"GITTIN STUFF"

The Impact of Equipment Management, Supply & Logistics on Confederate Defeat

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"They never whipped us, Sir, unless they were four to one. If we had had anything like a fair chance, or less disparity of numbers, we should have won our cause and established our independence." UNKNOWN VIRGINIAN TO ROBERT E. LEE.[1]

PREFACE

After defeat in the Civil War, known by some in the South as "The War of Northern Aggression," Southerners were in a quandary regarding their willingness for war. As discussed in the first article of this series, the North had the overwhelming advantage in industrial capability and manpower. If defeat was inevitable, then why did Southerners risk everything by going to war? Later Southern romantics would characterize the War as, "a battle of bludgeon against rapier and of machinery against chivalry, in which the knight-errant was bound to be run over by the locomotive, if not overthrown by the windmill."[2]

Despite limited resources, many historians have rejected the notion that the South was predetermined to lose. In a major work published in 1960, *Why the North Won the Civil War,* a number of distinguished historians argued that the South could have won, if it had conducted the war more effectively. In a more recent work (1986), *Why the South Lost,* equally distinguished historians came to the same conclusion.

This third article covers the events leading up to the collapse of the Confederacy and the impact of equipment management, supply support and logistics on its defeat. It describes the strategic loss of Wilmington, the last port providing supplies to Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, and the destruction or capture of factories and farms in the Deep South and Richmond. The lack of rations at Amelia Court House, which has been called the immediate cause of Lee's surrender, is examined in detail. Most importantly, the article addresses how the inability of its leaders to conduct productive logistics, equipment, and supply management led to the decline and ultimately, the defeat of the Confederacy.

The article title also contains "Gittin' Stuff," a term credited to controversial Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest. He used it to describe logistics, the laborious process of procuring necessary items, storing them until ready for use and finally distributing supplies and equipment among the soldiers or users.[3]

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Destruction of Supply Sources

As 1864 ended, Union General Winfield Scott's "Anaconda Plan," which included the blockade of the Southern coastline, had nearly achieved its goal. By years end most of the ports in the South had been captured. For four years they had provided equipment and supplies from Europe to support the Confederacy and its armies. Since the beginning of the war, Wilmington, North Carolina had been a preferred port of entry for blockade-runners because Cape Fear provided two entry channels, which gave ships a greater opportunity for escape and evasion. Also, rail lines ran directly from Wilmington to Richmond and Atlanta.[4]

By the fall of 1864, Wilmington was one of the most important cities in the Confederacy – it was the last operating port. Confederate armies depended on Wilmington for lead, iron, copper, steel, arms, saltpeter, cloth, food, shoes and leather. Lee advised President Davis in 1863 that, "Wilmington ought to be defended to the last extremity."[5] Fort Fisher guarded the Cape Fear channel south of Wilmington, because keeping it open for critical shipments from Europe was imperative. Fort Fisher, the South's most powerful fortification, had acquired the nickname "Goliath of the Confederacy." Its guns were protected by mounds of sand and its defenders by bombproof shelters dug into the sand. The Union recognized its value and planned a massive joint operation against this defensive stronghold.

Major General Benjamin Butler, a controversial political appointee, was the Union landing force commander. Rated one of the ten worst generals of the war by *The Civil War for Dummies,* he suggested blowing up an old flat-bottomed ship, the Louisiana, after floating it towards Fort Fisher loaded with tons of explosives.[6] The detonators failed so candles and a slow match were used to ignite wood to set it off.[7] The explosion was loud, accompanied

by much black smoke, but succeeded only in waking the defenders. The next day, Christmas Eve 1864, under the command of Admiral David Porter, fifty-six U. S. Navy ships armed with more than 600 guns began a bombardment of Fort Fisher. During the amphibious landing, Butler's second-in-command, Major General Godfrey Weitzel, was skeptical of Porter's claim that the fort was ready to surrender. He confirmed his concerns, finding it largely intact with well-entrenched defenders. Learning of anticipated Confederate reinforcements of 6,000, Butler withdrew his force without much of a fight, Fort Fisher held and Butler's military career came to an ignominious end.[8]

A larger force attacked on January 13, 1865, executing perhaps the most brilliant amphibious landing of the War, and capturing the Fort two days later.[9] The second assault featured a more effective artillery barrage that focused on the fort's land based artillery, knocking out all but a few cannon. As the Union forces prepared for the assault, Fort commander Colonel William Lamb observed the Confederate supply ship Isaac Wells heading towards Craig's Landing, which was already occupied by Federal forces. A warning shot was fired across the bow that did not dissuade the ship from landing. The ship landed at the dock and was swarmed by Union troops. Ironically, the Union army, rather than the navy, captured the first Confederate ship lost during the battle.[10] On January 15th, Union troops assaulted the earthworks several times, with the gallant defenders finally succumbing to an overwhelmingly greater force of Federal soldiers, sailors and Marines. The remaining Confederates retreated to Wilmington and it was soon captured, dealing a deathblow to Lee's army and the Confederacy. *The New York Tribune* declared, "Fort Fisher was the strongest fort in the South." .. added, "This success is of first importance…It involves the loss to the rebels of their principal port."[11] To make matters worse, Wilmington provided the Union a support base for Sherman's invasion of North Carolina in March 1865.

After the capture of Wilmington, Confederate import/export activities ceased permanently, along with purchasing operations in Europe. Supply offices in Bermuda and Nassau were closed permanently. Confederate supplies stored there were returned to England, and government-owned blockade running ships sailed back to English ports. Confederate agents in Europe, receiving word of the fall of the South's last port, ended their operations and departed for home, leaving their orders and debts behind them. Poorly organized, badly instructed, and short of funds, the agents had kept Southern armies in the field for four years, without formal recognition of the Confederacy from the nations where they served.[12] With their departure, the last foreign lifeline of the Confederacy was permanently closed, and Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had lost its most important source of supply.

After October 1864, the Confederate Government had bought $45 million worth of supplies on credit. The Confederate purchasing agent, Fraser, Trenholm and Company, was unable to pay off the debt. As a result, corporate partner and the last Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, George Alfred Trenholm, was imprisoned for four years. The Federal government seized his personal property, allegedly to pay import duties on the wartime shipments of his companies.[13] Afterwards, like his fictional counterpart Rhett Butler, he reestablished his business and helped with the rebuilding of Charleston. His reputation and financial status restored, he died in 1876.[14]

The Pulpit, Fort Fisher, NC , *Courtesy National Archives*

Meanwhile in the deep South, Confederate industry was taking a beating. In November 1864, General William Tecumseh Sherman began his march through Georgia, destroying cities, businesses, railroads and plantations in his wake. As documented in *Hard Tack and Coffee,* John D. Billings' 1888 bestseller, Sherman's army of sixty thousand was well supplied by a wagon train exceeding twenty-five hundred wagons and six hundred ambulances. The wagons rolled down the poor Southern roads, while the troops plodded along the roadside, foraging when necessary.[15] As it moved South, his army destroyed thousands of bales of cotton and millions of pounds of grain.

Sherman concentrated on destroying all East-West railroads, accompanied by an engineer regiment brought specifically for that purpose.[16] Of the approximately one thousand miles of rail in Georgia, 450 were destroyed. The Western & Atlantic and the Atlanta and Savannah roads suffered heavily, and although most of the Central Line's rolling stock was spared, its infrastructure was virtually destroyed along with 139 miles of track.[17]

Sherman's army moved in two parallel columns, the right towards Augusta and the left down the Macon railroad. After a week pillaging factories, mills, railroads and bridges, the two columns met at the Georgia capital, Milledgeville. After his arrival, local citizens confronted Sherman, requesting that he spare the town and its local factory. Since the factory was under the total control of Governor Joe Brown, who was already negotiating a separate peace with the North, it was spared.[18] After leaving all of Milledgeville intact except the prison, Sherman's army continued south, arriving in Savannah on December 21, 1864. The next day, the victorious general wired President Lincoln, "I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, and also about 25,000 bales of cotton."[19]
Only Richmond, the Confederate capital, was left as a significant industrial site not either decimated or under control of the Union army. Sherman's operations had severed the supply lines to Lee's army, which was defending the capital, as the Army of the Potomac commander, Ulysses S. Grant, massed a huge force for a final assault on Richmond. Grant's approach was to destroy Lee's Army of Northern Virginia through a siege of Petersburg, Virginia, a significant railroad hub south of Richmond.

Early in the siege, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pleasants proposed a unique idea to break the stalemate. Pleasants, a Pennsylvania mining engineer, suggested digging a long T-shaped tunnel under the Confederate lines and filling it with 8,000 pounds of gunpowder. With the tunnel in place, on July 30, 1864, Pleasants lit the fuse but nothing happened. Two brave volunteers from the 48th Regiment, Lieutenant Jacob Douty and Sergeant Harry Reese, crawled into the tunnel and relit it. A tremendous explosion shook the earth, blowing up tons of earth along with an estimated 350 Confederate soldiers. The assault was launched with a replacement division, "led" by Brigadier General James F. Ledlie, who had positioned himself well to the rear in a drunken stupor. A division of African-American soldiers, under Brigadier General Edward Ferrero, had been trained for the mission, but was not used due to Commanding General George Meade's concern about the success of the operation. He was worried that the assault troops might incur significant casualties, which could have had serious political consequences if African-

Richmond, VA in ruins, the Capitol is in the background. *Courtesy Library of Congress*

Americans were sacrificed.[20] The untrained, all-white replacement unit went into the huge crater, rather than around it, and was massacred from above by Confederate shooters. Afterwards, Ferrero's unit relieved Ledlie's, and it too was caught in the slaughter. Union losses outnumbered Confederate 5,300 to 1,032.[21] As victims of a poorly executed plan, African-Americans incurred about half of the Union losses. General Grant wrote to Chief of Staff Halleck, "It was the saddest affair I have witnessed in this war."[22] The Battle of the Crater was a Union disaster, but did not change the relative positions of the armies. The siege lasted nine months until April 1865, which further wore down the Confederate forces. As supplies to the Confederates became scarce, the City Point Supply Depot, historically the largest up to that time, effectively supported Grant's forces.

As the Union army drew closer to Richmond on April 2, 1865, panicked citizens of the capital loaded what personal property they could carry and left. Those that could afford the fare crowded into the Richmond and Danville train station attempting to head west. At the Central Hotel, which had served as office space for government auditors, the staff burned crates of paperwork in the street. Historians for the last 140 years have lamented the destruction of much of the official history of the Confederate Government in the massive bonfire that followed. President Davis worked in his office until nearly 5:00 PM packing his personal papers. A Government train, carrying him and his government, was scheduled to depart at 8:30 PM headed towards Danville, Virginia. The official records of the government were loaded in cars labeled "War Department," "Quartermasters Department," and "Treasury Department."[23]

At the beginning of the war, five rail lines served the capital. Due to its destination, Davis' government train used the Richmond and Danville. The line had been long neglected, overworked, and suffered from deferred maintenance. Rails were built of iron rather than steel, and ties were laid directly on dirt rather than gravel. All of the engines were wood burners, requiring frequent stops for both fuel and water, and capable of only ten miles per hour on rickety rails. The Tredegar Iron Works had produced rails prior to the war, but none since 1861, because its entire capacity was dedicated to the government, providing iron for cannons and other weapons of war.[24] The Government train, containing a tight-lipped Jefferson Davis and all of his cabinet except Secretary of War Breckinridge, did not depart until eleven that night. They headed west towards Danville, which would become the last capital of the Confederacy.[25]

Meanwhile, Confederate artillery personnel dumped cannon and other military hardware into the James River and Naval personnel scuttled their ships, as the city of Richmond burned. By the evening of April 2nd, rebel soldiers, army wagons and caissons jammed roads out of Richmond headed towards Lee's army. Hundreds more deserted and headed home to their families. As dawn broke on the 3rd, Confederate soldiers on the south bank of the James River could see the fire consuming the warehouses and stores along the waterfront. As the Union army approached, the Danville and Petersburg railroad bridges were collapsing into the James River. A heavy wind blew the fire up towards the Capitol. By midmorning, Union soldiers were in the capital and the fire threatened to burn the entire city. Shortly after arrival of the Union army, the fire at Gorgas' arsenal and laboratory set off thousands of artillery shells and cartridges. Some local residents thought optimistically that the Confederate army had returned and were shelling the city.[26]

John Reid Anderson, the owner of the largest factory in the South, the Tredegar Iron Works, was afraid that the Confederate army would demolish his factory as part of its destruction plan. Some officials such as Secretary of the Navy Mallory supported destroying it, while Ordnance Chief, Josiah Gorgas, supported Anderson. Fortunately for the owner, Secretary of War Breckinridge agreed with Gorgas, the factory was not destroyed, and the Tredegar battalion stayed behind to guard it. It was one of the few major factories to survive the fire.[27]

By the 4th of April, the city was in Union hands. U. S. President Abraham Lincoln was transported by boat down the James from City Point; landed near the detested Libby Prison, which had held Union officers; and headed for the Confederate president's house. Arriving at Jefferson Davis' office, he sat in the departed president's easy chair, symbolically closing the Confederate capital.[28]

Richmond, VA burned. *Courtesy Library of Congress*

The Rations Debacle at Amelia Court House

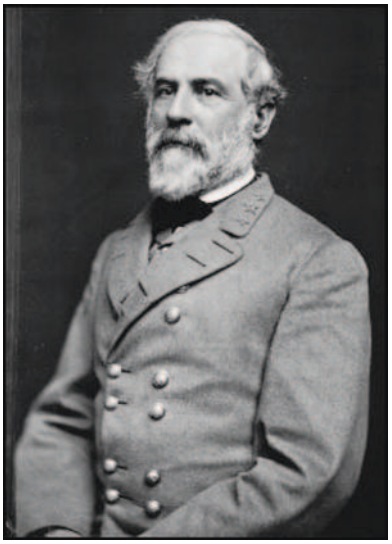
As April 3rd dawned, the remaining thirty-five thousand men of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia faced starvation. Lee's plan was to escape Grant's siege of Petersburg and Richmond and first head west, then south to team up with General Joe Johnston to fight another day. According to General Edward Porter Alexander, the Confederacy's capability to move equipment and supplies had deteriorated significantly by February 1865, due to lack of animals and vehicles. Lee's desperate plan to join Johnston's army most likely would have failed due to lack of transportation.[29]

Four columns of troops headed toward a rally point, tiny Amelia Court House, which lay 39 miles southwest of Richmond on the main supply route supporting the retreat. Aboard Traveller, Lee personally directed traffic at a fork in the road until all his troops had past. They were tired and hungry. Only one day ahead of Grant's army, they pressed on towards Amelia Court House and the 350,000 rations Lee expected to find there.

The morning of the 4th Lee arrived at Amelia and ordered the railroad cars opened. The inventory contained 96 loaded caissons, 200 crates of ammunition and 164 boxes of artillery harnesses, but no food.[30] John Esten Cook, who stood near Lee remembered, "No face wore a heavier shadow than that of General Lee. The failure of the supply of rations completely paralyzed him. An anxious and haggard expression came to his face."[31]

One hope remained: A million and a half rations were stored at Danville, 104 miles away by railroad, or a four day march.[32] Lee gave the order to send foragers out into the friendly neighboring countryside, while part of his tired, starving army stayed at Amelia Court House, awaiting the rest of the stragglers. The foragers returned with little. The local area had given so much to support the Confederacy, there was nothing left. The army could wait no longer so it headed out again. Lee did not know that the same day Federal troops destroyed, then burned, supply wagons bringing rations to his army only seven miles to the north of Amelia Court House. Five days later, his avenue of escape closed and supply lines cut, Lee surrendered to General Grant.

General Robert E. Lee, CSA
Courtesy Library of Congress



Lee's surrender was due to many factors, but his army's lack of food and stopping the retreat for a day to find some were two of the most telling and immediate. Historian Jay Winik referred to it as *"a mere administrative mix-up – over food, no less."*[33] Noted Confederate scholar, Clement Eaton pointed out that Lee's army suffered from a lack of food because of a *misunderstanding,* which resulted in the failure to position food at Amelia Court House.[34] The most basic supplies required to sustain the proud Army of Northern Virginia were not available, and as a result nothing else really mattered. The lack of food at Amelia Court House is mentioned in virtually every modern reference to Appomattox, but few offer any explanation.

Several books, published soon after the war, blamed Jefferson Davis and his government. The author of the controversial 1866 book, *The Lost Cause,* E. A. Pollard, wrote, "Several days before, Gen. Lee had dispatched *most distinct and urgent orders* that large supplies of commissary and quartermaster's stores should be sent forward from Danville to Amelia Courthouse. But the authorities in Richmond bungled the command, and the train of cars loaded with these supplies ran through to relieve the evacuation of the capital, without unloading the stores at Amelia Court-house."[35] J. P. Holcombe, in his address on the first anniversary of Washington and Lee University in 1871, included the following, "When General Lee reached Amelia Court House, and found that the supplies which he had ordered to be collected at that point, the last gift of their country to his perishing troops, had been sent, through some official blunder, to Richmond…"[36] Bevin Alexander in his treatise on Civil War strategy and tactics, *Robert E. Lee's Civil War,* recounts that artillery commander, General Edward Porter Alexander, found a railroad train loaded with rations at the Richmond and Danville Railroad station just outside of Richmond the afternoon of April 2nd. Allegedly, Lee had told the train commander to drop the provisions at Amelia, but the Government directed the train to return to Richmond to support evacuation of the government.[37] Bevin Alexander's book does not substantiate Lee's instructions with a reference.

To bolster his defense, Confederate President Jefferson Davis researched the incident extensively. As evidence, he quoted a letter from Commissary General Isaac M. St. John dated July 14, 1873. St. John recalled, …"No calls, by letter or requisition, from the General commanding, or from any other source, official or unofficial, had been received either by the Commissary-General or the Assistant Commissary-General; nor (as will be seen by the appended letter of the Secretary of War) was any communication transmitted through the department channels to the bureau of subsistence, for the collection of supplies at Amelia Court-House…."[38] Davis quoted Secretary of War Breckinridge, who remembered clearly in a letter to St. John dated May 16, 1871, "I have no recollection of any communication from General Lee in regard to the accumulation of rations at Amelia Court House . . . .The second or third day after evacuation, I recollect you said to General Lee in my presence that you had a large number of rations (I think 80 thousand) at a convenient point on the railroad, and desired to know where to put them. The General replied that the military situation made it impossible to answer."[39] Additionally, Lewis E. Harvie, president of the Richmond and Danville Railroad at the time, wrote St. John on January 1, 1876, ". . . .No orders were ever given to any officers or employee of the Richmond and Danville Railroad to transport any supplies to Amelia Court-House

for General Lee's army, nor did I ever hear that any such orders were sent to the commissary department on the occasion of the evacuation of Richmond, until after the surrender of the army."[40] Considered the most blameworthy, Davis went to great lengths to document his case that Lee's request was either never made or did not reach its required audience. Lee could not refute his arguments since most of the evidence was written after his death in 1870.

The evidence is not conclusive. Lee's biographer, Douglas Southall Freeman contends that the commanding general had given orders for supplies to be sent to Amelia, but they had not been delivered.[41] In his biography of Lee, he quoted the General's final report, "Not finding the supplies ordered to be placed there (i.e. at Amelia) twenty-four hours were lost."[42] However, Freeman admitted that there were no letters in the Official Records documenting that Lee ever requested food be positioned at Amelia prior to April 2nd.[43] Late on the 2nd, Lee did telegraph Breckinridge that his troops would all be directed to Amelia Court House; however, he did not mention supplies in that order.[44] Colonel W. H. Taylor, who was present at the surrender, said in an interview in 1906, "I cannot say that any specific, written order for the collection of supplies at Amelia Court House is extant; nor do I assert that any such order was ever written."[45] However, Taylor said that he was sure that General Lee gave verbal orders to the Chief Commissary of his army concerning supplies to the troops. General Edward Porter Alexander, who wrote one of the best first hand accounts of the war, was also at Amelia Court House. He wrote, "We should have gotten rations here, but in all the crash we had come through many plans had been sure to miscarry, & the plan to have rations here for us had been one of them."[46] First Commissary General Lucius Northrop's biographer, Jerrold Northrop Moore, writes that Northrop's successor, St. John, spent the night in Richmond loading trains of wagons and sending them southwest in the general direction of Lee's army. He indicates that the military situation precluded a specific destination, possibly referring to the Breckinridge letter.[47]

Did Lee submit a specific request that was never received or did he just assume that the troops and rations would both arrive at Amelia Court House? Lee did have a penchant for non-specific orders open to interpretation by his subordinates. Were those responsible trying to cover their failures, or conveniently did not remember? Historians for well over a hundred years have conducted extensive research on this critical episode. In probably the best retelling of the fateful last days, William Marvel provides his explanation: "Somewhere between Lee's lips and the commissary department in Richmond – and apparently much closer to Lee – that part of the plan had been forgotten."[48]

We will probably never know who was responsible, but Lee must shoulder some of the blame. He had warned Richmond of his imminent withdrawal from Petersburg, and planned a retreat for all of the units of his army. However, he failed to plan for rations to support the move, even though sufficient quantities existed in nearby towns.[49] The failure to position rations at Amelia Court House was compounded by Lee's flawed decision to wait for 24 hours during the time that foragers fruitlessly searched the countryside. While his stationary troops were near starvation, the Federal army blocked their retreat route, culminating in the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox.[50] The fact that bountiful food supplies were available in Farmville, Danville and Lynchburg points to the significance of location, movement and distribution of critical supplies. (Note: the author italicized portions of the quotations for emphasis, and grammatical and spelling errors in the quotations remain.)

White House of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA. Lincoln visited April 4, 1865. *Courtesy National Archives.*

Why Did the Confederates Lose?

Since Edward Pollard published *The Lost Cause* in 1866, Civil War buffs have debated why the Confederacy lost, and historians have written numerous alternative histories documenting what may have happened if it had won. Many reasons have been advanced as the primary reason for defeat. This article is about equipment management, supply support and logistics so it will focus on those aspects; however, those of us who manage equipment and materiel as a profession know that "property management" affects and is affected by other aspects of an organization.

Jim Dieter and the author have presented several workshops on equipment management and the requisites that must be

present for an organization to facilitate the development of an equipment management system. Three of the eight requisites; senior management support, leadership, and strategic planning have significant applicability to the Confederate government's management, or mismanagement, of its material resources.[51]

Senior Management Support

Five eminent historians met at Gettysburg College in 1958 to discuss different aspects of why the North won (and the South lost) the Civil War. David M. Potter addressed the performance of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his political decisions that led to the defeat of the Confederacy. He even suggested that if the senior leaders of the two warring nations had been reversed, Lincoln leading the South and Davis, the Union, that the Confederacy might have been victorious.[52]

The South of 1861 was an agrarian society unable to support the large armies that the Civil War demanded. One of the historians at the Gettysburg meeting, Richard N. Current, concluded, "Economic rather than strictly military superiority was the basic reason for the ultimate victory of the North."[53] As described in the first article of this series, the North had a huge advantage over the South in population, industry, finances, and railroads. However after the war, Confederate General Joe Johnston wrote that the South possessed "ample means" to win. General P. G. T. Beauregard agreed, stating that the outcome could not be explained by "mere material contrast" between the North and the South.[54]

The Confederate government squandered opportunities early to fully fund the war, but hindsight is always 20/20. Second Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin proposed to buy cotton in bulk in 1861 and ship it to Europe to establish credit. This action could have provided as much as $50 million dollars, but Secretary of the Treasury, Christopher Gustavus Memminger, disapproved of the plan, calling it "Soup-house Legislation." After his capture, ex-President Davis told a doctor at Fort Monroe: "South Carolina placed Mr. Memminger in the Treasury and while he respected the man, the utter failure of Confederate finance was the failure of the cause. Had Mr. Memminger acted favorably on the position of depositing cotton in Europe and holding it there for two years as a basis for their currency, their circulating medium might have maintained itself at par to the closing day of the struggle; and that in itself would have ensured victory."[55] Davis had temporarily forgotten that he had himself disapproved the plan and would admit later that Memminger was not entirely to blame.[56]

Both the army and civilian population were undernourished due to lack of a central agricultural policy. Southern armies and the civilian population starved in parts of the Confederacy while food rotted in other areas. State governors such as Zebulon Vance of North Carolina and Joseph "Joe" Brown of Georgia controlled equipment, supplies and foodstuffs, limiting the flexibility of the centralized Confederate government. Even when food surpluses existed in government or state warehouses, lack of railroad transportation limited resupply efforts. The war effort would have been better served if the government had taken over the management of railroads early in the War.[57]

In fact, the government waited until it was facing economic disaster before mobilizing its resources.[58] In February 1865, when defeat was at hand, Congress finally authorized the Secretary of War to assume control of any railroad needed for military purposes, transfer rolling stock from one railroad to another, and even transfer employees of railroad companies with military significance into the army.[59] This law was similar to the authority that the U. S. Congress had given to Herman Haupt and Daniel McCallum, superintendents of the U. S. military railroads early in the war.[60] In the long war of attrition, the laissez-faire policies of the Confederate government coupled with the illusion of a quick victory had led to policies that guaranteed defeat.

Senior management, namely President Davis, his senior cabinet members, the Confederate Congress, and commanders of the major armies, failed in their responsibilities to oversee the acquisition and management of equipment and materials to wage the Civil War successfully. Jefferson Davis was a conservative of his day, with a belief in states and individual rights and concern about the power of a central government. Davis did accept responsibility for making the major decisions that affected the War effort, including basic supply and logistics policies, but was reluctant to ensure they were followed. Historians have criticized him for allowing events to move him hesitantly towards a centralized government. He often delayed and overruled recommended nationalization and centralization plans, implementing them later when they were too late to be effective. He did not impose regulations on shipping and coordinate purchasing abroad until the war was more than half over.

The Confederate Congress supported the policies of the executive branch in most cases. If they failed, its often-divisive representatives were unable to develop effective policies. When Congress did take action on its own it tended to be detrimental to the equipment and supply management effort. For example, Congress fought the implementation of necessary shipping regulations. More importantly, it failed to establish a sound fiscal policy by refusing to implement required tax laws or price controls, while authorizing the issue of hundreds of millions of dollars of inflated bonds and notes.[61] Congressional policy led to hoarding and inflation and forced supply bureaus into impressments, which angered the civilian population.

Slow to regulate manufacturing or stimulate new industry to support the war effort, government leaders expected a short war and reflected the laissez-faire attitude of most Southerners towards government. Robert Garlick Hill Kean, chief clerk of the Bureau of War, was in the best position to view the performance of the senior managers of the Confederacy. He blamed lack of supplies and equipment on the bankrupt Treasury. Hill contended that the leaders counted on a short war and that the president, the First Congress and Secretary Memminger were not equipped to deal with a "very large subject."[62] Economist and military historian, Douglas Ball perhaps summarized it best, "Instead of doing its duty both to itself and to the South's citizens, the Davis administration improvidently and feebly conducted the economic affairs of a brave and civilized people in a manner reminiscent of the irresponsible, transient rulers of a bankrupt banana republic."[63]

Equipment and Supply Leadership

Ineffective equipment and supply leadership hindered the Confederacy during the entire war. Jefferson Davis was characterized as a thin-skinned, quarrelsome and intolerant leader, who appointed department heads of his choosing who were typically inept.[64] Andrew Myers, Quartermaster General, and Lucius B. Northrop, Commissary General, were friends of Davis, well connected and ineffective. Ordnance Department head Josiah Gorgas was the one exception. His biographer Frank Vandiver referred to him as "a wizard of logistics," who had the "…capacity to command from his associates a high degree of devotion…"[65]

To manage equipment and supplies, the Confederate supply bureaus used typical forms of control that property managers still use today; vouchers, reports, forms and accounts, but the supervisors and inspectors were too inexperienced to implement the required property controls and discipline in their subordinates. In addition to inefficiency, many were charged with extortion, collusion and theft. The Savannah Daily News, August 1, 1863, demanded "a searching inquiry into the acts of the Commissary and Quartermaster's Departments . . . to clear up or prove and punish the general suspicion in the public mind, that peculation and plunder, and misuse of authority for private purpose, have often been put before public duty and public service . . .."[66] In addition, poor supply management and distribution led to problems in the armies. Field supply officers were loyal to their commanders and not to the bureau in Richmond, resulting in their lack of cooperation in responding to centralized directives, requisitioning policies and distribution. Top field commanders were so wasteful that Secretary of War Seddon transferred management of supplies from commanding generals to supply chiefs.[67]

Individual supply bureaus tended to be more effective the more they supported themselves, and did not have to depend on outside sources for acquisition and distribution. The Ordnance Department and its subordinate bureau, the Niter and Mining Bureau, were the most successful. As Ordnance Chief, Gorgas was unquestionably

John Breckinridge, Secretary of War, CSA
Courtesy Library of Congress

the most exceptional logistician of the Confederate War Department. He was a West Point graduate and served in the Mexican War as an expert on ammunition.[68] Although dependent on battlefield captures early in the war, Gorgas built up a dispersed procurement, manufacturing and distribution network that assured sufficient ordnance support for all Confederate armies until the very end. Wisely, he decentralized at the operational level and centralized command functions. Although he was unable to produce enough small arms to satisfy the armies' needs, that was due to a shortage of skilled workmen.[69] Gorgas was also an advocate of blockade running and supervised the production of fast blockade-runners that supported the import of at least 600,000 rifles and other durable goods.[70]

Leadership of the Quartermaster Department produced mixed results. The first Quartermaster General, Abraham C. Myers, was a poor choice, even though he had served as a quartermaster on the frontier and in New Orleans.[71] Both he and his successor Alexander R. Lawton tried to plan for future needs, but were not successful in getting their superiors to provide the financial support required to support the military effort. Key materials such as woolens, shoes and other leather products were imported in far too limited quantities. The greatest failure of the Quartermaster Department was distribution. The destruction of much of the Confederacy's railroads and lack of wagons and healthy horses made Southern armies immobile late in the War. Myers was not in favor of military regulation of the railroads and Lawton was only willing to use the railroad control law in limited circumstances. Both contributed to the inefficiency of railroad transportation.[72]

By the time he assumed command of the Quartermaster Corps from Andrew Myers in February 1964, Lawton faced a scarcity of raw materials, loss of production facilities and a reduction in railroad support for distribution due to wear from overuse and capture and destruction by Union forces. At the beginning of his tour, resupply from foreign sources was irregular due to the tightening blockade, and later it totally ceased. However, with little prior experience in dealing with manufacturers, Lawton had common sense, the business traits of a lawyer and the boldness of a field military officer. He broke with the traditional approaches of his predecessor and was able to influence government policy through attendance at high-level strategy sessions at the War Department.[73]

In comparison, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs of the Union Army directed a massive supply effort that ensured superior support to Eastern and Western armies. His responsibilities also included wagon, rail and water transportation. Meigs provided logistics support to Meade in the Gettysburg campaign, and furnished Sherman's army with new uniforms and equipment in Savannah after its march to the sea. Considered one of the greatest logisticians in U. S. Army history, he was so highly regarded that he participated in the honor guard at President Lincoln's funeral.[74]

The Subsistence Department has been unjustly criticized as the worst of the Confederate supply bureaus.[75] Commissary General Northrop was cantankerous and considered "one of the most disliked of all Confederate officials" in the words of a modern historian.[76] He was hampered by the loss of the major meat and grain producing areas of the south early in the war. By the time the Deep South states of the Confederacy had started to produce sufficient crops and were in a better position to support the armies, connecting railroad lines had been overrun by Union troops. In addition, procurement of stocks was limited by inflation and high prices, and unpop-

ular impressments had to be used to feed the troops. When the troops were well fed, their families at home were on the brink of starvation. Impressments actually depressed production, and the civilian population as well as the armies suffered. In addition, internal competition for food hurt the Confederate cause. Isaac M. St. John, Chief of the Niter and Mining Bureau, accumulated foodstuffs by outbidding Northrop's Commissary Bureau for the harvest of 1864, reducing food available for Lee's army.[77]

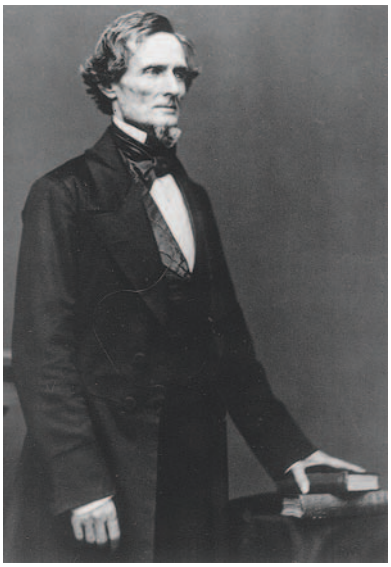
By January 1865 Lee's trench-bound army was subsisting on cornmeal and ears of corn. A soldier wrote, …"Our rations are all the way from a pint to a quart of cornmeal a day, and occasionally a piece of bacon large enough to grease your palate."[78] The situation improved somewhat when St. John's reserves were released upon his appointment as Commissary General on February 16, 1865, after Northrop's resignation. At the time of Lee's surrender numerous rations were positioned in Danville, Richmond, and in North Carolina while Lee's army faced starvation at Amelia Court House.

In comparison, the Union army was the best fed in military history up to that time. Standard meals included pork or beef served with bread and potatoes. The health-conscious Commissary Department, headed by Brigadier General Joseph P. Taylor, included fresh vegetables when available and desiccated (dried) vegetables, when not. Unlike the Confederates, Union soldiers always had a good supply of coffee, so much that they traded with the rebels for tobacco, which was in good supply in the Confederate army.[79]

The difference in diet was readily apparent during battlefield cleanup. Incredibly, workers responsible for burying the dead were able to identify the slain as Union or Confederate without paying attention to their uniforms. Southern bodies were almost always white-faced and lean, looking almost alive. Due to their better high-fat diet, Union corpses were most often found black and bloated.[80]

Throughout history, managers of equipment and supplies have traditionally been held in lower esteem than operators or planners. Ambitious Southern officers considered staff work inferior. There was glory in being a warrior, so billets in supply and logistics were left to the mediocre.

Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy
Courtesy Library of Congress



Army of Tennessee Commanding General Braxton Bragg, another of the ten worst generals in *The Civil War for Dummies,* was known as argumentative and unable to get along with anyone except his mentor, President Jefferson Davis.[81] Bragg was the subject of a story of questionable veracity early in his career in the U. S. Army. As a first lieutenant, he served as the commanding officer of several companies, as well as quartermaster. He submitted a requisition for supplies to the quartermaster for approval. In his role as quartermaster he disapproved his own requisition. When the matter was taken to the post commander for resolution, the commander exclaimed, "My God Mr. Bragg, you have quarreled with every officer in the army, and now you are quarreling with yourself."[82] Even Robert E. Lee was not much of a logistician according to General Hood. Early in the war, when Hood entered Lee's office it was full of cobblers, receiving personal instruction on making cartridge boxes and knapsacks. The instructor turned and Hood realized it was Lee, looking flushed and weary.[83]

The Confederate Congress demonstrated its lack of respect for the quartermaster corps when it passed a law to force all quartermasters assigned to posts and depots under forty-five years of age into combat units out of desperation at the very end of the war. Davis vetoed the law on March 11, 1865, on the grounds that it would seriously impair the war effort.[84]

The Confederate quartermaster's low esteem is perhaps best revealed in an incident that occurred in the swamps of northern Florida. On May 26, 1865, nineteen days after the capture of President Jefferson Davis and more than a month after Lee's surrender, Secretary of War Breckinridge, fleeing from Union forces, offered to promote Lieutenant William McCardell to major. McCardell had already surrendered and requested parole from nearby Union forces. McCardell told Breckinridge the following, "Well, you see, gineral, that's a feller in our regiment what hain't done nothin', and he is a major and a quartermaster, and if its all the same to you, I would just like to rank him for onst."[85] Breckinridge completed McCardell's commission and promoted him to lieutenant colonel in the Confederate army so he outranked the quartermaster, who purportedly did nothing. It proved to be one of the last official, and most meaningless, acts of the Confederate government.

Strategic planning

One of the most important requisites of equipment and supply management is its support of the organization's strategic plan. The strategic plan for management of equipment and materiel should be in sync with the overall strategic plan of the organization. Confederate government leaders expected erroneously that the war would be of short duration, believing that the North did not have the will to absorb the horrendous casualties of a protracted war. Many Confederates thought that after a few losses on the battlefield Lincoln would be forced to sue for peace, so a coherent strategic plan was never developed.[86]

Conceptually, the Confederacy had several strategic advantages. The South did not have to win the war; it could win by avoiding losing, and holding on long enough so the North grew too weary of war to continue. In projecting potential victory, the Confederates used the American Revolution as a model, since the colonies achieved their independence against much greater odds. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that the United States lost a 20th century war in Vietnam against a much weaker and poorly supplied foe, because the nation did not have the will to continue the war after loss of over 57,000 lives and

cost of $111 billion.[87]

The limited capabilities of its states negatively impacted Confederate strategy. One disadvantage occurred in its infancy when the four slave Border States decided to remain with the Union. The states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri contained large productive areas of grain and meat production and significant industrial capacity. The most consequential industrial loss to the South was Baltimore, Maryland with a population of 212,418, which made it the third largest city in the nation at the time.[88] The railroad shops around Mount Clare manufactured locomotives, car wheels, car axles, car bodies, trestles and track. If Maryland had seceded, the city's industrial capacity could have replaced Southern railroads as fast as they wore out or Union armies blew them up.[89] Instead, the city became the Civil War "hospital" for Northern railroads, taking millions of pounds of scrap metal and rebuilding railroad bridges, track or locomotives. For example the bridge at Harper's Ferry, featured in article one of this series, was rebuilt five times from materials produced in Baltimore.[90]

Of the states that remained, areas of both agriculture and industrial production were not well connected with the remainder of the South by an adequate transportation network. In addition, the most important agricultural and industrial capabilities of the Confederacy were vulnerable to Union attack. Grain and meat production was located in Virginia and Tennessee or remotely located in Texas. Production of coal, iron and clothing was concentrated in Virginia, Tennessee and New Orleans, exposed to land and sea attack.[91]

A key element of the South's political strategy was the Confederate leaders' hope that England or France would join the Confederacy as an ally and intervene directly in the war. Napoleon III of France wanted a Confederate victory but hesitated unless the British acted. The Confederacy enjoyed support among the British ruling class, but the working class and liberals opposed slavery and supported Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.[92] Recognition by European nations was tied to success in battle. After Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, recognition seemed possible: After Gettysburg and Antietam, it was impossible.

England and other European countries did provide sources of supply for both military hardware and civilian goods that allowed the Confederacy to survive for four years. After the war, one of General Beauregard's staff officers estimated that Confederate imports were valued at $200 million, an incredible figure considering an Enfield rife-musket could be bought complete with scabbard for $15.50.[93]

Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, USA
Courtesy National Archives

The military and logistics strategy employed by the South has been the subject of criticism by many historians since the war ended. Numerous second-guessing books published in recent years have documented what the Confederacy should have done to achieve victory. The Confederacy had 750,000 square miles that Union forces had to invade. Early in the war Confederate forces could be moved through internal lines of communication and armies could be supplied using rail, roads and rivers to fight back the invaders. A writer for *The Times* of London observed that no war for independence had ever been unsuccessful except when the disparity of forces was greater than this one.[94] One problem for historians, in evaluating the Confederate strategy for pursuing the war, is that no document for either offensive or defensive strategy has ever been found, if one ever existed. [95] We must evaluate the strategy by looking at actual events. The lesson for today's property managers is that success can only be achieved when an organization defines its goals and the strategy to achieve them, clearly and succinctly.

During the first year of the war, President Jefferson Davis' strategy was to deploy forces throughout the entire Confederacy. Southern states demanded troops be recruited, trained and stationed at places where there initially was little threat, such as Savannah, Charleston and New Orleans. Confederate armies were successful in defeating Union forces in such engagements as the two battles at Manassas and the Seven Days' Battles, due to control of the railroads and internal lines of supply and communication. Davis believed that defensive operations provided the best hope for Confederate victory. However, as the war progressed, Davis allowed Lee to assume more of the responsibility for Confederate strategy. Eaton wrote "the cause was lost" because Davis "made the dubious decision of allowing (Lee) … to invade Pennsylvania instead of sending strong reinforcements from his army to defeat Grant at Vicksburg."[96] This critical error opened the door to the West leading to destruction of the South's industrial and farming areas and also to Lee's defeat at Gettysburg, which also weakened Lee's manpower and logistics capabilities.

When considering the strategy of the Confederacy, discussions always turn to the most famous and revered Confederate of all, General Robert Edward Lee of Virginia. After the war Southerners and Northerners alike deified Lee as, if not the greatest, one of the greatest generals in the history of the world. E. A. Pollard characterized Lee's organizational genius, discussing his first appointment as commander of all military forces in Virginia by Governor Letcher. Pollard wrote, "The quartermaster and commissary departments were to be organized, to enable the immediate concentration of troops upon the borders of the State…. all these duties were executed with a rapidity and effect, and an easy precision of manner that may be said, at the outset of the war to have secured Lee's reputation as an unrivalled organizer of military forces, and thus early to have indicated one conspicuous branch of his great mind."[97] Bevin Alexander, in his book *Robert E. Lee's Civil War,* writes about Lee in the Introduction, "…Lee's personal attributes caused most Americans to see him as a beau ideal, incorporating practically all of the elements Americans value in human character – loyalty, integrity, compassion, charity, honor,

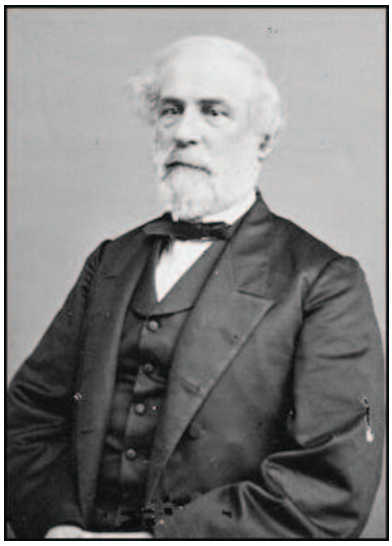
dedication to a cause, sense of duty, and courage."[98] Typically, those who compared Lee with a Union counterpart compared him with Lincoln, rather than his more appropriate contemporary, Ulysses S. Grant.

Historian Douglas Southall Freeman's massive four-volume biography, published in 1934-36, has formed the viewpoint held of Lee by generations of students. Freeman lamented that if Lee had remained with the Union he would not have lacked for troops, agonized over "men who shivered in the nakedness" or fed an "uncertain ration of a pint of meal and a quarter of a pound of Nassau bacon." He would also have had, "superior artillery, new locomotives, replacement horses and transports to move his troops over water."[99] Freeman's elegant prose described a man of honor who kept the Confederacy together the last three years of the war through his intellect and splendid presence on the field of battle.

In recent years historians have begun to question Lee's greatness. He adopted an aggressive offensive strategy, contrary to Davis' defensive one. Edward Bonekemper's recent book, *How Robert E. Lee Lost the Civil War,* is the most disparaging. Bonekemper's thesis is that the Confederates best hope for victory was to outlast Lincoln and take advantage of the schisms that existed in the North regarding slavery, the draft and the war itself.[100] He criticizes Lee as wasting manpower and depleting resources in assaults during 1862 and 1863, culminating with Gettysburg. By 1864, Grant was able to claim a 120,000 to 65,000 manpower advantage over Lee, and impose a 46% casualty rate on Lee's army, while sustaining a 41% rate himself.[101]

Even after assuming command of all Confederate forces, Lee was at best a regional commander, focused on the war in Virginia. In April 1863, Western generals Pemberton and Johnston requested that Lee provide Longstreet's Corps to the West to counter an expected move by Grant on Vicksburg. Davis and Secretary of War Seddon supported the request, but Lee minimized the threat and suggested moving troops from anywhere but Virginia.[102] Afterwards, Lee did achieve his greatest victory at Chancellorsville, but followed it with the disastrous Gettysburg Campaign, while Pemberton was soundly defeated at Vicksburg. After Gettysburg, Lee's army was strung out for miles, moving thousands

General Robert E. Lee, CSA
Courtesy Library of Congress



Robert E. Lee died five years after the War in 1870

of wagons and tens of thousands of livestock in a desperate effort to retreat across the Potomac and the relative safety of the Shenandoah Valley.[103] In addition, Bragg's army in Tennessee was not reinforced against a much stronger opponent, ran out of meat and was short on all rations while it occupied an area that shipped all of its crops and livestock to Lee in Virginia.[104] Each of these actions further weakened the capability of the Confederacy armies to supply themselves: Cumulatively, they were disastrous.

In comparison, Army of the Potomac Commander, Ulysses S. Grant was a strategic commander who understood that defeating enemy armies included depriving them of materials and discouraging the homeland. General William Tecumseh Sherman invoked a scorched earth policy, burning factories, farms and homes as he marched throughout Georgia and the Carolinas. Explaining what would later be called "total war," Union General Phil Sheridan provided his thoughts on how the North pursued the War, "The proper strategy consists in …causing the inhabitants so much suffering that they must long for peace, and force the government to demand it. The people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war."[105] Lee, unlike Grant and Sherman, refused to wage war against the civilian population; however, he did not always enforce his own policy. On the way to Gettysburg, Private Tally Simpson of South Carolina watched as thirty or forty soldiers captured every guinea fowl, chicken and turkey in a Pennsylvania farmyard. A frightened and angry women saw Lee riding by and yelled for him to stop them. Lee tipped his hat, replied, "Good morning, madam," and headed down the road to the amusement of his men.[106]

Historian Thomas Connelly of the University of South Carolina agreed that the South could not afford the aggressive Lee. The most significant Confederate army; Lee's, and battles leading to Confederate defeat; Antietam, Gettysburg, and The Wilderness, were all fought in the East where Lee had little maneuver room. While Lee's army was fighting for its life in Virginia, other weaker Confederate armies

Courtesy Library of Congress

Home of Wilbur McLean where Lee surrendered to Grant. McLean owned the property where the first battle was fought at Manassas, VA and moved to Appomattox to escape the war. The war began in McLean's back yard and ended in his front parlor.

were soundly defeated in the West, cutting off valuable sources of both food and industrial products and severing supply lines to his army. Connelly believed that considering the limited resources of the South, the Confederacy needed to "conserve manpower and logistical strength."[107]

Conclusion

The South's defeat in the Civil War was due to many factors, each influencing the other. Historians Emory Thomas, Raimondo Luraghi, and others have called attention to how an economic revolution occurred in the South, providing the basis for effective Confederate logistics. A predominantly agrarian society was able to develop sufficient industrial strength to enable large armies to stave off a Union invasion for four years. Luraghi wrote, "The Confederate government acted immediately to nationalize the whole productive power of existing manufactures as far as war production was concerned."[108] Thomas added, "The Davis administration outdid its Northern counterpart in organizing for total war…"[109] As discussed in the first two articles of this series, Josiah Gorgas achieved incredible results building arsenals and armories throughout the South, ensuring that Southern armies never lost a battle due to arms or ammunition. The Niter and Mining bureau provided such raw materials as iron, lead, copper, zinc and niter; and industrial complexes in Atlanta, Chattanooga, Richmond and elsewhere produced critical war materials.

The South developed new methods of procurement, storage and distribution of material to support its armies. However, Southern transportation was inadequate at the beginning of the war and got worse as it progressed. As Union armies captured or destroyed industrial centers and cut supply lines, positioning and distribution of equipment and supplies became more and more difficult. Railroads were critical for the mass movement of men and materiel due to the bad roads in the South and lack of wagons. Union forces either destroyed or commandeered railroad lines, and occupied other supply routes by land and sea. Southern river and coastal waterways became conduits for Union traffic supporting the invasion of the South, and rail centers such as Chattanooga and Atlanta were captured, destroying the already limited Southern railroad system.[110] In addition, the Confederate government was not up to the massive, complex task of managing the new manufacturing and distribution network. The Confederate Congress acted too late in passing laws nationalizing rail lines, securing space on blockade-runners, and controlling commerce.[111]

As the war progressed; the Union blockade became more effective, reducing the critical flow of supplies to both the rebel armies and the civilian population. Respected Confederate historian, C. W. Ramsdell astutely noted, "… the Confederacy had begun to crumble, or to break down within, long before the military situation appeared to be desperate."[112]

Ultimately, leaders are responsible for the conduct of any war. The senior leadership of the Confederacy compared unfavorably to that of the Union. When evaluating Lincoln vs. Davis and Grant vs. Lee, the South comes up short. Lincoln was a superior commander-in-chief who demonstrated concern for military policy and strategy but avoided details, allowing his generals to run the war and refraining from giving direct orders. Davis was inflexible and made decisions that should have been made by his generals, even giving orders to subordinate generals in the field without advising their superiors.[113]

Grant's colleague William Tecumseh Sherman compared Lee unfavorably to Grant, and wrote, "[Lee] never rose to the grand problem which involved a continent and future generations. His Virginia was to him the world… He stood at the front porch battling with the flames whilst the kitchen and house were burning, sure in the end to consume the whole… Grant's "strategy" embraced a continent, Lee's a small State; Grant's logistics were to supply and transport armies thousands of miles, where Lee was limited to hundreds."[114] In recent years, historians have criticized Lee for fighting the wrong war, a war of attrition. His aggressive frontal assaults resulted in the killing of his best leaders and soldiers, and the destruction, capture and degradation of irreplaceable equipment and supplies. Ironically, Lee's aggressive strategy was supported by the Confederate Congress and its people, who read daily newspapers with interest chronicling his army's exploits. The Confederate Congress charged that Davis' "dispersed defensive" had "chilled the enthusiasm of Southern men, who would have volunteered in ample numbers for an aggressive, concentrated campaign against the North."[115]

Many Civil War history books provide "what ifs?" as rationale for a potential Southern victory. The South had significant deficiencies in manpower, industrial production, railroads and logistics capability. Several of the "what ifs?"; Europeans recognizing the Confederacy, massive insurrection in the North, McClellan not obtaining a copy of Lee's Antietam plans, Stonewall Jackson not being lost at Chancellorsville, Lee winning at Gettysburg, or the North's losing its will, needed to go the Confederate's way for victory to be realized. None did. Most importantly, President Lincoln was re-elected in 1864, sealing the fate of the Confederacy. Only Lincoln had the will, the focus, the support of the Nation, and the well equipped and supplied armies to complete what he referred to at Gettysburg as "the great task remaining before us."

Perhaps the pertinent question to ask is, "How did the North Win the Civil War?," rather than how did the South lose. Years after the war ended, a reporter asked General George Pickett, whose charge at Gettysburg has been immortalized by the general public as the defining moment of the war, why the South lost. His reply was simply, "I've always thought the Yankees had something to do with it."[116]

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