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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

SUCCESSFUL WARTIME SENIOR LEADERSHIP

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication
by

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on leadership at the most senior levels. Leadership has been covered by numerous authors from varying perspectives. However, only recently has Executive Leadership been discussed. That discussion can be found in two Department of Army publications both published in June 1987. These are DA Pam 600-80, "Executive Leadership" and FM 22-103, "Leadership and Command at Senior Levels". These publications highlight the special skills and insights needed for leaders at the higher levels.

Three successful wartime leaders; Grant, Pershing, and Eisenhower will be discussed. Each of these generals led huge armies in epic, cataclysmic wars. Each was entrusted with tremendous authority, and perhaps even greater responsibility. If not successful each one would have borne, at least in part, the responsibility for a change in civilization as we know it today. Their place in history would be much different. The primary goal of the paper will be to identify those skills or competencies in these great leaders and how they contributed to their success. In addition, other pertinent questions will be considered. Is there a commonality of skills among these three generals? Is there a single skill that dominates? Do desirable

skills remain constant throughout history or do they change with time and circumstances? Can these skills be learned or are they inherent in an individual?

LEADERSHIP TYPES AND SKILLS

Army leadership is often categorized into three levels. These are direct, indirect and executive leadership. There is an orderly progression from simple to more complex.

"Leaders first learn to lead individuals and groups of individuals in direct leadership tasks. They then learn how to exercise indirect leadership of organizations. Finally, they develop in direct skills to lead large headquarters organizations which must communicate effectively across cultural boundaries."¹

Direct leadership is characterized by much control and influence. Face to face relationships are common. Personal influence from top down and bottom up is very important at this level. Leaders can make things happen through their presence. Leaders are involved personally and significantly with the success or failure of their subordinate personnel and elements. "A battalion fits this level of complexity. Authority relationships are clearer, and the requirement for lateral relationships with comparable organizations is low."²

Indirect leadership is characterized by team building, staff coordination, greater delegation of authority and focusing into the future. It combines aspects of direct and indirect skills. Personal face to face influence is less prevalent. "At

this level authority relationships are clear and lateral relationships are primarily focused on coordination, but the number of technologies that must be employed is large. A division fits this level of complexity."³

Executive leadership is that level at which "authority relationships are less clear and actions are often accomplished through consensus building and persuasion." Perhaps this level of leadership is best summarized by the following quotation from a serving CINC:

"Officers who succeed at three and four star levels have the individual capacity to cope with complexity, amorphousness, and uncertainty. They do not have to have everything laid out for them. They have the resiliency and ingenuity to adapt to new and different circumstances."⁴

Leadership at the executive level has been described as the "art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result." Its focus "becomes one of building teams and exerting influence through subordinate commanders and staffs. Energy is devoted to forecasting, planning, and shaping future organizational activities."⁵

Senior leaders arrive at their positions through an evolutionary process. As they proceed through each level of leadership and their various sub-levels; they gain maturity, insight, and the ability to deal with more complex organizations, less structured authority relationships, and a large degree of amorphousness. However, what is it that sets a few apart and destines them for success? Boldness, determination, courage,

strength of character, selflessness, and even luck are all attributes used to describe the successful leader.

All those attributes and many others are desirable. Although one would expect to find them in successful leaders, they do not necessarily equip those leaders for success at the executive level. Achieving the rank of a senior leader is not a guarantee of success. In wartime this is especially the case. For example how many generals did Lincoln go through before he found Grant?

The most useful description of skills necessary for the successful senior leader is found in DA Pam 600-80 which discusses the senior leader frame of reference. Specifically it says:

"Effective leadership requires an understanding of the previous decision base and the situation, particularly the cause and effect relationships that determine outcomes. The more complex the situation, the more difficult specific cause and effect relationships are to see. The leaders tool for understanding cause and effect in complex situations is a frame of reference, based on knowledge and experience. It is a mental map that cannot be taught by conventional classroom methods but develops over time. It is an operating model of reality that is used to acquire and interpret information. At the executive level, frame of reference must be sufficient to deal with events with complex causes that may be rooted in the distant past and to envision far distant requirements. This capability is necessary because executive decisions may impact over very long time intervals and be accomplished through indirect more often than direct effects."⁶

The DA Pam goes on to describe capabilities within the frame of reference that senior leaders use to carry out their responsibilities. Of these I believe the following are

significant:

- a) Systems understanding.
- b) Understanding second order effects.
- c) Vision and future focus.

System understanding is the ability of the leader to grasp the totality of the resources at his disposal and the effect each part has on the whole and on each other. Additionally, it is the ability to use the entire organization toward the achievement of common goals insuring all parts are functioning synergistically. Successful senior leaders are able to conceptualize quickly the essence of problems and possess the required skills to develop solutions. System understanding and conceptual skills allow senior leaders "to shape the future, be good planners, and generate the timely capability to out think the enemy. They understand that issues arise from multiple causes internal as well as external to the organization."⁷

While the concept "system understanding" smacks of management and peacetime skills it is also applicable to wartime leadership. In fact at the levels discussed in this paper it is absolutely applicable. What one should think about is the eight battlefield operating systems (maneuver, fire support, intelligence, etc.) we focus on in today's army. Commanders are required to insure all these are melded together to produce the most effective unit possible. Grant, Pershing, and Eisenhower all had to deal with bringing diverse resources together to achieve maximum effect. Even Napoleon referred to his army from time to time as his system.

Understanding second order effects goes hand in hand with system understanding. Senior leaders must anticipate the impact their decisions will have on the total organization. Many times, decisions made at this level have repercussions external to the organization. A senior leader, therefore, must be able to determine the positive or negative impact a decision in one area may have elsewhere. Only then will he be able to understand the implications of his decision on the mission of the organization he leads. Indeed our three senior leaders all had to consider second order effects each day of their commands. This was especially the case in correlating their decisions and their effects with national policy and in representing their organizations with society.

Thirdly, successful senior leaders must have vision. The ability to see ahead and know what is required. Vision is a "personal concept of what the organization must be capable of doing by some future point. It is the target".⁸ Vision must be coupled with determination. Senior leaders often must act as the helmsman for a great ship. Steering the ship through storms, around reefs, and often through unknown waters but always keeping his destination clearly in mind. Senior leaders must sort through a myriad of information, demands and attempts to change the organizations focus. He must be able to synthesize all of these and keep the organization on track toward the final objective.

We can see that there are many similarities in leadership at the senior level as compared with leadership at the direct and

indirect levels. Certainly imagination, boldness, competence, courage, and many other attributes are as important at the senior level as at lower levels, although some may take on a slightly different form. The senior leader, however, must have the capacity to grasp the scope of a huge organization, understand the effects of decisions made with regard to that organization and the ability to articulate his vision for the future of the organization thus harnessing its great potential toward a common objective. Clausewitz stated that many generals who are timid or overly cautious were as junior officers bold and daring. Indeed in many cases it is boldness, courage, and decisiveness under pressure which propels careers forward. However, perhaps the reason, at least partially, for Clausewitz' observation is the inability for those once bold officers to come to grips with the scope of their new responsibilities.

In addition to those traits discussed in the DA Pam, I have added political astuteness. This concept is one that many officers find difficult to accept. As a group officers are not prone to be publicly involved in political matters. In fact not long ago most officers didn't even vote. Clausewitz noted that war is a "continuation of politics by other means". Clausewitz was not talking about the partisan politics within a state but the political goals and objectives of the state in its relations with other states. The military is one element of power used to further the political objectives of the state. It stands to reason that senior leaders should have an understanding of politics and their relationship to strategy as they carry out

their responsibilities. Now let's look at how these three great leaders manifested these characteristics.

ULYSSES S. GRANT

Ulysses Simpson Grant led a great army in a massive struggle to save a young democracy from itself. However, in reviewing his early life, there is little to indicate the potential for leadership let alone leadership in battle.

Grant was born into a family of modest income in Ohio in 1822. He lived in Georgetown, Ohio where he lived until leaving for West Point in 1839. He spent his first seventeen years going to school and working for his father. In his memoirs Grant describes his childhood saying:

"I did not like to work but I did as much of it, while young, as grown men can be hired to do in these days, and attended school at the same time. I had as many privileges as any boy in the village, and probably more than most of them. I have no recollection of ever having been punished at home, either by scolding or by the rod."⁹

In 1839 Grant received an appointment to the Military Academy. The appointment was the result of another local boy's failure which created the vacancy and the long association Grant's father had with Thomas Morris the US Senator from Ohio. There is no indication that Grant ever aspired to go to the academy or was even consulted. When told he would go by his father, Grant consoled himself with the realization that he would get to see Philadelphia and New York.

Grant wrote that "a military life had no charms for me, and I had not the faintest idea of staying in the Army even if I should be graduated which I did not expect."¹⁰ James Cornwall in his biography Grant as Military Commander describes Grant's early feelings at West Point saying:

"He appears to have disliked and rebelled against the rigid discipline and routine of West Point, where the plebe was made uncomfortably conscious of his inferior status. He seems to have been totally devoid of any ambition to succeed in the career which had been thrust upon him."¹¹

Grant did graduate and was commissioned a 2LT of Infantry. Although he left no academic or leadership records behind, he did show a potential for tactics and the ability to learn from his errors that would come to the fore later in his life.

Grant initial assignment was with the 4th Infantry. First on observation duty along the Mexican border and then as part of Zachary Taylor's force which crossed into Mexico in 1848. Grant was a regimental quartermaster and took part in every major battle of the Mexican war. He did well and displayed competence and a good deal of personal courage. He rose to the rank of Brevet Captain.

After the Mexican war Grant was transferred to the Pacific coast. His family remained in the East. During this time he decided to resign from the army. His own words say it best:

"My family, all this while was in the East...I saw no chance of supporting them on the Pacific coast out of my pay as an Army officer. I concluded, therefore, to resign, and in March applied for leave of absence until the end of the July following, tendering my resignation to take effect at the end of that time."¹²

So in 1854 a career which started inauspiciously ended quietly with nothing noteworthy to show. Over the next seven years Grant tried farming, real estate, and working as a clerk in his fathers leather store.

"In the winter of 1860-61 Grant's fortunes had reached their nadir. He was slovenly and unkempt in appearance; he had not shaken off his drinking habits; his father and younger brother despised him and refused to lend him money; he was generally regarded as one of life's failures. Nobody would have dreamt that from this shabby chrysalis would emerge, within the next four years, the triumphant victor of the Civil War."¹³

At the outbreak of the Civil War Grant is in Galena, Illinois, clerking at his family's leather store. He assisted in raising a company of volunteers and goes on to assist the governor in raising regiments for the state. He never returns to the leather business.

As a Brigadier General, Grant commanded a military district. He commands a total of about 27,000 men. He establishes himself early as a fighter with the capture of Ft. Henry and Ft. Donelson. Our purpose here is not to account the specifics of any battle, but to deduce the qualities that marked Grant for successful senior leadership.

After the victory at Donelson Grant saw the opportunity to move quickly to extend the unions hold all through the southwest. In his memoirs Grant describes his thoughts on the subject clearly:

"My opinion was and still is that immediately after the fall of Fort Donelson the way was opened to the National forces all over the Southwest without much resistance. If one general who would have taken the responsibility had been in

command of all the troops west of the Alleghanies, he could have marched to Chattanooga, Corinth, Memphis and Vicksburg with the troops we then had, and as volunteering was going on rapidly over the North there would soon have been force enough at all these centres to operate offensively against any body of the enemy that might be found near them. Rapid movements and the acquisition of rebellious territory would have promoted volunteering, so that reinforcements could have been had as fast as transportation could have been obtained to carry them to their destination. On the other hand there were tens of thousands of strong able bodied young men still at their homes in the south-western states, who had not gone into the Confederate army in February, 1862, and who had no particular desire to go. If our lines had been extended to protect their homes, many of them never would have gone. Providence ruled differently. Time was given the enemy to collect armies and fortify his new positions; and twice afterwards he came near forcing his North-western front up to the Ohio river."¹⁴

Grant's thoughts reveal several points. First he had the vision to understand the need to bring his Army to bear on what was at that point a scattered and disorganized confederate defense. He also understood the effects this action, if successful, would have on the young men in those areas who had not yet committed themselves to the confederate cause. He clearly understood the second order effects such an action would have and the benefits that would accrue to the Union cause. He states that providence ruled differently. Providence in this case took the form of MG Halleck, commander of the Western Theater. Halleck like most of Lincoln's generals suffered from a lack of boldness, and vision. Halleck cautioned Grant whom he considered reckless with the following admonition. "By all means keep your forces together until you connect with General Buell, who is now at Columbia and will move on Waynesboro with three

divisions. Don't let the enemy draw you into an engagement now. Wait until you are properly fortified and receive orders."¹⁵

Grant's accomplishment at Ft. Donelson was, however, recognized by Lincoln who promoted him to Major General of volunteers. He also gains the nickname, which stays with him, of unconditional surrender Grant.

Grant went on after his initial successes to win battles at Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga. He displayed bulldog determination and an understanding of tactics which he demonstrated back in his West Point days.

Vicksburg gives us the best picture of Grant's potential for senior leadership. The capture of Vicksburg would deny the confederacy the free navigation of the Mississippi river. "It was the only channel...connecting the parts of the confederacy divided by the Mississippi."¹⁶ As Grant began to move toward Vicksburg he notified Halleck of his plans, since he had received no guidance from him. "He was always ready to act on his own responsibility and take the initiative when left without orders."¹⁷ Grant began positioning his Army for the move against Vicksburg when he received orders from Halleck requiring him to wait for Bank's army to arrive at which time he was to coordinate with Bank's in a methodical attack.

Grant already had three corps in position and knew that if he waited for Banks the confederate forces of Johnston and Pemberton would combine posing a much greater problem. Instead he proceeded to attack and placed his forces between the converging confederate forces defeating each separately.

To accomplish this mission Grant compromised some basic principles. He moved his Army forward with five days rations and abandoned his fixed supply points, planning to live off the land. He saw the need for speed as more important than establishing a fortified base from which to operate. Even his most loyal subordinate, Sherman, tried personally and in writing to talk him out of his plan. Grant pressed on and in doing so won a great victory, that some have called the turning point of the war. Grant realized the need for a victory and the impact it would have far from the battlefield. He responded to Sherman's pleas for a more cautious approach by saying:

"..The country is already disheartened over the lack of success on the part of our armies; the last election went against the vigorous prosecution of the war, voluntary enlistments had ceased throughout most of the North and conscription was already resorted to, and if we went back as far as Memphis it would discourage the people so much that bases of supply would be no use; neither men to hold them nor supplies to put in them would be furnished. The problem for us was to move forward to victory, or our cause was lost. No progress was being made on any other field and we had to go on."¹⁸

Clearly Grant displayed a boldness and determination lacking in most Union generals. More important, however, was his ability to see beyond the immediate situation and grasp what was going on in the country. This understanding of the effect victory would have on the Union effort is indicative of Grant's ability to understand the external effects of his decisions and his political astuteness.

Vicksburg resulted in Grant's promotion to Major General in the Regular Army. His star was rising. Six months later

Lincoln, after going through McClellon, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade, called him to Washington and made him the General in Chief of the National armies. Lincoln finally found a general;

"who had proved himself in the field by winning battles, and who also possessed common sense and a balanced mind; above all one who would not attempt to override political principles with military demands for Grant was firmly imbued with the doctrine the strategy must be the servant and not the dictator of policy".¹⁹

It is as General in Chief that Grant's abilities as a senior leader come to the fore. He understood the enormous resources at his disposal and that they had not been used to their full capacity. Grant made two early decisions that would insure the maximum use of the National armies and are indicative his understanding of the total picture. First he changed the basic strategy of the war. Up to that point the various Union armies operated independently allowing the Confederate forces to reinforce where necessary when and where the need arose. Grant decided that all the Union armies would be engaged in concert.

His plan:

"envisaged an offensive operation by all the Union armies on a front which stretched from the Mississippi to Chesapeake Bay, a distance of 800 miles. While Meade's army in the East held and wore down the Army of Northern Virginia under Lee, Sherman's Army of the Mississippi would pivot on Chattanooga, crush Joseph Johnston's army and wheel south-eastward through Atlanta, thus severing the Confederate forces from their sources of supply. It was a conception of colossal scope."²⁰

Next he reorganized the Union cavalry into a three division corps under the command of Sheridan. His plan was to integrate the cavalry into the operations of other arms and thus make them

an integral part of the Union armies.

Later in the war during Sherman's campaign against Atlanta Gen. Johnston was relieved as Confederate commander. Johnston had fought a campaign of delay as he pulled his army back to defensive positions. While Johnston's own superiors did not agree, Grant once again shows his ability to grasp the bigger picture. He wrote in his memoirs:

"I think that Johnston's tactics were right. Anything that could have prolonged the war a year beyond the time that it did finally close would probably have exhausted the North to such an extent that they might have then abandoned the contest and agreed to a separation".²¹

Grant was truly the right man at the right time. In one year he brought the war to a close. He was not a professional soldier nor did he aspire to high command. However, he possessed in large measure the qualities of system understanding, vision, understanding second order effects and political astuteness. John Keegan says of Grant:

"In the moment of victory his political understanding would be quite overshadowed by his military achievement. But in retrospect great though Grant's generalship is seen to be, it is his comprehension of the nature of war, and what could and could not be done by a General within it's defining conditions, that seems the more remarkable."²²

James Marshall Cornwall perhaps sums it up best:

"Perhaps Grant's greatest qualities as a commander were his wide strategic vision and his fixity of purpose. Few of the other leaders of the Civil War could see beyond the range of their immediate battle-front. Grant's perspective embraced the whole scope of the twin theatres of war, and he was never deflected by purely geographical objectives from his main purpose of destroying the Confederate armies. He had the sense to exploit fully the facilities, first of river transport to further his operations in the

western theatre, and later of the Virginian estuaries to keep advancing his supply base to the latitude of Richmond. His original strategic plan for the encirclement of the Southern armies was masterly, although delayed and partially frustrated by the mistakes of his subordinates and also by the skill of his major opponent in conducting defensive operations on interior lines. Grant's three major strategic achievements were the Vicksburg campaign, the outflanking of Lee by crossing the James, and the final tenacious pursuit to Appomattox. None of these could have succeeded without his inflexible determination."²³

JOHN J. PERSHING

John J. Pershing unlike his hero U.S. Grant may have been born to lead a great army. If nothing else, he seemed throughout his life to be in continuous preparation to be ready for whatever called.

Pershing was born in Lacklede Missouri in 1860. He was raised with an appreciation for the importance of education, and a sense of duty. His family enjoyed modest wealth, but they lost most of the family fortune in the "Panic" of 1873. Although the family home was saved, the future was suddenly not as bright. John Pershing's ambition for a college education and possible law career appeared to be out of reach.

Pershing was always a good student and to help his family took the teacher certification exam, passed it and taught school at the age of eighteen. Young Pershing's students tested him early. However, he proved himself a good teacher and a stern disciplinarian. Two traits that stayed with him throughout his life.

He took college level courses at Kirksville Normal School beginning in the spring of 1879. He did well and interspersed semesters at Kirksville with teaching through the spring of 1882. He continued to hope for a career in law.

In the spring of 1882 Pershing saw an ad for a competitive exam for entrance into the United States Military Academy. He took the exam, passed, went on to West Point.

Pershing went to West Point because it offered the opportunity for a good education. Although he didn't share Grant's trepidation he certainly was not thinking about a career as a soldier. However, whether he thought of it or not, others saw in him the qualities of leadership that would stay with him through his career. His first year he was elected class president. His second won him corporals chevrons and he graduated as First Captain. While he did well at West Point he did not distinguish himself as a scholar. Upon graduation he was commissioned in the Cavalry.

Pershing participated in every major U.S. Military action during his career. He chased Geronimo's bands through the southwest, participated in the Wounded Knee action, fought in Cuba during the Spanish American War and had several assignments in the Philippines.

The Punitive Expedition in Mexico is where Pershing first displays his capacity for senior leadership. Pershing's command during the Punitive Expedition amounted to the equivalent of two modern brigades. It was comprised of cavalry, artillery, engineers, and reconnaissance aircraft. It entered Mexico in two

columns thus complicating command and control as well as logistics. For the first time Pershing commanded a diffuse force. "In Mexico he began learning the heavier burdens of large commands, the complex personality problems, and endless logistical attention vital to success."²⁴ "With the perspective of a hard campaign, Pershing reckoned his growing competence and marked the changes he had learned. He would have a chance, he thought, to apply them in Europe."²⁵

He did have the opportunity to apply his lessons learned and in a big way. Pershing's selection to command the American Expeditionary Force was not a forgone conclusion. It was, however, significantly aided by two events. First in February, 1917, MG Funston, Pershing's commander and the likely candidate for the AEF job, died suddenly. Second was the political nature of Gen. Leonard Wood, Pershing's senior and a former Chief of Staff of the Army. Wood requested assignment to the AEF soon after the US declaration of war. However, his age, poor health, and President Wilson's lack of confidence in him prevented his appointment.

The administration suspected Wood of being a political general, an officer who could not be trusted to carry out orders and who was ambitious to be President of the United States.

"Personally", the President told the Secretary of War, "I have no confidence either in Gen. Wood's discretion or in his loyalty to his superiors."²⁶

So Pershing was appointed as Commander of the American Expeditionary Force a signal honor and along with it myriad problems. At the time the US Army was comprised of a little over 200,000 men. Pershing sailed for France with a staff of 191 to

begin the task of designing, manning, organizing, training, supporting, and fighting what would be the largest American force to take the field to that time.

Unlike Grant, who's primary task was to fight, much of Pershing's place in the history of senior leadership is, in my view, not as a fighter. Pershing was the architect of the AEF. Although the AEF participated in the final battles of the war, it was an inexperienced army led by inexperienced leaders. Many of the lessons learned by the French and British in 1914-1916 were being relearned by Americans in the Meuse-Argonne Campaigns of 1918.

"As commander of the AEF Pershing played an important role in the victory. A careful rather than a brilliant or great commander, he worked hard in planning an Army on a scale sufficient to tip the balance. It was largely the tremendous American influx that converted an allied deficit of 324,00 rifleman on March 21, 1918 to a 627,00 superiority on Nov 11, 1918."²⁷

An analysis of Pershing as a wartime leader is not as straight forward as with Grant. The conduct of war changed significantly since Grant's day both in scope and complexity. Pershing was not only in charge of a huge national organization but had to exercise his responsibilities on foreign soil in coalition with foreign governments and armies.

Perhaps the most critical issue facing Pershing was the issue of amalgamation. Simply stated this revolved around the question of whether American soldiers would fight as units under American commanders or would act as individual or small unit fillers fighting with British and French units. Pershing was determined that Americans would be organized as an independent

army and not be amalgamated. Two reasons contributed to his strong feelings on this point. First he was sure that the American public would not accept the appalling losses the French and British had endured due to, what were in Pershing's view bankrupt tactics. Such loss of life would be difficult to accept under any circumstances; but on foreign soil under foreign command the threshold of pain would be much lower. Second and more significant was his belief, one shared by Secretary of War Baker that, if amalgamation were permitted, it was possible that a million Americans would fight in France and at war's end not a trace of their achievement would be found. This would diminish the influence of the US at the peace table and in the post war world.

Pershing held this view despite overwhelming pressure to do otherwise. In August 1918 the British attacked the Somme salient with success. Five American divisions were training with the British at the time, one was used in the attack and more were planned for use later. Pershing went to Marshall Haig and informed him that he would recall three of the five divisions for an offensive he was planning. Haig was extremely upset. The British had diverted large numbers of ships to transport Americans to Europe, understandably they wondered when the Americans would begin their contributions the war. Pershing responded to Haig saying:

"I will not consent to have my troops used here, there, and the other place at the will of the allies. All this had been set down very clearly in black and white. The divisions were there for training and, if necessary, combat in an emergency. But they were not on indefinite loan.

We are all fighting Germans...the best way at present for my troops to fight the Germans is in my Army."²⁸

During the spring and summer of 1918 the French pleaded with Pershing to limit American shipments to infantry and machine gun units to be used as replacements prior to the expected massive German offensive. Pershing demurred. "He was willing to take the risk of the British being pushed into the sea and the French driven back beyond to Loire."²⁹ Donald Smythe summarizes the issue as follows:

"Even conceding that he might at times have been unnecessarily obstinate and failed to see the gravity of successive crisis', he nonetheless guessed correctly that they were not as severe as the Allies represented them and that the Germans would not in fact break through and win the war before an American army could be trained and fielded. He may have been lucky, but the fact is that he guessed correctly. The allies did not need as many priority shipments of American infantry and machine guns as they said they did."³⁰

Whether we agree or not with Pershing's firm stand on this issue, history has indeed been kind to him. Perhaps his vision of the post war world was clearer than those around him. He certainly understood the ultimate effects of his decision. However, he took tremendous risks and with a little less luck history may have turned out differently. Surely Pershing truly believed he was correct on the issue of amalgamation. Also one must think that he believed the war would go on much longer and the final victory would come due to the overwhelming force of the American Army in France. On that issue his vision was a bit less clear. Pershing was not by nature a risk taker. He preferred carefully laid out plans as opposed to bold quick action.

O'Conner in his book Black Jack says:

"Nothing in his early career would have indicated a fondness for gambling on a grand scale. With no book to fall back on, he was taking risks laden with historic consequence virtually on his own authority alone. The American army was to be withheld from the battle until it was organized to fight as an independent unit."³¹

Pershing immediately saw the lack of unity among the allies in prosecuting the war. The French and British rarely met. When they did meet coordinated strategy was not an agenda item.

Pershing said:

"The allies would never win the war until they secured unity of action under some form of coordinated control. Out of this insight came his determination to push for a supreme allied commander which bore fruit in the spring of 1918 with the selection of General Ferdinand Foch."³²

Although Pershing understood the need for a supreme commander he also clearly understood his role as the AEF commander. Unlike Eisenhower, who would follow him, Pershing's priorities were parochial. While he supported the supreme commander concept and tried to cooperate he was also very much the guardian of American interests. His idea of an independent American army kept him at odds with his allied counterparts much of the time.

General Pershing was indeed the architect of the AEF. He started with literally nothing and built the greatest American army to that point and deployed it overseas into combat.

While building his army he faced enormous logistical problems. He was required to negotiate with the British and French governments for required support, especially shipping,

rifles and ammunition. He fought single handedly against amalgamation knowing the effects it would have on US popular support for the war and the US position in the post war world.

Pershing is unique in that while his command of the AEF and all that went with it was supreme, and his focus for US interests was strategic, his role on the battlefield was operational. Pershing's greatest accomplishment as a senior leader was his ability to look ahead and visualize what would be required for this huge American force. There was no precedent to guide him. Secretary of War Baker said of Pershing: "He had the largest grasp of the situation and the truest and best informed imagination of what was necessary to win the war of anybody on either side of the ocean civil or military, with whom I came in contact."³³

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Dwight D. Eisenhower was perhaps the epitome of the senior leader. His task was onerous by any measure. As leader of the allied armies in World War II he truly was the Supreme Commander. While Pershing had the luxury of being parochial and to a degree territorial, Eisenhower had to bring the disparate allies together and move them forward toward the common objective.

Eisenhower certainly was an unlikely candidate for such an exalted position. Born into a large, financially struggling family his early life was hard. His family was comprised of seven children and all had to do odd jobs to earn money for the

family. Eisenhower developed an inner strength and confidence during those years that would stay with him through his career.

He was athletic, and bright and graduated from Abilene High School in 1909. He had no idea what the future would hold and went to work in the local creamery to help pay his older brother's college expenses. Through word of mouth he heard about the free education offered at West Point. He applied for a nomination, took the competitive exam and was accepted.

Eisenhower entered West Point in 1911. He was an average student and made his biggest impression as an athlete. Football was his sport until he injured his knee during his second year.

He graduated in 1915 with a class standing of 61 out of 164. He was commissioned a 2Lt. of Infantry and assigned to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. He tried but failed to get assigned to the Punitive Expedition that chased Villa through Mexico in 1916.

When the US declared war on Germany, Eisenhower was sure he would get his opportunity to lead troops in battle. He did not. Instead he spent the war in the United States training units for deployment. However, although he missed the opportunity to gain the experience which can only be gained in combat, he began to develop a reputation as a competent planner and organizer.

Perhaps the event that turned Eisenhower's career from average to one marked with potential greatness was his assignment to Panama as MG Fox Conner's executive officer. It was during these three years that Eisenhower began to study his profession in earnest, by reading the great captains' campaigns, and being examined by his mentor, Conner. After that tour Eisenhower

went on to the Staff College at Leavenworth. He graduated first in his class.

Tours as aide to Gen. McArthur, on McArthur's staff in the Philippines, and various jobs in Washington followed. His reputation was among the best and he was already known as competent, dedicated, and hard working. At the beginning of WWII Eisenhower was assigned to the War Plans Division and it was here that he comes to Gen. Marshall's attention.

Eisenhower came to assume his first senior level command as the Commander of Torch, the allied invasion of North Africa. His path to that lofty post did not follow the normally accepted paradigm:

"Eisenhower did not hear the zing of bullets over his head, did not lead men or tanks on charges across no-mans-land. But he did have first hand experience at setting up and running a camp of thousands of men, for creating and supervising their training schedule, for preparing them for combat."³⁴

As commander of Torch, Eisenhower was immediately faced with what would be the enduring problem of the war for him. He had to get all the players on the same sheet of music. He understood immediately the need for unity of command and the need to bury national prejudices. In essence this was system understanding.

"He understood human nature and the effect of national prejudice. He determined from the first that he would have a command and staff system devised for the tasks in hand which avoided divisions along national or service lines."³⁵

He pursued this belief throughout the war. The task was not a simple one considering the personalities involved. His success

at team building is perhaps best described by Fleet Admiral Cunningham a member of his staff during Torch.

"From the beginning he set Anglo-Saxon unity and friendship as his aim, and not only on the surface. The staff were totally integrated, and it was not long before the British and American members ceased to look at each other as warring tomcats and came to discover that the nationals of both countries had brains, ideas and drive".³⁶

Eisenhower understood early that, if he was to achieve success and lead the allied forces toward common objectives, he had to build a unified team. Only then would he be able to bring the enormous resources at his command to bear.

Another decision during Torch is indicative of Eisenhower's vision and appreciation of second order effects. During the battle for Tunisia, the II US Corps fought under the British First Army. Although they fought well there role was a limited one. During the early phase of the battle, the US 34th Infantry Division attempted to execute an ill conceived attack, across open terrain, against well defended German positions. The attack failed and the press was quick to play up the failure of American units. Eisenhower went to Alexander's headquarters to discuss the final plans for Tunisia.

"He insisted that II Corps must be given a real task and used with all its own four divisions. He emphasized how important it was for American opinion at home to realize that American troops were playing a substantial part in operations and not merely acting as suppliers of equipment to the British. American disenchantment could lead them to turn their eyes toward Japan and away from the strategy of beating Hitler first."³⁷

Eisenhower, like Pershing understood the need for public support at home. He also understood the impact lack of support could have

on the Germany first strategy. This is indicative of his political astuteness.

Two decisions Eisenhower made regarding the use of air power reveal his system understanding and vision.

Early in the Torch operation, Eisenhower came to grips with how to best employ air Power. Up to that point air resources were allocated as needed under separate command. This tended to diminish their effectiveness. Eisenhower had both US and Royal Air Force assets operating in North Africa and brought his air commanders to see the battle as a whole. Accordingly this action to organize air assets by Eisenhower caused Gen. Norstad to remark: "I think history will support my own feeling that this action of Eisenhower early in 1943 created the US Air Force in fact if not in name."³⁸

Eisenhower's use of air power also played a major role in the decisions leading up to the Normandy invasion, Operation Overlord. Although the allies were embarking on a difficult and herculean operation with many opportunities for failure, there were some positive aspects. One was the superiority of the allied air forces and the power they would bring to bear in covering the D-day landings. However, the best use of air assets, specifically strategic bombers, in the months prior to D-day was a hotly contested subject.

Both the British and American strategic bombers came under separate air component commanders and were not part of SHAEF. Eisenhower fought two significant battles in this arena: to get the strategic bombers under his command and to use the bombers

prior to Overlord to cripple the French railway system, the Transportation Plan.

Feelings were strong on the command issue. Eisenhower was adamant in his position and conveyed his strong feeling to the highest levels to include Churchill. At least twice during the debate he threatened to "quit and go home". He finally won his point and was given the strategic assets as part of SHAEF.

Next was the issue of employment. Both British and American air commanders believed the bombers should be used to destroy the German oil reserves, the Oil Plan. They thought this would pay great dividends later as the allies marched across France into Germany. Eisenhower believed that bombing the French railway system would be of more immediate value by preventing the Germans from getting reinforcements and supplies to the Normandy area.

Every conceivable argument was thrown at Eisenhower to convince him to go with the Oil Plan. The most significant argument was that many French citizens would die during the execution of the Transportation Plan. This issue reached the highest levels. Churchill entered the debate on the side of the Oil Plan. Eisenhower, convinced that he was right, held his ground. Churchill went to Roosevelt who supported Eisenhower saying; "military considerations must dominate".³⁹

Eisenhower won both battles. Eisenhower's vision was vindicated after the war by the men who should have known best. "The German generals were strong in their belief that the various

air attacks were ruinous to their counter offensive plans against the beachhead."⁴⁰

Although Eisenhower made numerous decisions while in command, we will not enumerate them here as that is well beyond the scope of this paper. However, one more example illustrates how clearly he understood the task he was given.

"Eisenhower's operational directive from the Combined Chiefs was a model of simplicity: You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with other allied nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces."⁴¹

Eisenhower took this broad directive and used all the latitude it gave him "in developing a general plan of operations that was equally broad."⁴² He believed that the best way to advance across Germany was on a broad front thus maximizing the resources available to him. He was constantly badgered by subordinates, especially Montgomery and Patton to abandon the broad front and attack on a narrow front, maximizing speed, and moving into Berlin as quickly as possible.

"This general plan carefully outlined at the staff meetings before D-day was never abandoned, even momentarily, throughout the campaign. Eisenhower had drawn up a broad plan that would allow him latitude and flexibility. In the course of executing it he would at various times infuriate everyone. But by capitalizing on the ambiguities of his plan, he was able until nearly the end of the war to retain enough pliability in the form of emphasizing one or another attack and of holding out the hope of an increased role for another force-to prevent the coalition command from dissolving into intransigence".⁴³

This last point is the crux of Eisenhower's success as a senior commander. He understood totally the need to coordinate the disparate forces under his command to insure that the total weight of the system was brought to bear at the appropriate time and place. Eisenhower had the vision, system understanding and appreciation of the effects of decisions made to bring this unwieldy coalition together and move it forward. He also had the political astuteness to insure that prosecution of the war would ultimately foster the political objectives of his own government without alienating allied governments in the process.

"His task was to weld together a force which was not only an allied force but one drawn from all services, and to direct it so that its whole weight was used most effectively to the single aim of the defeat of the common enemy. That he did superbly."⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Only eighty years separate the Civil War and World War II. Although this is a brief period chronologically it was a major time of change.

Grant, Pershing, and Eisenhower led great armies, however, the scope of their responsibilities increased exponentially in each case. Perhaps the biggest change occurred in the manner which Americans participated in war. Coalition warfare on a large scale began with World War I. Pershing had to deal with problems that Grant couldn't even imagine. Eisenhower not only had to participate in a coalition he had to lead it. Today's war fighting CINC's are all involved, if not formally through

treaties at least by virtue of geography, in many of these same issues.

Grant commanded the Union armies and in doing so was involved to a great degree in the strategy and tactics to achieve the Union goals. He had a major influence on how the armies fought. His direct involvement in the political aspects of the war was minimal, however, his understanding of the impact the battlefield would have on political objectives was total. Other than personality differences he did not have to bring disparate groups, separated by service or nationality, together to achieve common goals. Grant understood what it would take to win the war and the vast assets he had available to achieve victory.

Pershing, took command of an Army that did not exist. His task was to build an Army from the ground up that would deploy to France and fight. His mission was unprecedented in our history. Not only was he asked to build an Army he was also required to carry on diplomacy with the French and British. His logistical problems were massive. He fought almost single handedly against amalgamation and won. His guidance from Secretary Baker and the President was minimal although their support was total. Pershing truly worked in an ambiguous environment making major decisions the impact of which would be felt well beyond the boundaries of the AEF. Pershing's role on the battlefield was less straight forward than Grant's. In fact, given the scope of his responsibilities one might say that he would have been wiser to leave the operational issues of fighting to a deputy. His ability to build a force that would impact on the course of the

war cannot be denied. He was indeed the architect of the AEF.

Eisenhower may best be described as a great team builder. He brought great armies to the battlefield. This in no way is meant to diminish the tremendous role he played. He had all the problems faced by Pershing regarding coalition warfare but not the luxury of parochialism in dealing with them. Eisenhower had to make things work. He organized the allies into a cohesive force that would have been inconceivable before.

"Eisenhower always seemed able to decentralize and yet to keep his finger on what was going on. His subordinates were able to see that they were expected to act, they were told what was in Eisenhower's mind, and knew he would not shirk his responsibility...Eisenhower made it abundantly clear to all that he was their commander and personally bound up with their performance in battle."⁴⁵

To be sure Eisenhower had lots of help freely given. Churchill, DeGaulle, Montgomery and occasionally Roosevelt all made their contributions. He had the ability to sort through all the data, synthesize that which was relevant, and act with his goal always in mind. Perhaps he sums up his feelings on "high command" best in the following quotation:

"High command, particularly Allied Command, in war carries with it a lot of things that were never included in our text books, in the Leavenworth course, or even in the War College investigation. I think sometimes that I am a cross between a one time soldier, a pseudo statesman, a jack-legged politician and a crooked diplomat. I walk a soapy tight rope in a rainstorm with a blazing furnace on one side and a pack of ravenous tigers on the other., In spite of this, I must admit the whole thing is intriguing and interesting and is forever presenting a new challenge that will have the power to make me come up charging."⁴⁶

Each general possessed the ability to focus on the future and thus plan a course of action that would attain the desired objectives. Each clearly understood, the resources under his control and how to bring them to bear on the battlefield. Each was aware of the impact their decisions would have in areas external to their organization. This was especially true with regard to the area of politics and public policy.

Understanding the nexus of political considerations and the prosecution of war is the most striking commonality among these three generals. Each was sensitive to the effects battlefield decisions would have on political objectives. Grant knew that a victory at Vicksburg was essential to Lincoln's success in the 1864 election and the Unions ability to continue to prosecute the war. Pershing's fight against amalgamation and his insistence on an independent American Army certainly contributed to US influence in the post war world. Eisenhower, perhaps more than any, was constantly dealing in the political arena. His decisions with regard to US units during North Africa were made, at least in part, with an eye on the need to insure that the Germany first policy announced by the administration continued to receive popular support at home.

Although circumstances changed with time and the scope and responsibilities of each increased, I don't believe the required traits or frame of reference changed. Vision, system understanding, second order effects, and political astuteness all played a role in the leadership of each general.

Whether these skills can be learned or are inherent is

difficult to judge. None of these leaders started their careers with the intent to become professional army officers. While Pershing and Eisenhower developed their skills through experience and study Grant does not fit that mold. Grant did not, at least initially, adapt to the military, and in fact left the service for a time. He did not excel at West Point and gave no indication that he pursued a professional study program on his own. However, his leadership in battle and clear vision of what was required is undeniable. In Grant's case the skills for successful leadership at the senior level appear to have been inherent.

As a minimum it appears that these four areas are critical components essential for success at senior levels. They are, however, only part of the equation. Senior leaders are put into such positions because they demonstrated the ability to get the job done in previous assignments. The three leaders we studied all came to their positions via different routes. Yet all were extraordinarily successful.

This paper examined wartime senior leadership at the highest levels. The demands on the three leaders studied changed dramatically with each war. Each time the scope of responsibility increased and the nature of the duties diverted the commander's attention to issues away from the battlefield.

This trend continued after World War II and exists today in the form of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe for example. What is important in all this is that officers must be made aware early in their careers that leadership does change throughout the

course of a career. This can be accomplished by analyzing decisions made by "Great Captains" not only for their tactical or strategic lessons but also from the perspective of the impact those decisions had external to his organization. Additionally what influenced that leader beyond the battlefield.

While the school house can increase an individual's sensitivity and awareness of these competencies, this kind of leadership cannot be taught in the classroom. Successful senior leaders will develop due to experience, hard work, and a good dose of luck. Quality officers must be marked early in their careers and nurtured through the system. Their assignments should be carefully chosen to develop the attributes necessary for successful command at senior levels.

There are no sure fire solutions to insuring our senior leaders have the capacity to successfully discharge their responsibilities in time of war. However, experience, professional awareness, and an appreciation of history will go a long way toward solving the puzzle.

ENDNOTES

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