6-15-2024

The Foundations of Civilian Supremacy: Civil-Military Relations During the American Civil War

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This thesis explores in particular the significance of President Lincoln's leadership, his ability to manage divergent military personalities, and the challenges of maintaining civilian control over the armed forces while adapting to the unprecedented demands of total warfare. The findings generated by this thesis will contribute to the scholarship surrounding the American Civil War and the interactions between civilian and military authorities during an existential national crisis, shedding light on the evolution of these dynamics in subsequent conflicts within the broader framework of American civil-military relations.

Document Type

Masters Thesis

Degree Name

M.A. in International Studies

First Advisor

Paul R. Viotti

Keywords

American Civil War, American governance, Civil-military relations

Subject Categories

American Politics | International Relations | Military and Veterans Studies | Political Science | Public Administration | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Statement

The Foundations of Civilian Supremacy: Civil-Military Relations during the American

Civil War

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

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June 2024

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American Civil War
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Chapter One: Introduction

The American Civil War was a defining conflict for the United States, touching

every aspect of American society from then until today. The war shaped the perspectives

of several generations of military officers and political leaders, with lasting consequences

for civil-military relations. In this study, civil-military relations are defined as the

practices, interactions, and relationships between elected civilian authorities, and leaders

of the military institutions of the nation. In democracies, civilian control over the military

is a fundamental principle, ensuring that the military serves the interests and policies of

the civilian government and the nation it represents. The challenges of addressing this

topic include the broad spectrum of perspectives on how civil-military relations should

function, coupled to the historiographic questions over how to interpret complex forces

and events.

While most scholars trace the origins of civilian control of the military to the rise

of the nation-state in the 16th and 17th centuries, one can trace civilian control or the

notion of civilian control to ancient Greece and Rome, two societies that had a great

influence on the American Founding Fathers as well as other nation-states. As Richard

Kohn explains, "the point of civilian control is to make security subordinate to the larger

purposes of a nation, rather than the other way around. The purpose of the military is to

defend society, not to define it." [1] In ancient Greece, the military was comprised of citizen soldiers who answered the call when the city-states were threatened. In ancient Rome, the legions were subordinate to the senate and later to the emperor, both under the control of "civilians," at least as civilians were defined in those societies. The concept of a truly "professional" military made up of soldiers who serve the state began to emerge in Europe during the Westphalian period in the 16th and 17th centuries.[2] It was during this time that European and Asian armies were transitioning from armies of mercenaries and knights from the upper class of society to soldiers from the middle or lower classes who were trained, paid by, and loyal to the state. The emergence of what Burak Kadercan terms a "military establishment" or "corporatization" signifies the ascendance of career military officers who leverage their positions to exert influence over various government institutions, potentially either enhancing or undermining the interests of the state.[3] Kadercan uses the Janissary Corps in the Ottoman Empire as an example of a military institution that had a deep influence on military policy and strategy. [4] A state doesn't have to be a democracy to have the military under the control of civilians, but it is an important principle of democratic norms and values.

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[1] Richard H. Kohn. "An Essay on Civilian Control of the Military." *American Diplomacy* (1997).

[2] Burak Kadercan, "Strong Armies, Slow Adaptation: Civil-Military Relations and the Diffusion of Military Power." *International Security* (2014): 117–152.

[3] Ibid., 125-126.

[4] Ibid., 127.

There is much scholarly work that has focused on various aspects of the Civil War, particularly the emergence of the American professional officer corps, including a constant stream of new contributions. Where there continues to be a notable gap in the existing literature, however, is the lack of scholarly attention given specifically to civil-military relations before and during the Civil War period. While contemporary scholarship surrounding the study of civil-military relations in the United States started after World War II, particularly with Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz in the late 1950's; the Civil War offers a unique perspective on contemporary civil-military relations. Huntington and Janowitz spent little time examining the American Civil War and its impacts on relations between civilian and military leadership in the United States, preferring to focus on the Cold War era in which they were writing. In short, contemporary theories of civil-military relations have failed to identify and incorporate lessons learned from the American Civil War.

Objective, Research Question, and Thesis Statement

The objective of this thesis is to thus identify the emergence of an American civil-military relations theory at its inception during the American Civil War. Through a comprehensive analysis of civil-military relations during and after the Civil War, this thesis will identify the continued impacts of those relationship dynamics on contemporary civil-military relations scholarship and practice. In doing so, it sheds additional light on the ongoing challenges presented by the military-civilian dichotomy. I posed the following research question: How did the American Civil War shape the dynamics of civil-military relations, and what enduring lessons and legacies from this era

continue to influence the interactions between civilian and military leaders in the United States today?

An important part of the answer, as the following will show, is that the personalities of key actors at crucial moments, including interpersonal conflicts between civilian and military leaders, have been the main driver of American Civil-Military relations, rather than any specific organizational system or institutionalized values.

Literature Review

My review of the existing scholarship surrounding civil-military relations before, during, and after the American Civil War includes the preeminent works by Samuel Huntington, Eliot Cohen, and Morris Janowitz, as well as that of other scholars. The scholarship on civil-military relations is rooted in history, political science, and sociology. These different vantage points and seek to understand the complex relationship between elected officials, government agencies, and the armed forces, exploring the balance of power, the mechanisms of control, and the impact of these interactions on national security and democratic governance. This thesis, in considering the largely unexamined period of the American Civil War, focuses on the question of loyalty, i.e., on the allegiances of military leaders to the nation rather than their home states. In that period of unprecedented social, economic, and political divisions, both the Union and the Confederacy experienced challenges related to the loyalties of their various military and civilian leaders. As will be seen, the motivations behind such varying allegiances to cause, country, or ideology, were different on both sides of the conflict.

Scholarship on civil-military relations in the United States can be traced to Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*, which attempted to articulate the challenges in the aftermath of World War II, when the United States was managing a large peacetime military with global commitments while also trying to maintain liberal democratic values.[5] Huntington's views on the role of the military can be summarized as objective control, professionalism, specialization, autonomy, and ethics. His central argument was a call for "objective control" of the military.[6] He argued that civilian control over the military should be maintained, but it should be based on a clear understanding of the distinct roles and expertise of both civilians and military professionals.[7] In his view, the military should be responsible for the technical aspects of warfare, while civilian authorities should make policy decisions.[8] Huntington emphasized the importance of a professional military that is highly trained, disciplined, and insulated from politics. He believed that the military should focus on its primary mission of national defense and avoid interference in political matters. Huntington promoted the idea of functional specialization, which means that the military should handle military matters, and civilian leaders should be responsible for political and policy decisions.[9] This division in his view, would ensure the military's expertise in matters of national defense.

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[5] Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 345.

[6] Ibid., 189.

[7] Ibid., 8.

[8] Ibid., 11-22.

[9] Ibid., 400.

Huntington argued that the officer corps should have a degree of autonomy in determining military policy and strategy within the boundaries set by civilian authorities. This autonomy was seen as essential to maintaining professionalism and expertise within the military. Finally, Huntington believed in the importance of a distinct professional ethic within the military, based on loyalty to the Constitution, subordination of the military to civilian authority, and a focus on the military's technical competence.[10]

Each of Huntington's principles was a feature of the Civil War. The biggest clashes between President Lincoln and the military came over the issue of "objective control." When the military policy was effective, Lincoln allowed for objective control; when the military policy was a hindrance, Lincoln took direct control or subjective control as Huntington termed it. The officer corps of the Civil War era were professionals, educated at West Point and other military institutions and largely given free rein to execute strategy as they saw fit. Lincoln's interventions came later in the war when he concluded that his generals were not aggressive enough. The Civil War era serves as a historical backdrop that vividly illustrates the dynamics of objective control and professional military leadership, shedding light on the intricate relationship between civilian authority and military strategy, as outlined in Huntington's core principles.

Huntington also spent a chapter discussing the roots of the American Military profession, one he argues that started in the South and took the form of the "Southern

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[10] Ibid., 62.

Military Tradition."[11] Huntington points out how most of the bureaucratic and military leadership positions were Southerners schooled at West Point or one of the many military colleges in the South. There was direct pushback from civilians skeptical of the ability of a professional military to function in a society based on liberal democratic values. The "Southern Military Tradition" highlighted by Huntington shows the historical tension between a professional military class and the ideals of a society built on principles of liberalism, providing valuable insights into the evolving role of the military within American society in the leadup to the Civil War.

One outside the military might not appreciate how influential these two were particularly Huntington; Maj. Gen. William Rapp, a former commandant of West Point and the U.S. Army War College, wrote that "Huntington's 1957 *The Soldier and the State* has defined civil-military relations for generations of military professionals. Soldiers have been raised on Huntingtonian logic and the separation of spheres of influence since their time as junior lieutenants."[12]

Morris Janowitz built on Huntington's work in his book, *The Professional Soldier,* published three years after *The Soldier and the State,* drawing on many of the challenges the military faced amidst a changing profession in the aftermath of World War II.[13] Janowitz's writing endorsed many of Huntington's core points including the

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[11] Ibid., 211.

[12] William E. Rapp, "Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Military Leaders in Strategy Making." *Parameters* (2015): 13.

[13] Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), 303.

professionalization of the military as a means of strengthening civilian control over the armed forces. He believed that a professional military, characterized by a well-trained and educated officer corps, would be more likely to respect and adhere to civilian authority. His perspective was shaped by his work as a sociologist, focusing on societal integration, dual loyalty, the role of the military in social change, and civic education.

Unlike Huntington, Janowitz emphasized the importance of integrating the military into society.[14] He believed that the military should reflect that of the broader society it serves, with military personnel and their families participating in civilian life. This integration would help bridge the gap between the military and civilian sectors, making the armed forces more accountable to society. Janowitz explored the idea of "dual loyalty," which refers to the soldier's moral obligations both to the military and broader society.[15] He suggested that in democratic societies it was essential for the military to prioritize loyalty to the democratically elected civilian leadership. Janowitz also examined the role of the military in social and political change. He argued that the military could act as a catalyst for social change by promoting certain values and behaviors within the organization and, by extension, in society at large. Janowitz believed that the military should engage in civic education and instill democratic values and principles in its members. This would not only help maintain civilian control but also contribute to a broader sense of citizenship and responsibility among military personnel.

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[14] Janowitz, 212.

[15] Janowitz, 347.

Janowitz's work was particularly influential during the Cold War era and contributed to a deeper understanding of how the military should function in democratic societies, balancing the need for a strong defense with the principles of civilian control and social integration.

The most obvious difference between Huntington and Janowitz concerned their views was the relationship between professionalism and integration. Huntington's focus was on creating a highly professional military. He emphasized the importance of a technically competent and specialized military that was insulated from politics. He believed in a clear separation between civilian and military spheres, with a strong division of labor. Huntington's perspective centered on the military's professionalism as a means of ensuring civilian control. Janowitz, on the other hand, stressed the integration of the military into society. He believed that the military should reflect the broader society it serves. His perspective was more concerned with the social aspects of civil-military relations, emphasizing the need for the military to be accountable to society.

There was also disagreement over the role of the Officer Corps. Huntington argued that the officer corps should have a certain degree of autonomy in determining military strategy, but always within the boundaries set by civilian authorities. He believed that this autonomy was necessary to maintain professionalism. Janowitz did not emphasize officer corps autonomy as much as Huntington did. He focused more on the military's integration into society and the potential for conflicts between the military and civilian society, a view no doubt shaped by the book's publication during the Vietnam War.

Janowitz and Huntington provided a strong foundation and modern scholarship has focused heavily on key case studies and theories in the 20th and 21st centuries. Articles in leading journals such as *International Security*, *Foreign Affairs,* and *Foreign Policy* discuss at length the numerous problems of an increasingly politicized military, an isolated all-volunteer force, and the frequency of missions the military engages in.[16] Suzanne Nielsen and Don Snider edited and produced *American Civil-Military Relations* featuring several modern case studies and recounting of U.S. civil-military relations.[17] The evolving landscape of civil-military relations continues to be a focal point in contemporary scholarship, with case studies and analyses exploring issues such as the politicization of the military, the challenges of an all-volunteer force, and the diverse missions undertaken by the military, contributing to an ongoing dialogue on the dynamics between civilian and military spheres.

There are numerous case studies of civil-military relations in the American context. In his study of the Vietnam War, former National Security Advisor, H.R. McMaster criticized objective control of the military because the Joint Chiefs of Staff were willing to go along with the civilian plan for Vietnam against their professional military judgment.[18] The idea of "Civilian Supremacy," which characterized civilian

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[16] Risa Brooks, "Paradoxes of Professionalism: Rethinking Civil Military Relations in the United States." *International Security*, (2020): 7.

[17] Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don M. Snider, *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

[18] H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997)

control as absolute with no room for interpretation, was coined by Eliot Cohen, professor of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins in his book, *Supreme Command*.[19] His perspective on civil-military relations has often been used as a competing model to Huntington's model of "professional supremacy" or "objective control" depending on what term one prefers.[20] Cohen used Abraham Lincoln as the example of a civilian leader influencing and directing wartime military policy. In 2023, Andrew Payne argued that the idea of civilian supremacy is an illusion.[21] Using the debate over the troop surges in Iraq and Afghanistan as case studies, Payne argues that presidents and civilian leaders must negotiate with the military to meet the needs of both domestic politics and the military.

Recent scholarship continues to evaluate this perspective, for example, Andrew Payne argued in the Summer 2023 volume of *International Security* titled, "Bargaining with the Military," that the idea of civilian supremacy is an illusion.[22] Payne argues that presidents and civilian leaders must negotiate with the military to meet the needs of both domestic politics and the military using the debate over the troop surges in Iraq and Afghanistan as case studies. Current scholarship too often overlooks the American Civil War in favor of studying the 20th and 21st centuries. While contemporary case studies and debates on civil-military relations often focus on more recent conflicts, the American

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[19] Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*. (New York: First Anchor Books, 2002).

[20] Andrew Payne, "Bargaining with the Military: How President Manage the Political Costs of Civilian Control." *International Security* (2023): 169.

[21] Payne, 166-207.

[22] Payne, 166-207.

Civil War serves as a rich historical backdrop that can offer valuable insights into the complex and enduring dynamics between civilian leadership and the military.

Indeed, much of the civil-military relations theory formulated by contemporary scholars was evidenced as emerging during the American Civil War as Lincoln struggled to put together a team that could bring a political end to the conflict. *The Soldier and the State* and numerous subsequent scholarly works including *Civil-Military Relations in the United States: What Senior Leaders Need to Know (and Usually Don't)* by Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, two of the most prominent scholars in the field, bring up many of the dilemmas faced by generals of that era. However, these works haven't enjoyed the same level of popularity and perpetuity as others.[23] Furthermore, relationships matter, and for a military to function in a democratically controlled, civilian-elected government, such relationships must be predicated on trust and directly contribute to the efficacy of military officers' abilities. The Civil War also supported a wholesale change in the United States Army from basic training and tactics to education which laid the groundwork for the establishment of the professional army it has become today. The American Civil War serves as a compelling historical example of the enduring relevance of civil-military relations theories and the pivotal role of trust and relationships in the effective functioning of a democratically controlled military establishment.

There are two distinct perspectives or schools of thought when it comes to American civil-military relations. One is "professional supremacists" and the other is

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[23] Peter Fever and Richard Kohn, "Civil-Military Relations in the United States: What Senior Leaders Need to Know (and Usually Don't)." *Strategic Studies Quarterly,* (2021): 12-37.

"civilian supremacists." There are different terms for these perspectives and some scholars have been extremely critical of the term "professional supremacists" coined by Dr. Peter Fever.[24] Nonetheless, these terms provide an important conceptual tool for this thesis and are used throughout.

Professional supremacists argue that the recurring problem for civil-military relations specifically in wartime is ensuring the military an adequate voice and keeping civilians from micromanaging and mismanaging matters, something that occurred frequently during the Civil War as we will see.[25] The other camp argues that the central problem is ensuring that civilian guidance is followed even when the military disagrees with that direction.[26] There is an additional principle advocated by civilian supremacists which is that because civilians have ultimate control over the use of the military they, "have a right to be wrong."[27] As Feaver puts it, "the military can describe in some detail the nature of the threat posed by a particular enemy, but only the civilian can decide whether to feel threatened and so how or even whether to respond. The military quantifies the risk, the civilian judges it."[28] Therefore from civilian supremacists' perspective, fostering a balanced civil-military relationship hinges on acknowledging the necessity for

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[24] Richard K. Betts and Michael C. Desch "Correspondence: Civilians, Soldiers, and the Iraq Surge Decision." *International Security* (2012): 179-199.

[25] Peter Feaver, "The Right to Be Right: Civil-Military Relations and the Iraq Surge Decision." *International Security*, (2007): 89.

[26] Ibid., 90.

[27] Peter Feaver. "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* (1996): 154.

[28] Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique," 154.

military expertise in tactical matters while upholding the civilian prerogative to make ultimate strategic decisions, even when they may be contentious or erroneous.

The extensive literature on civil-military relations in the United States, spanning from the foundational works of Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz to contemporary studies, has provided a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between civilian leadership and the military. The principles outlined by Huntington, emphasizing objective control, professionalism, specialization, autonomy, and ethics, were vividly manifested during the American Civil War. The contrasting perspectives of Huntington and Janowitz on issues like professionalism, integration, and officer corps autonomy offer nuanced insights into the evolving nature of civil-military relations. While modern scholarship often concentrates on 20th and 21st-century conflicts, the American Civil War remains a compelling historical backdrop that highlights enduring dilemmas and challenges in this crucial relationship. As the United States grapples with the evolving role of its military and the delicate balance between national security and civil liberties, the lessons from the past continue to shape the discourse on civil-military relations, underscoring the timeless significance of trust, relationships, and effective governance in managing a democratically controlled military establishment.

A Proper Model of Civil-Military Relations: The Equilibrium of Political Reality

The Constitution as a document does not provide a theory of civil-military relations, creating a problem that scholars, policymakers, and military officials must struggle endlessly to resolve. There are basic assumptions about modern American civil-military relations that aren't in dispute, led by the need for the military to respect for the

Constitution's establishment of civilian control. More recently, the U.S. rise to superpower status, coupled to the advanced technologies of modern warfare, have made clear the need for military professionals to provide expertise to civilians. Compared to the rest of the world, the American military has shown remarkable restraint from involvement in domestic politics.

The key challenge and what drives the discourse in the field currently is the give and take between the military and civilians, at least at the intellectual and advisory levels.[29] While two distinct camps offer a model for American civil-military relations, neither well fits the reality of the linkage between politics and war. Professional Supremacists would say that ceding control to those with technical warfighting expertise will produce the results prescribed by policymakers, which isn't always true. Civilian Supremacists raise the risk that political motives will undermine military objectives. The best model of civil-military relations would address the dangerous extremes of both civilian supremacists and professional supremacists. This would require better education for both military officials and civilian policymakers, and forums designed to promote more nuanced debates over policy issues. But this shouldn't be limited to those groups; there is a considerable gap in the broader public about what the military does and how civilians should approach this use. This sounds great in theory but difficult in practice.

The technical expertise of the military is important to the tactical prowess of the military but that must be integrated within political objectives. However, the modern

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[29] Feaver, "The Right to Be Right," 93.

American military duties now extend far beyond simply trying to win battles. The military has and does participate in nation-building, disaster relief, and civil affairs just to name a few in addition to a host of other niche objectives. The broadening of the military responsibilities takes from their primary function, to defend the nation against other states. In addition, this notion of being apolitical just does not compute in a liberal democracy. This notion of being apolitical, that is, not voting in elections or getting involved in political issues can be directly traced back to Ulysses S. Grant and other American officers who thought that it was best for the officer corps to not be involved in politics. However, recently American military officers have become more involved, whether endorsing political candidates or running for office themselves. This inherently politicizes the profession and gives civilians more bandwidth to politicize the military on divisive political issues.

While some scholars contend that the inability of senior military officers to discern how their actions and perspectives can impact politics is a more recent trend, the civil war showed how even moderate disagreements could result in civilian backlash.[30] Educating military leaders on the potential impact can help alleviate these concerns. Where this education comes from is important. For example, at the Naval Academy the only required course that would touch on civilian control is "US Government and Constitutional Development." The course description states that it covers "Basic concepts of American democracy, the Constitution, political process, structure and functions of

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[30] Brooks, 18.

national government and factors influencing its operation." One Naval Academy graduate

mentioned that this course was the only time she could recall engaging with the subject of

civil-military relations at the school.[31] Other course imply this and there is a focus on

ethic and professionalism in other humanities and leadership course, but this is not

enough. While there is a course on civil-military relations offered, it is an elective. Young

officers should engage in civil-military relations both when things are good and bad.

While talking about politics is often taboo, young officers should understand what drives

political and decision making, especially in wartime. Higher educational institutions such

as the Naval War College and the Army War College offer civil-military relations as an

elective but again is not a requirement. Thus, this creates a gap that often is never closed.

There is also a debate over the diffusion of power in the relationship between the

military and civilians. I would subscribe to the civilian supremacist's argument that

civilians should have the right to be both right or wrong on military matters. The military

should provide the best advice in that context without it becoming public or undermining

the elected officials. As previously discussed, educating military officials beyond the

basic notions of constitutional and professional duties could help foster a better working

environment for military officers who have to work with civilian counterparts on this

issue.

The complex landscape of American civil-military relations necessitates a

nuanced approach that respects the essential balance of power between civilian

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[31] Background interview with Naval Academy Graduate, May 23, 2024.

policymakers and military professionals. While the Constitution does not explicitly outline a theory of civil-military relations, the enduring principles of military respect for civilian control and the provision of military expertise to civilian leaders remain foundational. The divergence between the Professional Supremacist and Civilian Supremacist models underscores the need for a hybrid approach that incorporates the strengths of both perspectives. Central to this is the enhancement of education for both military and civilian leaders, fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of military actions and political outcomes. Moreover, bridging the knowledge gap within the broader public about military roles and responsibilities is crucial in sustaining an informed democracy. As military duties continue to expand beyond traditional combat roles, integrating these functions within a coherent political strategy becomes imperative. Ultimately, a robust civil-military relationship hinges on mutual respect, informed dialogue, and a commitment to maintaining the apolitical nature of the military, thereby ensuring that the armed forces serve the nation without becoming entangled in partisan politics.

Chapter Two: History of Civil-Military Relations

The Revolutionary War, the Constitution, and National Security

For as much as the Constitution continues to hold credence as a document proclaiming liberty and justice for all, Americans continue to argue over the framing and intent of the Constitution. Even the founders themselves quickly divided into camps about how they should use the document for governance; the final ratification was based on compromise and only passed by the thinnest of margins. The foundation of civilian control of the military can be directly traced to the Constitution and the views of the founders. With enemies on all sides, it was critically important to articulate broad policy about how the country would fight wars and conduct foreign policy. Victory in the War of Independence was not a sure thing and probably resulted more from British fatigue than outright victory on the battlefield. Nonetheless, the founders learned many lessons during the war which they applied when it came to articulating the foundation for what they hoped the republic could be. The foundational principles of civilian control of the military, rooted in the Constitution and the lessons learned during the War of Independence, continue to shape the governance of the United States and its approach to national security and foreign policy.

One core lesson that came out of the revolution was that war could not be fought by committee. Military strategy had to be centralized to maintain efficiency. With that

frame in mind, the founder proposed a centralized defense of the country with mechanisms in place to mobilize and demobilize troops to meet the needs of the nation.[32] The Constitution is explicit in expressing Civilian Control of the military in Article II Section 2 declaring that, "the President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States." Congress was given the responsibility of declaring war and managing the budget of the military to serve as a check on the president.[33] The Founding Fathers laid a foundation for civilian control over the military because of a deep skepticism of a professional military believing that a professional military created more potential for government abuse. But there is an inherent contradiction between a democratically elected government built around compromise and debate and a military built around hierarchy and following orders.

Further examination of the Constitution and the writing of the Founders themselves reveals a country that faced a multitude of threats internally and externally. There were direct threats from regional nation-states. The British still controlled Canada and the outcome of the Revolutionary War could mean trouble. Spain still controlled a vast empire in the Caribbean with outposts in the West as well. One of the Founding Fathers, James Wilson stated, "We are still an inviting object to one European Power at

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[32] Richard H Kohn, *The United States Military under the Constitution of the United States, 1789-1989* (1991): 74.

[33] Ibid., 80.

least, and, if we cannot defend ourselves, the temptation may become too alluring."[34]

Even with those threats, many of the founders were inherently skeptical of a standing military. Samuel Adams wrote in 1768 before the revolution that, "even when there is a necessity of the military power, within a land, a wise and prudent people will always have a watchful and jealous eye over it."[35] Threats also came from the sea, and while the Atlantic Ocean offered a powerful barrier, threats to American shipping, on the sea's surface were rampant. Since the economic lifeblood of the country relied heavily on the export of its goods, an undefended commercial shipping industry was a significant vulnerability.

The outside threat that most drove the need for some type of permanent military or military was the Native Americans who stood in the way of American expansion. The European Powers had already gone through several cycles of peace and conflict, so the Founders knew the potential threat. People most opposed to the military provisions in the Constitution reluctantly acknowledged the reality of the nation's security; the New York essayist "Brutus" articulated, "to raise and support a small number of troops to garrison the frontier post, and the arsenals."[36] The perceived threat posed by Native Americans and the historical context of European powers' conflicts were pivotal factors that influenced the inclusion of military provisions in the U.S. Constitution, even though

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[34] Wilson quoted by Kohn, *The United States Military under the Constitution of the United States*, 65.

[35] Samuel Adams quoted by Michael F. Cairo. *Civilian Control of the Military.* International Information Program (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2005).

[36] Kohn, 66.

some critics reluctantly recognized the necessity for safeguarding the nation's security through the maintenance of a limited military presence.

The tension between civilian control and military professionalism has been a fundamental aspect of American military policy since the Revolutionary era and was pushed to the limit during the Civil War. This is in part because the constitution "mixed political and military functions, interjecting politics into military affairs and military affairs into politics."[37] Nothing is more representative of this than the career of Winfield Scott. Scott was arguably the most accomplished military man before the Civil War and more notable for different reasons than Calhoun. He fought in the War of 1812, the Black Hawk War, and the Mexican-American War. Yet Scott didn't go to West Point or the Southern military colleges, instead going to the College of William and Mary before becoming a lawyer. He began his long military career as a volunteer in the militia before trailblazing an almost fifty-year career. But Scott was heavily involved in politics even as commanding general. He sought the presidential nomination several times (even while still commanding the army) and jointly with Whig leaders Henry Clay and Daniel Webster supporting the Compromise of 1850. Even if Huntington and other scholars would view this behavior as "unprofessional" it was perfectly in line with what the constitution perceived should be the civil-military relationship.

There is an ongoing challenge of balancing democratic principles with the demands of national defense that continues to this day. While the Constitution is a

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[37] Huntington, 189.

framework of simplicity, as Huntington points out, "the American constitutional system does not facilitate the stable existence of a balanced pattern of executive civil-military relations."[38] It's an odd part of the Constitution given that victory in the Revolutionary War was extremely challenging, and some historians have argued that it was the intervention of other European Powers that delivered victory rather than American prowess on the battlefield.[39] The conduct of Congress and the Continental Army showcased the dysfunction of a decentralized system and yet much of the dysfunction that occurred during the war was kept in place.

Another product of the Revolutionary War was the principle of volunteerism and the belief in the citizen-soldier as the frontline of national defense. Soldiers in the Continental Army were volunteers motivated by a wide variety of causes. In some cases, bounties were paid to entice men to enlist or for men who chose to serve longer. Bounties could consist of additional money, additional clothing, or land west of the Ohio River, where many veterans would settle after the war.[40] A private in the Continental Army earned $6.23 per month and pay would increase upon promotion of rank sometimes a promotion in rank brought an increase in food rations and some cases more money instead of rations.[41] It reflected the fact that a sense of patriotism often wasn't enough for

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[38] Huntington, 189.

[39] Kohn, 68.

[40] American Battlefield Trust. "The Fighting Man of the Continental Army." December 17, 2023. https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/fighting-man-continental-army.

[41] "The Fighting Man of the Continental Army."

citizens to risk their lives for the state. The tradition of both volunteerism and using incentives for the recruitment of citizen soldiers was the policy of national defense up until the Civil War. The Revolutionary War laid the foundation for the enduring principles of volunteerism and the citizen soldier, shaping the ethos of the United States' national defense policies until the advent of conscription during the Civil War, marking a clear shift in the nation's attitude to military service.

The foundation of civilian control over the military, established by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution and shaped by the lessons of the War of Independence, remains a fundamental aspect of American governance. The tension between democratic principles and the demands of national defense persisted throughout history, reaching a critical juncture during the Civil War. The absence of clear policies for the conduct of war and interactions between defense institutions in the Constitution itself created the ongoing challenge of balancing a decentralized system of governance with the need for effective national defense. Additionally, the Revolutionary War left a legacy of volunteerism and the belief in the citizen soldier, shaping the policy of national defense until the formalization of conscription during the Civil War. The complexities and contradictions inherent in the relationship between civilian control and military professionalism continue to influence the governance of the United States, reflecting the evolution of the nation's approach to security and foreign policy.

The Rise and Fall of West Point

The United States Military Academy at West Point was the most influential institution on the military leadership of the Union and Confederate armies respectively.

Almost every major combatant commander, U.S. Grant, William Sherman, Phil Sheridan, Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, and Stonewall Jackson were educated at West Point. While the founders thought that citizen soldiers were the best remedy to issues of national security, they still needed professionals to lead them hence the establishment of the United States Military Academy in 1802. West Point is the oldest military educational institution in the United States. The institution is still going strong today graduating a thousand-second lieutenants, many of whom go on to hold the highest-ranking positions in the military. However, during the Civil War period, many did the minimal service required and moved on to civilian life. It was said during this time that the Academy produced more businessmen and railroaders than generals. This was a product of the military of that era but almost all the high-ranking officers who fought on both sides were West Pointers. 448 commissioned General Officers in the North and South graduated from West Point.[42] The United States Military Academy at West Point played a central role in shaping the leadership of both the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War, with many of its graduates assuming key positions on both sides of the conflict.

President Thomas Jefferson's decision to create the United States Military Academy at West Point proved to be a controversial one. The creation was an additional statute in the Military Peace Establishment Act of 1802 which not only founded the academy but gave the president greater autonomy to manage and even remove commissioned officers. Most of the senior officers at the time were men of the

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[42] Allen Mesch, *Preparing for Disunion: West Point Commandants and the Training of Civil War Leaders*, (West Jefferson: McFarland, 2018), 5.

Revolution and politicians, rather than professionals so they often aligned closely with a particular political party. At the time, Jefferson was taking much criticism from the army for his policies, so the act was passed to exercise more civilian control over the military; the theory being that the army had to be either compatible with the views of the President or not care to discharge their duties. The academy was also a further signal that professional military men were needed to safeguard the security of the nation. Jefferson's establishment of the United States Military Academy at West Point marked a significant step in the evolution of American military professionalism and the assertion of civilian control over the military, setting the stage for the development of a true cadre of professional officers.

However, even though the institution was supposed to be producing army officers, West Point was an engineering school masquerading as a Military Academy. Engineering, mathematics, and philosophy took up almost 70% of the classes during this time, while 30% encompassed leadership and military tactics.[43] The top graduates were sent to the engineer corps while the lower graduates were sent to the infantry and cavalry. With such little emphasis on being an officer, it was no wonder that the majority did minimal service before heading into civilian life. The Mexican-American war showed how such heavy focus on these subjects could be detrimental. A renewed focus on rounding out a more balanced education was thus implemented in 1854 with courses in history, law, and

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[43] James L Morrison, "Educating the Civil War Generals: West Point, 1833-1861." *Military Affairs* (1974): 108.

Spanish.[44] The introduction of law added an interesting component as well but was lumped in with philosophy. So, in theory, some broad parameters of civilian control were at least mentioned if there were discussions or lectures about the role of the military relating to the Constitution. The evolution of the curriculum at West Point, shifting from a heavy emphasis on engineering to a more well-rounded education with exposure to law, history, and philosophy, reflected a growing recognition of the need for military officers to have a broader understanding of their roles.

The lackadaisical nature of Civil War armies in the early years of the war can be directly traced back to West Point. Historians often justifiably deride Civil War generals as amateurs. Despite the general lack of focus on military tactics and strategy at West Point, it is still important to look at who and what they were studying at the time. The previous American military experiences during the War of 1812, the Mexican-American war, and various conflicts with the Native American tribes didn't result in great American war philosophers or literature. So naturally, cadets and young army officers looked to Europe and the Napoleonic Wars for inspiration. The constant conflict produced philosophers of war such as Carl Von Clausewitz whose book *On War* would influence several generations of officers and security practitioners in the 20th and 21st century, and the lesser-known Antoine Henri Jomini. Jomini was a Swiss military officer who served as a general in the French Army under the French Emperor Napoleon, and later in the

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[44] Ibid., 108.

Russian army producing numerous works on military strategy and policymaking.[45] But why did Jomini become more influential than many others of that period? The simplest explanation offered by historians is that unlike a lot of other writers at that time, Jomini's work was easier to read and his central principles were simple.[46] Jomini's central thesis written in his book, *The Art of* War, concluded that war was an art. He described war in six parts: statesmanship, strategy, grand tactics, logistics, engineering, and minor tactics.[47] The person who brought *The Art of War* to America was Dennis Hart Mahan, a professor at West Point during the 1830s and a key proponent of Jomini's theories, which permeated the Academy and shaped the basic military thinking of its graduates. What is notably absent from Jomini is the link between politics and war. The famous Carl Van Clausewitz quote, "War is merely an extension of politics" was put aside in favor of Jomini's focus solely on war.[48] In addition, Clausewitz's writing could be difficult to follow, with challenging analogies, and unclear distinctions. The influence of Jomini's theories at West Point and the absence of a strong link between politics and war in his writings had a lasting impact on the military education and thinking of many Civil War generals, contributing to the early shortcomings of Civil War armies and their struggle to integrate military strategy with political objectives.

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[45] Mark T. Calhoun, "CLAUSEWITZ AND JOMINI: Contrasting Intellectual Frameworks in Military Theory." Army History, (2011): 23.

[46] Calhoun, 31.

[47] Mesch, 23-24.

[48] Mesch, 29.

However, it is still difficult to ascertain the actual influence that Jomini truly had on American Generals. Union General Jacob Dolson Cox insisted that during his time at West Point, "there was no instruction in strategy or grand tactics on military history or the art of war. The little book by Mahan on 'Outpost Duty' was the only textbook on theory outside engineering proper, at an earlier date the cadets had studied Jomini, but it had been dropped."[49] On the other hand, a Marine Corps Brigadier General J.D. Hittle wrote, "It has been said with good reason that many a Civil War general went into battle with a sword in one hand and Jomini's *Summary of the Art of War* in the other."[50] Henry Halleck, who was chief of the Union Armies for much of the war was so enthusiastic about Jomini's perspective on war that he spent three months translating his books from French to English. The extent of Jomini's influence on Civil War generals may have varied, but his ideas undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping the perspectives of many military leaders during that era, neglecting the need to bridge the gap between military strategy and political objectives.

In addition to Jomini, one central principle that emerged in the thinking of Civil War Generals was the idea of the "decisive battle."[51] A "decisive battle" refers to a military engagement or conflict in which the outcome has a significant and far-reaching impact on the overall course and outcome of a larger conflict or war. In such a battle, the

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[49] U. S. Grant III, "Military Strategy of the Civil War." *Military Affairs*, (1958): 13.

[50] David Herbert Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War* (San Francisco: Golden Springs Publishing, 2015), 28.

[51] J.D Hittle, *Jomini and His Summary of the Art of War* (Mechanicsburg: Military Service Publishing Company, 1947), 2.

victor often gains a clear advantage that ultimately leads to the resolution of the conflict in their favor. Napoleon (whom Jomini fought with) made a career off of decisive battles; but by the end of his rule no matter how many battles Napoleon won, the coalition of Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia would have superior resources to fight again eventually defeating Napoleon and forcing him to abdicate his throne not once but twice. This perspective on the decisive battle was extremely influential in the early years of the Civil War but did not match the reality of modern industrial war. The physical sizes of armies and the resources they could bring to had increased dramatically since the Napoleonic wars. The evolving concept of the "decisive battle" during the Civil War was a shift in military thinking influenced by the experiences of generals like Napoleon. However, the stark contrast between traditional notions of decisive battles and the emerging reality of modern industrial warfare realized the need for military strategies to adapt to the changing dynamics of larger field armies and increased resources as a result of the Industrial Revolution. This was a challenge that civil war generals struggled with early in the conflict.

Most of the tactics cultivated at West Point focused on military engineering while important, is merely one part of understanding war. The focus on engineering can be linked to how fortifications and earthworks became a core part of Civil War tactics in 1864-1865. It can also explain the Union's proficiency in logistics and building infrastructure, which was important to the Union war effort as the army advanced deeper into the South.

The defection of so many officers from the Southern States to the Confederacy raises questions about patriotic duty and their oaths to the Constitution. It shows, that when faced with a choice, a significant portion of Southerners took up arms against the United States. West Point during that time was individually competitive to an almost toxic degree. While individual ranking is still in use at West Point today, there is a much heavier emphasis on teamwork, togetherness, and general mission. General Sheridan was famously suspended for brawling with a Southern classmate after a perceived insult on the parade ground. Emory Upton, another officer who became famous for his post-Civil War service came from a unique background, before his appointment to West Point, he had attended Oberlin College in Ohio, which was the first College institution to admit Black Students in 1835 and only six years later admitting women through a coeducational program. He wasn't shy about his progressive views mentioned by a fellow cadet, Morris Schaff in his memoir, *Spirit of Old West Point, 1858-1862* made him a target of Southern Cadets.[52] The animosity culminated in a fistfight between Upton and Wade Hamilton Gibbes, a cadet from South Carolina. Afterward, Upton's roommate came down to the main hall where a posse of Southern Cadets was brooding about, and he stated, "If there are any more of you down there who want anything, come right up."[53] The competitive and sometimes divisive atmosphere at West Point during that era reflected the broader

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[52] Morris Schaff, "The Spirit of Old West Point (1858-1862)." *The Atlantic Monthly*, (1907): 692.

[53] Ibid., 693.

societal tensions and political conflicts of the time, which had a significant impact on the perspectives and actions of military officers during the Civil War.

The Civil War was the only American conflict in which commissioned military officers took up arms against the country. Of the 383 West Pointers who obtained at least the rank of Brigade General, 157 around 41 percent joined the Confederacy with almost 95 percent of the defectors being from the South.[54] The defection of so many shook the institution to its core with many government officials questioning the need for West Point when so many of its graduates were emerging with so little loyalty to the country. However, hostility towards West Point existed in American society long before the Civil War. There was an effort by Congress to try and abolish the academy altogether in 1837 while the New York State Legislature proclaimed that West Point was, "wholly inconsistent with the spirit and genius of our liberal institutions."[55] Senator Ben Wade of Ohio and chairman of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War questioned the whole purpose of West Point, saying;

> I cannot help thinking that there is something wrong with this whole institution. I do not believe that in the history of the world, you can find as many men who have proved themselves utterly faithless to their oaths, ungrateful to the Government that supported them, guilty of treason and a deliberate intention to overthrow that Government which has educated them and given them its support, as have emanated from this institution … I believe that from the idleness of these military-educated gentlemen, this great treason was hatched.[56]

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[54] Hyde, 5.

[55] Huntington, 205.

[56] Ben Wade quoted by Mesch, 144.

Republican James Lane went even further than Wade declaring; "West Point would be the Death of this Government."[57] Lane and Wade reflected the perception from Radical Republicans that West Point was a breeding ground for the rebellion, given that so many Southern West Pointers went on to command the Southern armies most notably Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and James Longstreet. Modern scholarship on civil-military relations often explores how the military often aligned with a single political party even if it was in theory supposed to be apolitical. During the Civil War, most of the senior military officers were Democrats. The skepticism and hostility towards West Point, exemplified by figures like Senator Ben Wade and Congressman James Lane during the Civil War, is a recurring theme of political distrust towards military institutions. This suspicion, evident in debates about the loyalty of military-educated individuals, highlights a broader pattern in civil-military relations where military academies and officers become subjects of political scrutiny, reflecting concerns about their potential influence on national loyalty and political stability.

The crisis of secession presented a fateful choice for military officers from the South: to retain their oath to the constitution or loyalty to their state. Indeed, many Southern officers betrayed their oath including Robert E. Lee who stated that he couldn't, "raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children."[58] It was yet another reminder that one of the basic functions of civil-military relations, the preservation of

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[57] James Lane quoted by Bill Hyde, *The Union Generals Speak: The Meade Hearings on the Battle of Gettysburg* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 5.

[58] Robert E. Lee quoted by James McPherson in *Battle Cry of Freedom.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 281.

loyalty to the country and its Constitution over all other allegiances had been neglected. However, it should be noted that many Southern officers such as George Thomas, who played an important role in the Western theatre, remained loyal to the Union.[59] The dilemma faced by Southern military officers during the crisis of secession underscores the complex interplay of loyalties and allegiances that influenced their choices during the Civil War, revealing the intricate nature of civil-military relations in this tumultuous period.

The failure of so many officers from the South raises the question of their personal experiences at West Point and in the military. Their personal political preference aligned them with the Confederacy, but their professional obligation aligned them with the Union. The simple explanation is that officers identified much more with their home states than the United States at large but that isn't a full explanation. As previously discussed, West Point's extreme focus on engineering and the sciences left very little room to focus on basic obligations to the United States. Furthermore, the stark differences between the North and South were apparent. Abraham Lincoln's famous statement during a speech in June, 1858 that, "A house divided against itself, cannot stand."[60] This in respect created two different versions of civil-military relations that were competing against one another. Within the military, there was an ongoing debate over loyalty to the United States as a country and loyalty to the state and culture they came

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[59] Ibid., 282.

[60] Lincoln quoted by Herbert, 206.

from. Economically, culturally, and socially, the North and the South couldn't have been any more different. The "democratic" North and the "aristocratic" South was reflected in the fact that the North drew more immigrants and diversified its economy rapidly. The South's economy had already begun to stagnate with an overreliance on slavery that prevented industrialization and diversification. Of course, the shadow over all of this was slavery. The Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David Potter concluded that "in terms of values, slavery had an effect which no other sectional factor exercise in isolating North and South from each other."[61] While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact factor in Southern officer's loyalties, as there were many, the reality is that in Antebellum America, the divides were so stark that no amount of education or training would've prevented Southern Officers from resigning from the U.S. Army to join the Confederacy.

The legacy of West Point and its influence on the military leadership of the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War is a complex and multifaceted one. From its founding by President Thomas Jefferson as a response to the need for professional military leadership, West Point was a focal point in shaping the cadre of officers who would lead the nation through the conflict. The institution's initial emphasis on engineering, combined with the later introduction of a more well-rounded curriculum, reflected an evolving understanding of the skills and knowledge required for military leadership in a democratic republic. The infusion of European military philosophy, particularly through the teachings of Antione Jomini, left a lasting impact on the strategic

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[61] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: America before the Civil War 1848-1861.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1976), 43.

thinking of Civil War generals. However, the lack of a strong link between politics and war in Jomini's theories contributed to the early shortcomings of Civil War armies in integrating military strategy with political objectives reflected in the personal frustration of President Lincoln and the civilian leadership. The competitive and sometimes divisive atmosphere at West Point mirrored the broader societal tensions of the time, influencing the perspectives and actions of military officers during the conflict. The defection of Southern officers raised questions about patriotic duty and loyalty, underscoring the intricate nature of civil-military relations during the crisis of secession. Ultimately, the stark differences between the North and South, economically, culturally, and socially, contributed to the failure of many Southern officers to remain loyal to the Union. West Point's enduring impact on American military professionalism and its ongoing role in shaping the leaders of the American military underscores the factors of education, ideology, and loyalty in the history of the United States Military Academy.

The Influence of the Southern Military Tradition

While West Point was the institution for military education among military officers. Numerous military institutions emerged in the South including the Citadel and the Virginia Military Institute among others. Before the Civil War, Every Southern State except Florida and Texas had a state-supported military academy modeled on West Point.[62] Huntington argued that this was a product of antebellum Southern culture where military men were "gentlemen" modeled on the ethos of the knights in shining armor

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[62] Huntington, 219.

from the medieval era.[63] Since many of these men also came from slaveholding families that were obsessed with the security of themselves slaves created a cadre of men who displayed aristocratic tendencies.[64] This went directly against the liberal values that steadily gained traction in North creating an ideological challenge within the military that continues to this day.

Further examination shows the dominating influence of Southerners on the U.S. military. In 1837, three of the four active generals and nine of thirteen colonels were from the South eventually prompting Congress to institute a policy in which appointments were distributed to congressional districts, a tradition that continues to this day.[65] This decision was a key inflection point in civilian control of the military, as Congress had concluded that having an institution dominated by one specific social group could result in bad outcomes for the rest of the country. Some were quite critical of this policy, including Huntington who wrote that it, "was a crude effort at popular subjective civilian control."[66] The problem in his view was that congressional appointments would get in the way of merit-based appointments and that certain members of Congress would have an outsized influence on who was admitted to West Point and the Naval Academy respectively. The proliferation of military institutions in the South before the Civil War and the dominance of Southerners in the U.S. Military highlighted the need for a more

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[63] Huntington, 211.

[64] Janowitz, 79.

[65] Huntington, 212.

[66] Huntington, 206.

balanced and diversified approach to military appointments, leading to a shift in the

distribution of appointments to congressional districts as a means of enforcing civilian

control over the military.

The clash between the Southern Military Tradition, with its emphasis on

professional military preparation and loyalty to the home state, and the broader American

society's preference for citizen soldiers was a recurring theme in the early years of the

United States. Figures like John Calhoun and Winfield Scott exemplified this tension, as

they grappled with the question of whether a professional officer corps was essential for

the nation's security. Calhoun's efforts to professionalize the military, despite

congressional pushback, marked the beginning of a long line of Southern military leaders

who believed in the necessity of a more robust and professional armed forces.

However, the Southern Military tradition also created an ethos that contradicted

democratic liberalism both directly and indirectly. James McPherson concluded that

"Union Victory destroyed the southern vision of America and ensured that the northern

vision would become the American vision."[67] But was this true? While Lincoln and other

northern political leaders certainly redefined democratic liberalism to include social

groups other than white men with property, reactionary elements in the South ensured it

would take another 100 years for this vision to be achieved. Even if the southern military

tradition when it came to tactics and strategy had been discredited, it remained an

influential force within the military. For example, while the southern affiliation within the

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[67] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 861.

Army officer corps changed from 90% in 1910 to 46% in 1950, they were still roughly twice overrepresented compared to other groups.[68] Numerous military bases were named after Confederate generals including John Hood and Braxton Bragg among others. Only in the last few years has there been an effort to rename those bases. Segregation by race persisted in the Army and was only discontinued after World War II, a result of civilian intervention, not the military. Many of the military colleges in the South continue to provide an alternative pathway into the American officer corps. These contrasting perspectives on the role of the military in American society would continue to shape the nation's approach to civil-military relations and its military institutions in the years leading up to the Civil War and beyond.

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[68] Janowitz, 88.

Chapter Three: The Civil War Era

The Bureaucratization of War

With the secession of the South, the battle lines had been drawn as the United States went to war with itself under the delusion that it would be over quickly. Initially, only 75,000 militiamen contracted for 90 days were raised by the Union under the illusion that the South could be brought back quickly after winning a few battles.[69] As historian James McPherson would call the early years of the conflict, it was a case of "Amateurs going to war."[70] The initial war plan developed by general-in-chief Winfield Scott envisioned an "envelopment" of the South by blockading the coast and invading key ports along the Gulf Coast.[71] Thus, after a certain amount of time, the South would be won back and integrated as loyal partners to the Union. But there was a problem with this strategic view as Russell Weigley wrote, "the blockade and gradual military pressure against the Confederate land frontiers seemed sure to produce military victory of the north had enough time, but Lincoln was never certain of having enough time."[72] In hindsight, the delusion was hard to comprehend given what the war would become, total

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[69] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 319.

[70] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 331.

[71] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 333.

[72] Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 129.

war. Such a small emphasis on military tactics and strategy meant that leaders on both sides would learn the hard way. The early days of the American Civil War, marked by the illusory hope of a swift resolution and the lack of comprehensive military planning, stand as a reminder of the turbulent and transformative nature of conflict, where both sides had to adapt and learn as the war evolved into a protracted struggle as wars often do.

Today's civilian-led bureaucratic institutions for waging war, the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and the Federal agencies comprising the intelligence community did not exist during the Civil War. But much of the management came down to civilians such as Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Stanton is an underappreciated figure in civil-military relations, he didn't go to West Point or serve in the military, he was a lawyer by trade and Attorney General for President Buchanan before taking on the role of Secretary of War under Lincoln. When he arrived, the war department had earned the moniker, "The Lunatic Asylum" because of the petty infighting, corruption, and incompetence.[73] Stanton went about turning the war department into a robust and functional bureaucracy capable of supporting the front-line troops. He fired corrupt or incompetent bureaucrats, helped turn the North's vast industrial base into a vast number of weapons and supplies, and made the railroads owned by private companies move troops and supplies anywhere when needed. The war

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[73] Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold Hyman, *Stanton: Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1962), 152.

department evolution headed by Stanton created a new form of civilian supremacy eventually became the key to Union victory.

For all of Stanton's accomplishments, there was a dark side to his methods. He ruled with an iron fist and made a long list of enemies within the Army. Those he deemed weren't loyal enough to the administration were banished to the frontier, administrative posts, or court-martialed. He often appointed political operatives to subordinate posts which not only perpetuated the politicization of military affairs but was also a departure from the traditional merit-based system within the military hierarchy, further exacerbating tensions between civilian leadership and military professionals. Historian William Marvel concluded that Stanton's intention for the office of the Secretary of War was to create, "an agency for the enforcement of political doctrine and the dissemination of partisan propaganda."[74] Stanton's approach to the office of the Secretary of War, as viewed by Marvel, calls attention to a potentially concerning aspect of civil-military relations, wherein the military apparatus becomes entangled in partisan politics, potentially compromising its effectiveness and integrity as an institution meant to impartially serve the nation's defense needs. While the politicization of the military apparatus by military officials was rampant, it is important to note that civilians were doing the same. In examining Stanton, it becomes evident that both civilian and military actors must uphold the principles of professionalism, impartiality, and meritocracy to ensure the effective functioning of the nation's defense apparatus and preserve the

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[74] William Marvel. *Lincoln's Autocrat: The Life of Edwin Stanton.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2015), 250.

integrity of its democratic institutions, something that was often a struggle in the Civil War.

The relationship between Stanton and Lincoln best describes what Huntington called the "vertical pattern" of civil-military relations.[75] This definition assumes that the President and Secretary have identical responsibilities where the Secretary acts as a pseudo-deputy to the President.[76] Lincoln and Stanton had a close relationship because Stanton largely agreed with the President that the military often disregarded orders and casually undermined the President's policies. However, Huntington is critical of this because he sees this pattern of intrusion of civilian control into military prerogatives as an inevitability. However, there needed to be a unified executive front in the face of military opposition whether it was over military strategy or other issues such as emancipation. Under the principle of civilian control, this was within the bounds of acceptability, but his conduct regularly bled over into his interactions with military officers who often disagreed with Stanton when it came to politics.

Some historians argue that Stanton was more focused on settling personal scores than he was on winning the war while the military officers were simply trying to do their duty.[77] This fully manifested when the commander of the Army of the Potomac Ambrose Burnside wrote to President Lincoln, "The Secretary of War has not the confidence of the

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[75] Huntington, 188.

[76] Huntington, 188.

[77] Marvel, 256-259.

officers and soldiers and I feel sure that he has not the confidence of the country."[78] Nonetheless, he remained in his position even after Lincoln's reelection when there were rumors of his departure. He was arguably the most powerful and influential Secretary until Robert McNamara assumed the renamed position in the 1960's.

Edwin Stanton's tenure as War secretary can be defined by the paradoxical nature of his effort to create a robust bureaucracy capable of waging total war while also politicizing the army in damaging ways. While the important precedent of civilian administration exercising control of the military was affirmed, the intrusion of politics into army policies either directly or indirectly was an unfortunate byproduct. Today, the Secretary of Defense position is by law designated for a civilian and does not require military experience. The tradition of extensive civilian control over the defense bureaucracy can be traced back to the Civil War. That period also showed how he line between politics and military objectives could become muddled very rapidly, a frequent occurrence in future conflicts.

In Search of Pinocchio's: The Joint Committee on the Conduct of War

The consequences of war were foreign to most Americans before the Civil War. It had been several generations since the British burned the White House to the ground during the War of 1812. Nothing encapsulated this more than when a parade of officials from Congress followed Union troops on their way to Confederate forces at Bull Run. They set up on a ridge overlooking the battlefield and ate picnic lunches as they watched

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[78] Marvel, 270.

the battle. The battle started well but deteriorated in the afternoon and when a general retreat was called and Union troops began to retreat, Michigan Senator Zachariah Chandler picked up a rifle and threatened to shoot them. The debacle set off a firestorm in Washington and subsequent military disaster in the West and at Ball's Bluff led to the creation of The Joint Committee on the Conduct of War. The Committee was formed not only to examine Ball's Bluff but in the words of one of its founders "to keep an anxious, watchful eye over all the executive agents who are carrying on the war at the direction of the people…we are not under the command of the military of this country. They are under ours as a congress."[79] The committee met 272 times over four years producing four consequential investigations of the Ball's Bluff fiasco, William Franklin's failures at Fredericksburg, Fitz John Porter's inaction at Second Bull Run, and the investigation into George Meade after the battle of Gettysburg.[80] The reports and questions from the Committee indicate that they didn't trust most of the senior leadership in the Army. The creation and actions of The Joint Committee on the Conduct of War during the Civil War represent a shift in the relationship between the military and civilian authorities, reflecting the growing awareness of the need for civilian oversight and accountability in the face of the unprecedented consequences and challenges of modern warfare.

The Committee was made up of seven senators, four Republicans and three Democrats, none of whom had any military experience or education. It was dominated by

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[79] Huntington, 181.

[80] Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, *Journal of the Committee.* Committee Report (Washington, DC: U.S. Senate, 1864), 1.

Radical Republicans, most notably, its Chairman Senator Ben Wade who believed in the total defeat of the rebellion and the emancipation of slaves.[81] This would inevitably set a collision course with the senior leadership of the army, most of whom were conservative Democrats who certainly didn't align or necessarily believe in abolition. Exasperating tensions was the fact that members had a Rolodex of reporters they went to with behind the door's testimony, mostly to push the cause of emancipation. Part of the reason that George McClellan didn't want to tell Lincoln his war plans was because, as he described it, "If I tell him my plans, they will be in the New York Herald tomorrow morning." The clash between the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War and the senior military officers during the Civil War epitomized the paradox of civilian oversight and professional military autonomy, illustrating the tensions inherent in navigating the complex relationship between the political leadership and the military establishment.

The official history contends that the Committee enjoyed cordial relations with the White House.[82] This is probably because Congress was already investigating the First Lady for misspending government money amongst other things. The relationship between the President and the committee can be described as a good cop, bad cop routine. Lincoln could certainly be passively aggressive in War Department telegrams but never lost his temper, he was more than happy to leave that to the committee so long as it wasn't aimed at him. Edwin Stanton had also received the endorsement of the committee

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[81] Hyde, 12.

[82] United States Senate Historical Office, *Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.* History of Notable Senate Investigations, (Washington, DC: U.S. Senate).

for his position as War Secretary and though they didn't align politically, Stanton hated

disloyalty, so he was more than happy to use the committee to root out generals who were

perceived to be disloyal or not buying into the war's aims. The dynamic between

President Lincoln, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War, and Secretary of War

Edwin Stanton during the Civil War reveals a complex interplay of political, military, and

bureaucratic forces, highlighting the multifaceted nature of civilian-military relations.

After the battle of Bull Run, the Army of the Potomac was content to sit along the

Potomac River while the army was reformed, assessed, and trained under the careful eye

of George McClellan. However, the proximity of the Confederate Army and Washington

meant that the Army of the Potomac could not sit on the defensive. Confederate Outposts

along the Potomac offered an opportunity for the Army to test itself. General Charles

Stone offered to take the battle to the Confederates by taking Ball's Bluff which based on

reconnaissance and intelligence was relatively weak. McClellan signed off on the

operation, none the wiser. Crossing a river, deploying, and attacking an elevated position

would have been challenging for any army let alone an army that was inexperienced and

still training. What followed was a complete debacle with General Stone delegating

authority to his subordinates so as the battle turned into a massacre, Stone had little idea

what was going on. Almost 1,000 casualties were suffered for little gain including

Senator Edward Baker, the only sitting Senator to be killed in action during the war.

McClellan was quick to blame Stone who in turn received a full assault by the

Washington Press and Congress. It didn't help that Stone refused to testify for the

committee, which bordered on insubordination of congressional authority from the members' point of view.

The Committee investigation quickly went beyond Stone's conduct at Balls Bluff but his alleged communication with Confederate envoys, using soldiers to protect slaveholder property in Maryland and returning runaway slaves to their owners. Under this cloud of suspicion, Stone was arrested and held without a trial. The consequences reverberated far beyond Stone as General Sam Heintzelman described the whole episode as "the greatest outrage" and General Phil Kearny wrote that McClellan, "Sacrificed Stone."[83] To question the loyalty of one general was to question the loyalty of everyone else. The Ball's Bluff episode and subsequent investigation not only exposed the shortcomings and internal divisions within the Army of the Potomac but also escalated tensions between the officer corps and the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War, foreshadowing the challenges and suspicions that would persist throughout the Civil War.

By the Summer of 1862, the Union's overall position had changed very little. McClellan's campaign in the Peninsula had floundered so a new army had been formed in Virginia under the command of John Pope. This incensed McClellan who was supposed to be the theatre commander but felt he was being directly interfered with by Washington. Pope had already endorsed total war and was a driving force in the military to confiscate and destroy the Rebel Party, while McClellan believed that doing so would only cause more problems and drag out the war. At the Second Battle of Bull Run the command

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[83] Sam Heintzelman and Phil Kearny quoted by Stephen Sears, *Lincoln's Lieutenants: The High Command of the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: First Mariner Books. 2018), 145.

dysfunction met yet another Union defeat. The Army of Virginia attacked while part of the Army of the Potomac sat by passively and when a massive Confederate counterattack came, they were in no position to support one another. This came right on the heels of the failure of the Peninsula campaign. The failure of McClellan to support Pope only continued the committee's suspicions that McClellan was subtly supporting the Confederate cause. The Republicans on the committee had already voted to lift the secrecy junction allowing key members to publicly criticize McClellan and his subordinates. There is little doubt that the committee played a critical role in the eventual removal of McClellan even if the president didn't necessarily want to. Another casualty was General Fitz John Porter, thoroughly disliked by Pope and alleged to have not supported him was eventually court martialed for disobeying orders and misbehavior, a trial that dragged on till 1863 resulting in his conviction. It seemed that the officer corps was under attack from all sides, by Congress, by the president, and by themselves. However, the ouster of Porter and McClellan took out the two champions of inserting the army directly into domestic politics and war-making. Historian Stephen Sears concluded that their respective ousters turned the Army of the Potomac from McClellan's Army into Lincoln's army.[84]

The Battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862 was arguably the greatest debacle of the entire war for the North. Piecemeal assaults on fortified positions in the cold was one the Committee would not let go of at all. Zach Chandler stated in the

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[84] Ibid., 480.

aftermath that, "The truth is the heart of our Generals is not at work."[85] The committee traveled to the army's camp to take testimony from Ambrose Burnside and the other leading officers. The committee ultimately concluded that William B. Franklin, who commanded the left wing of the army was at fault for the outcome of the battle. However, it is important to note that Burnside also stated during his testimony that he disliked slavery and tried to make his officers agree, something the Radical Republicans were more than happy to hear.[86] Despite Burnside's effort to remedy his relationships, most of his fellow officers disliked him, and their testimony made it impossible to command resulting in his decision to resign. However, the investigation revealed the attitude of the officers who were not only conservative but plotting to try and bring George McClellan back into command. The entire fiasco only raised more doubts in Congress about the true motivations and effectiveness of men who appeared to be more concerned with their status than fighting the war.

While the Battle of Gettysburg is celebrated as the turning point of the war, when the Army of the Potomac finally defeated Robert E. Lee, it came with much drama. It started with Dan Sickles a New York Congressman turned Corps Commander whose resume also included an acquittal of murdering his wife's lover because of mental insanity. He had commanded a Corps for a few months at that point but wasn't trusted at all by his fellow generals and most of all by George Meade because of his brashness and

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[85] Chandler quoted by Sears, 469.

[86] T. Harry Williams, "The Committee on the Conduct of the War: An Experiment in Civilian Control." *The Journal of the American Military Institute*, (1939): 152.

lack of military education. However, there is a significant divide in the historiography of his leadership. Eliot Cohen contends that Sickles was well-liked among his men and not as poor tactician[87] Other scholars put more weight on his immatureness and tactical skills when it came to managing the battlefield.[88] Nonetheless, arriving at Gettysburg on July 2, Meade instructed Sickles to position his corps along Cemetery Ridge to tie the Army of the Potomac into a "fishhook defense" (because the way the lines were constructed looked like a fishhook). Sickles, amateur that he was, thought that the ground a mile in front of his position was better. Without telling Meade or anyone else, Sickles marched his 10,000 men forward as fellow commanders John Gibbon and Winfred Hancock looked on in horror exclaiming, "What in the hell can that man Sickles be doing."[89]

Meade was convening a meeting of his Corps commanders that afternoon when he received word of Sickle's misadventure. Famous for his temper, he exploded and "in a few sharp words" told Sickles to pull back immediately and he followed to make sure of it.[90] Before that redeployment could happen though, the entire weight of the Confederate attack fell on Sickles Corps with Meade desperately pulling reinforcements from everywhere to stem the onslaught. Subsequently, when Sickles got his leg blown off, Meade didn't exactly feel bad. Unfortunately for Meade, he returned to Washington to spread fantastical rumors of his heroism at Gettysburg and the supposed incompetence of

[87] Cohen, 26.

[88] Murray and Wei-Siang, 283.

[89] Sears, 561.

[90] Sears, 561.

Meade. The dramatic events surrounding Dan Sickles' ill-fated decisions at the Battle of Gettysburg not only stress the challenges and complexities of military leadership but also the interpersonal dynamics and consequences that unfolded in the aftermath. It would leave a lasting impact on the perception of the battle and the individuals involved even if history ultimately remembers Gettysburg as the great turning point of the war.

The failure to pursue Lee's army after Gettysburg and the Mine Run Campaign in the fall of 1863 only reinforced Sickles' musings of Meade's conservative motivations and conduct as the commander of the Army of the Potomac. The investigation would be the most widespread to that point with every major Corps and Division commander testifying about Gettysburg and the Mine Run campaign. Meade was one of the few generals who had been with the army since Bull Run rising from Brigade command to commander of the Army of the Potomac so there was an immediate perception that he was a product of McClellan's leadership even though he generally seemed to be indifferent to the man. It didn't help that Sickles had testified first and already painted a picture that Meade was a petty tyrant who micromanaged the battlefield. His testimony on March 5, 1864, paints a stark picture, he seemed taken aback by how incredibly detailed the questions from the committee were as he tried to recall the minutiae details of army movements almost eight months earlier with practically no preparation.[91] The committee even presented maps so Meade could walk through his decisions minute by

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[91] Hyde, 109.

minute over the three days of hearings.[92] His second appearance before the committee on April four came amidst intense preparation for the Overland Campaign. While much shorter than his previous testimony, the Committee was trying to put the final touches on a report that would show his subordinates (including Sickles) were responsible for the Union victory, not him. However, the report did not have the impact that the Committee envisioned, Meade remained in command and his reputation survived long after the war even if civilian institutions were questioning his integrity. The exhaustive investigations and hearings surrounding George Meade's decisions at Gettysburg and the Mine Run Campaign reflect the intricate and politically charged nature of Civil War military accountability, with implications that extended beyond the battlefield and shaped the narratives of leadership during the war.

The Civil War saw serious oversight and evaluation of generals in real time. The committee was a new way of retaining civilian control of the military. Leaks to the press were frequent, especially if something explosive arose from testimony. Generals also used testimony against one another for a variety of different reasons. The committee's work presented all the challenges of civil-military relations in a democratic society. The civilian's perception of military decisions and capabilities and the military's perception that they didn't know what was going on. The Committee was a double-edged sword, there was critical work done to account for what went on in battles, but the political agendas of the Radical Republicans bled over into almost every investigation including

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[92] Hyde, 115.

the four major ones discussed. The media was used to fuel narratives about the conduct of

certain generals. One political scientist concluded that the South welcomed and

celebrated military expertise while the North actively undermined it and, in some ways,

the Committee lends credence to it.[93] The Joint Committee on the Conduct of War played

a huge role in reshaping the dynamics of civilian-military relations, introducing

unprecedented oversight and evaluation of military leadership in Congress. While aiming

to address the challenges of modern warfare, the committee's investigations and

interactions illuminated all the challenges in trying to maintain a balance or lack thereof

between civilian control and military autonomy, leaving a lasting impact on the

perception of battlefield leadership and congressional accountability.

Subtle Insubordination: Lincoln vs McClellan

The army of the Potomac was the center of much controversy and dysfunction

throughout the war. h. 35-year-old George McClellan took over the army after the battle

of First Bull Run, which had effectively ensured the war would be a long endeavor.

McClellan went about stacking the leadership roles with West Pointers. His contempt for

outsiders was obvious and created an insulated culture that was openly contemptuous of

civilian leadership and advice. McClellan was on the record calling President Lincoln a

"Gorilla", the Navy Secretary, "a garrulous old Woman" and Secretary of State William

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[93] Huntington, 213.

Seward an "incompetent little puppy."[94] [95] In later years, American generals would be fired for less insulting comments. It was obvious that civil-military relations were not on the curriculum at West Point and the struggle to develop a rapport with the civilian leadership was obvious and one of the core challenges that officers faced during that period.[96] The nature of the army was also rapidly changing, the military profession was small and outside of the Mexican-American war, was left to police the frontier and different forts along the East Coast. Now, they were at the helm of an army of citizen soldiers under a civilian administration that was also learning how to manage a wide-ranging conflict. The tumultuous relationship between the Army of the Potomac and civilian leadership during the Civil War, exemplified by George McClellan's insubordination and contempt for political figures, underscores the challenges and evolving dynamics of civil-military relations in a rapidly changing military and political landscape.

Promotion to brigadier general required Senate confirmation, a requirement dictated by the constitution. During the war, this process was politicized to a degree approaching comedic proportions. Union general officers could be roughly divided into four categories: long-service professionals, veterans who left the army for 5 to 10 years,

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[94] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 364.

[95] George McClellan quoted by Sears, 108.

[96] Peter Fever and Richard Kohn, "Civil-Military Relations in the United States: What Senior Leaders Need to Know (and Usually Don't)." *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, (2021), 14.

young men who rose through the ranks during the war, and civilians without any military experience.[97] The performances of these men were all over the place.

Officers personally lobbied for promotions even if their superior didn't want them promoted, senators single-handedly held up promotions if they didn't align on a certain political issue, and if an officer with political connections was relieved, senators would personally lobby for their reinstatement.[98] For the early part of the war, the senior military leadership wasn't a meritocracy, it was comprised of whomever had the best political connections. In some ways, the system politicized the military which had a hugely detrimental effect on the army of the Potomac's effectiveness in the early parts of the war. Interestingly though, at the regimental level and below, it was the exact opposite. The tactical acumen and ability to lead men in combat were the paramount traits sought after. Many of the regiments were volunteers raised by the states and governors sought out West Pointers and those with military experience. When that pool went dry, regiments often elected leaders who had demonstrated proper leadership.[99] The stark contrast between the political influence in senior military promotions and the merit-based leadership at the regimental level during the Civil War exemplifies the dual nature of the Union military structure, where political considerations often dominated higher echelons

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[97] Cohen, 34.

[98] Sears, 119.

[99] Sears, 94.

while battlefield performance and leadership qualities were paramount at the grassroots level, ultimately shaping the effectiveness and cohesion of the Army of the Potomac.

The ending of slavery was not an initial war goal but one that President Abraham Lincoln felt had to happen if there would ever be a proper reunion. However, during his presidential campaign, Lincoln pledged that the Federal government would not make policies to affect slavery in states where it already existed.[100] Most merely assumed that an ending of war would yield a compromising peace with slavery intact, either because they believed not doing so would open a chasm so deep that North and South could never heal or for prejudicial reasons. In opposition to Major General John Pope who issued orders authorizing his officers to seize enemy property with compensation, McLellan wrote that if the military, "adopts these radical and inhuman views to which it seems inclined, & which will prolong the struggle, I cannot in good conscience serve the government any longer."[101] Lincoln, however, approved these orders based upon several acts passed by Congress and reinforcing his thinking that legally, Lincoln was more than welcome to wage total war. The emancipation proclamation was simply an extension of that perspective, but the military needed to give him the political capital to issue it, and that would take a while.

In the late summer of 1862, Lee's army was rampaging in Maryland, but the army of the Potomac struck the best of luck a military commander could obtain. A Union

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[100] David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 363.

[101] James McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief.* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 105.

private, Barton Mitchell, discovered Special Order 191, which directly laid out Lee's plan

for the coming weeks verbatim. It was an intelligence coup that wouldn't be matched

during the rest of the war, but McClellan was passive in his response. Eventually,

McClellan cornered Lee's army near the town of Sharpsburg. What followed was the

bloodiest day on American soil, leaving 22,727 dead, wounded, or missing. Even more

troubling, the Army of the Potomac had attacked Lee with only about half the forces

available to him and piecemeal, allowing Lee to shift his forces to meet each attack.

McClellan largely lingered in the rear with his staff listening to the sound of the guns

while his subordinates struggled to lead an army he was supposedly in charge of. But

maybe Antietam was the pinnacle of his perspective: bloody battle that would lead both

sides to compromise for peace without taking the war to a personal level. In many ways,

it makes McClellan was the coward of the war, willing to sacrifice his soldiers not for

victory but for compromise. There isn't direct evidence that McClellan's personal views

played a role in his tactics or fighting but it certainly appeared that way. Perhaps

McClellan felt that politics was playing too much of a role in military policy. Emory

Upton who played an important role in the U.S. Army after the war wrote that "there

might be politics in the Cabinet and Congress, but there could be no politics in an army

facing the foe."[102] An even more damning comment was made by one of McClellan's

staff officers, who is alleged to have said after Antietam that "the object is that neither

army shall get much advantage of the other; that both shall be kept in the field till they

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[102] Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917), 364.

are exhausted, when we will make a compromise and save slavery."[103] This comment

eventually made its way to Lincoln and was undoubtedly on his mind when as Lincoln

watched McClellan fail to pursue Lee's army. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of

War had already sowed the seeds of McClellan's downfall as a series of testimonies from

his subordinates months earlier in January 1862, painted a picture of chaos and lack of

leadership.[104] The Maryland campaign only reinforced this belief among the president

and other civilian leadership.

Lincoln's issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation presented another test for

civil-military relations. Lincoln had been tip-toeing around the issue throughout the

summer, quietly consulting with key players in the political sphere. The proclamation was

made under the guise of a war measure and an attempt to weaken both the Confederate

Army and the South's economy. McClellan reacted with disgust telegraphing his thoughts

to several editors of anti-war democrat newspapers with one of them stating in an

editorial that the emancipation proclamation was an "absurd proclamation of a political

coward."[105] The firing endures as one of the great controversies of the war, but it was

Lincoln reasserting not just civilian control but civilian supremacy over the military by

relieving an insubordinate commander. While more recent command disputes, such as

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[103] Colonel Thomas Key quoted by Cohen, 39.

[104] Sears, 135.

[105] Sears, 421.

MacArthur vs. Truman, receive far more attention, the move remains the prime example of the tradition of objective civilian control being upheld.

Lincoln as Supreme Commander

Lincoln was in many ways, the president-general and a complete outlier when it came to strategy and war-making. While Lincoln generally did take a hands-off approach, he wasn't afraid to order his generals into action or give his input on campaign plans as commander in chief. He stayed up late reading books on strategy and military tactics from the Library of Congress and concluded that the Union had to destroy the Confederate ability to wage war, and thus destroy their armies, their chief source for maintaining secession. As one scholar put it, "he believed that he had to master the details of war, from the technology to the organization and movement of armies, if only to enable himself to make informed judgments about general officers."[106] Lincoln saw a part of his responsibility to be informed on military affairs and strategy though he did not attend West Point or serve in the military, it was a part of his duty as commander-in-chief. Lincoln articulated his strategy, calling on his army to, "threaten all their positions at the same time with superior force."[107] Even then, he confessed to General Ulysses S. Grant at their first meeting in March 1864 that, "he had never professed to be a military man or know how campaigns should be conducted" and yet at that meeting, he brought out a map

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[106] Cohen, 49.

[107] Donald, 334.

of the Virginia theatre and gave Grant his campaign plan much to Grant's chagrin.[108]

Even for his confessed inexperience, he formed a keen understanding of the important

link between strategy and politics, something many of his generals did not or would not

understand.[109] The Union had a larger population, more industry, and the freedom of

initiative, Lincoln simply had to find a way to mobilize the necessary resources and align

it all toward victory.

One of the challenges is that the political goals of the administration often did not

align with the military leaders. Lincoln had a clear philosophy as his personal secretaries

John Hay and John Nicoly put it: "War and politics, campaign and statecraft, are Siamese

twins, inseparable and interdependent; and to talk of military operations without the

direction and interference of an administrator is as absurd as to plan a campaign without

recruits, pay or rations."[110] At the outset, Lincoln maintained that secession was simply a

rebellion, a term he said in speeches or wrote over four hundred times throughout the

war.[111] Even if the war was defined as a "rebellion", it was still a war, and the President

was the commander-in-chief. Lincoln believed it was his prerogative to increase the size

of the army and manage the financing of the war. In short, he would fight this war with

vigor and without interference from other parts of the government. While Congress did

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[108] Ulysses S. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant. Vol II.* (New York: Charles L Webster & Company, 1886), 122-123.

[109] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 364.

[110] John Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (New York: The Century Co, 1914), 359-360.

[111] Herbert, 302.

provide oversight, the most interference he got was from the Army, specifically, the officer corps. At the very beginning of his tenure as the leader of the Army of the Potomac, George McClellan allegedly said, "If the government expected him to fight the with the South to free the slaves, they would be mistaken, for he would not do it."[112] McClellan figured that after winning a few victories, there would be a negotiated compromise peace. Lincoln's administration never strode away from the total reunification of the Union, conditional or not, which contributed to the dysfunction of the relationships early in the conflict because war aims weren't aligned to meet political goals. This left Lincoln with a difficult question; how should he handle a situation in which general officers disagree regarding the course of action to try and address a disconnect between political and military strategy?

However, not only was there disagreement over the politics of the war but the strategy as well. It is important to understand the three levels of war. In military theory, there are three levels, strategic, operational, and tactical. The strategic level is generally viewed as national policy and theatre strategy. The operational level entails campaigns and major operations. Finally, the tactical and lowest levels are battles, engagements, or small unit actions. Clausewitz is credited as identifying two levels: strategy and tactics during his writing while Aleksandr A. Svechin, an officer in the 1920s Soviet Red Army, first proposed the concept of an operational level of war.[113] However, the U.S. Army did

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[112] McClellan quoted by Sears, 127.

[113] Andrew S. Harvey "The Levels of War as Levels of Analysis." *Military Review* (2021), 76.

not adopt fully adopt this perspective in all three facets as a core doctrine until 1982 but this framework has important applicability to the Civil War in the context of civil-military relations. For the most part, debates between civilians and military officials occur at the strategic level but Lincoln was unique because he was involved in all three levels at different points of the war.

Until General McClellan's dismissal in November 1862, Lincoln was more than happy to act as if following Huntington's principle of officer autonomy allowing the military free reign on tactics and strategy. Lincoln told members of the Committee on the Conduct of the War in January of 1862 that when it came to military planning, he, "did not think he had any right to know, but that, as he was not a military man, it was his duty to defer to General McClellan."[114] Interestingly, President George Bush would make a similar comment about General George Casey during the war in Iraq almost 150 years later, saying; "Casey is a wise and smart man who has spent a lot of time in Baghdad recently, it's his judgment that I rely upon."[115] Both President Lincoln's and President Bush's statements demonstrate deference to military expertise in matters concerning war planning and strategy. They are a fundamental aspect of democratic governance, in which civilian authorities, while maintaining ultimate decision-making authority, often rely heavily on the professional judgment and expertise of military commanders in executing military operations.

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[114] Donald, 329.

[115] Bush quoted by Payne, 182.

Even though Lincoln was commander in chief, he wanted to give the officer corps

a degree of autonomy and defer to their military judgment given that in theory, they had

the expertise and experience to fight and win. However, this allowed McClellan to

handpick his officers and receive wide latitude in his campaigning. However, the result

was a sort of groupthink that became termed by General John Pope as "McClellanism"

which came in the form of passivity on the battlefield, distrust of anyone outside the army

of the Potomac, and always an overestimation of Confederate capabilities.[116] This

passivity was also a feature in the Western Theatre where Union Forces under George

Buell milled about in Kentucky and Tennessee doing little despite the President's

pleadings.

The turning point for Lincoln was the dismissal of George Buell and the demotion

of George McClellan in the summer and fall of 1862. Lincoln was now willing to relieve

generals who weren't aggressive political consequences be damned. By this point,

Lincoln had consulted with many military officials and his readings made him realize that

he needed to own the title of commander in chief. He would never have the staff or time

to personally direct military campaigns, but he was commander-in-chief and felt it was

well within his right to demand results from the army. Lincoln would be the first and last

president to take direct control of field armies issuing orders and managing the

movements of forces. Most notably, Lincoln and Edwin Stanton cooked up a scheme to

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[116] Daniel Leasure, "Personal Observations and Experiences in the Pope Campaign in Virginia" In *Glimpses of a Nation's Struggle: A Series of Papers read before the Minnesota Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, (St. Paul: St. Paul Book and Stationery. 1887): 147-148.

try and trap Stonewall Jackson's forces in the Shenandoah Valley. Unfortunately for the pair, the Union commander in the valley disregarded Lincoln's orders and Jackson retreated to fight another day. But by this point, Lincoln felt comfortable enough managing the forces directly and if they weren't willing to act on their own imitative, then he would put into the record that they would not follow the president's orders and relieve them if necessary. Lincoln also frequented the army camps first at the Peninsula in the summer of 1862, in Antietam in the Fall of 1862, after Chancellorsville and Ft. Monroe in 1864 where he spoke to corps commanders and was able to have a sense of the thinking of the senior military commander.[117] There was an inherent political element to the president's management of the officer corps. Success on the battlefield was tied directly to the political will of the North to sustain the war. As Lincoln aptly summarized, "the masses of the country generally are only dissatisfied at our lack of military success. Defeat and failure in the field make everything seem wrong."[118]

There were certainly consequences as Republicans suffered brutal electoral defeats throughout 1862 both for issues on the battlefield and off. Daniel Bessner and Eric Lorber argue that the two most critical factors in a president punishing generals are the salience of the issue, and whether the issue is a core part of their political agenda.[119] McClellan had directly undermined the president's war aims by acting as a partisan on the

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[117] Cohen, 42.

[118] Lincoln quoted by Herbert, 429.

[119] "Toward a Theory of Civil–Military Punishment." *Armed Forces & Society* (2012): 52.

issues of slavery and confiscation of rebel property. In short, McClellan was doing what Peter Feaver defined as ''functional'' shirk, this is when a military officer disregards the policy of the civilians or does not work towards the goal set by the civilians.[120] Buell also participated in "functional" shirking by ignoring the president's advice to advance, thus challenging the commander-in-chief intentionally or not. From then on, Lincoln would directly involve himself in strategy and military policy.

While the Union sought volunteers under the impression that the war would not last long, it was clear by 1862 that this would not be the case and the North had already exhausted its volunteer pool. The Union refrained from pursuing a national draft until 1863 when Senator Henry Wilson, chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, sponsored the Conscription Act of 1863, which established the first national draft system and required registration by every male citizen and immigrant who had applied for citizenship between the ages of 20 and 45.[121] This was the first time that the United States had officially pursued nationwide conscription and as the Pulitzer prize-winning historian Fred Albert Shannon pointed out, "military service was not an ingrained idea in the American mind."[122] The 1863 Act was also notable because it took the recruitment out of the hands of the state and its respective officials further solidifying the idea of a truly

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[120] Peter Feaver, "Crisis as Shirking: An Agency Theory Explanation of the Souring of American Civil-Military Relations." *Armed Forces and Society* (1998): 409.

[121] The Senate Historical Office. n.d. "The Civil War: The Senate's Story." *United States Senate.* (December 24, 2023) https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/civil_war/ConscriptionAct.htm.

[122] Fred Albert Shannon, *The Organization and Administration of the Union Army 1861-1865.* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co. 1928), 294.

American army.[123] Up to that point in time, the United States had relied on the volunteer citizen soldier. The principle of "states rights" had been applied to the army but that was not enough.[124] President James Madison had pushed for conscription during the War of 1812 but was met with a fierce rebuke by Congress. Still, a draft was a fickle matter, a citizen could waive his draft status if he paid $300 or found a substitute which ruffled a lot of feathers, particularly in immigrant and working-class communities who didn't have the financial or social means to waive their draft status or find a substitute.[125] The distaste towards the draft culminated with riots in New York City just days after the victory of Gettysburg resulting in several military officials being killed and African Americans being lynched. In the aftermath, the New York governor Horatio Seymour wrote to President Lincoln stating that the draft was illegal, but Lincoln replied that only if the Supreme Court deemed it illegal would it be stopped since the Union quite frankly could no longer, "waste time to experiment with the volunteer system."[126] The Union continued a dual policy of volunteers and conscription though few men were drafted. For example, of the 292,441 names drawn in the first draft after the act was passed in 1863, only 9,881 were drafted for military service.[127] In fact, in the Midwest, some enlisted because they

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[123] Herbert, 424.

[124] Shannon, 5-38.

[125] "The Civil War: The Senate's Story."

[126] Michael Beschloss, *Presidents of War.* (New York: Broadway Books, 2018), 217-218.

[127] Shannon, 306.

feared the social stigma among their fellow soldiers if they were drafted.[128] Every Spring, the enlistment of soldiers whose contracts were up prompted the Union to try and retain them through bonuses, leave, and loyalty to their fellow soldiers. The implementation of conscription marked a significant shift in the Union's approach to manpower mobilization during the Civil War, sparking controversy and civil unrest, and highlighting the complex challenges faced by the government in maintaining military manpower as the conflict prolonged.

The Emancipation Proclamation was one of the key moments of the war when the elimination of slavery became a core political goal of the Union. But Lincoln's arrival at emancipation was complicated. On the issue of slavery in the context of the war, his goal was merely to stop the expansion of it beyond the South, "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do that."[129] But the war forced his hand, and Lincoln, the shrewd politician that he was began pushing for emancipation through military policy rather than through Congress. This was always Lincoln's approach when it came to the war, if he could find ways to get things done without other institutions, he would. The most outspoken officers were pushed out and in their place were officers, whatever their personal views, who were willing to prosecute.

Abraham Lincoln's role as both president and commander-in-chief during the Civil War was characterized by a dynamic and evolving approach to strategy, military

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[128] Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of the Tennessee* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 215.

[129] Cohen, 32.

leadership, and the pursuit of political goals. Initially hesitant to interfere in military matters, Lincoln eventually asserted his authority, actively engaging in strategy development and directly managing field armies. His dismissal of generals like George McClellan and George Buell signaled a shift toward more assertive civilian control and demonstrated Lincoln's willingness to prioritize aggressive military action aligned with political objectives. Lincoln's impact on civil-military relations during the war set a precedent for presidential involvement in military strategy even though future presidents would refrain from such actions. His pragmatic approach to emancipation and utilization of conscription highlighted Lincoln's commitment to achieving victory and preserving the Union, even if it meant compromising on political and social challenges. Ultimately, no man can be more credited with Union victory than Abraham Lincoln. Through personal family tragedy, frustration with his generals, and other challenges he persevered. His legacy has taken on a certain mythos in the American memory for his empathy and decency, which is true, but he was also forceful, pushing for the draft, endorsing total war, and cracking down on domestic liberties in ways that no other American president has done before or since. He did so because it had to be done.

The Dilemma of Objective Control: Henry Halleck

Henry Halleck is a Union General who wasn't as well studied compared to Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan, but he played a critical role in advising the president on strategy and broader military policymaking. He was a prodigy of Dennis Hart Mahan who was a professor of civil and military Engineering and the most important figure in bringing the theory and ideas of Antinoe Jomini to the American Military. Halleck was one of the few

generals in the war who missed out on the Mexican-American War instead being stationed in California where he translated Henri Jomini's book, *Political and Military Life of Napoleon*. At the onset of the war, he was appointed the rank of Major General and commanded all Union forces in the Western Theatre. The failure of the Peninsula Campaign in the Summer of 1862 led to his appointment as General-in-Chief of the Armies of the United States.

Lincoln's and Edwins Stanton's frustration with George McClellan's passiveness as a military commander as well as a lack of uncoordinated strategy between different theatres was the driving force for the creation of the position, General in Chief.[130] However, Halleck viewed the role more as administrative, and serving as a conduit between the field commanders and the President rather than a true field commander. In a letter to William Sherman, Halleck wrote,

> I am simply a military advisor of the Secretary of War and the President and must obey and carry out what they decide upon, whether I concur in their decisions or not. As a good soldier, I obey the orders of my superiors. If I disagree with them, I say so, but when they decide, is my duty faithfully to carry out their decision.[131]

Admiral Mike Mullen, the 17th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the modern manifestation of Halleck's role echoed this sentiment, stating that, "you have the debate, the president makes the decision, and we march on."[132] Curiously enough, it was

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[130] John F. Marszalek, *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), 129.

[131] Jean Edward Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 287.

[132] Quoted from Payne, 166.

Halleck's own decision to describe himself as a presidential advisor, Lincoln and his civilian advisors didn't necessarily see it that way and it wasn't prescribed in law in the way that the Joint Chiefs of Staff are now. The establishment of the position of General-in-Chief during the Civil War, despite Henry Halleck's interpretation as more of an administrative role, reflected the need for centralized military coordination and a unified strategic vision to fight modern wars.

In theory, Halleck could give political cover to Lincoln should he pursue command changes, given that Halleck was a Democrat who stayed loyal to the United States. From an administrative perspective, Halleck was successful, he continued Stanton's policies of rooting out corruption and the Union's logistics became overwhelming in a short period. More than anything, he became a master at navigating the challenging and cutthroat business of army and administrative policies, something that many Union generals didn't necessarily appreciate.

Though Halleck was an important figure in creating the advisory capacity within the military to the president, one episode is an important reminder of the democratic civil-military dilemma. In January of 1863, after Ambrose Burnside's Fredericksburg debacle, he wanted the Army of the Potomac to engage in another offensive into Virginia. Lincoln, knowing the bad weather that was inevitable professed skepticism and asked Halleck to go and assess the situation and give his professional opinion to the president. Halleck refused opting to defer to Burnside, based on his view that, "a general in

command of an army in the field is the best judge of the existing condition."[133] Lincoln promptly wrote back, "Your military skill is useless to me if you will not do this."[134] In response, Halleck offered to resign as general-in-chief and Lincoln had no choice but to back off because Lincoln's cabinet had already had two high-profile resignations in previous months, and the general-in-chief of the army leaving would spell political suicide for the president.[135] Was Halleck's offer to resign a form of professional protest? Halleck biographer John Marszalek simply chalked it up to the stress of the job but Halleck was a creature of Washington, it's difficult to believe that he did not know what the outcome would be when he offered to resign, and thus boxed the president in as later American officers would do to their commander in chiefs.[136] Intentional or not, Halleck was committing a political act even though as he saw it, he was merely fulfilling his professional responsibility. Risa Brooks perfectly summarizes what Halleck was doing stating that, "those who see themselves as professionals define away the possibility that their actions might be political."[137] The ongoing battle between military expertise and civilian authority in the context of Halleck and Lincoln's strategic disagreement raised

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[133] Henery Halleck quoted by Herbert, 410.

[134] Lincoln quoted by Herbert, 410.

[135] Herbert 410.

[136] Marszalek, 164.

[137] Brooks, 17.

the question about the appropriateness of officers resigning or refusing a post in disagreement with civilian policy or decisions.

The debate about the appropriateness of senior officers resigning in protest over disagreements with civilian leaders is closely scrutinized in American civil-military relations but the Halleck episode is overlooked.[138] One of the leading scholars on American civil-military relations, Peter Feaver in his article in *International Security* dubbed the principle of American officers having the "professional" right to insist that civilians heed their advice on military planning and strategy and an obligation to speak out publicly or resign if those civilians fail to do so as, "McMasterism."[139] This term came out of Army officer H.R. McMaster's New York Times bestselling book, *Dereliction of Duty* which blamed military officers for not doing more to voice their concerns during the decision-making process in the run-up to American involvement in the Vietnam War.[140] In some respects, "McMasterism" was the militaries counter to the civilian supremacists principle that "civilians have a right to be wrong." By taking direct action publicly, the military could prevent civilians from being wrong in the first place. Dr. Risa Brooks in her evaluation of this phenomenon wrote that this principle could have serious consequences; "If a military leader resigns in opposition to an imminent decision by a president or policymaker and that action mobilizes public opposition, the costs to the

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[138] Brooks, 18.

[139] Feaver, "The Right to Be Right," 94.

[140] Feaver, "The Right to Be Right," 94.

civilian leadership of pursuing that action increase."[141] There are clear delineations between general officers being fired and resigning over policy disagreements or other issues. The firing of a general officer implies a loss of confidence in military leadership from the civilian leadership. The resignation of a general officer implies a loss of confidence in the civilian leadership. The effect of either action depends on the popularity of the general or civilian leader, the perception by the public and other civilian leaders, and the impact of the policy they are disagreeing over. The Halleck episode with President Lincoln, where he offered to resign in protest over a disagreement on military strategy, serves as a historical precursor to debates within American civil-military relations. This overlooked incident illuminates the enduring dilemma of senior officers contemplating resignation as a form of professional protest, a principle that can be traced back further into American military history than is often acknowledged in contemporary scholarship.

Halleck continued to survive as General-in-Chief, but his role did change when U.S. Grant assumed his position and Halleck was appointed to be his chief of staff. But his passiveness and clashes with the President and Secretary of War had earned him a demotion. The president remarked at one point that Halleck was, "little more . . . than a first-rate clerk."[142] That largely became his role as the intensity of fighting increased dramatically in 1864 requiring more supplies and men than ever before.[143] Halleck would

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[141] Brooks, 19.

[142] Abraham Lincoln quoted by Marszalek, 202.

[143] Marszalek, 204.

continually clash with Grant over strategy, but he had already been supplanted and his influence deteriorated in the final eighteen months of the war. Both Lincoln's decision to keep Halleck and his respective decision to retain his position even after his demotion are important to note. Lincoln had undermined the Huntington principle of objective control by interfering directly in military operations but was the president wrong for his frustration about the lack of aggressiveness and results by the army? Was it wrong for Halleck to be frustrated by the intrusion of civilians into military operations? There isn't a direct answer for either but shows how relationships are the primary driver of civil-military relations. Halleck's changing role and ultimate demotion feature the persistent tension between military expertise and civilian authority. The dilemma of objective control, epitomized by Halleck's clashes with both Lincoln and Grant, emphasizes the balance required in navigating strategic decisions during times of conflict—a challenge that continues throughout the broader discourse on the interactions between military leaders and civilian policymakers.

Halleck's legacy is incredibly checkered. Even now, there is an army of historians ready to assail his faults and shortcomings. Williamson Murray and Wayne Wei-Sheng asserted that Halleck was, "A pedant, enveloped in a warped understanding of Jomini and what Halleck believed was proper military theory."[144] This led him to be overly cautious and came close to "single-handedly wrecking the Union War effort" because he clashed

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[144] Williamson Murray and Wayne Wei-Siang, *A Savage War: A Military History of the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 543.

with Grant.[145] Even still, he kept Grant and Sherman around when they were facing their shortcomings early in the war, if those two had resigned or been fired, the outcome of the war might have been entirely different.[146]

Henry Halleck emerged as a figure both decisive and polarizing. As General-in-Chief, he played a crucial role in shaping the Union's military strategy, providing administrative prowess and political cover to President Lincoln when he needed it most. However, the overlooked episode of his clash with Lincoln over the Virginia Offensive highlights the perennial civil-military dilemma, offering a historical precursor to later debates in American civil-military relations. Halleck's subsequent demotion and critical assessments of his cautious approach shows the challenges of military leadership during war. While his legacy remains checkered, with criticisms of pedantry and overcaution, Halleck's strategic decisions, including retaining Grant and Sherman, had far-reaching implications for the war's outcome. The enigma of Halleck's role, from a master navigator of administrative policies to a figure deemed "little more than a first-rate clerk," reflects the paradoxical dynamics of civil-military relations during the war.

Grant, Sherman, and Hard War

While the Army of the Potomac was dominated by political drama and infighting, Virginia wasn't the only place experiencing war. The Western theatre was also the center of fierce fighting for many years. But unlike the Army of the Potomac, the political

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[145] Murray and Wei-Siang, 543.

[146] Marszalek, 201.

controversy wasn't as big a problem. There were firings and political agendas were still present. While scrutiny probably wasn't as intense compared to the Eastern Theatre given the distance from Washington to where the fighting was. It was here that the Generals who ultimately won the war, Ulysses S. Grant and William Sherman pulled their punches. While Lincoln was present in the background, he wasn't as involved in decision-making probably because Grant and Sherman were competent and aggressive, the exact opposite of the Army of the Potomac. While Grant and Lincoln's relationship is often celebrated as a triumph of cordial civil-military relations, there were strains.

Ulysses S. Grant didn't come with the pompous merit that many of his fellow officers did. He ranked 21 out of 39 in his class at West Point, had a competent record during the Mexican-American War, and failed in several business adventures by the time of the Civil War. His melancholy background might have made it easier for him to work with civilian superiors. He did, however, do what few Union Generals did in the early years of the war, win battles. Most notably he took Fort Donelson and Henry, standing his ground at Shiloh, and then undertook an epic campaign against Vicksburg. Even still he didn't necessarily fancy himself a soldier, years after the war while traveling in Germany, he told the German Crown Prince while reviewing Prussian troops,

> The truth is I am more of a farmer than a soldier. I take little or no interest in military affairs, and, although I entered the army thirty-five years ago and have been in two wars, in Mexico as a young lieutenant, and later, I never went into the army without regret and never retired without pleasure.[147]

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[147] James D. McCabe, *A Tour Around the World* (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Company, 1879), 432.

Even if the remark was in jest, Grant did not center his personality and perspective on his experience as a soldier and when it came to war and politics, this aided him in his rise through the ranks during the war. His most trusted subordinate William Sherman excelled at the academy and missed out on the Mexican-American War but spent extensive time in the South including a tour as the first superintendent of the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning & Military Academy.

At the beginning of the War, the Lincoln administration sent out guidance restraining soldiers from taking Southerner's property, but by the Summer of 1862, the war was evolving not just on the battlefield but off of it as well. Incidents of foraging and taking of Southern property began almost immediately as soon as Union soldiers moved into the South, but this was not endorsed by senior officers, and many tried to discipline soldiers under their command. However, Congress passed several laws that endorsed the seizure of Southern property, and eventually, the Emancipation Proclamation was Lincoln's subtle endorsement of the policy. The key difference between conventional war and total war is that all civilian-associated resources and infrastructure are either legitimate military targets or there is no distinction between military and civilian personnel. While this did not necessarily mean that every civilian resource and infrastructure was targeted, it did dramatically change the context of the war. From the perspective of Union Soldiers, if stealing and burning property got them home faster, so be it.[148] But the war was evolving, as Union forces advanced deeper into the South, they

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[148] Woodworth, 212.

not only had to deal with unfirmed Confederate armies but guerrilla forces as well. To deal with the guerrilla forces that were harassing his troops, Sherman wrote, "we are not going to chase through the canebrakes and swamps the individuals who did the deeds but will visit punishment upon the adherents of that cause which employs such agents."[149]

It is important to note that while soldiers were charged with carrying out the day-to-day realities of total war, the decision to take the Civil War from "regular war" to "total war" lies solely with the civilian leadership in the North. While John Pope was the first high-ranking military officer with the philosophy to take the war directly to the Southern Population, the civilians could have easily stopped Pope but instead Lincoln took it as a subtle endorsement of total war by the military and ultimately, there was no shortage of officers who either felt the same way that Pope did or were willing to wage total war because it was their professional duty. While there is still a scholarly debate on whether the American Civil War was "total war" there was a clear change in the attitude towards war in the American context.[150] Some might argue that the arrival of total war was simply the logical endpoint of Clausewitz's trinity; escalating violence, fueled by hatred and animosity, driving the combatants in the war to a level of destruction that was inconceivable at the start of the conflict.[151] But the decision to do so was debated and eventually agreed upon by the civilian leadership which in the context of American civil-military relations was the correct approach no matter how one feels about the morality of

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[149] Sherman quoted by Woodworth, 245.

[150] Mark E. Neely Jr, "Was the Civil War a Total War?" *Civil War History* (1991): 5-28.

[151] Murray and Wei-Siang, 354.

such policies. The transition from conventional warfare to total war singles out the influence of civilian leadership on military policy. As the conflict shifted from restrained military actions to a more encompassing strategy that targeted civilian-associated resources, the decision to embrace total war emanated from the highest echelons of the Northern government. This strategic shift, marked by the subtle endorsement of policies like the Emancipation Proclamation shows how in democratic civil-military relations, the character of conflict often lies with civilians rather than the military.

The final manifestation of total war was the March to the Sea in the fall of 1864. After taking Atlanta, William Sherman decided to take half his army and march through the heart of Georgia and make the state "howl."[152] The purpose of the march would be to deliberately target railroads, bridges, factories, warehouses, and anything that contributed to the Confederate war effort. While the march has certainly taken on a life of its own in the historiography of the war, there is no doubt there was a concerted effort to target civilian infrastructure. They took food, horses, and other livestock and occasionally burned down homes. The Confederates up the ante as well increasingly using guerrilla warfare and land mines, which was considered to be outside the norms of "civilized warfare."[153] The March to the Sea was the endpoint of total war where the brutal reality of the conflict came full circle. Rather than normal battles between armies, it became a battle of peoples using any means necessary to harm one another.

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[152] Sherman quoted by Woodworth, 586.

[153] Woodworth, 602.

Most notable about the Western theatre was that Union progress in various campaigns made the debate over how to deal with the issue of slavery a central and recurring problem. Outside of brief battles in Maryland in Pennsylvania, the fighting was almost totally fought in a 50 square mile area of Virginia, the Western Theatre saw fighting in Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Georgia, and later the Carolinas. It was here that many northern soldiers got a firsthand look at the brutality of slavery. But the Theatre was constantly a set of contradictions, in some ways, the treatment of liberated slaves by Union soldiers was no better than when they were enslaved, but many freed slaves were offered jobs or hired to work in the rear areas of the army. However, attitudes would change not just because of war measures but because former slaves saw the blue-clad men as their deliverers from bondage. Beyond serving in the rear areas, former slaves provided critical intelligence which was important where there were few other sympathies.[154] The complexities and contradictions of the Western Theatre during the Civil War not only exposed Union soldiers to the harsh realities of slavery but also played a role in shaping evolving attitudes toward emancipation, highlighting the impact of the war on perceptions of freedom and equality.

The Western Theatre wasn't immune from the ensuing drama of civil-military relations; the most notable incident came in the early winter of 1862 when the first attempt to take Vicksburg was set by bad weather and his frustration with supply issues led to General Orders No. 11 which stated that "the Jews, as a class" would be fired from

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[154] Woodworth, 214.

the Department of the Tennessee and any who failed to do so within a day would be arrested.[155] The order was a public relations disaster inviting a quick rebuke by the White House and a censure from Congress that fell short by just three votes.[156] The failure of the first Vicksburg campaign and the General Order No. 11 invited the War Department into Grant's backyard. Edwin Stanton, secretary of war, sent Charles Dana, the acting assistant secretary of the War to scrutinize Grant and the campaign.[157] Dana's resume didn't exactly fit the title of his position, he was the former editor and part-owner of the *New York Tribune* and had no prior military experience.[158] It was a dramatic move to increase direct civilian control over a military campaign. The author would argue that this was Lincoln's version of a "political commissar" with Dana's role intended to ensure political control of the military. Interestingly though, Grant and his staff embraced Dana and likewise, he grew fond of Grant, becoming one of his most ardent supporters inside Washington. Whether it was his political instincts or reflection of his character, Grant won an important supporter who would be at his side till the end of the war while also helping pave his path to command all Union armies. The incident involving General Orders No. 11 and Charles Dana's scrutiny in the Western Theatre not only highlighted the challenges of civil-military relations but also showcased Grant's ability to navigate

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[155] Donald Miller, *Vicksburg* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019), 259.

[156] Ibid., 260.

[157] Ibid., 322.

[158] Ibid., 325.

political complexities, ultimately turning a potential crisis into a personal advantage that would shape the course of the Civil War.

There were War Democrats and conservative Republicans who wanted nothing to do with the issue while others endorsed the abolition of slaves purely as a war measure. The most notable to endorse this "Total War" strategy was William Halleck who himself wasn't an abolitionist but rather believed weakening the Confederacy in every capacity could bring a quicker end to the conflict.[159] William Sherman was also prejudiced and wrote in 1861, "I would not if I could abolish or modify slavery."[160] Though these views probably came from the extensive time he spent in South Carolina nonetheless was furious that his friends in the South would betray the Union stating, "On the question of Secession…I am Ultra-I believe in coercion and cannot comprehend how any government can exist unless it defends its integrity."[161] The general who is most associated with waging total war against the South and would be reviled for generations of Southerners was also a man who held deeply held prejudices. But like a lot of other Union generals, saw the liberation of slaves merely as a war measure rather than a movement toward abolition. But regardless of how they felt, their execution of policy made it easier for Lincoln to eventually endorse emancipation.

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[159] Ibid., 175.

[160] Ibid., 67.

[161] William Sherman quoted by Donald Miller, 67.

The Western Theatre emerged as the center of all the contradictions, complexities, and crucial moments of the Civil War. Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William Sherman, instrumental in securing victory when victories were difficult to find early in the war, navigated through the challenges of war with competence and aggression, providing a contrast to the political drama that regularly engulfed the Army of the Potomac. The transition from conventional to total war, pushed by civilian leadership, marked a shift in strategy, challenging established norms of war and reshaping the very fabric of conflict. The Western Theatre not only exposed Union soldiers to the harsh realities of slavery but also played a role in shaping evolving attitudes towards emancipation, freedom, and equality. The incidents of General Orders No. 11 and Charles Dana showcased Grant's adeptness in turning a potential crisis into a personal advantage. As the war progressed, the debate over slavery and the endorsement of a "total war" strategy by some leaders demonstrated the complexity of political dynamics influencing military policies. Despite personal prejudices and reluctance, the execution of policies ultimately facilitated Lincoln's path toward the endorsement of emancipation. In the Western Theatre, the confluence of military strategy, political maneuvering, and evolving societal attitudes left an indelible mark on the narrative of the Civil War and its aftermath.

Ride of the Westerners: 1864

By 1864, the war was in its third year with hundreds of thousands of casualties, and the conclusion of the conflict seemed farther away than ever. Despite marketable success in the Western Theatre and a crucial victory at Gettysburg, the Union's strategic position had changed little. But Lincoln believed he had finally found the team to bring

the war to a decisive end. Ulysses S. Grant who had made a name for himself at Fort

Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga was promoted to Lieutenant General and

brought in to command all U.S. forces, and William Shearman to take his place running

operations in the west. The Army and Navy Journal, the semiofficial newspaper of the

U.S. military that started in 1863 pointed out that hopefully with Grant, the entire military

strategy would now have, "unity of direction."[162] There was also another note made by

the journal that hopefully now, the civilians would, "certainly make those who have the

power of so seriously damaging the reputation and influence of our officers more

cautious about exercising it."[163] In essence, Grant could stop the criticism of civilians by

delivering results on the battlefield.

Lincoln and Grant had never met or talked in person before, only through

telegrams via the War Department, so there was some worry in the White House that

Grant had political ambitions, and the fallout from General Order No. 11 banning Jews

from army jobs still lingered.[164] But Grant personally rebuffed and idea of running for

president and was subsequently welcomed by the administration with open arms.

Moreover, Grant and Lincoln bonded over their similarities. Both were raised in the

Midwest far removed from the elite circles of the Northeast that dominated national

politics, they both married into slaveholding families and had overcome considerable

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[162] "Vol 1- NO 30." *The United States Army and Navy journal and gazette of the regular and volunteer forces* (1864): 504.

[163] Vol 1- NO 30, 504.

[164] Sears, 620.

professional adversity to reach the positions they were in. The partnership between Ulysses S. Grant and Abraham Lincoln, two men with humble origins and shared experiences, marked a turning point in the Union's efforts to bring the Civil War to a decisive end.

When Grant arrived at the Army of the Potomac, they had been fighting the same army around the same Virginia rivers for three straight years. Union soldiers had repeatedly shown they were willing to slug it out with the Confederates on the Peninsula, at Antietam, at Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. Victory at Gettysburg gave the Army of the Potomac the desperately needed confidence of not only its soldiers but its generals that they could outfight the Army of Northern Virginia. Even still, as Bruce Catton summarized, "for a long time they had told one another that the one thing they wanted was a fighting general in command."[165] But there was a bargain in this belief, if the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac wanted a fight, Grant would give it to them.

To fully ascend his duties as commander of all Union armies, he was nominated for a promotion to lieutenant general. To this point, he had been far removed from Washington and Grant would receive his first baptism in the ferocious politics of the capitol. Showing up to the White House for the first time for a dinner reception, he shook so many hands and received so many pats on the back that he never had time to eat. In the West, Grant generally had the freedom to do what he wanted without oversight from Washington but now his every move would be scrutinized not just by the

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[165] Catton, 108-109.

administration and Congress but the press as well. But unlike the previous commanders, Grant understood the politics and was cognizant that the civilians had pressures as politicians that he as a military officer did not have. Grant's transition to commanding all Union armies brought him face-to-face with the overwhelming politics of Washington, but he approached this new role with an understanding of the political pressures faced by democratically elected civilian leaders that previous military leaders did not or would not understand.

March and April marked a roundabout discussion on the Union strategy for 1864 and now more than ever, events on the battlefield would be directly tied to politics with an election coming in that fall. Grant's ascension to Lieutenant General, the first to hold that rank since George Washington, might have allowed him to make his stamp on Union strategy but this was not the case. Initially, Grant presented a scheme to take the city of Mobile, something he had been advocating for throughout the fall even before his promotion but was rejected in favor of an expedition into Texas. The French emperor Napoleon III had created a puppet state in Mexico and foreign policy signals to Europe were much more important than Mobile in the view of Lincoln and the Secretary of War. Grant still advocated for a strike against Mobile instead of attacking by sea, by land via New Orleans but this too was rejected, Mobile would have to wait. Finally, and maybe Grant's most radical proposal was to split up the Army of the Potomac with one portion being sent to North Carolina to strike at Raleigh and draw Lee away from Richmond while the other could take the fight directly to Richmond. This final proposal was again rejected as Lincoln reminded the senior brass that for the Virginia theatre, the main

objective was Lee's Army.[166] Three consecutive rejections of Grant's strategic vision

might have been a bad omen for their relationship, but Grant understood Lincoln's

signals. Grant's final campaign plan, five armies in three different theatres acting in

concert was music to Lincoln's ears. Here was someone who as Lincoln envisaged would,

"move at once upon the enemy's whole line so as to bring into action our great

superiority in numbers."[167] The extensive discussions on military strategy and political

considerations during the Civil War, Grant's final campaign plan, reflecting President

Lincoln's strategic vision of utilizing the vast resources of the North against the South,

marked a crucial juncture where the coordination of multiple armies symbolized a

strategic harmony that would profoundly influence the course of the conflict in 1864.

Unlike Henry Halleck or other senior officers, Grant brought a broad strategic

framework to confront the challenges of modern warfare. Armies were now too big, too

organized, and too well-supplied to be destroyed in one battle. It had taken Grant nearly

two years and numerous campaigns to split the Confederacy in two and even then, there

was still much fighting to occur in the western theatre showcasing the conundrum. Every

previous commander in the East had envisaged some sort of confrontational battle with

Lee, but even if they could do so, there is almost no evidence of what they would do

afterward.[168] Even Gettysburg, often popularized as the turning point of the war, merely

limited Lee's ability to go on the offense rather than bring the fighting to a close. For all

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[166] McPherson, *Tried by War*, 211.

[167] Lincoln quoted by McPherson in *Tried by War*, 214.

[168] Weigley, *A Great Civil War*, 325.

of George Meade's tactical brilliance at Gettysburg, the subsequent Mine-run campaign in the fall of 1863 showed how most Union military leaders had little vision for bringing the war to a decisive end. Even if Lincoln and Grant initially disagreed on the way to go about it, this was the fundamental principle that they both understood which is what made a great partnership. It was finally at this stage of the war that Lincoln felt comfortable enough that he turned the conflict over to those who made it their business as a profession. This is also what separated Grant from Lee. Grant was a strategist and Lee was a tactician. Grant knew that he could never hope to win the war with one battle and therefore would have to fight many battles in many different theatres to both destroy the Confederate Armies and their will to fight.

While Grant was negotiating in Washington with Lincoln, George Meade was also remaking the Army of the Potomac in his image. For the most part, the political hacks and career officers that undermined the civilian leadership were gone. In their place were younger more vigorous generals most of whom started from the bottom of the army as captains and majors and worked their way up. Most of the West Pointers who led brigades had graduated between 1850-1860 and were under the age of 35. Meade himself was a product of this who began as a regimental commander and three years later now commanded the Union's largest field army and held the rank of general. The army went from seven corps to three corps to help Meade manage the battlefield and further get rid of the generals who weren't up to the task at hand. Commanding II Corps was Winfried Hancock who was tough, courageous, and the army's most experienced corps commander but he was still recovering from wounds received at Gettysburg, something that would

nag him for the rest of the war. Leading V Corps was Gouverneur Warren, he was the army's chief engineer but had performed well at Gettysburg. Rounding out the army was the VI Corps under the command of John Sedwick who earned the nickname "Uncle John" from his troops and had held his command since Gettysburg.

It wasn't just at the corps level that the experience changed but even at the brigade and regimental level. The political officers who led the volunteer regiments in the early years of the war were largely gone and were citizen soldiers whose skill and competence had allowed them to survive three years of hard fighting. At the beginning of the Overland campaign, nearly three-quarters of the army's 48 infantry brigades were citizen soldiers who had not attended West Point or had any formal military education; their education was on the battlefield.[169] Even still, there were concerns, besides the veteran soldiers, almost all of the recruits arriving to fill out regiments were men who were either forced to be there or enticed by massive signing bonuses.[170] A large contingent included "bounty men" who took signing bonuses to enlist then deserted and proceeded to do so again, but by 1864, there was a massive crackdown and many were forcibly conscripted into the army as a result.[171] The other problem was that there were still political generals, Meade had made an effort to weed out the ones he could but some still held critical political connections. The compromise would be that they would be kept

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[169] Sears, 626.

[170] Bruce Catton. *A Stillness at Appomattox (Army of the Potomac, Vol. 3),* (New York: Doubleday. 1953), 23.

[171] Ibid., 24.

on a tight leash and with Grant in charge, political connections became a liability, not an asset. The transformation of the Army of the Potomac under George Meade, marked by the infusion of younger, more capable generals and citizen soldiers, signaled a significant shift in its leadership and composition, reflecting how the army was rapidly changing in the face of modern war.

Personal relationships are the foundation of civil-military relations and the pair exemplified this from the moment they met. For all the tediousness of the Spring strategy sessions, the president and Grant formed a good rapport. Even as the Army of the Potomac was groomed the incompetent generals, Grant saw fit to bring a group of officers with him to hold key leadership positions who were dedicated to their profession and couldn't have been more different from the Machiavellians that had occupied most of the key leadership positions in the Army of the Potomac for much of the war to that point. The most notable arrival of new officers was Philip Sheridan and James Wilson. At the battle of Stones River, anticipating a Confederate attack, Sheridan had his entire division up early while the rest of the Union army slept. Indeed, a Confederate attack came, and his division held on long enough for the rest of the Union army to safely withdraw. Sheridan was a hard, charging aggressive commander who had gone from the rank of major to major general in six months. Russell Weigley pointed to Phil Sheridan as the trailblazer for an operation command style characterized by personal toughness and a willingness to remove subordinates deemed inadequate for their roles, a tradition later

upheld by World War II generals like Joe Collins and James Gavin. [172] James Wilson was a "young, fire-eating, just-out-of-West Point" officer but had mostly played an administrative role under Grant, but he turned out to be an outstanding combat leader in his own right.[173] They were both tasked with leading a Calvary Corps in the East that had been dysfunctional for most of the war to that point.

Lincoln's previous frictions with Grant were mended rather quickly since he denounced any idea of him running for the presidency and took a liking to Grant because, in many ways, they thought the same way about strategy. Three years into the war, Lincoln finally had the general whom he trusted and would execute the full prosecution of the war's political goals that had been solidified, the reunification of the Union with the South and the formal ending of slavery. The personal and professional rapport between President Lincoln and General Grant marked a turning point in civil-military relations, aligning their strategic thinking and commitment to achieving the war's political objectives.

George Meade characterized Grant's strategy simply to "overwhelm them" and cause so many strategic dilemmas that the Confederacy's thin resources would be overwhelmed.[174] This was a strategy that Lincoln had been advocating for several years but was always hampered by incompetence and second-guessing from the generals. The

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[172] Russell F. Weigely, *Eisenhower's Lieutenant's": The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944-1945.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1981), 99.

[173] Catton, 171.

[174] George Meade quoted by Stephen Sears, 626.

campaign planning heading into 1864 was hamstrung by what historian Stephen Sears called a "rouges gallery" of generals that had somehow survived despite incompetence and bumbling. [175] One of these was Benjamin Butler who might have been the most political general in the Union Army. But Butler was supposedly the one Union officer who would be executed without a trial by the Confederates.[176] He was a bit of an outlier in the army as a war democrat and largely was able to retain his generalship despite years of incompetence through political favors and his political positioning.[177] More generals that Grant wanted to get rid of but couldn't were Franz Sigel and David Hunter, Sigel a self-proclaimed representative of German Americans, and Hunter, an outspoken abolitionist were exiled to campaign in the Shenandoah Valley to not cause headaches for Grant. Even Grant's effort to fire General Nathaniel Banks after botching the Red River Campaign in Arkansas in March resulted in a rebuke from Halleck who wrote, "Banks is a personal friend of the president and has strong political supporters in and out of Congress. There will undoubtedly be a very strong opposition to his being removed or superseded."[178] Halleck went on to say that the president might go along if there was a true national need for his removal which in the grand scheme of things was not. This group of generals all represented important constituencies that President Lincoln needed for the upcoming election in November so getting rid of them would have been a political

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[175] Sears, 620.

[176] Catton, 207.

[177] Sears, 620.

[178] Grant quoted by Bruce Catton, *Grant Takes Command.* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1968), 175.

headache. Understanding this dilemma, Grant gritted his teeth and kept them around but at a distance so they might not directly cause problems. However, they did directly cause problems by doing what they did best, being incompetent. This allowed Lee to pull reinforcements from where they were and inflicted huge casualties on the Army of the Potomac during the Overland Campaign resulting in a stalemate in Petersburg. But Lincoln's electoral victory in November finally gave Grant a get-out-of-jail-free card, all three were subsequently sent away or resigned in favor of Grant's favorites such as Philip Sheridan who took over the campaign in the Shenandoah Valley and played a critical role in the defeat of Lee in 1865. Grant faced significant challenges dealing with a group of politically connected but often incompetent generals, and it wasn't until Lincoln's electoral victory in November that he could finally remove them and place more capable leaders in key positions.

While Grant was the leader the army of the Potomac desperately needed. It wasn't immune from challenges. The command structure of the army was bizarre due to army politics. While Grant was the overall commander, he was supposed to be the strategist while Meade was the tactician. As Meade's chief of staff, Andrew Humphreys wrote in effect it was, "two officers commanding the same army."[179] Meade was also annoyed that the press was, "uniformed and consistent in endeavoring to make him out the actual commander of this army" and that, "should success attend its operations that my share of

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[179] Ibid., 156.

the credit will be less, than if he were not present."[180] The return of Ambrose Burnside from the west who had commanded the army of the Potomac briefly also confused things as he reported to Grant and not Meade. So, if Meade wanted Burnside to do something he had to go to Grant who in turn would go to Burnside. It certainly made for a puzzling command structure especially since Meade was supposed to be the tactician but technically didn't have direct control over a quarter of his army. The complex command dynamics and challenges within the Army of the Potomac during Grant's leadership serve as a reminder of the intricacies and difficulties inherent in coordinating a large military force, even under a capable strategist like Grant.

For as much as Grant has synchronized Union strategy and resources towards a common strategic goal, it still had to be executed and the first eight months of 1864 were extremely poor. For starters, Grant did not formally receive his promotion to General in Chief till March and an additional two months was needed to put together a campaign plan that would not start till May. The Union had essentially wasted five months to sustain military pressure on the South because of the politics of Washington, the epitome of what "professional supremacists" feared could happen when politics got in the way of war making. From there, Lee fought a skilled campaign against Grant eventually reaching a stage of stagnation around Petersburg in June. The "Overland" campaign was the bloodiest yet, the Army of the Potomac suffered 55,000 casualties in a month and a

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[180] George Meade quoted by Sears, 626.

half.[181] Benjamin Butler's army of the James who was supposed to slip into Richmond's backdoor while Grant occupied Lee moved so slowly that Grant eventually took troops away to prosecute his siege at Petersburg. Sherman fared no better in the West where the Confederate Armies steadily withdrew closer and closer to Atlanta also meeting stalemate by mid-August. Other Union offenses floundered and by the summer, the war had largely stalemated with thousands of casualties. No doubt the Confederacy had taken a beating, but it was not decisive. Lincoln floundered in the White House and prepared for electoral defeat to George McClellan while a member of the New York Sanitary Commission proclaimed, "Both Grant and Sherman are on the eve of disaster."[182]

On the surface and to the average northerner, it might have appeared that the Union was on the verge of disaster and it certainly seemed to the Northern public. It also might have appeared that the Union armies had reached what Clausewitz described as the "culmination point"; the point at which an attacking force, despite previous successes, reaches its maximum strength and effectiveness. Beyond this point, the attacking force may face diminishing returns, exhaustion of resources, and increased vulnerability, potentially leading to a reversal of fortunes. Despite the main Union efforts being bogged down in the East and the West, it had tied up most of the Confederate forces. This first allowed Admiral David Farragut's fleet to attack and blockade Mobile, the last significant blockade-running port in the Gulf of Mexico. This was followed up with Sherman

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[181] Murray and Wei-Siang, 399.

[182] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 756.

outflanking Atlanta, cutting the last railroad from the city and forcing Confederate forces to retreat. This set the stage for a final showdown in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Shenandoah Valley campaign in the fall of 1864 offers a case study of both the dysfunction and eventual synchronization of the civil-military relations in the North. The Shenandoah Valley was a strategically important area linking East to West. A parade of Union commanders and armies had fought in the valley but never brought it under control, which supplied Richmond and Lee's army. Even the arrival of Grant didn't solve the problem. But with the Army of the Potomac stalled at Petersburg in June, there was an important opportunity to reevaluate the strategic situation. Starting with the fact that four different departments held some type of command in the valley, all of whom had gotten very good at finding a way to blame their problems on another department. Grant initially sent Sheridan to take command of the Army of the Shenandoah in August of 1864 with a simple objective; to turn the Shenandoah Valley into a "Barren Waste."[183] Grant's first venture to the Valley to see for himself did not go smoothly as one of Grant's staff officers noted that the department leadership under David Hunter was, "doing nothing and not knowing what the enemy was doing."[184] Lincoln offered blunt advice he generally refrained from giving to his commander writing to Grant,

> You may have received from here even since you made that order, and discover, if you can, that there is any idea in the head of any one here of 'putting our army south of the enemy,' or of 'following him to death' in any direction. I repeat to

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[183] Sears, 738.

[184] Sears, 733.

you it will neither be done or attempted, unless you watch it every day and hour and force it.[185]

With the full blessing of the president, Grant's solution was to reorganize the departments into a single military division under the command of Sheridan (Hunter had resigned). The appointment of Sheridan was met with skepticism from the War Department with some officials wondering if he was too young for the command, but Lincoln deferred to the military expertise of Grant again both agreeing with his strategy and appointment of Sheridan.[186] The evolution of Lincoln as a civilian leader is important to note. In three years, he had gone from a "professional supremacist" to "civilian supremacist" to "professional supremacist", but he finally found a military officer who agreed with him and could work with him professionally thus seeding the mechanics of the war to the military. The fundamental question Lincoln had been attempting to solve for three years was, how should civilians handle a situation in which the military's expertise or autonomy doesn't achieve the strategic and political objectives set forth? Lincoln could not turn to the State Department of Treasury Department to fight Lee along the Potomac. Professional supremacists assume that military expertise or autonomy either directly on the battlefield or indirectly by listening to military advice will inevitably obtain victory.[187] However, as we see with the leadership challenges with the Army of the

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[185] Sears, 733.

[186] Catton, *Grant Takes Command,* 344.

[187] Huntington, 99-100

Potomac, this is not an inevitable outcome, and civilian intervention is often needed which was the path that Lincoln ultimately chose.

The command change worked culminating in "Sheridan's Ride" into history where Sheridan personally rallied Union forces snatching victory from the jaws of defeat at the battle of Cedar Creek decisively routing the Confederate Troops finally bringing the Shenandoah Valley under Union control. Besides Sherman's capture of Atlanta, no victory contributed more to Lincoln's reelection than Sheriden's victorious campaign in the Shenandoah Valley. The Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864 serves as a compelling illustration of the challenges and eventual success in streamlining civil-military relations in the North, ultimately contributing significantly to both the military effort and President Lincoln's eventual reelection.

While the South was on its heels in late 1864, its total defeat was not assured and there is little doubt that Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman brought the war to its end the fastest given the constraints they faced. Yet this team is given very little credit or mentioned in the study of U.S. Civil-Military relations in favor of 20th and 21st-century case studies. Most scholarship focuses on dysfunction in Civil-Military relations and if they look at a positive case, point to George Marshall and Franklin Roosevelt as the models for a healthy relationship but Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman are overlooked. They met regularly to discuss strategy and measure the progress of the conflict and for the first time, there was a truly coordinated military strategy that marshaled the superior resources of the North to attack the South at their weakest points. The butcher's bill for these battles was immense, but ultimately, the strategy worked, and the South surrendered in April of 1865.

The often overlooked but highly effective partnership between Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman during the U.S. Civil War serves as a remarkable historical example of coordinated civil-military relations that played an essential role in bringing about the ultimate victory and end of the conflict in 1865.

War is Just Politics

1864 was not only important because of the events on the battlefield but also because there would be a presidential election in the fall. The civil war era essayist, Ralph Emerson reflected that "seldom in history was so much staked on a popular vote, I suppose never in history."[188] Indeed the election came with enormous stakes not just because of the direction of the nation but if American Democracy could carry on under the strain produced by a civil war. The election of 1864 would pit Abraham Lincoln against the fired George McClellan who as a presidential candidate still maintained his commission in the United States Army. The stakes could not have been higher, Lincoln had expended huge political capital on both ending slavery and the unconditional surrender of the South. Defeat would mean that so much sacrifice might have been in vain. The presidential election of 1864, set against the backdrop of a nation torn by civil war, exemplified the immense stakes not only for the direction of the country but also for the endurance of American democracy itself, as Abraham Lincoln attempted to be the first President to win consecutive terms.

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[188] Chernow, 452.

McClellan was a reluctant candidate and was drafted by the Democratic Party on the platform of pursuing a negotiated peace immediately and allowing slavery to continue. At a speech at West Point before an audience of cadets, McClellan endorsed the pursuit of Union victory through military means.[189] This infuriated peace democrats and McClellan backtracked stating to a reporter after that if elected, he intended to, "recommend an immediate armistice and a call for a convention of all states and insist upon exhausting all and every means to secure peace without further bloodshed."[190] In theory, all the South had to do was hold until the election since the other major political party had endorsed negotiation. However, the defining event of the campaign came on August 31 when William Sherman's army captured Atlanta, the second-largest city in the South. It cannot be appreciated just how important this was as Atlanta's capture came just before the Democrat's formal platform declaring the war a failure. The victory finally also put to rest an insurgent Republican campaign to remove Lincoln from the ticket in favor of someone else. This was followed up by several important victories by Philip Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley, finally bringing victory to a theatre that had caused nothing but problems for the Union. After four years of bloodshed, Lincoln could point to tangible progress on the battlefield while McClellan struggled to endorse a platform that called for negotiation when victory seemed nearby. He expressed that, "I could not look in the faces of gallant comrades of the army and navy and tell them that their labor and

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[189] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 771.

[190] George McClellan quoted by McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 771.

sacrifice of our slain and wounded brethren had been in vain."[191] This comment again infuriated peace democrats and created an internal divide within the Democratic party that they never recovered from. McClellan's wavering stance on pursuing victory and negotiating peace, coupled with the Union's strategic successes on the battlefield, contributed to the erosion of his electoral prospects.

Ultimately, Lincoln won the election in November by half a million votes and an electoral count of 212 to 21. Lincoln received 78% of votes of soldier's ballots, a strong endorsement of ending the Confederacy with the bayonet and that their friends' sacrifices would not be in vain.[192] Though there isn't precise data on how soldiers voted, but it was overwhelming in certain units. For example, of the 99 voters in the 20th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, 98 of them voted for Lincoln.[193] The election of 1864, with its high stakes and contrasting platforms, revealed the nation's yearning for victory and the preservation of the Union as Abraham Lincoln secured a decisive mandate, largely due to the military successes on the battlefield and the resounding endorsement of ending the Confederacy in totality.

McClellan's unpopularity within the military wasn't just among common soldiers but also among the generals as well some of whom had served under him previously. Francis Lieber who helped with legal guidelines for the conduct of the Union army

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[191] McClellan quoted by McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 776.

[192] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 804.

[193] Woodworth, 587.

during the war said McClellan was, "shameless, disgraceful, and treasonable proclamation."[194] General Meade observed that McClellan's campaign against his former soldiers was "out of the frying pan into the fire."[195] Even if they had certain views towards McClellan, Meade wrote that he, Grant, and all of the senior commanders in the army did not vote in the election.[196] William Sherman was so wary of the perception of looking partisan that he refused to even discuss the election making his staff wonder about his leanings.[197] Even if politics were present in the army, senior officers were reluctant to contribute to the fire. It marked a serious change within the Army; gone were the days of Winifred Scott and George McClellan actively supporting politicians and legislation and in were the professional non-partisans. It was also a further acknowledgment that ultimately, the army was a tool of the elected officials, and they were not directly accountable to the people, therefore they should not directly involve themselves in politics or policy. The reluctance of senior military officers to engage in partisan politics during the 1864 election marked a significant shift towards professionalism and non-partisanship within the U.S. Army, reinforcing the principle that the military served as a tool of elected officials, accountable to the nation's elected leadership rather than directly involving themselves in politics or policy.

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[194] Lieber quoted by Marszalek, 213.

[195] Meade quoted by Sears, 743.

[196] Sears, 743.

[197] Brian Holden Reid, *The Scourge of War: The Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2020), 354.

Another point of contention during the election within the army was whether soldiers in the field should be allowed to vote. The War Department was worried that the Army would be severely depleted if soldiers returned home to vote and that the Confederacy might take advantage. Grant was always shrewd when it came to politics writing to Secretary Stanton in September 1864, "Soldiers should not be deprived of the most precious privilege. They have as much right to demand that their votes shall be counted, in the choice of their rulers."[198] Nonetheless, Grant instituted a policy barring soldiers from holding political rallies or gatherings in support of a particular candidate mostly to keep their focus on the task at hand.[199] The debate over soldiers' voting rights during the 1864 election highlighted the delicate balance between preserving democracy and maintaining military readiness, with Grant's decision to prioritize soldiers' voting rights while keeping political activities in check reflecting Grant's instincts to take a pragmatic approach to controversial issues.

Citizen Soldier vs. Professional Soldier: Political Generals

The Soldier-Politician is a tradition in American Politics that goes back to George Washington's presidency. Of the 46 men who have become president of the United States, twelve not only served but reached the rank of general, six of them during the Civil War. There was never any barrier for soldiers entering politics and, in some ways, welcomed given the United States' heavy emphasis on service and patriotism. McClellan did not

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[198] Chernow, 452.

[199] Chernow, 452.

even resign his commission until election day, which in effect, meant a commissioned general in the United States Army was running for president. It wasn't out of the ordinary for a commissioned officer to run for president; Winfield Scott sought the presidential nomination several times while he was chief of the U.S. Army, McClellan took it to a partisan extreme. But who better for the Democrats to pick as their nominee than the young dashing general who took on Lincoln. Even today, soldier politicians are incredibly popular in American politics. McClellan's failed run set an important precedent about soldiers seeking political office separating themselves from the military for a few years before leaping into politics. The tradition of soldier-politicians in American politics, which includes prominent figures like George Washington and the Civil War generals, has left a lasting mark on the nation's political landscape, with George B. McClellan's partisan run in 1864 serving as a noteworthy chapter that set a fortuitous precedent for senior military officers seeking political office.

The other challenge of political generals is that they were for the most part amateurs. Some were politicians, businessmen, or connected well by other means giving them a unique path to command. But because almost all did not attend West Point or have military experience, they had no idea how an army was supposed to work or the proper protocol when it came to following or issuing orders. This created an immediate divide between West Pointers and political generals because as the West Pointers saw it, they were amateurs who had no business being in the position they were in. The West Pointers had in theory earned their way up through a meritocracy demonstrating experience and leadership. President Lincoln was unfriendlily caught between a rock and a hard place.

The political generals were extremely influential with the communities they came from and embarrassing them could create political trouble for the president. But as Bruce Catton pointed out when referring to the American Civil War,

> If there was a war that met the textbook definition and was simply an extension of politics – ward and country and state-house politics, politics at the most intensely lived in levels – it was this one, and nobody but professional soldiers was especially shocked thereby.[200]

This isn't to say that all political generals were bad, many were courageous and some adapted to the rigors of military life immediately but the cultural divide created a challenging leadership culture that would take years to mend.

The rapid expansion of the army meant that there would never be enough West Point-educated officers to fill the ranks. Politicians saw wartime service as a way to pad their political credentials and there was no shortage of them. Politicians played a key role in raising volunteer regiments so that could increase their political reputations. Dan Sickles, previously discussed for his role in the Gettysburg investigation by the Committee on the Conduct of War started his military career that way raising volunteers including the 70th, 72nd, 73rd, and 74th New York Infantry which eventually formed the Excelsior Brigade commanded by Sickles. However, Dan Sickles wasn't the only political general to be at the center of controversy. The American Civil War's rapid expansion of the army led to the emergence of political generals seeking to bolster their

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[200] Catton, *Grant Takes Command,* 145.

political careers, and figures like Dan Sickles exemplified this trend, underscoring the complex interplay between politics and the military during that era.

Benjamin Butler was a democrat house and Senate member of the Massachusetts state government who interestingly supported Jefferson Davis for president in 1860. However, he stayed loyal to the Union and quickly earned an officer commission obtaining the rank of Brigadier General. The first major action he saw in the war was to secure Annapolis, a key city in the border state of Maryland that had many Confederate sympathizers and a key port on the East Coast. During his efforts, he clashed with a West Point graduate Marshal Lefferts who commanded a New York Regiment. When Butler gave him the order to move Lefferts stated that he didn't believe that Butler couldn't give orders to a New York Regiment as a Massachusetts General. Butler wrote in the aftermath, "That was the first time in carrying on the war that West Point had ever interfered to render my movements abortive, but not the last time by a great deal…it stirred me then, as it always has stirred me since."[201] Only a few weeks later, Butler was given orders by Winfried Scott, the U.S. Army's general-in-chief, to keep the rail line from Baltimore to Annapolis secure, Butler promptly ignored the orders and marched into Baltimore with a thousand troops taking the city without bloodshed.[202] The episode ended with Butler being relieved of command but was quickly offered a promotion by President Lincoln because he needed the support of pro-war Democrats. His next prominent

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[201] Benton Rain Patterson, *Lincoln's Political Generals: The Battlefield Performance of Seven Controversial Appointees* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014), 9.

[202] Ibid., 9.

mission was to garrison the city of New Orleans, the first major city to fall under Union

occupation in the war. He quickly declared martial law and treated the citizens of New

Orleans harshly so much so that he was named "Blue Beard of New Orleans."[203] His

political connections and service away from the Eastern Theatre made Butler immune

from any sort of consequence but his command of the Army of the James would be his

downfall. Historian Bruce Catton was more direct in his assessment calling Butler, "a pet

of radical republicans."[204] By that point, U.S. Grant had ascended command and wanted

to remove Butler but as Adam Badaeu, a member of Grant's staff characterized it; "he

was informed that political considerations of the highest character made it undesirable to

displace Butler: the administration needed all its strength, and could not afford to provoke

the hostility of so important a personage, and Grant was obliged to yield."[205] Finding a

compromise, Grant appointed William "Baldy" Smith, a trusted subordinate of Grant in

the Western Theatre as a corps commander to guide and advise Butler. However, Butler

was going to have none of allegedly stating to a staff officer that, "he{Butler}was not

going to build a bridge for West Point men to retreat over."[206] It was only after the

disastrous first attack at Fort Fisher several months later that it truly became untenable for

Butler to retain his position and Lincoln's reelection finally gave Grant political cover to

fire him. Arguably the most political general in the war, who survived disobeying orders

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[203] Ibid., 44.

[204] Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 50.

[205] Patterson, 52.

[206] Smith quoted by Patterson, 54.

and botching military campaigns was content for the rest of the war to testify before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War and rant about the cabal of West Pointers who crossed him. Benjamin Butler's controversial career as a political general during the American Civil War, marked by insubordination, harsh treatment of civilians, and a disdain for West Point-trained officers, stands as a unique and divisive chapter in the history of the conflict, leaving a legacy of political maneuvering and military failures.

Ethnicities played an important role in the war effort. Many immigrants fought in the Union Army, Irish-Americans, Dutch-Americans, and importantly German-Americans. Franz Siegal was unlike other political generals in that he graduated from Karlsruhe Military Academy in 1843. He immigrated to the States in 1852 where he landed in St. Louis which already had a large German population. He was incredibly active in politics where he wrote extensively giving speeches and writing made him the most prominent German-American in the country. At the outset of the war, he was quickly approached for a commission not only because he was living in a border state but also because he was a German-American. He served in the Western Theatre before matriculating to John Pope's Army of Virginia where their failures prompted Sigel for an assignment in the rear. Annoyed with this, he resigned from his commission where he returned to the speaking circuit but with an election looming, Lincoln offered him a new command in the Shenandoah Valley with the German-American vote in the back of his mind. To that point, no Union General or army had succeeded in wresting the valley from Confederate control, and offering it to Sigel might have been too much but there was an election to be won. Unfortunately, Sigel's campaign ended with a devastating defeat at

New Market leading to his relief in July. Interestingly, Sigel wasn't kept around until the election and returned to the speaking circuit but didn't disparage Lincoln or the War. Franz Sigel's journey from a prominent German-American political figure to a Union general and his subsequent campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley reflect the complex interplay of ethnicity and politics during the war.

Unlike the previous politicians discussed who made names for themselves for their military incompetence, John "Blackjack" Logan, a former congressman from Illinois. His first service was to pick up a rifle at Bull Run and take potshots at Confederate soldiers at the Battle of Bull Run. He started as a regimental commander eventually reaching the rank of Major General, going on to command the famous XV Corps of the Army of the Tennessee. For all of his accomplishments, however, there was still an inherent bias towards those who did not attend West Point. When the commander of the Army of the Tennessee, James McPherson was killed during the Atlanta Campaign, Logan was temporarily given command until he was relieved by Oliver Howard, a West Pointer with a rather unimpressive record who'd been exiled to the Western Theatre to revive his military career after floundering in the Army of the Potomac. Logan wrote in the aftermath that, "West Point must have all under Sherman who is an infernal brute."[207] Logan had rightfully earned the opportunity to command the Army of the Tennessee, he was an outstanding combat leader and well respected among his men, and yet he was picked by another officer of less merit. The cult of West Point was obvious and though

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[207] Castel, 419.

Logan wrote that, "It makes no difference, it will come right in the end."[208] After the

Atlanta campaign concluded, Logan returned to Illinois to campaign on behalf who by

that point had switched from the Democratic party to the Republican Party. John

"Blackjack" Logan's military career was marked by his rise from Regimental

Commander to Major General and his struggle against what he called the "West Point

Protective Association."[209] The challenges and dynamics faced by non-West Point-trained

officers in the Civil War, as well as his transition from politics to military service and

back to politics, had profound consequences for civil-military relations.

The Civil War more than any American conflict influenced the selection and

promotion of officers. In the modern, professional military, merit is just as important as

political connections. Nonetheless, career soldiers and politicians saw the opportunity of

wartime service to increase their political credentials as evidenced by the careers of many

soldiers after the war. The role of political generals would also set off a debate within the

army itself over the merit of officers who didn't go to West Point and the lack of

professionalism they brought with them. Not every political general was a Benjamin

Butler, but they proliferated enough that they would lead to consequential philosophical

and professional changes in the United States Military after the war. The era of political

generals during the Civil War left an enduring legacy that impacted the selection and

promotion of officers, sparking debates within the military and ultimately contributing to

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[208] Castel, 419.

[209] Murray and Wei-Siang, 438.

significant philosophical and professional changes in the United States Military, which continue to shape its modern, merit-based character.

1865: Endgame

1865 ushered in the final year of the war. The Confederacy was on its last legs and it was time to finish the job. While containing Lee's army in Petersburg, the rest of the Union armies ran roughshod over the last parts of the Confederacy untouched in the war, specifically, Central Alabama and the Carolinas. Union soldiers took a furious path through South Carolina, whose first shots at Fort Sumter meant there was hell to pay with a simple newfound chant, "Hail Columbia, happy land, if I don't burn you, I'll be damned."[210] The Lincoln administration was trying to plot a path toward reconstruction and reconciliation. Large swathes of the South were already under Union occupation so Lincoln advocated for setting up governments loyal to the Union but his generals were generally passive towards that policy. Lincoln was most direct in cultivating the loyal government in Louisiana, parts of which had been under Union control since 1862.[211]

Lincoln had always been reluctant to harshly treat the South for fear that there could never be reconciliation between North and South, but that bridge had been crossed long before. Sherman's campaign in 1864-1865 was derived straight from the United States Service Magazine that stated, "to break up the Rebel armies is not going to bring peace, that the people must be influenced…they must feel the effects of war…they must

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[210] Murray and Wei-Siang, 482.

[211] Donald, 561.

feel its inexorable necessities."[212] It's difficult to fully measure the effect that Sherman's campaigns had on the hearts and minds of the South but he estimated that he did caused almost $100 million in damage in Georgia alone during the March to the Sea, an extraordinary amount for that time.[213] At the same time, Union Calvary went on an epic raid through Central Alabama foraging liberally and burning any building deemed to be aiding the Confederate war effort. For in these last campaigns, violence and destruction reached a level unfathomable in 1861.

Accepting the surrender of Confederate forces and making terms would be a curious challenge between the military and the Lincoln administration. In early February, three Confederate emissaries arrived at Grant's headquarters stating they had an audience with President Lincoln to negotiate peace. This was a scheme cooked up by Francis Preston Blair who was an extremely influential figure in the Republican party. Grant had heard nothing of this but heard them out. His letter to the Secretary of War is revealing because while he believes the Confederate's intentions were faithful, he made a point to state that, "I have not felt myself at liberty to express even views of my own or to account for my reticence."[214] It was yet another sign that Grant saw obvious distinctions in the negotiation of peace and his role as the commander of all U.S. forces. It was an anti-Clausewitz view that even if war was an extension of politics, it should be left to the politicians to chart the path. Ultimately, the Confederate peace effort failed, and the

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[212] Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 149.

[213] Murray and Wei-Siang, 467.

[214] Grant quoted by Catton, *Grant Takes Command*, 421.

Confederacy began to crumble starting with Lee's army who surrendered at Appomattox

Court House on April 9. The terms were extremely generous and done without the input

of Lincoln or Secretary Stanton. But Grant adhered to Lincoln's principle of

reconciliation. The army of Northern Virginia would be paroled, able to keep their

possessions and horses, and received several days of rations from Union soldiers as a sign

of goodwill.

While the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia and the capture of

Richmond came without much fanfare, the surrender of Confederate forces in the

Carolinas came with much controversy. At a previous conference in late March between

Lincoln, Sherman, and Grant, Lincoln had urged Sherman to accept the surrender of

Confederate forces in the Carolinas to avoid more bloodshed. However, Sherman not

only proposed terms of surrender to the Confederate armies but also wrote a proposal

between the U.S. government and the Confederate government. The proposal stated that

the President would recognize the Southern state governments, the people of the South

would be fully guaranteed the rights and franchise subscribed by the constitution, and

general amnesty for Confederate officials. The Confederate commanders agreed and

signed the proposal with Sherman who enthusiastically telegraphed Washington to report

the good news.[215] When Secretary Stanton read the telegram, he was furious. Not only

had Sherman negotiated peace without any input from himself or the President, but he

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[215] Weigley, *A Great Civil War*, 449.

had undermined the president by preemptively agreeing to peace terms.[216] Stanton was so mad that he sent Grant down to North Carolina to renege on the deal and remind Sherman on no uncertain terms who was in charge.[217] The whole episode poisoned the relationship between Sherman and Stanton, something that was never reconciled, and shaped Sherman's perspective towards civilian leaders even after his appointment to general-in-chief of the U.S. Army during Grant's presidency.

It turned out that bringing the war to a close was much easier than Union leaders might have anticipated. The main armies of the Confederacy surrendered without much issue. Confederate leaders fled and were captured including Jefferson Davis a month after the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on May 9. Thus, the long process of reconstruction began as the nation attempted to heal. The American Civil War in terms of casualties, loss of property, and social unrest was the most destructive conflict in American history with long-standing consequences that go on to this day.

[216] Weigley, *A Great Civil War*, 449.

[217] Weigley, *A Great Civil War*, 449.

Chapter Four: Post-Civil War Period

Emory Upton: The U.S. Army's First Warrior Prophet

The United States Army spent considerable time after the war not just introspecting but separating itself from the broader civilian population. Downsized and relegated back to frontier duty, the U.S. Army was free to ponder the lessons of the conflict and the future of war. Many of the reformers were Civil War veterans, most notably Emory Upton. While he did bring much-needed professionalization in doctrine and military education, he was heavily critical of civilian control of the military. He wrote in his book *The Military Policy of the United States*, "All the defects of the American military system rested upon a fundamental, underlying flaw, excessive civilian control of the military."[218] This was the first time a commissioned officer, in writing, directly challenged the basic mechanisms of civilian control of the military. The aftermath of the Civil War witnessed the United States Army's transformation and a critical reevaluation of its relationship with civilian control, as veteran officers like Emory Upton initiated a dialogue on the balance between military professionalism and civilian authority that would shape the future and attitudes of several generations of American officers.

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[218] Emory Upton. *The Military Policy of the United States*. (United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912).

In short, the military was a profession, one that required education and experience to succeed, not the mere appointment of questionably qualified civilians by equal or less qualified politicians. Of course, military officers with long careers with plenty of time to think and institutionalize while the Secretary of War was beholden to the elections every four years. The longest-serving secretary of War between the Civil War and World War I was William Belknap who held the office for six years from 1869 to 1876 and whose most notable achievement was to be impeached and indicted for his role in the Trader Post Scandal.[219] So of course, Upton concluded that men like Belknap shouldn't be anywhere near the military. Emory Upton's advocacy for a professional military establishment, free from the influence of politically appointed officials, highlighted the growing consensus within the officer corps that military success required educated and experienced officers, setting the stage for significant reforms in the United States Army.

In addition, Upton's vigor for systemic change written in his book is easy to see given his wartime experiences. He led a daring attack against the Confederates at the battle of Spotsylvania in the Spring of 1864 during the Overland Campaign in Virginia. His initial breakthrough was a complete success, but he was left out to dry by his superiors, one of whom was alleged to have been drunk at the time of the attack. As a result of their failure to deploy reinforcements, Upton's brigade suffered heavy casualties and the battle was ultimately stalemated. Upton was wounded during the battle and earned a promotion to Brigadier General on the spot from Grant who admired Upton's

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[219] David M Delo, *Peddlers and Post Traders: The Army Sutler on the Frontier*. (United States: Kingfisher Books, 1998).

aggressiveness and leadership. However, his commanding officers were political appointees with little to no military experience and this no doubt infuriated Upton who had spent years at West Point and working his way up to brigade command with his talent and leadership. It is telling that while he ended the war as a Corps Commander, he never held a high enough command to interact with high-ranking civilian officials. But his interaction with these semi-professional generals probably played a role as well. Civilians had to finance the war, conduct rigorous diplomacy to keep out European Powers, and mobilize other parts of society on the military's behalf. Emory Upton's personal experiences on the battlefield, including his frustration with politically appointed superiors, fueled his passion for systemic change in the military, underscoring the complex relationship between the military's need for professionalism and the role of civilian leadership during wartime.

Upton was among several Army officers sent to Europe after the Civil War to study and interact with their European counterparts. Particularly, Upton became infatuated with the Prussian Army which by the 1870's had won three different wars in Europe, two of them against the preeminent land powers Austria and France. The Prussians were known for the doctrine of quick, decisive, and direct movement on the operational level known in German as *Bewegungskrieg*. What was of interest to Upton was the lack of civilian oversight and involvement in military policymaking in the Prussian military. But both the doctrine and structure of the Prussian military were a result of their government and geography. Prussia was a monarchy headed by a king so the need for civilian control wasn't ever an issue. Likewise, the Prussian military

doctrine's obsession with professionalism was a necessity resulting from the country's limitations of manpower and material, meaning that they had to fight quick decisive wars or risk defeat—as they would in the great wars of the 20th century. U.S. Grant traveled to Germany around the same time that Upton did and met the influential statesman, Otto Von Bismark. Grant was taken aback by how militarized Prussian society was and disturbed by the ways it was bleeding over into the rest of Germany.[220] German officials repeatedly referred to Grant as "general" even though he had been out of the army for almost a decade.[221] Yet, Upton wholeheartedly embraced the militarization of Prussian society. It was an interesting development given that characterized the soldiers he commanded under him as the best in the world.[222] He believed that militaries could achieve greater efficiency and management without civilian interference, even if this meant sacrificing democratic principles and values. In contrast to the United States, Huntington remarked that this stance was the opposite of the American enthusiasm for military professionalism and expertise, humorously suggesting that Americans had essentially converted "In God We Trust" into a military doctrine.[223]

Upton's lessons learned in Europe, as recorded in his book *The Military Policy of the United States* and his other writing, were extremely influential as he served as the commandant of West Point from 1870-1875. Upton was advocating for many of the

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[220] Chernow, 876.

[221] Mcabe, 432.

[222] Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 111.

[223] Huntington, 266.

principles of "objective control" long before Huntington was writing *The Soldier and the State* though one could argue that Upton took it to an extreme. Emory Upton's fascination with the Prussian military model and his belief in reducing civilian oversight in the military reflected the influence of his experiences in Europe, ultimately shaping his views on military professionalism and policymaking in the United States.

Emory Upton's campaign against civilian control of the military, often referred to as the "Uptonian Paradox" had a profound impact on American military thought and policy, setting a precedent that still resonates in contemporary conflicts and decision-making processes. He argued that the only way to maintain military effectiveness was to take the role of civilians in the military completely out of it.[224] While Upton wrote that the president could retain the title of commander-in-chief, civilians in the war department were a nuisance and should be retired. It's obvious from literature in the late 19th century that many officers followed in his footsteps. Upton was the first iteration of the "Centurion Mindset" where the battlefield became everything and any other connection to such activities was irrelevant.[225] Upton's advocacy for minimizing civilian involvement in military affairs and prioritizing battlefield expertise laid the groundwork for a military doctrine and decision-making in the American officer corps for generations to come.

In some ways, Upton was the first true philosopher of the American Way of War just as George Patton, Colin Powell, and Dave Petraeus would take the mantle in later

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[224] Cassidy, 130.

[225] Jason W. Warren "The Centurion Mindset and the Army's Strategic Leader Paradigm." *Parameters* (2015): 27.

eras. From Russell Weigley's perspective, however, Upton's efforts did serious damage to the civilian-military decision-making process. Weigley wrote,

> In setting the main current of American military thought not to the task of shaping military institutions that would serve both military and national purposes, but to the futile task of demanding that the national institutions be adjusted to purely military expediency.[226]

Upton's aversion towards civilian control still reverberates today. Military strategies in conflicts such as Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan were implemented with little or no input from other key government institutions such as the State Department, USAID, and the Intelligence Community, all of which were pursuing their agendas without a unified goal. Emory Upton's legacy as a military philosopher and advocate for reduced civilian control of the military continues to shape the dynamics of American military thought and strategy, with echoes of his ideas still present in military operations and decision-making processes.

The professionalization of the army Upton and many others pursued vigorously came in the form of a renewed study of war and strategy. In 1878, the Military Service Institution of the United States was founded to focus on "the advanced studies of the science and art of war."[227] Only a year later the United Service Journal began publication seeking out articles about the study of war. The United States Army War College in Carlisle, PA was founded later in 1901 after the Spanish-American War but reflected a renewed need to educate mid-level officers on how to "advise the President, devise plans,

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[226] Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1984).

[227] Cassidy, 132.

acquire information, and direct the intellectual exercise of the Army."[228] The

corporatization of military leadership was established two years after the Army War

College in 1903 with the founding of the "Joint Board" which was composed of four

high-ranking officers from the military services.[229] This would later evolve into the Joint

Chiefs of Staff during World War II. There was a keen effort to push officers to educate

themselves and each other. It's clear from their perspective, that West Point could only

offer so much, and more was needed for those seeking higher command. Despite this,

there was a notable lack of focus on the politics of war, arguably the most important part

when it came to the crafting of strategy and perspective of civilians. However, the result

of such efforts was to further divest the military from civilian control. As Weigley

summarized, "the officer corps had lost sight of the Clausewitzian dictum that war is but

an extension of politics by other means."[230] But there is a contradiction, if war is merely

an extension of politics, then military officers are going to be involved in politics whether

they like it or not. But if war is its own construct and doesn't apply to politics, this creates

the mindset that Upton eventually arrived at. This concerted effort to professionalize the

U.S. Army through advanced studies of war and strategy laid the foundation for a more

educated officer corps; but it also inadvertently distanced the military from understanding

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[228] U.S. Army n.d. *Historic Carlisle Barracks.* Accessed October 6, 2023.
https://www.armywarcollege.edu/history.cfm#:~:text=Army%20War%20College%20Evolution&text=As%20an%20adjunct%20to%20the,intellectual%20exercise%20of%20the%20Army.

[229] Huntington, 317.

[230] Weigley, 168.

the critical interplay between war and politics, a factor that would prove costly in future conflicts.

Yet for all the criticisms that Upton conjured up after the war, civilians helped manufacture the weapons and supplies and facilitated the logistics that allowed the Union army to be one of the best-supplied armies in existence at that time. In some ways, Upton's work was one of the foremost arguments for the separation of the military from civilian institutions and by extension, the public. Unfortunately, Upton sowed the seeds of the military-civilian divide in the United States which echoes to this day.[231] The conflicts between George McClellan during the Civil War and Douglas MacArthur and Harry Truman during Korea show how Upton's ideas lasted far beyond his life.

McClellan and MacArthur vs Grant and Ridgeway

Nowhere would civilian control of the military be tested than the Korean War almost 90 years after the end of the Civil War. While the World Wars are celebrated as triumphs of the civilian-military partnership in winning global conflicts. The Korean War was the first limited war of the Cold War era and strained Civil-Military relations, but the episode eerily echoed the clash between Lincoln and McClellan almost a century earlier. This case study offers how despite the drastic differences between Korea and the Civil War, the basic challenges of civilian control remained present. In summary, the Korean War and the American Civil War were distinct conflicts with different causes, participants, and outcomes, and they occurred in different periods and locations. The

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[231] Peter Feaver and Richard H Kohn, "Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security" (United Kingdom: Triangle Institute for Security Studies, 2001).

Korean War was an international conflict with global implications, while the American

Civil War was a domestic struggle with profound consequences for the United States. In

comparing the Korean War to the American Civil War, it becomes evident that despite the

vast differences between these conflicts, the fundamental challenges of maintaining

civilian control over the military persistently surfaced, underscoring the enduring

importance of this dynamic in American history.

Further exploration of Douglas MacArthur's background and upbringing offers

insight into his antithesis toward civilian control of the military. He was raised in the

shadow of his father Arthur MacArthur Sr. who had won a medal of honor for his actions

during the battle of Missionary Ridge in 1863 eventually finishing his army career as a

lieutenant general. MacArthur's time at West Point in the 1890s came just as Emory

Upton's writings dispelling the notion of direct civilian control of the military reached a

fever pitch within the army. By the time he was in command of U.S. Forces, he was a

larger-than-life character in America with a career spanning four decades piqued by his

acceptance of the formal Japanese surrender aboard the battleship *USS Missouri*, thus

ending hostilities in World War II. However, he had already gained a reputation as a

general who was always flirting with a new career in domestic politics, undermining

civilian officials, and had a massive ego. When discussing a potential invasion of Japan

in the summer of 1945, George Marshall told the Secretary of War that when it came to

MacArthur he was, "so prone to exaggerate and so influenced by his desire that it is

difficult to believe his judgment."[232] MacArthur's upbringing, military career, and evolving attitudes toward civilian control of the military provide a nuanced perspective on his complex relationship with the concept of civilian oversight, which played a significant role in his insubordinate actions and decisions as a military leader.

George McClellan was quite different from MacArthur. A son of a prominent surgeon, Dr. George McClellan Sr., and fully intent on following in his father's footsteps until he decided to do something different being admitted to West Point at the age of 16 as one of the youngest cadets at the corps. Always heralded as a golden boy, he graduated second in his class, fought with distinction in the Mexican-American War, and was a highly successful businessman. His rise to command of the Army of the Potomac at the age of 35 raised eyebrows but he helped turn the army into a formidable force but as previously discussed he struggled to put it to use culminating in his eventual firing. George McClellan's early life and career achievements, marked by his intelligence, military success, and leadership, offer a stark contrast to the trajectory and leadership style of Douglas MacArthur, highlighting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of military leaders who were fired for insubordinate reasons.

Two different men, one young and one old, one inexperienced and experienced, and both at the peak of their professional careers through hard work yet they acted almost the same; openly contemptuous of the Presidents they served. McClellan stated that

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[232] George Marshall quoted by Richard B. Frank *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire.* (New York: Penguin Books. 1999), 276.

Lincoln was, "ever unworthy of ... his high position."[233] MacArthur refused to salute President Truman at the Wake Island Conference in October 1950 which military officials took as a deliberate insult and MacArthur would later call Truman a "little bastard."[234] But what linked both was that they came from the same strain of American general officers that internalized the idea that civilians even if they had served in the military previously had little to no expertise on military affairs and any effort to do so was a deliberate attempt to undermine them. McClellan laid the foundation, Upton put it in writing, and MacArthur put it into practice. In their shared disdain for civilian control of the military, George McClellan, Emory Upton, and Douglas MacArthur represented a lineage of American general officers who fomented tension between military expertise and civilian control, leaving a troubling legacy that ultimately reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the principle of civilian leadership in the United States military.

Curiously, McClellan and MacArthur who had different personal upbringings and different career arcs both ended up the same; fired by the president. Though their firing was slightly different. MacArthur was fired because he had inserted himself directly into politics while McClellan's firing was both the result of military failures and political intrigue. McClellan's firing was the result of an accumulation of disagreements with the president though the failure in the aftermath of the Antietam campaign was the final straw. Unlike Lincoln, Truman had the backing of the military establishment including

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[233] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 364.

[234] David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War.* (New York: Hatchette Books, 2007), 365- 369

the Joint Chiefs of Staff to fire McClellan while Lincoln's decision practically brought on a mutiny within the Army of the Potomac.[235] Interestingly a decade after his firing, MacArthur wrote afterward that, "The supremacy of the civil over the military is fundamental to the American system of government, and is wholeheartedly accepted by every officer and soldier in the military establishment."[236] In theory, while this might be true, this wasn't reflection in the actions of MacArthur who was pursuing policy directly independent of his civilian superiors. Truman was also thinking much about Lincoln's handling of McClellan and ultimately concluded that he had every right to assert civilian control over the military. But both were necessary to reinforce the authority of the president even if Truman and Lincoln didn't necessarily see it as that.[237]

Even the presidents who fired them were quite different. Lincoln, who continuously is ranked and celebrated as one of the great U.S. presidents, and Truman an accidental president often overlooked in favor of his predecessor Franklin Roosevelt. But it was a testament to the strength of civilian control of the military that both men would not tolerate insubordination and at great risk to their political standing, affirmed civilian control of the military. The firings of George McClellan and Douglas MacArthur by Presidents Lincoln and Truman, despite their differences, reveals the enduring commitment to civilian control of the military in the United States and the willingness of presidents to uphold this principle even at the expense of popular generals, ultimately

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[235] Bessner and Lober, 656.

[236] Douglas MacArthur. *Reminiscences.* (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1964), 363.

[237] David McCullough. *Truman.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 258.

securing the foundations of American democracy. Even so, both presidents had to find other generals to carry on the struggle.

For as much as the MacArthur firing parallels that of McClellan almost a century earlier, the eventual ascension of Mathew Ridgeway was similar to Ulysses S. Grant's ascension. Ridgeway and Grant both inherited command of armies that lacked confidence in themselves and serious pressure from politicians to get things done on the battlefield. Both were cognizant of the politics of the respective wars they were fighting but did not insert themselves in a way that undermined civilian control. In their minds, professionalism was confined solely to the duties prescribed by their command and nothing more. They felt comfortable giving their military advice but ultimately, they subscribed to the president and his policies. The contrasting leadership styles of Matthew Ridgway and Ulysses S. Grant, despite their shared commitment to civilian control of the military, reflected the complexity of military leadership and the diverse approaches that can yield success in challenging wartime circumstances.

Mathew Ridgeway was one of the heralded leaders of the Greatest Generation. He applied to West Point because he thought that would please his father who was also a graduate of the academy. Ridgeway was the leader of the U.S. Airborne effort throughout the war commanding the 82nd Airborne in Sicily and Normandy before commanding the entire Airborne throughout the rest of the European campaign. At the war's end, Ridgway was on a plane headed for a new assignment in the Pacific theater of war, under General of the Army Douglas MacArthur. He was signaled out as a future star of the army even though he had already led an impressive career when the Korean War broke out. Matthew

Ridgway's leadership in World War II and his subsequent rise to prominence within the U.S. Army set the stage for arguably the most important role in his career during the Korean War, where he would once again demonstrate his exceptional military acumen and dedication to his country.

Of course, Grant has previously been discussed. A Midwesterner with an average record at both West Point and in the Mexican-American War. He was a fledgling businessman by the time the war broke out. Torn between the politics of his wife and himself, he nonetheless answered the call when President Lincoln called for volunteers in 1861. Grant also held considerable political capitol because he was successful on the battlefield and was smart in using it. The best example of this is when he relieved General John McClernand a former congressman and powerful political rival during the Vicksburg campaign in 1863. The tension between the two predated the relief but Grant knew that he needed an obvious reason to relieve someone so powerful. His remarkable campaigns in the West allowed him to furnish his military credentials while also navigating contentious political issues that have already been discussed.

Ridgeway had already been involved indirectly in Korea. He was crucial in getting American troops the right anti-tank weapons when they came against the formidable T-34 and helped streamline a supply system for the most critical items from the states directly to Korea. He would take command of the U.S. 10th Army amidst a harrowing retreat from North Korea with thousands of Chinese troops on their tail. He quickly assessed, reorganized, and reinvigorated an army that had suffered massive defeats only weeks before. He stabilized the line and went to work wresting the initiative

back. Unlike MacArthur, Ridgeway could see the political limitations thrust upon him by President Truman as a result of the Cold War. MacArthur wanted to see the war widened, Ridgeway knew that he had to keep the conflict contained in conjunction with President Truman's directives. It was the first time during the conflict that the command in the theatre and civilian leadership in Washington was fully aligned and this was crucial.

Grant's exploits have already been well documented in this paper. Laying the foundation for Union victory in the Western Theatre and keeping enough pressure on Lee to eventually win total victory. His ascension to fully command all Union forces was the move needed to use the overwhelming resources of the North and turn into victory. His shrewdness in navigating the complex politics both within the army and outside of it was what allowed him to succeed where many of his peers failed. Most impressively when he commanded the Eastern Theater where success was most directly tied to the political strength of the administration.

Four different generals with different personal upbringings but two distinct outcomes. It's difficult to discern if there was a systemic reason why they decided to go down their respective paths. They were all professional military officers by trait. They all went to West Point, taking the same classes and ascending rapidly when the nation needed them. But McClellan and MacArthur deliberately inserted themselves into political matters while Grant and Ridgeway did not. Was it ego? Professional Experience? As has been pointed out relationships matter, and McClellan and Truman did not trust the president and vice versa. This made a clash inevitable and when it came to a power struggle, the president was in a position of authority to override and fire them. The

simplest explanation is that Grant and Ridgeway simply knew the line between their opinion and their professional opinion while McClellan and Ridgeway did not. The next section categorizes these officers.

International War vs Civil War in Civil-Military Relations

For all the differences between the Civil War and other American conflicts, the similarities in American civil-military relations are quite striking. Some scholars have already explored this issue and advocated that the specific kind of conflicts the United States is involved in should drive the model of civil-military relations rather than personalities or other factors.[238] In both civil and international conflicts, the military plays a pivotal role in safeguarding national interests, maintaining security, and upholding the sovereignty of the state. With structured hierarchical leadership, a clear chain of command, and responsibility for directing operations and ensuring discipline, the military operates as a central tool of the state in achieving these objectives. Resource mobilization, including manpower, equipment, and finances, is essential in both scenarios to support military operations effectively. Furthermore, the public perception of the military holds significant sway over its effectiveness and legitimacy both in international and civil conflicts.

Typically, there exists a hierarchical structure within the military, with a clear chain of command, regardless of the nature of the conflict. Commanders are responsible for directing military operations, implementing strategies, and ensuring discipline among

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[238] Donald S. Travis. "Saving Samuel Huntington and the Need for Pragmatic Civil–Military Relations." *Armed Forces & Society* (2017): 395-414.

troops. The Civil War was when a clear strategic and command culture began to emerge within the U.S. Military. Just as the outcome of the Civil War ensured that the North's liberal vision of society would become the American vision of society; the United States Army's version of war would be the American Way of War. As Russell Weigley has documented in many of his works, this way of war can be characterized by officer's aggression on the battlefield and seeking to destroy enemy armies and attain decisive victories.[239] It didn't matter what the conflict type was, this was the approach that the American Officer Corps was taught and implemented.

By the end of the conflict, the true number of resources that the North assembled was truly awesome. By 1863, the Union Army had 600,000 soldiers in the field with an additional 400,000 support troops with uniforms, weapons, and ample supplies.[240] That force number was maintained throughout the rest of the war despite the immense number of casualties in 1864 and 1865. At the beginning of the war, the U.S. Navy had a total of 72 ships half of which were scattered in port or patrolling the Mediterranean, the Far East, and elsewhere.[241] By the end of the war, there were more than 600 commissioned ships undertaking various operations from Virginia to Texas.[242] Union manufacturing

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[239] Weigley, *American Way of War*, 151.

[240] Murray and Wei-Siang, 482.

[241] Craig L. Symonds, *Lincoln and His Admirals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

[242] Spencer Tucker, *Blue & Gray Navies: The Civil War Afloat*, (Naval Institute Press, 2006), 1.

produced 1.5 million rifles and a thousand new artillery pieces.[243] The government spent

an estimated $3.4 billion or $126 billion in today's numbers, to finance the war.[244] It

wasn't just military items that exploded during the war. Union agriculture grew more

wheat in 1863 than any other time in the nation's history despite almost half a million

farmers serving in the Union army.[245] Northern exports of wheat, corn, pork, and beef

nearly doubled Despite the needs of the army and the civilian population.[246] Through

meticulous resource mobilization and sustained effort, the North's formidable logistical

and industrial capabilities not only fueled its military might but also facilitated

remarkable agricultural and economic growth which is a characterization that would

continue to define future American conflicts.

Public opinion and perception influence the character of all conflicts, but

particularly in American democracy, this can hold sway. Lincoln always had to keep in

mind and made quite clear that the outcomes on the battlefield were directly tied to the

North's will to sustain the war. Lincoln pushed his generals to be aggressive because he

knew that a passive strategy would never be allowed by the public. While some scholars

argue that foreign policy and to an extent military policy, is an elite driven phenomenon,

public opinion does matter and often shapes how civilians craft strategies both before and

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[243] Sarah Stewart Taylor, "A Museum that Tells the History of Manufacturing from Civil War Rifles to Modern-Day Retail." HUMANITIES. 2018.

[244] Claudia D. Goldin and Frank D Lewis, "The Economic Cost of the American Civil War: Estimates and Implications." *Journal of Economic History* (1975): 304.

[245] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 817.

[246] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 817.

during the war.[247] This is more obvious in societies that are more educated and engaged politically as the North war during the war.

The distinctions between civil and international conflicts are quite clear. The military's role in civil conflicts is complicated by internal divisions, as loyalty may be divided between the state and various factions or ideologies. This complexity contrasts with the more straightforward alignment of the military in international wars, where it typically operates under the central government against external adversaries. Finally, while international wars may attract foreign interventions and diplomatic efforts, civil conflicts present challenges for external actors due to concerns about sovereignty, legitimacy, and the risk of exacerbating the conflict.

The political dynamics of the war were abundantly clear from the start. Union victory would not be obtained by occupying large cities in the South. The Confederate Armies and the will of the southern people had to be destroyed for them to rejoin the Union. While some might argue that other American conflicts have had complicated political objectives that have led to defeat, its military objectives have been quite clear. It's the same problem that American civil-military relations continue to deal with.

American foreign policy during the Civil War can boiled down to "a balancing Act" with two clear objectives.[248] One was to keep the European powers from intervening

[247] Elizabeth N. Saunders. "Elites in the Making and Breaking of Foreign Policy." *Annual Review of Political Science* (2022): 219-240.

[248] Sean A. Mirski, *We May Dominate the World: Ambition, Anxiety, and the Rise of the American Colossus.* (New York: PublicAffairs. 2023), 26.

and the other discourage them from recognizing the Confederacy as a sovereign state. This stands in contrast to many of the conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries where the United States focused extensively on building coalitions with both allies and other partner nations to fight against adversaries. While the Union wasn't hamstrung by the difficulties of coalition warfare, the fear of European powers did drive military strategy. This is best characterized by several Union expeditions to Texas as the French continued to occupy Mexico. When Grant first took charge, he thought a Union presence in Texas was a waste of time and resources but later thought that the French actions were, "a direct act of war against the United States" since they violated the basic principles of the Monroe Doctrine.[249] World War I and II were characterized by the failures and successes of trying to fit American military and political strategy with the needs of allies and partners. For example, the invasion of Africa, Sicily, and Italy in World War II was driven by the British "soft belly" strategy which sought to fight the Axis powers on the periphery of their occupied territory. The Civil War's foreign policy approach of balancing European intervention while discouraging recognition of the Confederacy contrasts with the coalition-building strategies prevalent in later conflicts, highlighting the evolving nature of American military and political strategy in navigating international affairs.

Despite differences in objectives and challenges in looking at civil and international war, certain constants prevail, such as the military's role in safeguarding national interests and the significant influence of public perception on strategic decision-

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[249] Grant quoted from Mirski, 28.

making. The Civil War served as an important case study, shaping not only the Union's military strategy but also its broader approach to conflict, setting a precedent for future engagements. While the Civil War's foreign policy focused on balancing European intervention and thwarting recognition of the Confederacy, subsequent conflicts witnessed a shift towards coalition-building strategies to confront common adversaries. This Civil War continued the ongoing adaptation of American military and political strategy in navigating the complexities of international affairs, a process marked by both successes and failures.

"Opinion-Driven Officers" vs "Objective Officers"

The Civil War was also an indirect battle between "Opinion-Driven Officers" and Grant and Ridgeway as "Objective Officers" in the U.S. Army. The term "Opinion-Driven Officers" conveys the idea that these officers allow their personal beliefs and biases shaped within the military to shape their interactions with civilian superiors, potentially compromising their professionalism and chain of command. "Objective Officers" emphasizes the officers' commitment to maintaining professionalism and adhering to the chain of command, regardless of personal beliefs or biases. In the Civil War, the clash between "Opinion-Driven Officers" and "Objective Officers" played a crucial role in the leadership and actions shaping the outcome of the attitude and policies of the Union officer corps. The impact of these personalities had a much bigger influence on civil-military relations than specific policy or political disagreement.

Opinion Driven Officers were the dominant force in the U.S. Army before the Civil War. As previously discussed, Winfried Scott was heavily involved in politics even

as commanding general. He sought the presidential nomination several times (even while still maintaining his commission and command) and joined publicly with Whig leaders Henry Clay and Daniel Webster supporting the Compromise of 1850. Many officers were open with their party affiliation and held public views on polarizing social issues. Opinion-Driven Officers were largely in charge of the Union Armies at the beginning of the war but by the end, they had been replaced by objective officers such as Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan.

When it came to the challenge of opinion-driven officers running into political trouble, Grant wrote after the war that, "What interfered with our officers more than anything else was allowing themselves a political bias."[250] In short, it was usually the officer's fault that their political views got in the way of their professional duty, and it was no wonder that civilians reacted harshly. Grant also did not distinguish whether these were political officers or regular officers but both groups had political issues. Furthermore, Grant reflected that

> The generals who insisted upon writing emancipation proclamations and creating new theories of state governments and invading Canada all came to grief as surely as those who believed that the main object of the war was to protect Rebel property and keep the Negroes at work on the plantations while their masters were off in the Rebellion.[251]

It didn't matter if the generals were extremely conservative or progressive, Grant viewed issues such as emancipation and the broader morals of war to be left to the civilian

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[250] Grant quoted by Catton, *Grant Takes Command*, 158.

[251] Grant quoted by Catton, *Grant Takes Command*, 158.

policymakers. Grant believed these officers undermined objective civilian control by participating in politics because as Huntington describes, "civilian control decreases as the military becomes progressively involved in institutions, class, and constitutional politics."[252] Grant long identified the detrimental impact of officers allowing their political biases to interfere with their professional duties, leading to civilian backlash and undermining the principle of objective civilian control well before Huntington and other scholars did so.

While in writing and practice, the U.S. Army did become professionalized after the Civil War, the first iteration of this occurred during the Civil War. One key component of professionalism produced by the influence of "Objective Officers" was the role of being apolitical especially when it came to elections. All the senior commanders in the Army of the Potomac chose not to vote in the election of 1864. William Sherman was so tight-lipped that even his staff weren't sure where he leaned, and he made sure not to be around if his staff were engaging in political conversations. This newfound commitment to professionalism and apolitical stance among military leaders during the Civil War not only laid the foundation for a more professional U.S. Army but also set a vital precedent for the role of the military in American democracy but it also created another set of problems.

For as much as "Objective Officers" were important to changing the culture of the U.S. Military, there were drawbacks. During the Cold War, especially during the war in

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[252] Huntington, 83.

Vietnam, Officers had become so apolitical and professional that they lost sight of the politics surrounding the war. This is illustrated in H.R. McMaster's work, *Dereliction of Duty* offering critical analysis of the decision-making process during the runup to the Vietnam War between the senior military and political leadership concluding that the war was lost before it even began.[253] McMaster concludes there was a breakdown in civil-military relations. He argues that senior military leaders failed to provide candid advice to the political leadership, contributing to strategic misjudgments for fear of undermining the president politically. In some respects, McMaster inadvertently was arguing for a return to the opinion-driven officer under the guise of professionalism. While McMaster is quick to blame political leaders, especially the White House, the journey of professionalism in the U.S. military which emerged after the Civil War was a journey factor in the runup to the Vietnam War that had tragic consequences.

The Vietnam War produced several generations of opinion-driven officers that reflected the need to examine military strategy and political realities. The Powell-Weinberger doctrine articulated that military force should be overwhelming and only used as a last resort if there are clearly defined and achievable political-military objectives, reflective of public support.[254] This doctrine, aiming to delineate military strategy while acknowledging political constraints, reinforces the idea that politicians, and consequently the public, bear inherent responsibility for the conflicts the United

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[253] McMaster, 333.

[254] Jeffrey Record, "Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine?" *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, (2007): 79.

States enters. It suggests that unless specific criteria are met, military force should not be employed—a concept reminiscent of Emory Upton's notion that civilian institutions should defer to military policy, and that advice from senior military officials should be heeded by civilians, even if those civilians disagree thus compromising the basic notion of civilian control. Even after the birth of the Powell-Weinberger doctrine that stressed these principles, Powell would support Operation Iraqi Freedom which in many ways, went against every principle that he had previously articulated. Another quote from Stanley McChrystal, the commander of ISAF forces in Afghanistan echoes this systemic divorce and preference of deference to the military stating, "I kept telling my staff in Afghanistan, we don't own this war. This is not our war. We are technicians. We are going to use the Sam Huntington model here."[255] Deliberately not considering the politics of the war reflects how far the pendulum has swung in the direction of objective officers. This has unfortunately created a warped sense of professionalism that undermines American civil-military relations.

The previous case study shows how opinion-driven officers and Objective officers were commonplace even a century after the Civil War. However, the aftermath gave birth to a generation of Objective officers that slowly began to populate the senior leadership positions in the army. The World Wars were the last hurrah for opinion-driven offices as Objective officers began to outnumber the Opinion-driven. MacArthur was the most prominent and one of the last in a dying breed of American military officers.

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[255] Stanley McChrystal quoted by Brooks, 43.

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Unfortunately, though, this has created a paradox because Objective officers became so dominant that there was a fundamental divorce between war and the politics driving them. Normally, an opinion-driven officer would make their dissent publicly and loudly but because objective officers focus so much on remaining apolitical and professional when it comes to complex situations that may or may not require military options, officers have struggled to argue their perspective in the face of civilian and media scrutiny. This dilemma is illustrated by former MARSOC commander Andrew Milburn who argues, "when the military professional alone is in a position to prevent calamity, it makes little sense to argue that he should not exercise his discretion."[256] However, this discretion seems to apply to a specific group of senior officers who are working with senior civilian leaders. If a junior officer feels the same about an order or mission they don't believe in or might result in unnecessary harm to the soldiers under them, then they would be viewed as insubordinate by their superiors. There is an endless number of examples of this challenge, often faced by young officers on the battlefield where they must weigh the lives of their men or the mission. In the end, we are left with an ever-evolving dilemma of military leadership that continues to grapple with the challenge of ensuring both strategic effectiveness and ethical responsibility in the face of complex and morally ambiguous situations.

The Milburn quote also raises another question, is it even possible for officers to be discreet and are there even situations where the only institution that can prevent bad

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[256] Andrew Milburn. "Breaking Ranks: Dissent and the Military Professional." *Joint Forces Quarterly* (2010): 105.

outcomes is the military? This would be more applicable to the Civil War era because there was only a small number of people debating military policy. Even then, for example, George McClellan refused to disclose his strategic thinking to President Lincoln because he believed that it would leak to the media thus making whatever discretion he might have had mute. In the contemporary era, where every conversation is documented and debated this is an impossibility. In addition, there are so many layers of bureaucracy and people debating military policy that the chances of specific decisions coming down to anyone, but the president are unlikely.

This wedge has created an institutional reaction whenever civilians question military policy or strategy. One example is during the debate on whether to increase the force level in Afghanistan during the Obama Presidency in 2009. During one meeting in the situation room, Obama noted in his autobiography that the senior military officers, "had trouble hiding their frustration at having their professional judgments challenged, especially by those who'd never put on a uniform."[257] Even if President Obama was skeptical and blunt in his assessment of the military, he ultimately pursued a strategy recommended by the military surging troops in Afghanistan with the only caveat being a robust timeline for withdrawal for the troops involved in the surge. Thus, even if civilians demonstrate skepticism, political leaders often rely on the advice of military professionals while also asserting their strategic considerations.

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[257] Barack Obama. *A Promised Land* (Harlow: Penguin Books, 2020), 440.

The debate between opinion-driven and objective officers throughout history reveals the enduring tension between military expertise and civilian oversight. From the Civil War era to contemporary conflicts like the debates over the surge in Afghanistan, the role of military leadership in shaping policy and strategy is and will remain a complex and evolving challenge. While the transition towards objective officers has promoted a robust and institutional sense of professionalism and apolitical commitment within the military, it has also posed dilemmas, particularly in navigating the intersection of military discretion, civilian authority, and ethical responsibility. As military leaders grapple with these challenges, the need for a nuanced understanding of civil-military relations and a balance between strategic effectiveness and ethical considerations persists, reflecting the ongoing evolution of military leadership in the face of complex and morally ambiguous situations.

Civilian Supremacy Achieved?

No event played a more direct role in shaping American civil-military relations than then the Civil War and ultimately civilian control of the military reached its peak during the conflict. The norms and practices that developed during the war have continued for almost 150 years. While other conflicts and events have brought changes, the practice of civilian oversight, officer professionalism, and the American way of war were brought about. Several key concepts were developed and reinforced during the role. The president's constitutional role as commander-in-chief was expanded to not just the figurehead of the armed forces but it became necessary for the President to craft grand strategy and the policies that came along with it. An extension of this was the norm of

civilian administrators of the military was reinforced especially given the key figures did not come from the military establishment. The norm of congressional oversight in war was developed. The dilemma of objective control was solved by civilian supremacists by direct intervention in the military when general officers did not or would not carry out the policy prescribed by the administration. Finally, the citizen soldiers as the central modem of national defense developed and continued for almost a century. An unfortunate byproduct of this triumph was a renewed effort by military officers to institutionalize objective control as previously discussed with Emory Upton and other notable American officers that followed.

America fought in numerous conflicts after 1865 but the Civil War was unique as a conflict; the crown prince of Germany told Grant, "What always seemed so sad to me about your last great war was that you were fighting your people. That is always so terrible in wars, so very hard."[258] When it comes to the President's duty as commander-in-chief, there have been triumphs and failures, no president is perfect and often constrained by factors beyond his control. However, the president's prerogative to be involved in strategy making is a consistent factor particularly in Vietnam during Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon's presidencies and George Bush and Barack Obama's presidencies during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The evolution of the president's constitutional role as commander-in-chief reflected the imperative for active involvement in crafting grand strategy and associated policies, emphasizing that the complexities of conflicts like

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[258] McCabe, 432.

Vietnam and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan demanded presidential engagement beyond the traditional figurehead role within the armed forces that the founders might have originally envisioned.

The expansion of the defense bureaucracy has seen a host of civilian administrators appointed by the president to advise and make sure the respective agencies in the matter carry out the policies charted out by the president and the National Security Council. There is also an abundant number of civilians who work in non-leadership roles throughout the defense establishment who can often bring a different perspective than their military counterparts.

Congress has followed in the path of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War serving as an important point of discourse and oversight during wartime. Notable examples after the Civil War include congressional oversight of the economy during World War II, Senator William Fulbright's Foreign Affairs committee providing an important evaluation of the Vietnam War, and the congressional committee examining the strategy of the Iraq War. While the president is the commander-in-chief and provides the focal point for foreign policy and strategy in war, Congress is an important mechanism in contributing to the improvement and oversight of such policies. The norm of congressional oversight in war has evolved into a crucial mechanism, exemplified through historical instances such as World War II, Vietnam, and the Iraq War, solidifying Congress's pivotal role in contributing to the refinement and oversight of foreign policies and strategies during times of conflict.

Civilian control of the American military reached its peak during the Civil War. It was during this time that civilian supremacy was achieved. I'd argue that since 1865, there has been a slow deterioration of civilian supremacy to a hybrid version of professional supremacy. This comes in the form of bureaucracy that exists for national defense today which dwarfs anything that occurred during the Civil War. There are now six branches that make up the armed forces, 18 intelligence agencies charged with overseeing and directing intelligence, and a budget that is $750 billion more a year than what the Union government spent during the entire Civil War. This gives professional supremacists an arsenal of bureaucracy to undercut or undermine civilian policy they disagree with. Moreover, the American military remains an immensely trusted institution with over 60% of Americans giving the military more credibility to the public when it comes to the handling of military matters according to polling.[259] There is no doubt that the authority of the president and civilian officials charged with leading these institutions is unquestioned, however, if we prescribe the civilian supremacist model that,

> Focuses on empowering civilian leaders to involve themselves more forcefully and directly in the business of war-making, even to the extent of pressing military officers on matters that the military might consider as being squarely within their zone of professional autonomy.[260]

Professional supremacists counter that it is the elected civilian officials who empower them by providing substantial budgets and necessary resources for executing the missions

[259] Mohamed Younis. 2023. "Confidence in U.S. Military Lowest in Over Two Decades." *Gallup.* July 31. Accessed January 4, 2024. https://news.gallup.com/poll/509189/confidence-military-lowest-two-decades.aspx.

[260] Feaver, "The Right to be Right," 96.

mandated by the civilian government. Richard Kohn captures this perspective by asserting that regarding American civil-military relations in the 21ˢᵗ century, "civilian control is not a fact but a process."[261]

Another point that supports the ascension of professional supremacists is the propensity of former military officials to take civilian positions within the government. After World War II, it was estimated that at least 150 former general officers occupied "important policy-making positions."[262] Even right now, the current Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin is a former four-star general and required a waiver from Congress to assume this position. This is a norm that has been eroded since the Civil War and will require further review if civilian supremacy is to be maintained by future civilian leaders.

The Civil War was a vital event in shaping the dynamics of American civil-military relations, establishing civilian control of the military as a cornerstone of democratic governance. The norms and practices developed during this conflict have endured for almost 150 years, but their evolution is evident in the network of civilian oversight, officer professionalism, and an American way of war. While the president's constitutional role expanded to involve active engagement in crafting grand strategy, civilian administrators and congressional oversight emerged as essential mechanisms for policy implementation and refinement. However, in the contemporary era, there appears to be a shift towards a hybrid version of professional supremacy, characterized by a vast

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[261] Richard H. Kohn, "The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today." *Naval War College Review*: (2002):16.

[262] Huntington, 357.

defense bureaucracy, an influx of former military officials into civilian positions, and more public trust in the military than in other civilian institutions. Striking a balance between civilian control and military professionalism will always be the core challenge in democratic civil-military relations, and the examination of this relationship must continue to ensure the preservation of democratic values and effective national defense.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The American Civil War, more than any other American conflict, shaped civil-military relations in the United States. Both the positives and negatives of current dynamics in civil-military relations right now can be traced back to the Civil War. Despite civilian control of the military has gone through the crucible of being challenged then affirmed, and triumphing, it created a fundamental tension and skepticism within the United States military that each successive president has had to balance.

For as much as Grant, Sherman, and countless others gave the Union military victory, Abraham Lincoln provided the political will and executive leadership to see it through. As much as Lincoln's assassination derailed reconstruction, it left his legacy intact as one of the greatest presidents in U.S. history. He was a general, president, and liberator at once and willing to go to extraordinary lengths to preserve the Union. No other president faced such a challenge. Lincoln was the president general who didn't let his credentials as a civilian cast doubt on his intentions or belief in the Union cause. Lincoln, more than any other figure in American history, preserved civilian control of the military whilst also laying a framework for tighter civilian control of the bureaucracy that has endured almost 160 years later. Each successive challenge of civilian control indirectly or directly by military officers was equally met by the culture of civilian control.

Study Limitations: While there is an endless number of sources, both primary and secondary on the civil war, there is a limit of both soldier accounts and statistics to further examine the culture and motivations of everyday soldiers. There was a limit of civil-military relations theory that I could integrate. In addition to Dr. Feaver, Dr. Brooks, and others, there is a wealth of other scholarship on contemporary issues in American civil-military relations that did not make it. Public polling was not as robust, we can only draw so many conclusions about electoral results and anecdotes from soldiers on the frontline.

Areas for Further Research: There is a wealth of scholarship yet to be written on the culture of the American military and civil military relations before World War I. Such a focus on Civil-Military relations in the 21st century has limited the history and influence that previous American conflicts have had on current challenges today. While this study seeks to change and add to the history of Civil-Military relations in the United States, there is still a wealth of case studies, conflicts, and legacies to be explored so much so a whole history of American civil-military relations that has yet to be written.

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