and...to realize the glorious principle on which your Constitution is founded--the brotherhood, freedom, and equality of all men.[38]

Lincoln forwarded his reply to Minister Adams through Secretary Seward with instructions to "submit it informally to the notice of Earl Russell and, if he offers no objection, then to deliver it to the parties to whom it is addressed."[39] Lincoln wrote:

> To the workingmen of London....The resources, advantages, and the powers of the American people are very great, and they have, consequently, succeeded to equally great responsibilities. It seems to have devolved upon them to test whether a government, established on the principle of human freedom, can be maintained against an effort to build one upon the exclusive foundation of human bondage.[40]

On January 1, 1863, Mayor Abel Haywood of Manchester presented an account of a public meeting of the workingmen in that city to Adams, who sent it along to Seward who, in turn, forwarded it to Lincoln:

> As citizens of Manchester...we beg to express our fraternal sentiments...We honor your free States, as a singular, happy abode for the working millions...One thing alone has, in the past, lessened our sympathy with your country and our confidence in it; we mean the ascendancy of politicians who not merely maintained Negro slavery, but desired to extend and root it more firmly. Since we have discerned, however, that the victory of the free North, in the war which has so sorely distressed us as well as afflicted you, will strike off the fetters of the slave, you have attracted our warm and earnest sympathy. We joyfully honor you, as the President...for the many decisive steps towards practically exemplifying our belief in words of your great founders, "All men are created free and equal." ...Accept our high admiration of your firmness in upholding the proclamation of freedom.[41]

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[38]Basler, *The Collected Works*, 6: 88-89.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid., 63-65.

Lincoln responded to the Manchester workingmen on January 19, 1863. He wrote:

> I have...been aware that favor or disfavor of foreign nations might have a material influence in enlarging and prolonging the struggle with disloyal men in which the country is engaged....Circumstances...induced me...to expect that if justice and good faith should be practiced by the United States, they would encounter no hostile influence on the part of Great Britain.[42]

Lincoln also expressed his desire that the sentiments of the workingmen might also "prevail in the councils of [their] Queen." He continued, "I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the workingmen at Manchester and in all Europe are called to endure in this crisis." He then proceeded to place all blame for this hardship on the South. He stated that "it [had] been...the attempt to overthrow [the] government, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery" that brought the war on.[43] He continued:

> Through the actions of our disloyal citizens the workingmen of Europe have been subjected to a severe trial....Under these circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterance upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism....The peace and friendship which now exists between the two nations will be, as shall be my desire to make them, perpetual.[44]

Henry Adams, secretary of the United States minister in England, wrote on January 23, 1863, that the Emancipation Proclamation "has done more for us here than all our former victories and all our diplomacy."[45] In fact, after the proclamation was issued,

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[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ford, 243.

British "Northern sympathizers outnumbered Southern sympathizers...."[46] But, even though many workingmen had been won over by the Proclamation, the aristocrats, as Charles Francis Adams points out, still held to their old notions. Adams wrote on February 27, 1863:

> The anti-slavery feeling has been astonishingly revived by the President's proclamation....It is however to be noted that all this manifestation comes from the working and middle classes. The malevolence of the aristocracy continues to grow just as strong...[and] continue[s] to favor [sic] the notion of division and disintegration....[47]

British officials such as abolitionists John Bright and Richard Cobden were thrilled with the Proclamation and stepped up their arguments against intervention, but other British government officials, in contrast to many workingmen, remained unimpressed with the Emancipation Proclamation. Soon after the formal proclamation was issued, an American correspondent for the *New York Times* visited the British Parliament and observed that Earl Derby called the reuniting of the Union "conclusively and absolutely impossible." Lord John Russell held the same opinion and said that the subjugation of the South "would be a grievous calamity." Mr. Calthorp, from the Commons, said that he "could not avoid feeling contempt for the Lincoln Administration."[48] But, even though most of the governing class still favored secession, they could not act on their feelings unless they wished to commit political suicide. For example, the *Manchester Guardian*, a working class newspaper, reported that Lord John Russell had adopted a wait and see attitude. Russell claimed that the British government was going to remain "neutral" for

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[46]William Michael Rossetti, "English Opinion on the American War," *Atlantic Monthly* 17 (February 1866): 133-136.

[47]Ford, 254.

[48]*New York Times*, March 1, 1863.

now but "could not say what circumstances might happen from month to month in the future."[49]

On September 10, 1863, Republican Senator and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Charles Sumner made a speech to the citizens of New York at the Cooper Institute in which he explained America's foreign relations. Sumner assured the citizens of the "impossibility of any [British] recognition" of the South "with slavery as a cornerstone."[50] After his reassurance, he begged the people to forgive Britain's "trespass upon [their] patience," and expressed his abolitionist agenda.[51] He attempted to convince his listeners that America could "know no bounds to its empire," but that the "first stage" to this process was "the death of Slavery."[52]

In Parliament, Mr. John A. Roebuck, however, still argued that if Britain intervened and stopped the war it could put an end to the cotton famine, but, by this point, Roebuck lacked the support from many other officials.[53] Lord Pamerston, for example, had also changed his attitude. Palmerston said that he "lamented the sacrifice of life and property in America," but he thought that "at present there was no advantage to be gained by meddling."[54] Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, and Lincoln's assassination in that same month won over even the major British press. The *London*

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[49]*Manchester Guardian*, December 20, 1862.

[50]Charles Sumner, *Our Foreign Relations...Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner...Sept. 10, 1863* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1863), 53.

[51]Ibid., 74.

[52]Ibid., 78.

[53]*London Times*, October 7, 1863.

[54]*New York Times*, August 6, 1864.

Punch, for example, which had very consistently and brutally criticized Lincoln during the war now labeled him a visionary and "a true-born king of men."[55]

Lincoln had intended to use the Emancipation Proclamation as a diplomatic weapon to keep Great Britain out of the American Civil War and to prevent them from recognizing the Confederacy as a sovereign nation. It worked. Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not result in an immediate change in all of British public opinion, it was very effective in accomplishing its intended purpose in a more gradual way. Even though there was a complexity of allegiances in British public opinion, the proclamation had a big effect on the workingmen first, which, in turn, restricted the British government from siding with the, then, unpopular slave holding South. In order to further strengthen British support for the North, Lincoln wrote several letters, which like the proclamation, appealed to the workingmen's sense of Christian heroism. Finally, Northern victories on the battlefields and the Lincoln re-election further convinced the British government not to meddle in America.

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[55]*London Punch*, May 6, 1865.

CONCLUSION

Although Abraham Lincoln is one of the most well known American presidents, he may also be one of the least well understood. Ever since his death, biographers have continually re-crafted Lincoln's image and have come to widely divergent conclusions about his effectiveness. This is particularly true of his role as a military strategist in the face of the nation's most costly war. Even Lincoln's contemporaries were divided in their assessment of such strategic decisions as employing political generals, insisting on the use of new and controversial technologies and tactics, and issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. Indeed, many of his actions seem to have been at least tactically risky if not outright military blunders. But as James M. McPherson initially suggested, and this study demonstrated, such assessments of Lincoln's generalship are shortsighted.[1] It is only when Lincoln's military decisions are viewed in light of his larger political agenda that the brilliance of his "grand" strategy can be appreciated.

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[1]James M. McPherson, "Lincoln and the Strategy of Unconditional Surrender," in *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 69.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Lincoln was very much a novice in military matters: he had little military experience to speak of, and he took it upon himself to study as much on the subject as possible. In some respects, however, his lack of formal training was an asset to him. Unlike his feisty general-in-chief and political rival George B. McClellan, Lincoln did not feel tied to old and out-dated military strategies. Instead, Lincoln was a great innovator of industrialized warfare. While McClellan insisted on running a safer and more orthodox protracted war with the idea of launching singular major strikes against the South, Lincoln's political acumen suggested an alternative approach. What was clear to the president, but not to the general, was the realization that numbers and resources were on the Union side, and that this superiority made it possible for the Union to concentrate troops at several points at a time.

Experience also taught Lincoln what McClellan could never see, that the destruction of the rebel army and not the occupation of rebel territory was the key to success. After McClellan proved unable to crush the Confederacy, Lincoln replaced him with Henry M. Halleck, who functioned merely as a figurehead while Lincoln took full strategic charge of the war effort. Even after he found a general whose understanding of strategic arithmetic matched his own--Ulysses S. Grant--Lincoln still never took his hands out of war strategy, despite what Grant wrote in his memoirs years later. While it true that Grant and Lincoln worked well together because they agreed on military strategy, Lincoln, nevertheless, continued to be the chief architect of war strategy.

At first, Lincoln waged a limited war with the hope that the loyal citizens of the rebel states would influence a return to the Union. He also did not wish to destroy the South's means of production and transportation, which were so necessary for Northern

factories and hence for the economic life of the reunified country Lincoln envisioned. But, when Southern resistance stiffened and a quick and peaceful solution to the secession crisis did not emerge, he became convinced that only hard war could bring back Union.

The Emancipation Proclamation is an obvious sign post of Lincoln's change in strategies. Eventually the war would degenerate into a completely barbarous struggle that did not discriminate between soldiers and civilians. Property was taken and burned. Slaves were set free and used against the South. In essence, Lincoln destroyed the South's economic, social, and political institutions with no regard for life or limb.

What neither Lincoln's contemporaries nor subsequent military historians have been able to understand is how the statesman-like Lincoln who demanded a soft war could become the callous Lincoln who waged total war; why someone whose career depended on winning in the field would routinely appoint incompetent generals; how the humanitarian Lincoln who pledged "malice toward none" and "charity toward all" could justify war against Southern civilians; and why a president who seriously considered colonizing the slaves ended up freeing them instead? Such apparently contradictory tendencies have led historians to characterize Lincoln as everything from the "Great Emancipator" to a racist tyrant.

The answer lies in Lincoln's obsession with Union. The reunification of country was his goal and everything else was negotiable. Thus Lincoln the politician and Lincoln the general were one-in-the-same, and it is only when this fundamental truth about the man is considered that his military decision making can be understood. Far from making tactically inept decisions, Lincoln made strategic masterstrokes that continually

channeled the forces of war in the direction he deemed necessary. And in the end, he was successful.

The prevailing view of Lincoln has changed as historians have recast him in the light of their own times and experiences. While perhaps the popularly perceived "Great Emancipator" image may not be the most accurate view of Lincoln, it does now seem safe to conclude that he was the Savior of the Union. His vision of national strategy, which eluded his contemporaries and historians alike, determined the outcome of the Civil War. Lincoln was, indeed, the strategist of Union victory.

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