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# The Negative Impact of Jefferson Davis' Lack of Grand Strategy

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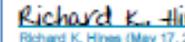
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**THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF JEFFERSON DAVIS' LACK OF GRAND STRATEGY**

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Military University

by

Joseph Carlson

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

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American Public University System

Charles Town, West Virginia

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**Abstract of the Thesis****THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF JEFFERSON DAVIS' LACK OF STRATEGIC  
ABILITY AND LEADERSHIP SELECTION**

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Jefferson Davis attended West Point and fought in the Mexican American War. These qualifications influenced the South to ask him to be their interim president, to which he would later be elected. However, having those qualifications did not give Davis the experience needed to develop the grand strategy that would be required to win the Civil War. He was inapt at picking leaders, and subsequently removing them. He was not able to get ahold of the out of control inflation, which drove up food cost, which played inhibiting the confederacy in obtaining enough food later in the war. The laws that were being passed also played in bringing down the overall morale of the soldiers, as well as their loyalty to the Confederacy and their will to fight. The encompassment of these issues create, in part, a grand strategy, which Davis was lacking and therefore could not properly develop the offensive-defensive plan he hoped would be successful for the Confederacy.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Jefferson Davis had several issues that hindered the Confederate Army during the Civil War; however, strategy and leadership selection were two of the primary issues that worked conjointly against Davis and the Confederate cause. Davis held military experience; however, that experience did not equate to strategic knowledge.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Davis was unable to see ahead of the battles in front of him and envision the necessary tactics that would need to occur in order to achieve victory. The battles that occurred west of the Mississippi River played a significant role in the overall success of the Union winning the war and Davis would not realize the significance of the battles west of the Mississippi River until it was too late. The Battle of Pea Ridge (March 6-8, 1862) was the largest battle for the Confederacy west of the Mississippi River and the loss of that battle ensured control of the Trans-Mississippi by the Union - which gave the Union an early tactical advantage in the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> The Battle of Shiloh (April 6-7, 1862) should have also come as an early warning to Davis that his offensive-defensive plan was inadequate and would not hold up against the Union forces. Therefore, Davis, despite his military experiences, lacked the grand strategy necessary to wage a Confederate offensive-defensive, as exemplified in his lack of taking the Trans-Mississippi seriously; and, despite

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1. For information pertaining to Jefferson Davis at West Point, see: Walter L. Fleming, "Some Documents Relating to Jefferson Davis at West Point," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 7, no. 2 (1920), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1902656>. For information pertaining to Jefferson Davis' in the military, see: Joseph E. Chance, *Jefferson Davis's Mexican War Regiment* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991).

2. William Shea, *The Campaign for Pea Ridge: The Civil War Series* (Fort Washington: Eastern National, 2001), 57-60.

victories in the East, Pea Ridge and Shiloh should have been taken as early warning signs that many of his officers were sub-par.

A grand strategy is the encompassment of everything strategically necessary to win a war. The necessities that make up a grand strategy include, but are not limited to, general selection, financial decision, and strategic abilities.<sup>3</sup> Jefferson Davis, despite his military training, was inept at picking effectual leaders, and equally inept at removing those that were ineffectual. He let his own personal friendships and biases get in the way of making sound decisions when it came to giving appointments of leadership – often assigning those positions to his friends. The problem that often occurs with appointing friends is that it is often harder to bring oneself to remove that person when necessary, or removing them after the damage has been done.<sup>4</sup> Davis also had flaws in his methodology of selecting leaders outside his circle of friends, which would also play a role in the loss of battles for the Confederacy. One prime example of poor leadership selection and strategic knowledge can be seen in Earl Van Dorn (1820-1863) and the Battle of Pea Ridge. It will be demonstrated that Davis did not hold the Trans-Mississippi region on the same level of importance as he did the Eastern Theater – a strategic mistake that would end up costing him the theater and the war.

Another failure of leadership selection and strategy can be seen in a study of Shiloh. Jefferson, as of 1861, did not feel that P.G.T. Beauregard was an effectual leader. However, rather than reduce his rank or place him in a position where he could do the least amount of

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3. Charles D. Ellis, "Lessons on Grand Strategy," *Financial Analysts Journal* 69, no. 4 (August 2013): 6, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1418168300?accountid=8289>.

4. For a comprehensive look at Davis' general selection, see: Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Partners in Command: The Relationships between Leaders in the Civil War* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994) and Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990).

harm, Davis left him to be second in command to Sidney Albert Johnston – who Jefferson considered his greatest field officer. Shiloh, coupled with Pea Ridge, should have served as an awakening for Davis; however, he ignored the signs and continued onward.<sup>5</sup>

Pea Ridge and Shiloh are arguably two of the most important battles in the early part of the war based on the strategic abilities both places provided. It is almost a certainty that without provisions and a way to get them to the troops in the field, the rest of the war is a lost cause. Both of which were the initial planned uses of the Trans-Mississippi and the Corinth railroad junction. By not protecting these two vital, and obvious, resources the Confederacy was buying time.<sup>6</sup>

The problem facing historians is the lack of available information that focuses on Davis' lack of a grand strategy and how that affected the Confederacy. What were Davis' qualifications that allowed him to believe he was a strategist? What were the financial mistakes that were made by Davis or that Davis allowed the Confederacy to make? What was Davis' method and reasoning in selecting officers, and was this method applied in the selection of Van Dorn, Johnston, and Beauregard? Why did he select Van Dorn for the Pea Ridge Battle over competent officers that were already in the region? Were there any external factors that could have caused Van Dorn to do such a poor job of leading the battle? What were the leadership mistakes, made by Van Dorn in the battle for Pea Ridge, which played a role in its subsequent loss? In contrast to

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5. John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's diary at the Confederate State Capitol*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J.B Lippincott, 1866, digitized 2007), 371, 392, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/rebelwarclerksdi02joneuoft#page/n5/mode/2up>. These entries provide examples of Davis' feelings towards Beauregard.

6. For a comprehensive look at Corinth and its importance, see: Timothy B. Smith, *Corinth 1862: Siege, Battle, Occupation*, Modern war studies (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2012). For a brief look at Corinth, see: Timothy Smith, *Corinth in the Civil War: At the Crossroads Of History | Mississippi History Now* (Accessed May 11, 2016), [mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/297/corinth-in-the-civil-war](http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/297/corinth-in-the-civil-war). For information regarding importance and planned uses of the Trans-Mississippi during the Civil War, see: Richard E. Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991). Both will be examined later in the thesis in Chapter Six.

Van Dorn, what were some of Samuel Curtis' strengths, and what did he do differently that illustrates Van Dorn was ineffective? Why did Davis, despite requests for Bragg's removal, keep him on for as long as he did? Why was Bragg promoted despite his shortcomings as a leader? What effect did the loss of the Trans-Mississippi have on the Civil War? What was the point of Johnston rushing to Shiloh after his delays? Why was Beauregard second in command? Why did Beauregard tell Davis the battle was won despite it not being over? How was Shiloh an early warning?

This thesis will serve to look at the grand strategy (or lack thereof) of Jefferson Davis; in addition, it will examine how his lack of a grand strategy influenced the Civil War. In order to accomplish this, this study will examine Davis' qualifications and financial decisions, explain the methodology used by Davis in selecting his leadership, describe the characteristics of the leadership at Pea Ridge and Shiloh, provide an analysis of their leadership style, and examine their decision making process. Then, the study will illustrate how Jefferson Davis did not see the importance of the Western Theater, and the significant role the Trans-Mississippi played in the overall Civil War; and how, coupled with Shiloh, this should have had been a sign of ineffectual leadership for Davis. In addition, the two battles should have let Davis know that he did not possess the grand strategy necessary to win the Civil War. This will show that Davis did not view the Western Theater as tactically and strategically important to the overall war. It will then show that Davis was not efficient at picking leaders, using Van Dorn as an example and backed up by leadership in the Trans-Mississippi region and the battle of Shiloh, and will show that this inefficiency played a larger role in the overall failures of the Civil War.

The proposed thesis will look at various factors of Davis and the primary Confederate leaders of two battles that should have warned him of the state of his leadership selection and

how that selection plays into his overall lack of strategic ability. The two examined battles consist of Pea Ridge and Shiloh. In addition, an analysis of Van Dorn's leadership leading up to and during the Battle of Pea Ridge will be taken into consideration to fully illustrate his ineffectual abilities.

The thesis will start with a brief narrative describing Davis' military training and background. This will be important as it plays a role in establishing the qualifications of Davis; in addition, it illustrates why, and how, his military background played a vital role in how he chose his commanders. Davis' method of selecting generals caused him to choose Van Dorn to go to Arkansas and replace McCulloch, which was more qualified to lead in this situation than Van Dorn.<sup>7</sup> A brief narrative will be used to illustrate McCulloch was the superior choice to lead in the Battle of Pea Ridge. An examination of some of the higher influencing financial decisions that Davis allowed will be conducted and show how those decisions fall into the grand strategy.

Van Dorn led the soldiers in Arkansas to a devastating defeat, relinquishing the greatest advantage the Confederacy had at that point in the Trans-Mississippi. As a result, the Confederacy would never again be able to launch an attack with the amount of men it had at Pea Ridge.<sup>8</sup> At this point, the decisions that Van Dorn made will be examined, especially His move to leave most of the food and equipment behind in the middle of March while he had his men traverse the mountains of Northwest Arkansas. The conditions the soldiers had to contend with on their way to Pea Ridge will be examined in order to establish their fighting ability/strength in the upcoming battle and how that establishes Van Dorn as an ineffectual leader. In addition,

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7. Shea, *The Campaign for Pea Ridge: The Civil War Series*, 7–8.

8. *Ibid.*, 57–60.

examination of the effects the decision had on soldiers post battle will be used in further establishing Van Dorn as an ineffectual leader.<sup>9</sup>

On the way to Pea Ridge, Van Dorn fell into an icy creek and was carried in an ambulance to Pea Ridge and for a time on the way to Bentonville, Arkansas.<sup>10</sup> An analysis will be done at this point to determine if Van Dorn could have been suffering from hypothermia and, thereby, affecting his decision-making. If the results point toward the affirmative, an examination as to the extent hypothermia would have played will need to be factored into the overall results. The next examination of major decisions will be his reasoning for pushing ahead to Pea Ridge after arriving at Bentonville despite objections by his officers, his decision to split his unit at Twelve Corners Church, and his decision for suddenly slowing down his march as he reached Elkhorn Tavern.

Following the examination of the Pea Ridge battle, the battle of Shiloh will be examined. First, a review will be conducted on what qualifications Johnston and Beauregard had that led Davis to believe they would be effective generals and leader. A key factor will be to look at why Davis did not remove Beauregard from leadership despite his lack of trust in him. An examination of how the battles of Pea Ridge and Shiloh will be conducted to understand their importance in the grand strategy and how they should have served as an early warning measure for Davis.

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9. This will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis in Chapter Six. However, for an immediate comprehensive examination, see: William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). A report by Van Dorn's Chief of Staff does not mention an ambulance. For that information, see Dabney H. Maury, "Recollections of the Pea Ridge Campaign." *Southern Historical Society Papers. Vol 2* (July-December, 1876): 183. However, it is entirely possible that Maury left that information out to save Van Dorn any embarrassment – however, that idea, though probable, is purely speculative.

10. *Ibid.*, 58.

To solidify the argument of Davis' inability to select effective leadership, Van Dorn, Johnston, and Beauregard's efforts outside the instances of Pea Ridge and Shiloh will be analyzed. This will be done to determine if it was poor leadership that led to the loss of the Trans-Mississippi and Shiloh, or if there were factors beyond leadership control that gave such an appearance. This will close with how the loss of the Trans-Mississippi, and Shiloh, played a larger role in the loss of the Civil War from a leadership and strategic standpoint, thereby establishing why Davis should have taken the region more seriously. In addition, a look at the climate of the Civil War east of the Mississippi River will be conducted to determine why he did not give the western theater more attention. Eventually, Van Dorn was demoted, after which, he began to win his engagements; therefore it is important to look at, and compare, the leadership styles to determine what factors played a role in the shift.<sup>11</sup> After which, Shiloh and the primary leaders, especially Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard, will be examined to further illustrate that Davis' leadership selection, as well as his own strategic inability, was not effective enough to handle a Confederate offensive-defensive.

This paper will utilize primary sources, most of which will encompass correspondences between commanders during the Civil War. Journals of Civil War soldiers will also be used to offer personal views of their leadership. Secondary sources will also be used, with most being comprised of writings by modern historians.

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11. For a look at when Van Dorn began to win, see: Robert Hartje, "Van Dorn Conducts a Raid on Holly Springs and Enters Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1959): 120–33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42621420>, and also: Thomas Robson Hay, "Confederate Leadership at Vicksburg," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11, no. 4 (1925): 543–60, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1895912>.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

There are several books written on the various issues of strategy and command separately; however, these books and articles serve to examine particular battles, or campaigns, and the individual strategy that affected their outcomes. Where these books fall short is the examination of a lack of grand strategy by Davis himself, and how that played into the overall Civil War. As an example, books such as *Why the South Lost the Civil War* and *How the North Won: A military History of the Civil War* does not discuss Davis' lack of a grand strategy, nor does the tens of thousands of books that examine "The Lost Cause" theory that the South was destined to lose from the start.<sup>12</sup> Those books do look at various reasons, but not from the prospective of how it fit into or effected the grand strategy. A student of history would be hard pressed to not find a book on almost every aspect of the Civil War. Several books, and peer-reviewed journal articles, have been written separately on the issues of Davis, Pea Ridge, Van Dorn, and Shiloh. However, serious attempts at increasing the scholarship concerning Pea Ridge and its importance in the overall war have only been going on since the mid-1950s. In 1956, Walter Brown said that, "No Civil War historian has yet recognized the true significance of the battle of Pea Ridge."<sup>13</sup> Brown changed the way that many historians viewed Pea Ridge in the overall Civil War. Since that time, historians have been increasing the amount of scholarship

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12. Richard E. Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991).; Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1991). These books illustrate many aspects of various strategies of each side but fall short in explaining the grand strategy and how it fits into their explanations; however, *Why the South Lost* does come close.

13. Walter Lee Brown, "Pea Ridge: Gettysburg of the West," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1956): 3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40027188>.

associated with Pea Ridge – most notably is William L. Shea, whom has written numerous books on the battles near the Arkansas –Missouri border – especially the Battle of Pea Ridge.

Although scholarship on Pea Ridge has been written since 1956, Shea has done the most in-depth writings on the subject of the Battle of Pea Ridge. Through his writings, Shea shows that Van Dorn as an ineffectual leader by offering accounts from various points of view about Van Dorn by his subordinates and peers instead of outright stating that he was, which allowed readers to draw their own conclusion.<sup>14</sup> Shea does, however, illustrate that Van Dorn never fully grasped the concept of “Murphy’s Law” and that he was not “well served” by his subordinates.<sup>15</sup> Accounts in Shea’s book *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (1992), co-authored by Earl J. Hess, Shea offers another detailed look at the Battle of Pea Ridge, offering more first-hand accounts of the battle. In this book, Shea offers more information in the way of the strategic decisions made by Van Dorn that over-ruled the popular decisions by his subordinates.<sup>16</sup> This analysis by Shea compliments previous scholarship that shows that General Samuel Curtis actually took a more active role in ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of his soldiers.<sup>17</sup>

Earlier scholarship (1969) of Grady McWhiney and Judith Hallock looks at Bragg by attempting to determine if the controversy surrounding Bragg was due to his own failures as a leader or if his failures were really due to events beyond his control.<sup>18</sup> Additional scholarship that has come before Woodworth’s book, such as *The Politics of Command: Factions and Ideas*

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14. Shea, *The Campaign for Pea Ridge*, 26.

15. Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 312.

16. *Ibid.*, 81.

17. Edwin C. Bearss, “The Battle of Pea Ridge,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1961): 74.

18. Grady McWhiney and Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969), 2:2.

in *Confederate Strategy* (1973), by Thomas Connelly and Archer Jones, examine the policies and influences that played a role in Davis' decision-making. Connelly and Jones also examine the anti-administration bloc to determine what roles they played in swaying Davis' decisions. Steven E. Woodworth's, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (1990), focuses on Davis as a tactician and how he influenced the outcome of battles by placing ineffectual leaders in leadership positions and then refusing to remove them. Woodworth details the failures of Van Dorn and Bragg, but does not explain the significance of the losses of the Western Theater battles. Woodworth offers new scholarship in the study of Bragg by looking at him almost completely from a strategic, leadership standpoint.<sup>19</sup>

The scholarship on Davis is vast and offers multiple insights into him as a leader and human being. The secondary source that will be used primarily in this area of the research is William Coopers' *Jefferson Davis, American* (2010), which offers a thorough examination into the life of Davis and presents him in a humanized manner. Cooper also establishes Davis' work habits often kept him away from home and engaged in advisory meetings. While Cooper writes extensively on the life of Davis, he does not focus on the military tactics. In *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings* (2004), Cooper later compiled a large selection of the writings by Jefferson Davis, which provide valuable insight into the way Davis thought about the different obstacles that faced him. While Cooper is not the author of the writings, Cooper did make sure to include some of Davis' writings that illustrate his abilities (or lack thereof) as a tactician.<sup>20</sup>

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19. Thomas Lawrence Connelly and Archer Jones, *The Politics of Command: Factions and Ideas in Confederate Strategy* (Louisiana: LSU Press, 1973), 49.; Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990).

20. William J. Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 315.; Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. William J. Cooper (New York: Modern Library, 2004).

The scholarship on Shiloh has evolved into four categories as historians have disputed various events from the battle. The first level of scholarship came shortly following the war when participants of the battle began writing their memoirs and recounts of the events that transpired. The next school of thought brought the veterans reports, along with Shiloh becoming a National Park, and gave many historians the evidence that is still widely used to insist that Sunken Road and the Hornet's Nest were quintessential and decisive aspects of the battle. The third level of scholarship argues that the loss of Shiloh by the Confederates is due solely because of A.S. Johnston's death. The fourth level of scholarship argues that neither level two or three played a role in its decisiveness, but that a combination of not knowing where Union positions were located, deployment times of troops, and the overall geography of the land caused the Confederacy to be unable to fight the enemy with full effect.<sup>21</sup>

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21. Timothy B. Smith, "Historians and the Battle of Shiloh: One Hundred and Forty Years of Controversy," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 334, accessed February 29, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42627793>.

### Chapter 3

#### Davis, Offensive-Defensive, and Grand Strategy

Jefferson Davis was a West Point graduate, served in the Mexican-American War where he led troops, served as Secretary of War prior to secession, and micro-managed too many aspects of the Civil War in order for it to have ever been a victory for the Confederacy. Davis wanted to be in charge of the Confederate Army and lead troops instead of leading the Confederate nation; however, he took the role as leader when it was offered to him.<sup>22</sup> The Confederacy had plenty of reasons to select him to lead the Confederacy, as his list of qualifications was superb. He was a West Point graduate, and served as a second lieutenant with an infantry unit. He was later a presidential elector in 1844, and in 1845, was elected to the House of Representatives. He left a year later to serve in the Mexican-American War, and returned from the war a decorated hero – which helped acquire him a seat in the Senate. He later served under President Franklin Pierce as Secretary of War. This list of accomplishments was the primary reason that he was chosen to lead the Confederacy.<sup>23</sup> However, his accomplishments did not grant him the ability to create the grand strategy needed to win the Civil War.

Davis was near the bottom of the class roster at West Point, thus the reason for his entry to the infantry. His lack of obtaining a higher position in the standings could have stemmed from his lack of desire to go to West Point in the first place. He told his sister that he had no desire to go, but would go since his elder brother (acting in replacement of his late father) urged him to do so.<sup>24</sup> By not having the desire to be at West Point, and intending to leave after four years, it stands to reason that Davis may not have put as much effort into learning as opposed to those

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22. William J. Cooper Jr., *Jefferson Davis and the Civil War Era* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 3.

23. *Ibid.*, 3–5.; William Edward Dodd, *Jefferson Davis* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 15–17.

24. Jefferson Davis to Amanda Davis Bradford, August 2, 1824, in Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. William J. Cooper (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 3.

students that wanted to attend. The number of demerits that Davis obtained helps support this reasoning as Davis was consistently given demerits for a series of infractions such as staying in bed after reveille, failure to report to drill, and consuming alcohol.<sup>25</sup> Some historians, such as Steven Woodworth, believe that his lack of performing grades could be due to Davis' love of reading.<sup>26</sup> A person who reads books other than assigned often do so because they find the content of the assigned books boring and have no desire to put forth any effort into learning the material. Historians Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones oversell Davis' abilities by saying that Davis was "well educated as a Military Professional."<sup>27</sup> This is contrary to the academic record Davis held while attending West Point.

Although Davis did not make a lasting impression with his grades at West Point, he did establish close friendships. The two of his closest friends at West Point, and beyond, were Albert Sidney Johnston and Leonidas Polk. Davis did attend West Point with Joseph Johnston and Robert E. Lee, but they were more of acquaintances than they were friends.<sup>28</sup> Davis' friendships would later play a role in the loss of the Confederacy.

West Point did not teach strategy directly, but rather, looked at previous campaigns to get an understanding of which formation to use and when for maximum results on the battlefield. During Davis' time at West Point, the cadets were required to study French, and one of the French books that would have been available at the time would have been Antoine Henri

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25. Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American*, 36.

26. Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 5.

27. Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 9. This is not to suggest that West Point was not an outstanding military academy, but that Davis did not perform well enough to have learned all of the essentials taught at West Point.

28. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*.

Jomini's, *The Art of War*.<sup>29</sup> However, it should be noted that West Point having the book available does equate to cadets reading the book; therefore, while the book was at West Point while Davis was there, his having the opportunity to read it does not necessarily mean that he did read it. It serves to show that Davis and other students would have had the ability to read it if they so desired. In Jomini's book, he outlines a strategy that defends against an invading enemy on one's own ground, with one's own resources, and with the support of one's own country; in addition, it outlines the need for offensive attacks when strategically available. This would allow the home army the chance to attack when it was ready, able, and when the best strategic opportunity presented itself. Jomini referred to this tactic as the "offensive-defensive."<sup>30</sup> However, there is not any definitive evidence that Jomini's book is where Davis got the term and he did not allude to the origin in his memoir.<sup>31</sup>

Some of Davis' inability to lead would also come from his inflated ego based on his services during the Mexican-American War. While the South revered him as a hero for his actions of halting, and turning, a Mexican advancement at Buena Vista by having his regiment organize in an obtuse angle.<sup>32</sup> However, the battle of Buena Vista was not a significant battle, but people from all over still hailed Davis as a hero – even offering him a commission as a

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29. Joseph G. Dawson, "Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy's "offensive-defensive" Strategy in the U.S. civil war. *The Journal of Military History* 73, no. 2 (2009): 594, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/195656595?accountid=8289>.

30. Baron de Jomini, *Summary of the Art of War, or a New Analytical Compend of the Principle Combinations of Strategy, of Grand Tactics and of Military Policy*, trans. O.F. Winship and E.E. McLean (New York: Putnam, 1854), 85, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2001.05.0051%3Achapter%3D3#note6>. The book was originally written in French and would have been the book at West Point, but for purposes of the thesis, the translated version of 1854 is used.

31. Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government: Volume I*, A Da Capo paperback (1881; repr., New York, N.Y: Da Capo Press, 1990), 361. While there is no direct evidence that Jefferson copied the phrase and strategy from Jomini, it is the most likely source.

32. Grady McWhiney, "Jefferson Davis and the Art of War," *Civil War History* 21, no. 2 (1975): 101, accessed February 11, 2016, [https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/civil\\_war\\_history/v021/21.2.mcwhiney.html](https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/civil_war_history/v021/21.2.mcwhiney.html).

Brigadier General, to which he declined. Davis also began to believe the hype that was being built up around his name. This instance became a prime example of how a “crowd judges men largely by dramatic experiences.”<sup>33</sup> The *Daily Alta California* ran a reprint and commentary on an article from the January 9, 1885 printing of the *Richmond Examiner*, which said, “If we are to perish, the verdict of posterity will be “Died of a V.””<sup>34</sup> This misconception of Davis as a grand tactician or strategist would end up wreaking havoc when he took over the Confederacy.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that Davis performed well in the battles of Monterey and Buena Vista, which consisted of all his battlefield experiences; however, basing him as a strategic genius based off of his little combat experience is foolish and premature.

The “offensive-defensive” strategy was one that made sense at the beginning of the war. The North was going to have to come down to the South if they wanted to fight, the South would have the home field advantage, they would be near their own resources, and would have the support (moral and otherwise) of the nearby communities. With the South, being uncertain at the time how the North would come at them, the “offensive-defensive” also allowed for more flexibility. However, it turns out that the Confederacy utilized more of a defensive strategy versus an offensive strategy throughout the war. The decision to allow any offensive efforts at all would later become a hindrance to the Confederacy. As the Union kept having continuous victories, Grant decided that because the South kept making brave attempts to take back their land that he “gave up all idea of saving the Union except by complete conquest.”<sup>36</sup> This was a

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33. H. J. Eckenrode, *Jefferson Davis, President of the South* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1923), 45, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015026644552>.

34. “Died of a V.,” *Daily Alta California*, February 9, 1865, 2, accessed February 14, 2016, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=DAC18650209.2.11>.

35. Kevin Dougherty, *Civil War Leadership and Mexican War Experience* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 129–30, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/apus/docDetail.action?docID=10218398>.

36. Ulysses S. Grant, “XXV,” in *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Complete* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1885), accessed February 29, 2016, <http://www.bartleby.com/1011/25.html>.

conclusion Grant came to following Shiloh. After the fall of Fort Donelson and Fort Henry, Grant was surprised to see that the Confederates regrouped, concentrated many of their troops in one location, and organized, and accomplished, a frontal surprise attack. He realized after he won the battle that the war would not be a quick one.

The grand strategy needed to engage a successful “offensive-defensive” is not completely beholden to military tactics and war strategy; it can, and does, include economic and political strategies that affect the military and outcomes of battles as well. Davis did not fully understand the concept of strategy and that meant he did not understand a grand strategy. It does not come only from military tactics, but also from every external factor that could influence the troops and their ability to fight. Everything combined into a long-term plan on how events will, or should, unfold creates a grand-strategy, and the grand-strategy was an issue that Davis neglected to understand; in addition, his lack of a grand strategy would create problems that would escalate to the point of no recovery. Carl Von Clausewitz described it as, “The strategist must therefore define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with its purpose. In other words, he will draft the plan of the war, and the aim will determine the series of actions intended to achieve it.”<sup>37</sup>

As noted, part of an “offensive-defensive” strategy gives part of an advantage to being nearer to one’s own resources. One of the South’s policies enacted by Davis was impressment. By forcing the people to sell their goods to the government, at a reduced price, the people started to quit growing food, making supplies, and quit taking their goods to be sold at the market in fear that the government would take the goods under impressment. With impressment taking goods

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37. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michel Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 177.

away from the people, the morale of the people began to diminish, thus taking away another benefit of the “offensive-defensive” strategy.<sup>38</sup>

As impressment continued to pay civilians a fraction of the value of the goods that were taken, another problem began to further the issues of morale – inflation. In December 1863, Davis recommended to Congress that there needed to be a “compulsory reduction of the currency to the amount required by the business of the country.”<sup>39</sup> However, this was a request that was too late to undo the damage that had been created. The Confederate treasury had been creating money until there were over 600 million notes in circulation; which, amounted to three times the amount necessary for business. As these notes continued to be printed, the value of the notes steadily declined, and therefore, created hyperinflation. The result was a continuation of decreasing morale among the people, and by proxy, the soldiers.<sup>40</sup>

In adding to the decline of morale via inflation was the issues that pay had on the families of the soldiers. By December 1862, the inflation rate was 4:1, or put another way, it cost four dollars to buy what used to cost one dollar. As a result, when soldiers would send home twenty dollars, it only had four dollars of purchasing power. This variation in pay versus inflation caused a strain to be placed on the families back home, as they had to stretch food even further than before. Wheat was costing five dollars, corn was costing two dollars, and pork was costing buyers twenty dollars. This inflated the belief that poor men without slaves got poorer while

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38. Mark Thornton and Robert B. Ekelund, *Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation: The Economics of the Civil War* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2008), 47–48.

39. Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government: Volume I*, 491.

40. Ibid.; For more information on inflation during the Civil War, see also: Wesley C. Mitchell, “Greenbacks and the Cost of the Civil War,” *Journal of Political Economy* 5, no. 2 (1897): 117–56, and Paul Auerbach and Michael Hauptert, “Bank Response During the American Civil War,” n.d.. For more readings on hyperinflation, see: Cagan, Philip, ‘The Monetary Dynamics of Hyperinflation’ in *Studies in the Quantity Theory of Money*, ed. Milton Friedman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956). For more readings on the issues surrounding gaining an accurate representation of inflation, see: Paul R. Auerbach and Michael J. Hauptert, “Problems in Analyzing Inflation During the Civil War,” *Essays in Economic & Business History* 20 (2002), <http://www.ebhsoc.org/journal/index.php/journal/article/view/114>.

fighting for rich men to be able to keep their slaves. Inflation drove up the prices of food to the point that the Confederate government was paying below the market price. In addition, buying at lower prices would cause the Confederate dollar to continue to decline in value. The inflated food prices eventually got to the point where reading the prices of food in the newspaper would seem to cause more anxiety than reading the killed and captured list. As prices of food increased, those items that would be considered an indulgence became taboo among the people. Those that used to be able to afford a little bit of luxury were in the same situation as the poorest person. The situation was no better off for those in the military, even some of the officers were reduced to eating the same parched corn as the privates. As the prices of food rose, so did other goods and services. Hotel and shopkeepers were forced to raise their rates in order to keep up with inflation. Those with enough slaves to avoid conscription began selling their slaves at inflated rates, further adding to the inflation.<sup>41</sup>

These inflated prices were passed on to the Confederate government, who in turn bought the food at a rate reduced from the store price. This would cause shopkeepers to have to raise their rates in order to make up the differences in the loss. The Confederate government had a hand in furthering the food shortage issue; although to be fair, it was done via strategy and any other army in the world would have done the same. As the Union troops would advance on a town, the Confederate troops would be ordered to burn and food or goods that may become of use, or that could sustain, the Union troops. Large “piles of corn in sacks, and bacon, and crackers, and molasses, and sugar, and coffee, and rice, and potatoes, and onions, and peas, and

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41. “A Benevolent Butcher - Public Agencies,” *Richmond Enquirer*, August 16, 1864, 2, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1864-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/>; Edgar Snowden, *Alexandria Gazette*, March 29, 1864, 1, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1864-03-29/ed-1/seq-1/>; Samuel R. Watkins, *Co. Aytch* (North Charleston: CreateSpace IPP, 1882; reprint 2013), 62. This book is a re-print, which was originally titled: *1861 vs. 1862. "Co. Aytch", Maury grays, First Tennessee regiment; or, A side show of the big show* (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing, 1882). The original has been uploaded online, to view that book, please see: <https://archive.org/details/1861vs1862coaytc00watk/>; *Western Sentinel* (Winston, North Carolina), December 12, 1862, 3, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026526/1862-12-12/ed-1/seq-3/>.

flour by the hundreds of barrels would all be burned or otherwise destroyed to prevent Union soldiers from obtaining them. At times, this would equate to vast amounts of food that could have been put to better use by being given to the troops instead of burned and wasted. This would have caused the troops to have to take less food by force and thus allowing more food in circulation – which would keep food costs lower. However, in removing the food and goods from the available market, the Confederacy created a shortage, and that shortage led to higher prices on the remaining food. The act of burning would also play on the morale of the Confederate soldier. They were burning food while many of their brothers, and sometimes themselves, were starving. This made some question the extent of their loyalty.<sup>42</sup>

At the beginning of the war, the bonds and treasury notes were a stable investment for people and provided a source of income for the Confederate government; however, they became unstable as they began to be influenced based on how the Confederacy was holding up during the war. Due to the initial victories in the east, this created growth and stability for the bonds and notes, but as the Union began to gain footholds, the interest rates began to fluctuate drastically. The bonds were to be backed by gold specie; however, there were more bonds issued than the Confederacy had specie. At this point, the Confederacy began to issue the Confederate dollar as a way to pay for the bonds. The inflation caused the amount paid to be a depreciated amount of the value of the bonds.<sup>43</sup> The bonds would fluctuate from 17½% in 1861, to 49% by March 1864, and rounding out to about 14% by the end of 1864.<sup>44</sup>

One of the leading causes of the Confederate debt was a fifteen million dollar loan. The Confederacy did not have a way of repaying or backing the loan. The notes were to offset this

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42. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 83–84.

43. George K. Davis and Gary M. Pecquet, “Interest Rates in the Civil War South,” *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 1 (March 1990): 135, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2123441>.

44. J.C. Schwab, “The Finances of the Confederate States,” *Political Science Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (March 1892): 41, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2139009>.

issue, and since the notes had to be paid with Confederate dollars, the Confederacy backed the issuance of the notes with a cotton export duty. However, since the South was the home of cotton, the cotton prices had to be raised and in order to achieve this, the cotton had to be embargoed. The embargo was to limit the supply of cotton and artificially drive up the price. Unfortunately, the cotton barons did not want an embargo on the cotton and fought to have the forced legislation to fail; as a result, the embargo became “voluntary.”<sup>45</sup> The voluntary measure worked and following 1861, the export amounts of cotton fell by almost ninety-nine percent. The embargo was so effective that “During the season 1860-61 New Orleans exported one and a half million bales of cotton; during the following season the amount fell to eleven thousand. The total exports of southern cotton during the same time fell from two million bales to thirteen thousand.”<sup>46</sup> However, Thornton and Ekelund believe this is an exaggerated figure and does not reflect the actual number as southern plantation owners were trying to evade cotton taxes.<sup>47</sup> According to Thornton and Ekelund, a more compressive strategy could have been more effective for the South,

The South probably would have done better if the Confederacy had either strictly enforced a compressive embargo or had aggressively exported cotton. The comprehensive embargo might have effectively threatened European textile interests while a policy of aggressive exports would have provided clear evidence that the Union had imposed an illegal paper blockade. Either policy would have increased the possibility of European intervention early in the war.<sup>48</sup>

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45. Thornton and Ekelund, *Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation*, 31.

46. J.C. Schwab, *The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865: A Financial and Industrial History of the South during the Civil War*. (New York: Franklin, 1969), 250–51.

47. Thornton and Ekelund, *Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation*, 32.

48. *Ibid.* International law dictated that in order for a blockade to be legal, the blockading country must have enough ships to successfully blockade the entire country. The Union did not have enough ships to accomplish this and as a result, the blockade is referred to as a “paper blockade.” Under international law, it was technically illegal.

This may have been doable had Davis had the strategic sense and fortitude necessary to stand up to the cotton barons of the South and not let them dictate wartime policy. With the Union instituting a successful paper blockade, the Union was able to stifle the Confederate cotton exportation with effects detrimental to the Confederate economy. The paper blockade caused the Confederacy to go from what would have been over one billion dollars in export revenue to having a seven-hundred million dollar deficit.<sup>49</sup>

With respect to Thorton and Ekelund, even had the Confederacy utilized a more comprehensive approach to their self-imposed cotton embargo, or had exported cotton aggressively, it may not had made a difference in regard to income for the Confederacy. As Thorton and Ekelund point out in their own book, England (chief importer of the cotton) began to turn to India and Egypt to fulfill their cotton needs. Therefore, with the Confederacy causing false inflation by burning cotton, the British would likely have purchased cotton from India and Egypt versus paying the inflated cost of Confederate cotton. The Confederacy also burned much of their cotton, to drive up prices and keep the Union from obtaining it and using it for their own war effort. In addition to the cotton, the Confederates burned anything they could get ahold of that could possibly be “driven or rolled” or otherwise used in the transportation of cotton back to the Union. There were cotton bales burning as far as the eye could see, the Confederates also rowed flatboats out into the river and set the cotton on fire and allowed it to drift off downstream toward the Union located on the Mississippi.<sup>50</sup>

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49. David G. Surdam, “Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War,” *The Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 2 (June 1996): 473–74, accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2123979>.

50. Mark Thornton and Robert B. Ekelund. *Tariffs, Blockades, and Inflation*. 32.; Sarah M. Dawson, *A Confederate Girl's Diary*, ed. Natalia Smith (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913; digitized 1997), 16–18, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/dawson/dawson.html>.

Adding to the steady destruction of morale was the issue of the Conscription Law. While the law itself was necessary for the Confederacy to raise the needed troops, it was more of the exemptions that were passed five days following the Conscription Act to act as a supplement that further decreased the morale of the troops. Soon following the Conscription Act, the soldiers that signed up for set periods found that they were now forced to remain in service. Adding further insult, the “Twenty Negro Law” allowed persons owning twenty or more slaves were exempt from conscription, and the officers that had signed on for a set period were also exempt and were allowed to go home. From this point on, the soldiers began to hate everything and everybody that was associated with the Confederacy and the war. They viewed these actions as “a rich man’s actions, a poor man’s fight” and felt that “the war might as well have ended then and there.” In addition to owning slaves, numerous other jobs or duties that the people could do would allow them to avoid being conscripted.<sup>51</sup> Davis would later admit that it was “indefensible in theory” as it was wrong for people to receive “unequal distribution of duties or obligations” and the practice should be “wholly abandoned.”<sup>52</sup>

The “Twenty Negro Law” would have a rippling effect across the Confederacy and encouraged some Confederate soldiers to question their loyalty to the Confederacy. The law, coupled with deteriorating morale, led some Confederates to desert the army. In some instances, those that deserted began to run guerilla tactics against the Confederacy in attempts to keep them away from their homes. In other instances, those that deserted joined or worked with the Union. One of the largest, and more well-known incident, of this happening is in Jones County,

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51. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 28.; For the law regarding conscription exemptions, see the scanned texts: James Matthews, ed. “LXXIV.--An Act to exempt certain persons from enrollment for service in the Armies of the Confederate States.” “Confederate States of America. The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America, Commencing with the First Session of the First Congress; 1862. Public Laws of the Confederate States of America, Passed at the First Session of the First Congress; 1862. Private Laws of the Confederate States of America, Passed at the First Session of the First Congress; 1862.,” [ hereafter Statutes] University of North Carolina, 1862, uploaded 1999, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/statutes/statutes.html>.

52. Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government: Volume I*, 515.

Mississippi, where Newton Knight led a group of deserter against the Confederates. In addition, he was successful in driving the Confederates out of Jones County (although they would repeatedly return to attack) and raised the United States flag over the courthouse and declared the town the “Free State of Jones,” since Knight was trying to have Jones seceded from the Confederacy.<sup>53</sup>

When Davis gave a speech on the progress of the war at the end of 1862, he said that the Confederacy called on the men to stay on as soldiers at the end of their enlistment, and the men answered the call. In addition, he goes on to discuss how it was those men that felt those that had thus far avoided the war should be forced in, and so they made the conscription acts. Davis later admitted conscription was the wrong course of action, but in his speech, he felt that the conscription act was given “harsher criticism than it deserves.” He also defended the exception acts by saying those left behind were needed as a show of force to keep the slaves in control and that many of the wealthy families had members serving in the military. Continuing with the speech, Davis either began lying about circumstances and his army’s ability, was naive about it, or was giving the usual politician style rhetoric that focuses on keeping up morale by not being honest – more likely it was a combination of the former and latter. In his speech, Davis spoke of the advantages of the army,

When the troops of the enemy become disciplined, and accustomed to the obedience of the camp, they will necessarily approach more nearly to an equality with our own men. We have always whipped them in spite of disparity of numbers, and on any fair field, fighting as man to man, and relying only on those natural qualities with which men are endowed, we should not fear to meet them in the proportion of one to two.<sup>54</sup>

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53. Victoria E. Bynum, “‘White Negroes’ in Segregated Mississippi: Miscegenation, Racial Identity, and the Law,” *The Journal of Southern History* 64, no. 2 (May 1998): 250–52, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2587946>. ; “Outlawry Crushed in Mississippi,” *Memphis Daily Appeal*, May 10, 1864, 2, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1864-05-10/ed-1/seq-2/>.

54. “Jefferson Davis’ Speech at Jackson, Miss.,” Rice University, accessed February 29, 2016, <http://jeffersondavis.rice.edu/Content.aspx?id=113>. This speech was given to the House Chamber at the Mississippi Capitol.

By this point of the war, there had been several battles, namely Shiloh and Pea Ridge, where the Confederacy had a strategic advantage over the Union and lost.

The necessities required to pull off a successful grand strategy was stacked high against the Confederacy. The Union, for the most part, was unified, which is contrast to the Confederacy where the states were more focused on their individuality than the completion of the overall objective, and their economic situations were better than the Confederacy. The Union started out with superior numbers in regards to manpower. According the 1860 census of the United States, there were 31.4 million persons living in the United States. Of that amount, the states that seceded constituted an estimated 9.1 million persons, with 5.4 million being white. Southern sympathizers in the North were estimated at about 600,000 – bringing the total South to roughly six million people and leaving the North about 21.7 million persons at the onset of the war. That equals out to a man power ratio of about five to two in favor of the Union.<sup>55</sup> The superior numerical population of the North also equated to more persons to work in the industrial plants. The same census report also shows there were 1.3 million industrial workers compared to one-hundred ten thousand in the South – a ratio of 110:1. In 1860, the North industrial powerhouse that was producing goods leaps and bounds more than what the Confederacy produced, producing “...thirty times as many boots and shoes, twenty times as much pig iron, thirteen times as much bar, sheet, and railroad iron, twenty-four times as many locomotive engines...”<sup>56</sup>

The North held almost every advantage going into the Civil War, which should change the line of questioning among historians from “How did the North win/South lose?” to “How did the South survive as long as they did?” or “Why was the South so foolish as to think they could

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55. US Census Bureau, “1860 - History - U.S. Census Bureau,” Accessed March 11, 2016, accessed March 9, 2016, [http://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/questionnaires/1860\\_2.html](http://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires/1860_2.html).; Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, 17.

56. Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 8.

win?” The latter is probably more of a question for a historian and psychologist team. To combat the disadvantages that were glooming in front of the Confederacy, they turned to looking at slaves to provide relief for the whites in order for the whites to perform military duty of combat. Slavery provided an advantage to the Confederacy, albeit a slight advantage. If the South did not have slaves, they would not have been able to supply as many white troops as they did to the Confederate military. Of the amount of whites that served, had there not been conscripted slave, the Confederate military would not have had the as many white soldiers for fighting as they did. The Florida legislature, in 1862, decided to allow slaves owners to enlist their slaves as medial labor workers in an attempt to free the white soldiers so they could be used in battle. The slave owners would be required to provide one good pair of clothing for the slave, and the slave owner in return would receive twenty-five dollars a month in compensation for each slave they enlisted to the Confederate military. In 1863, some four thousand slaves were brought in to Richmond to bringing the total slaves to ten thousand to work on building and re-enforcing fortifications. While the Confederacy would have to pay the owners for the use of the slaves, the move would free up an estimated ten thousand white soldiers that could be utilized in combat roles.<sup>57</sup>

The Union utilized different tactics versus sticking to the place-oriented strategy that was central to Jomini’s strategy; in addition, the Union was an established and functioning government and country – whereas, the Confederacy was still trying to get their country in order. Many historians still attribute these reasons and more, or a combination of them, as the reasons the Confederacy lost the war. However, leadership is ultimately responsible for the actions, or inactions, of their subordinates in all instances – especially war. In the case of the Confederacy, it was Jefferson Davis at the helm, and therefore, the blame for the loss should lay squarely with him. However, one must ask, with so much going against the Confederacy, why would they even

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57. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's diary at the Confederate State Capitol*, 2016.

dare to chance a war. However, in fairness, it was reasonable for the Confederacy to believe that victory would have been accomplishable. The Colonies had been the “underdogs” in the American Revolution; in addition, during the War of 1812 the United States was once again the “underdogs” against the British. In both instances, against the British, the “underdogs” came out victorious over a militarily superior force. Therefore, the Confederacy had good cause for thinking that a victory was within their grasp. All of the reasons that historians have written about to illustrate why one side won or one side lost are all correct in their own separate reasoning; however, collectively, they fall squarely under the concept that Davis did not possess the necessary grand strategy to pull off an offensive-defensive, or a Confederate victory in the Civil War.

The military quickly began to lose morale because of forced service; the people were losing morale due to the impressment of their goods, which increased the decline of morale of the troops. The “offensive-defensive” had now lost troop morale, public morale, and was steadily losing resources due to the public’s hoarding in order to keep goods from impressment. The only remaining advantage the Confederacy had left under the “offensive-defensive” was that they would have home field advantage in several battles, which, in theory, would allow them to use their knowledge of the layout of the land to gain the upper hand. However, Davis had an unforeseen issue that would work against this advantage in many instances – his generals.

## Chapter 4

### Davis' Generals and Leaders

The Confederacy, at first, planned to mirror their army after the Union. Copying the Union made sense as it was Davis that modified the department system of regional responsibility when he served as Secretary of War. However, the Confederate Army never fully made it past the planning stage. The militia was a hodgepodge of failures in almost every aspect of preparedness. Their organization abilities left much to be desired, their available food rations, were poor, they did not yet have the necessary training, most were untested on the battlefield at the start of the war, and their supply and logistics were not up to par with the Union. This created a militia that was nothing more than a “political spoils system, with generals and colonels appointed to reconcile factional interests, build party power, and pay debts.” This resulted in a militia that was not ready for the hardships of a war. In addition, it created a way for many of the states to control the outcomes on some parts of the war by not allowing their militia to go serve the Confederacy, using the notion of states’ rights and state defense as reasoning. This created a Confederate provisional army that was mix of militia officers that they could get from the states, Mexican-American War veterans, and men who were seen as prominent citizens and political significance. A person that is a prominent citizen, or that holds political significance, does not suddenly gain leadership abilities on the battlefield when given a military officer title, nor does it suddenly give them the necessary strategic abilities to win battles or a war.<sup>58</sup> Davis appointment to president and his short military experience did not grant him the grand strategy necessary to pick effectual leaders; instead, he picked ineffectual friends.

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45. Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, 10–11.

As mentioned earlier, strategy and tactics are only a part of what encompasses a grand strategy. Another part of a grand strategy is the ability to select proper leadership. While strategy and tactics are vital to success, without leaders to ensure those tactics and strategies are followed through with, they stand as pointless and useless. Davis' selection of generals was part of his failure in creating a grand strategy. It is reasonable to argue that Lincoln had issues with leadership as well and that since the problem occurred on both sides it becomes a moot point. However, while Lincoln had issues with his generals, the way that he and Davis handled the issues is what set them apart. George McClellan posed constant issues for Lincoln by refusing to take the initiative and attack the Confederacy – even when ordered to do so by Lincoln. Afterwards, Lincoln kept McClellan in charge just long enough to methodically transfer power to another general, a process that took great care as McClellan's troops were loyal to McClellan. Davis also kept Leonidas Polk and Braxton Bragg in command longer than he should have, while Lincoln was quick to relieve generals – having relieved three in one year.<sup>59</sup>

To another extent, wars appear different in an office or capitol as opposed to in the field. The personnel in the office setting see a paper war, statistics, a half-truth of the reality that is beyond the doors of their office. In the field, the situation is vastly different. Generals know what they need in order to win (with the exception of the few that over-reacted and over-estimated the amount of enemy troops). In addition, they are usually fairly apprised of what aide their fellow generals can provide. However, Davis did not always support the generals. This would turn out to cause some men to be ill equipped when going into battle. One such example is when Davis, being in a bad mood, received a message from Johnston requesting that Davis strip some of the men and supplies from other units and send them to Johnston. Davis reluctantly refused saying

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59. James McPherson, "Was the Best Defense a Good Offense? Jefferson Davis and Confederate Strategies," in *Jefferson Davis's Generals*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 158, accessed February 17, 2016, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10278253>.

the men all had a weapon of some sort “shotguns, rifles, even pikes could be used.” Suggesting, even in a bad mood or as sarcasm, that the soldiers should use pikes in battle is not only poor form, but also poor leadership. If Davis even halfway believed what he had just said then the South never really did stand a chance under his leadership.<sup>60</sup> Davis would later change his mind and send the troops that he “did not have” to reinforce Johnston after the shock of the attack on Fort Donelson.

The primary issue with Davis and his selection of generals was two-fold. First, was the qualifications he insisted in order for the man to be a general and lead an army. Secondly, their relationship to Davis played a factor in their positions. In addition, as historian Donald Stoker pointed out, commanding generals have to do more than have strategic ability and win battles, they have to be able to win wars as well.<sup>61</sup> To the first point, Davis was adamant about only selecting generals to command an army that had went to West Point, which is a coincidence itself seeing how little stock Davis placed into learning anything at West Point.<sup>62</sup> One possible reason that Davis felt that only West Point graduates should be in command could be found in a letter dated December 3, 1861. In the letter, Davis wrote to W.P. Harris of the Confederate Congress, “The Federal forces are not hereafter, as heretofore, to be commanded by path-finders and holiday soldiers, but by men of military education and experience in war.”<sup>63</sup> It is possible that Davis felt that since the Union was only going to be using soldiers of, or primarily of,

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60. James M. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 57.

61. Donald Stoker, *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/apus/reader.action?docID=10395937>.

62. Eckenrode, *Jefferson Davis, President of the South*, 30.

63. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I*. [hereafter *OR*, all references are from Series I unless otherwise noted], ed. Philip Oliver (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1996), 8:700, Medium, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/>.

“military education” then the Confederacy should do the same. This is only another possible theory as to why Davis would not allow non West Point graduates lead in high command.

Davis’ decision on combat leaders would become an issue going into the Battle of Pea Ridge. Benjamin McCulloch and Sterling Price could not get along and decide who should lead. McCulloch felt that he should lead since he was Confederate Army and Price was Missouri State Guard. McCulloch had a long list of qualifications that set him apart from Price and made him more qualified to lead. McCulloch had served in the Texas Revolution, served as a Texas Ranger, served in the Texas Guard, and served and a Major General in the Mexican-American War. However, despite McCulloch’s qualifications, and due to the fact that McCulloch was not a West Point alumni, Earl Van Dorn was placed in charge.<sup>64</sup> Van Dorn graduated West Point and was also a close and personal friend of Davis, McCulloch was neither of those things.

Van Dorn’s lack of planning, which is correlated to his poor treatment of the troops, is appalling. When Van Dorn arrived on scene of Price and McCulloch in the Boston Mountains, he immediately began having the generals prepare to move north to attack the enemy. Van Buren was “rash and reckless” and did not afford the men many items to take with them into the field for fear that it would slow them down. All of the troops extra “clothing, baggage, tents, etc[etera]” would be left behind in order to ensure faster movement. Van Dorn then proceeded to march the men at a blistering, unreasonable pace. The weather was extremely cold at his time of year with constant snowstorms, yet Van Dorn treated the men as if they were “cast steel, with the strength and powers of endurance of a horse, whose mettle he was testing to its utmost capacity and tension.”<sup>65</sup> The problem with the pace that Van Dorn set is that he had no idea that it was

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64. Shea, *The Campaign for Pea Ridge: The Civil War Series*, 7–8.

65. William H. Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment, Louisiana Infantry*, ed. Edwin C. Bearss (Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshelf, 1866), 129-130, Medium, accessed February 18, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/asouthernrecord00tunngoog>.

too fast – he was riding in an ambulance, unaware of the struggling speed the soldiers were enduring.<sup>66</sup> Van Dorn force-marched the troops from the Boston Mountains to Fayetteville, rested briefly, and then force-marched to Bentonville. They arrived at Bentonville at dark; they rested, with only a biscuit to eat, and then started marching again at about 10 PM. After marching about seven miles, they were ordered to rest until morning. However, without food or blankets, it was extremely difficult to sleep or get any sort of actual rest.

The morning of March 7, the men were ordered to fall in, and they did so starving as they had completely ran out of food; after which, they began marching toward the enemy to fight. The entire march was about fifty-five miles.<sup>67</sup> Over a three-day period, that normally would not have been overly strenuous, but with the winter weather it vastly increased the difficulty of the marching. The men had been in garrison for several weeks, and the sudden, fast pace march began to take its toll on them. By the end of the marching, some of the boots became painful to wear and caused the men to take them off and throw them aside; in addition, the Missouri State Guard had been ordered to leave their horses behind, thus adding to the number of men being in pain from the march. The men would later notice a trail of bloody footprints in the snow.<sup>68</sup>

Due to Van Dorn's decisions to move as quickly, and not pack enough rations, the troops ran out of food on March 6 in addition, some did not having any blankets to keep warm as many left them on the wagons as well. By the seventh, the soldiers were in no position to be marching or fighting. Van Dorn believed that there would be food along the route, and that after the enemy had been defeated, the men would be able to forage for food effortlessly. However, Van Dorn

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66. Ephraim McDowell Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal; Including the Campaigns of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade* (Saint Louis: Times Print Co. Street, 1868), 164, accessed February 21, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/memoirshistorica00ande#page/164/mode/2up>.

67. William Kinney, "Sergeant Kinney's Account of the Battle," in *The Battle of Elk Horn (Pea Ridge), Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, Medium, accessed February 19, 2016, <http://freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~virgilgw/third/page4.html>.; *OR*, 8:283.

68. Anderson, *Memoirs*, 162, 168.

did not create a back-up plan to ensure the men received food. In addition, the Union troops had already been raiding food stores and foraging on their own, so it seems unpractical for Van Dorn to have assumed that there would be enough food at Pea Ridge or along the way. As day broke on their march of the seventh, the troops noticed that some hard tack had ended up on the ground, and although it had been ran over by horses and wagons, the soldiers that got to them first did not hesitate in eating them. This was a calculated mistake on behalf of Van Dorn, and the hunger of the soldiers would play a key role in costing him the battle. During winter, a person shivering burns extra calories and requires ten percent more calories than normal to compensate. A person in a Civil War marching unit would have already needed an estimated 4275.22 calories to sustain themselves.<sup>69</sup> By not allowing enough rations, Van Dorn would force the men to march to battle and then fight over a two-day period with no food, next to no water, and suffering from calorie deficiency.

The decisions that Van Dorn made would cause some men in the South to decide never to fight against the Union again, with many men returning home instead of joining the Confederacy. Van Dorn did not take responsibility for any of the issues that led to the loss, nor the loss itself. He was content to blame the loss on accidents that were “unforeseen” and “beyond my control.” In addition, he also laid some of the blame on the “badly disciplined army.” Van Don also pointed out that, following the deaths of McCulloch and McIntosh, his right flank was thrown it to utter chaos, as the men did not know what to do or know who was in charge. This is an instance that Van Dorn should have made everyone aware of what, or who, the chain of command would entail. Van Dorn reported that he was left without an officer to command the

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69. Anderson, *Memoirs*, 167; Q.B. Gilmore “Captain Gilmore’s Report” in The Battle of Elk Horn (Pea Ridge) Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry, Medium, accessed February 19, 2016, <http://freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~virgilgw/third/page4.html>; Matthew Brennan, *The Civil War Diet*, Thesis (Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2005), 38, Medium, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05262005-122146/unrestricted/CivilWarDiet.pdf>.

right wing, however, there were officers there but none took command, and none was assigned command following Van Dorn being informed of the death of McCulloch and McIntosh. However, to a lesser extent, one of the officers should have firmly taken control and grasped a handle on the situation. On the eighth, fully aware that the men had been without food for nearly two days, knowing that the enemy was in a stronger position, and knowing his men were almost out of ammunition, Van Dorn chose to proceed with the attack. After the battle, Van Dorn said in his report, "I was not defeated, but only foiled in the intentions." After Van Dorn's loss and retreat from Pea Ridge, he reported that he went into battle with less than 14,000 men and estimated the Union as being estimated at 17,000-24,000; however, his numbers were closer to 16,000 with the Union being closer to 10,000; therefore, Van Dorn had a numerical advantage going into the fight. Van Dorn was pleased enough to report that he dealt a serious blow to the enemy forces despite his loss; when, in reality, they lost roughly the same percentage of men.<sup>70</sup>

Davis' close friends and West Point graduates, Polk and A.S. Johnston, were also placed in high command within the Confederate Army along with Braxton Bragg, P.G.T. Beauregard, and Joseph Johnston. All of which would become an issue for Davis later on (with the exception of A.S. Johnston who died at Shiloh.) Not all generals will be looked at, and none to the extent of Van Dorn, but all were, in some way, overly arrogant in their abilities (or what abilities they believed they had) and slow to be relieved of command. To Van Dorn's credit, once he was relieved, he began to win battles. Historian Robert Hartje argues that it was not entirely Van Dorn's fault that he lost the battle of Pea Ridge and the Trans-Mississippi, but places that blame on Price and McCulloch by saying they were disorganized and unprepared. He disproves his own notion at the beginning when he says, "Certainly the commander himself erred in the employment of his troops; his reconnaissance was inadequate; his troops were ill-prepared and

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70. *OR*, 8:646, 282, 284-5.

poorly equipped for such an attack.”<sup>71</sup> His statement goes to further strengthen the argument that Van Dorn was sub-par and in over his head, because if they were as inadequate as Hartje claims then Van Dorn should have waited until they were better prepared. This possibly has to do with the fact that many of the leadership and decision-making responsibilities were beyond his control, leaving him with the only responsibility of fighting when and where he was told. Confederate General Henry Sibley would attempt the same idea again later in 1862. Having learned nothing from Van Dorn, he set his campaign for New Mexico with minimal provisions and ammunition – believing they would be able to forage during their campaign. However, they ended up running out of nearly everything, including coffee, sugar, salt, and clothing, and were reduced to eating spoiled meat and bread.<sup>72</sup>

Davis also let public opinion dictate what generals he would place in charge and where. The issue of public opinion was how Beauregard was placed in command of South Carolina. Initially, Davis had sent John Pemberton to lead South Carolina; however, the governor of South Carolina insisted that Pemberton would not be able to get the public support required to lead the troops. As a result, Davis pulled Pemberton and replaced him with Beauregard.<sup>73</sup> At this point of the war, there is no evidence that indicates that Davis had any animosity or ill feelings toward Beauregard, nor is there any evidence that suggests that Davis had any doubts about Beauregard’s leadership abilities or qualifications. That animosity would begin as Beauregard began to complain of General Lucius B. Northrop, a longtime friend of Davis. The animosity would rapidly escalate following Manassas when Beauregard claimed to have had plans for taking the war to Washington and capturing it but Davis refused. However, this was not the case

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71. Robert G. Hartje, “A Confederate Dilemma Across the Mississippi,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1958), accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40038012>.

72. *OR*, 9:714.

73. Jefferson Davis to F.W. Pickens, August 1, 1862, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, ed. Lynda L. Crist, Mary S. Dix, and Kenneth H. Williams (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1995), 8:318.

and the claim agitated and infuriated Davis.<sup>74</sup> To be fair, it is likely that the troops in South Carolina would not have followed Pemberton, as he was a northerner who followed his southern wife back to the South at the beginning of the war. By not having a leader that they could follow, it is reasonable to assume that many may have left or not performed as well in battle.

Beauregard came up with his version of the art of war, which summed up some of Jomini's principals while adding some of his own. His opening statement had already been disproven before the book was written, "The whole science of War may be briefly defined as the art of placing in the right position, at the right time, a mass of troops greater than your enemy can there oppose you."<sup>75</sup> While the premise of the statement is true (be at strategic place at the right time with more men than your enemy) there is more than that involved in strategy, as exemplified in the Battle of Pea Ridge. As Jomini pointed out, an army should provide way to ensure their supplies can arrive successfully.<sup>76</sup> Even though men at Pea Ridge were running dangerously low on ammunition, had their supply wagons made it to them then they may have the advantage of some increased morale.

Jomini put out more instruction that Van Dorn failed to take heed to, or else Van Dorn may have had a successful outcome at Pea Ridge. Instructions such as keeping supplies close in case of retreat, or there may not be any provisions to aide in ones escape from the battlefield, and to carry sufficient provisions, for it is not important to ensure every person carries provisions, but it is important to ensure provisions are brought along.<sup>77</sup> However, Van Dorn was not an effectual

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74. *OR*, 2:508.

75. P.G.T. Beauregard, *Principles and Maxims of the Art of War: Outpost Service General Instructions for Battles Reviews* (Charleston: Steam-Power Press of Evans & Cogswell, 1863; Digitized 2010), 1, accessed March 8, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/principlesmaxims00beau#page/n3/mode/2up>.

76. Jomini, *Summary of the Art of War, or a New Analytical Compend of the Principle Combinations of Strategy, of Grand Tactics and of Military Policy*, 255.

77. *Ibid.*, 144, 173, 231, 254, 372.

leader, even if Van Dorn had read Jomini, he probably would have considered Jomini a fool based on Van Dorn's demeanor. Van Dorn's quick haste to assault Curtis demonstrates that he felt that he would be able to defeat Curtis with numerical superiority, a sentiment that is echoed often throughout Beauregard's *Principles and Maxims of the Art of War*. Beauregard says in one example, "It must never be forgotten that *it is not the number of troops ranged in order of battle which decides the victory, but the number which is actually put in vigorous action be a commander.*"<sup>78</sup> [Italics in original] However, to be fair, "the more men, the better" was the general sentiment among many commanders at the time. They used rifles, a muzzleloader that took a few seconds to reload, and at times, they had to resort to hand-to-hand combat or decide a battle at the end of a bayonet. In these circumstances it is reasonable to understand why many felt that larger numbers equated a victory. However, Pea Ridge showed that strategy can beat a hungry and thirsty numerical force; in addition, Shiloh showed what could happen when a strategist was given the chance to regroup.

In the latter part of 1862, the Confederacy began to make some, albeit small, strides in their procurement of weapons and ammunition, which would continue to grow. This was thanks to the head of the Bureau of Ordnance, Josiah Gorgas. Gorgas single handedly laid out the plan to get the South manufacturing arms. He was not above asking for help from churches and citizens – asking them to send in their bells to be melted for cannons, nor was he above asking the moonshiners for their copper to make the percussion caps needed for the muskets. Gorgas then made arms and ammunition a rail priority, meaning it took priority over other supplies when

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78. Beauregard, *Principles and Maxims of the Art of War: Outpost Service General Instructions for Battles Reviews*, 8. This is not to say that Beauregard does not make some valid points in his book, but rather, he emphasizes having more soldiers than the enemy. This is a common sentiment at the time and is understandable why this method would be taught. However, as the Battle of Pea Ridge illustrates, superior numbers can sometimes fail to superior leadership.

being loaded for transportation. He also utilized fast moving blockade-runners in helping get the weapons to where they needed to be.

When Davis' friends were placed in positions of authority based on their friendships instead of their abilities, things often seemed to go wrong for the Confederacy, such as in the case of Lucius B. Northrop – appointed head of the Commissary Bureau. While some of the problems of food shortages were beyond the control of Northrop (such as not having control of the Trans-Mississippi), the soldiers still blamed him for their food shortages none-the-less.<sup>79</sup> A war clerk working at the states capitol of the Confederacy wrote in his diary of a letter he received that said “...it is a pity the President’s heart is not in his head; for then he would not ruin the country by retaining his friend, Col. Northrop, the Commissary General, in office.” When Senator went to see Davis to urge him to remove Northrop, he quoted Davis as telling him “Col. N. was one of the greatest geniuses in the South, and that, if he had the physical capacity he would put him at the head of an army.”<sup>80</sup> Although they failed in persuading Davis, the people constantly and consistently wanted Northrop removed from power as an ineffective leader.<sup>81</sup>

Northrop was not always solely at fault for the food not getting to where it needed to be, some of those issues could be placed at the hands of the generals. General Bragg was thought of as a tyrant and known for not allowing certain rations to be given to the men such as coffee, whiskey, and tobacco. When men under Bragg did have such items, they were obtained via their own means. Some men believed that Bragg was withholding these items in order to crush the heart, spirit, and overall morale of the men, believing that the more miserable they were made to

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79. James M. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 163–65.

80. John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate State Capitol*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J.B Lippincott, 1866), 2:131, accessed March 12, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/rebelwarclerksdi02joneuoft#page/n5/mode/2up>.

81. *Ibid.*, 136.

feel, the happier Bragg became. Bragg would have the rations prepared miles away from camp and brought in every three day; however, the rations would only last one day due to the hunger of the men. The soldiers were starving as reduced to eating the corn they were able to find on the ground, even after it had been ran over by wagons and horses. As a result, Bragg would never be able to gain the respect of his men. Once Joseph Johnston took over, he issued order requiring men to receive certain ration and at certain intervals, thus somewhat breaking the grasp Bragg had of the morale of his men.<sup>82</sup>

Another example of Davis' reluctance to relieve those that are in command and makes critical mistakes is Davis' appointment of Attorney General Judah P. Benjamin – a close friend of Davis. Benjamin would later be transferred to secretary of war and that is where the issues with Benjamin began. Brigadier General Henry Wise was commanding Roanoke in early 1862 and sent an urgent plea to Benjamin for thirteen thousand troops to face the larger Union force that was headed their way. Benjamin refused by telling Wise there were no available troops to be sent. However, General Benjamin Huger had an estimated fifteen thousand troops that were idle in Norfolk. and the 2,500 Confederate forces were captured. While facing a congressional censure, Benjamin resigned. However, rather than leaving Benjamin unemployed, Davis made Benjamin Secretary of State.<sup>83</sup> It should be noted that Terry L. Jones, Professor of History at the University of Louisiana at Monroe, wrote an opinion piece for the *New York Times* in which he argued that Benjamin made the decision not to send the troops because there were not any available to send.<sup>84</sup> However, this is in contrast to official records that illustrate that the

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82. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 29–30, 87-88.

83. *OR*, 9:183-191.

84. Terry L. Jones, "The Jewish Rebel," *New York Times*, April 18, 2012, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/18/the-jewish-rebel/>.

Benjamin knew about Huger's available troops. The loss of Roanoke allowed the Union to take control of the small region.

One thing about attempting an offensive-defensive is the leader has to be willing to lead, even if that means sometime going against the establishment for the betterment of the country as a whole. For example, both Davis and Lincoln suspended writ of habeas corpus. However, Davis waited until he had approval from Congress to do so; whereas, Lincoln just did it. That act illustrates one of the differences in mindset between the two leaders; Davis wanted to hold out until the Union left, but Lincoln wanted to take action. Therefore, Davis was willing to wait and get approval for every action; Lincoln wanted to end it and end it fast. To be fair, this type of decisive action is one of the reasons that South had left, so it is somewhat understandable why Davis was doing it the way he went about it. However, this was war, either Davis was the Commander-in-Chief, or he was not. If he was, then he should have been given the authority, powers, and abilities to do what is necessary to win battles and the war. Instead, the states were so concerned with their own rights that they often ignored requests for the central government. At the beginning of the war, as states began to act in a way that would hurt the Confederacy as a whole, Davis should have acted as a leader should act, and took control of the situation. However, he was not the leader the Confederacy needed at that time. Had Davis taken control of the Confederacy for the sake of winning the war, and the Confederacy replaced him because of such actions, then the loss would be solely on their heads, but that is not what happened. However, that is what made the Union a union, they worked together, for the most part (McClellan's devotion to the Union is questionable at best), with the common goal of dominating the Confederacy and ending the rebellion. Davis did not have the ability to truly lead on such a large scale, and neither did many of his friends that he placed in charge.

## Chapter 5

### Trans-Mississippi

To say that supplies are important to an army would be an understatement, especially if the supply is food and water. The ability to ensure the army is fed is paramount in war. A person can argue that it is bullets that win battles, or any other item they wish to mention, but if a soldier does not have food or water then they will lose. The concept at the start of the Civil War was that the Trans-Mississippi would furnish a bulk of the food provisions needed for the troops fighting on the east side of the Mississippi River. However, due to a lack of grand strategy, Davis did not have the forethought to strengthen the region. The Confederacy primarily produced cotton and tobacco, so much so that they barely produced enough food for themselves. If an army of substantial size stayed in one place too long, with the expectation of procuring food from the locals, they would use up all the available food in a very short time. However, on the west side of the Mississippi River, food crops and livestock were the primary commodities; therefore, it made sense to utilize them as a primary source of food supplies.<sup>85</sup> Davis did not possess the necessary grand strategy to understand the importance the Trans-Mississippi would play to the Union success of the Civil War.

The loss of the Trans-Mississippi region is the catalyst that dictated the course of the remaining battles - and subsequently, the overall war itself. The Trans-Mississippi region consisted of Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, New Mexico (territory), and some of the Indian Territory. The grand strategy needed for Van Dorn to succeed involved the Confederacy maintaining control of the Trans-Mississippi.<sup>86</sup> Failure to maintain control of the Trans-

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85. Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 15.

86. William T. Windham, "The Problem of Supply in the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy," *The Journal of Southern History* 27, no. 2 (1961): 149, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2205275>.

Mississippi allowed the Union to divide the Confederacy, take control of the waterways, and hinder Confederate supply. The Trans-Mississippi was “a vital commercial and shipping center.”<sup>87</sup> The Mississippi River contained numerous ferries that transported goods from both sides of the river, and the river itself allowed access to multiple waterways that would be of benefit to either side that controlled the river.

The Confederacy knew that the war was primarily going to be on the east side of the river. However, they expected to receive valuable supplies such as sugar, bacon, beef, wool, cotton, wheat, and salt from the west side of the Mississippi as the area was mostly farmlands. In addition, the Confederacy expected to use the Trans-Mississippi for bringing goods from Britain up through Mexico.<sup>88</sup> As previously mentioned, a grand strategy encompasses everything however, in Louisiana they needed almost everything and barely had enough ammunition to supply one regiment. In addition, they were also in dire need of “iron, harness, leather, and teams,” with iron being their greater need.<sup>89</sup>

Gaining supplies in Arkansas and Louisiana was already hard enough since the Confederacy lost the Trans-Mississippi, but getting them beyond those states was becoming seemingly impossible. The troops that were coming into Arkansas and Louisiana from further west were arriving in disarray. Some regiments that were arriving were so demoralized that they were useless and had to be broken up and situated in other units. With the Union in control, the Arkansas River was unable to be fully utilized as it had previously been, causing some units to only be able to supply food for a few men until more could come. Realizing that supplies of ammunition and guns were not going to be coming from the east (as they were being put to use

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87. Richard Owens, “The Strategic Significance and Uniqueness of the Battle of Pea Ridge/Elkhorn Tavern, March 7- 8, 1862,” *Essential Civil War Curriculum* (August 2014): 1, accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/assets/files/pdf/ECWCTOPICPeaRidgeEssay.pdf>.

88. Windham, “The Problem of Supply in the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy,” 150.

89. *OR*, 15:838.

there) the Confederate leadership in Arkansas at the time, General E. Kirby Smith, tried to get funds to purchase materials for building a workshop to repair guns. However, Richmond was slow to respond and when they did respond, they told Smith that he was on his own and would have to find a way to do it himself. Certified vouchers would not suffice as the area was already saturated with them rendering them near worthless. Being cut off from supplies from the east meant the men were slowly starving, and some ran to the Union as they felt it was better than starving to death. Having only poor meat and cornbread to eat, and not enough tents or clothes, many soldiers stationed at Fort Smith ended up dying. The *New York Times* summed the situation up best when they said, “All the rebel force in Arkansas is completely demoralized. Their transportation, wagons, and animals, are literally ‘used up.’”<sup>90</sup>

A strategic advantage of the Trans-Mississippi would have possibly worked out for the Confederacy at the battle of Shiloh. When Johnston brought his troops up from Shiloh and met Grant on the south, Van Dorn could have provided more troops and attacked from the north – possibly ending the battle with a Confederate victory. Bragg knew of the importance of the Trans-Mississippi, but did not want the position due to the bickering between McCulloch and Price. If it was as important as Bragg thought, then his disinterest in leading the troops in the region should stand as a testament of his inability to gain control of a situation, and more importantly – lead. However, Davis should not have allowed his generals to determine where and whom they wanted to command.

By 1864, the Confederate troops on the west side of the Mississippi River would be considered “useless.” There was almost no place for the Confederates to cross to aid the units to the east. From Cairo to Memphis, the Union controlled both sides of the Mississippi River, from Memphis to Vicksburg the marsh proved too difficult, and that left the area between Vicksburg

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90. *OR*, part II, 22:794–797, 924–927; “THE REBELLION,” *New York Times*, March 25, 1863, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1863/03/25/news/the-rebellion.html>.

and the Red River's outlet; however, with the numerous gunboats patrolling the area, crossing seemed too risky. The three rebel states of Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana comprised one quarter of the Confederate population, and boasted they contributed over one hundred thousand men to the Confederate Army. This left these states in the Trans-Mississippi with sparse men and defenses, and forced to play the waiting game.

The troops that remained in the Trans-Mississippi had divisions with hundreds of men what were said to be unable to "hide their nakedness." The fall of Vicksburg would not help the situations east of the Mississippi. By 1865, it would be said that the Confederate Army west of the Mississippi River would be "In fine condition in everything except discipline, having plenty of clothing, provisions and ordnance stores."<sup>91</sup> The Confederate military in the Trans-Mississippi was unable to remain combat effective throughout the war in regards to their attempts to maintain supplies, food, and munitions; therefore, the department that was supposed to supply the east with aid, became useless. Following the battle, the Union had placed so much pressure on the Confederacy in the Trans-Mississippi, that even farmers in the bayou's of Louisiana were unable to produce sufficient crops. In addition, Jefferson made it clear that those in Louisiana should not expect any help from the east side of the Mississippi until the Union fleet that lay in wait between Vicksburg and Port Hudson could be dealt with.<sup>92</sup> Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas

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91. *OR*, 8:797; "The Trans-Mississippi Rebel Army a Matter to Be Looked After," *New York Times*, August 6, 1864, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/08/06/news/the-trans-mississippi-rebel-army-a-matter-to-be-looked-after.html>; "TRANS-MISSISSIPPI," *New York Times*, June 6, 1863, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1863/06/06/news/trans-mississippi.html>; "REBEL TRANS-MISSISSIPPI ARMY; *OR*, part IV, XLI, 1001; Strength of the Rebels What They Are Doing Affairs in Texas, & C. Forrest and Dick Taylor Whipped," *New York Times*, April 9, 1865, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1865/04/09/news/rebel-trans-mississippi-army-strength-rebels-what-they-are-doing-affairs-texas-c.html>.

92. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's diary at the Confederate State Capitol*, 2016.

were “now cut off” from the rest of the Confederacy that remained on the East side of the River, and “no protection or aid” could be given to them by the government.<sup>93</sup>

Perhaps the worst off in the Trans-Mississippi region was the Confederate soldiers that resided in the Indian Territory. The Indian Territory was just beyond normal supply routes. Albert Pike worked diligently setting up rapport with the Indians and worked out treaties with the Five Civilized Nations; however, as soon as he took command of the troops his supply problems began. He was unable to procure supplies for the east due to Van Dorn and Thomas C. Hindman intercepting and taking the supplies and provisions that were marked for Pike and his men. This would place a strain on Pike and his relationship with the Indians. Pike would front his own money to buy horses for men and to pull guns, but the guns did not come. For months, Pike did not have percussion caps or powder, and was therefore ineffective to participate in any combat that may arise – defensive or offensive. When he finally did receive percussion caps and powder, Hindman ordered that Pike send it to Charles A. Carroll. The situation had gotten so bad, that it aggravated Pike to the point of resignation.<sup>94</sup>

In Helena, Arkansas, the Confederacy would once again go against a numerically inferior Union army. With the Union numbering about four-thousand and the Confederacy numbering about seven-thousand, the Confederacy set out to defeat the army at Helena, which was supplying Vicksburg besiegers with supplies. On July 04, 1863, outnumbering the Union, the Confederacy was still unable to claim victory. This would not bode well for the Confederacy as they also lost Vicksburg and Gettysburg. By this point, the Union had shown the Confederacy that the Union could win when they were outnumbered by the Confederacy on the battlefield, as

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93. John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate State Capitol*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J.B Lippincott, 1866), 1:382, accessed March 12, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/rebelwarclerksdi02joneuoft#page/n5/mode/2up>.

94. *OR*, 13:835, 856-57, 860-69, 970.

well as when outnumbering the enemy. Grant remarked, “The fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell.”<sup>95</sup>

The taking of Vicksburg was a feat in its own right and could be seen as further proof the Confederacy was not going to be able to match the Union in strategy. The Confederacy had recently been supplied with new rifles, while the Union was still using flintlocks that had been converted to percussion cap. Those rifles came with their own multitude of problems. Many of the Union rifles were of various calibers, which would make it difficult apportioning ammunition; in addition, had a Union soldier ran out on the battlefield, he may or may not have been able to get ammunition off the nearest dead soldier. After the Union took Vicksburg, Grant ordered that the units with the worst rifles exchange them for the newer uniformed rifles the captured from the Confederacy. The rifles that the Union turned in to the Ordnance Department were not the rifles they captured, but their old rifles that they traded for.<sup>96</sup>

Grant knew that in some circumstances, by splitting an army, he could fight one and smother the other, as the latter would be cut off from provisions. He knew this had been done in taking the Mississippi. After Grant’s return from Knoxville, he would order Sherman to clear out the remaining Confederacy along the east bank of the Mississippi River; while Sherman cleared the east, other Union troops were to clear the west side – thus allowing their boats to move through the Mississippi River unmolested. Grant would want to divide the Confederacy again, and would want it done again by having Sherman take complete control of the railroad that stretched east to west.<sup>97</sup> This would leave the Deep South and the Trans-Mississippi to be smothered while the Union focused on the Confederate troops north of the tracks. By smothering

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95. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Complete*. ‘XXXVIII’.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*

the Deep South, it would destroy their morale and weaken them to the point that it would make the eventual Sherman's March an easier objective than it otherwise would have been.

The Confederacy was on the right path in wanting to use the states west of the Mississippi River to supply the east side with provisions. However, what the Confederacy failed to do was protect the resource. The Confederacy did not have the leadership required to hold the Trans-Mississippi, and they did not have the naval power to control the river itself. Once the Union dominated the Mississippi River, the paper blockade played a pivotal role in causing this to take place. The Union virtually eradicated the ability for the western Confederate states to trade with the eastern Confederate states. The Blockade caused the Confederacy to rely heavily on smugglers to bring goods, such as Texas' cattle, to the east side of the Mississippi. However, due to the effectiveness of the Union paper blockade, the Confederate smugglers only had limited success in getting supplies from the Trans-Mississippi to the western side of the Mississippi.<sup>98</sup>

The rail system in the South was not as substantial as the North's railway system, therefore, any advantage – such as the intersection of a rail system that stretched across the Confederacy – would be paramount to a grand strategy. One problem facing the Confederacy was the states were so headstrong in their determination to hold an independent stature that they would jump at any opportunity to express that individualism. One such way was the different states would utilize different gauged tracks in the construction of the railway through their state. This would cause delays when trains had to exchange cargo in order to continue. This would later serve as a logistics and supply problem during the Civil War.<sup>99</sup>

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98. Surdam, "Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War," 473–74.

99. David J. Eicher, *The Longest Night: A Military History of the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 120.

Historian James A. Ward argues that the South had sufficient railway for their purposes, as railways in the South were not used to transport people to and from their desired destination, but served to transport people to the nearest market. Ward is not wrong to an extent, the South did have adequate railways for them to accomplish their goals; however, that was pre-war. During the war, the rails were used for different purposes than trying to get people to market, and were instead used to get troops and supplies to the battlefield. It is in the context of during the war that the railways in the South served inadequately.<sup>100</sup>

Pre-war, however, the South utilized their vast network of waterways to trade, using the rails, as Ward points out, to get to the market or to the river. Once the war broke out, the South was still heavily dependent on the usage of the waterways to get supplies and marketable items. The Mississippi River was like a modern day interstate, with numerous exits throughout to get goods where they needed to go. The loss of the “interstate” forced those further inland to use the smaller rivers, which slowed transportation of supplies between units. In addition, the taking of the Trans-Mississippi by the Union allowed the Union to not only control the Mississippi, but also control the majority of the smaller waterways as well. Another strategic advantage of controlling the Trans-Mississippi River is that it allowed the Union to be able to get fresh troops and supplies from the North to the South rapidly as they had less Confederate boats and ships to contend with after taking control. When the North need supplies that were being created in the North, the military could put it on a transport ship in one of its smaller rivers that emptied into the Mississippi, take the Mississippi down river, and the exit the Mississippi River for the smaller river to get them closer to where they need to be. Physics also played a role in giving the North the advantage. Rivers flow downstream, therefore, the rivers in the North flowing to the

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100. James A. Ward, “A New Look at Antebellum Southern Railroad Development,” *The Journal of Southern History* 39, no. 3 (1973): 10–12, accessed March 10, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2206259>.

Mississippi, and then taking the Mississippi down south, would have allowed the Union to transport their supplies more rapidly than a boat or ship traveling against the current.

The Trans-Mississippi region was worse off than the east side of the Mississippi River. In 1860, there was only a total of three-hundred twenty-eight miles of track in Louisiana alone. By comparison, Virginia had over one-thousand eight hundred miles of track at the same time. The lower part of the Rio Grande in was without track. Therefore, when the bulk of Confederate troops were pulled out to serve on the east side of the river, this left few men to be able to defend the little railroad the Confederacy had in the region. By failing to secure the rail in this region, the problem of getting food and supplies from the west to the east increased significantly.<sup>101</sup>

The argument could be made that the Confederacy was trying to defend too much at once, and coupled with that problem, many units were trying to expand the Confederacy's influence and power further west (as in the case of General Sibley.) Trying to expand territory when one is barely able to maintain the battlefields they currently occupy is a ludicrous and poor judgement of any person in command. However, the same argument could be made that the Union was attacking and having to hold a vast space, thereby negating the argument that the South was at disadvantage in that regard; at best they were about even. In addition, the Governors of the southern states routinely held men back for state defense, which could have provided more men on the front lines to defend the Confederacy as a whole.

Arguably, one of the best ways to of handled the situation would have been to bring all confederate troops in the west to meet the Union in Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Once a stronghold had been established, continue driving the Union east and back across the river. Once this had been accomplished, the Confederacy would have been able to secure most of the Mississippi by erecting defensive measures to combat incoming Union ships (similar to Island

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101. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel*.

10) and hold the west coast of the river. By holding off the ships, they would have an opening in which to transport provisions into the east. This measure would not have guaranteed Confederate victory, but would have allowed them to maintain control of the Trans-Mississippi for a longer period. However, the problem with this plan is the fact that the states were more concerned with themselves and not the Confederacy as a whole. Once the Confederacy on the west side was cut off from those on the east side, the west had to work to become quasi-independent. As the Union attacked various places throughout the southern states to the west, they also used up much of the local resources. To resolve this, the Confederacy had no choice but to trade with the Union for needed items. Davis looked the other way; he could not send troops back across the Mississippi River with his forces fighting the concentrated Union troops on the east side of the River.<sup>102</sup>

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102. James M. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 167.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Pea Ridge and Shiloh**

The battles that occurred at Pea Ridge and Shiloh should have served as an early warning to Davis. These two locations were paramount to the overall strategy needed for the Confederacy to be successful. Pea Ridge was a battle that, if lost, would give control of the Trans-Mississippi to the Union, thereby effectively cutting off a large region that the Confederate army was dependent on for supplies. Shiloh took place near a primary intersecting rail hub that was of vital importance to the Confederacy. Food and supplies from the west could be brought there and then delivered to the Confederate army with expediency. The Confederacy, and its officers, was not up to the task to face the Union. In addition, the two battles should have illustrated the offensive-defensive would not be viable to Davis, and that he did not have the comprehensive grand strategy needed to win a war. This thesis will not go into a narrative of the battles, and it will not go into a full narrative of the generals in charge, but will only discuss the information that is relevant to creating the points that pertain to the overall grand strategy. Pea ridge and Shiloh should have been early warning signs to Davis that his officers were sub-par, and refusal to make changes to those in command would inevitably result in future losses.

The battles of Pea Ridge and Shiloh could have, and should have, been a rapid and decisive Confederate victory. However, the Confederacy, or more specifically the leadership, did not fully prepare for the battles that were to come. In both instances, it was not a lack of effort on the part of the soldiers that lost the battles for the Confederacy, but it was those in command that lost the battles. In the battle of Pea Ridge, the Confederacy went into the battle outnumbering the Union; in Shiloh, the two were about equally matched with forces numbering at about 47,000 to

45,000 – Union and Confederate respectively.<sup>103</sup> Each battle had the Confederacy ahead at the end of the first day of fighting. In addition, in both battles, the Confederacy had the overall advantage. The issue then comes down to what caused the shift that allowed the Union to gain the upper hand. This goes back to Davis’ selection of generals. As earlier mentioned, he was selecting them based on his friendship with them and if they were a West Point graduate. By not selecting those that were strategist, he was immediately hindering the effectiveness of the Confederacy and its Army.

Pea Ridge’s problem lay squarely with Van Dorn. As previously mentioned, he rushed the men into battle while they were poorly rested, poorly provisioned, and poorly led. The turning point for Pea Ridge was not so much that the Union had reorganized to gain a better advantage (although that certainly played a role), but had more to do with Van Dorn’s men not having any more energy to fight. This action illustrates that Van Dorn was not a person that would be able to strategize. While it can certainly be argued that sometimes generals lose battles, the difference here is that it was lost because of poor planning; the outcomes of those poor plans could have easily been avoided had Van Dorn taken time to think through the battle plan he initiated. Van Dorn would exhibit his strategic failures again at the second battle of Corinth, allowing the strategic location to remain in Union control.

The battle of Shiloh was almost a “lose-lose” situation for the South after their delay. The main objective was to keep the enemy away from Corinth, as it was a vital crossroads for the controlling army. A.S. Johnston, initially, had the right idea about moving forward to attack the

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103. Grant is estimated to have had about 47,000 men to Johnston’s 45,000; however, Grant claims that he only had an estimated 33,000 “effective” men going into the battle. For that number, see Grant, *Memoirs*, 190. O.E. Cunningham states that part of the discrepancy is due to units that arrived late the night of the fifth or early the morning of the sixth. However, having traveled, unloaded, and set up, they would not be considered “effective” as they were not fully rested. For the full discrepancy explanation, see: O. Edward Cunningham, *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862*, ed. Gary D. Joiner and Timothy B. Smith (New York: Savas Beatie, 2009), 121. James McPherson has the numbers at 33,000 for the Union and 40,000 for Johnston. See: James M. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015). 67. Going forward, when speaking of the Union, the thesis will go by the 47,000 Union count unless otherwise stated.

enemy where the enemy would least expect it and when the enemy would be the least prepared. However, that idea should have been re-evaluated after numerous delays, some beyond Johnston's control, prevented him from sticking to his prescribed schedule. Had he been able to stay on task, it is reasonable to assume that, even taking his death in battle into account, the army would likely have been successful on the second day, as re-enforcements from Buell would not have yet arrived. The "lose-lose" situation following the delay is for the reason that they attacked and lost, but had they waited at Corinth then the Union Army would have arrived and possibly beaten them then. However, an alternative theory is the men at Corinth could have spent the time waiting on Grant move south by building fortifications and trenches, thereby giving the South the upper hand even being outnumbered. With these options available (retreating from Corinth was not an option), it is evident that the best course was, arguably, the one Johnston took, despite the delay. This decision is arguably best due to the element of surprise that would be afforded Johnston, as his army was a hodgepodge of arms that caused logistical issues regarding ammunition, which will be discussed later. Johnston took great care to ensure that every aspect was as secret as possible to avoid alerting the enemy to their plans.<sup>104</sup>

Even with a delay, Johnston still had the upper hand. He knew where the enemy was located, the enemy was being complacent, the Union leadership was refusing to accept Johnston was getting ready to attack; the Union did not erect any substantial fortifications or dig trenches. The Confederates about equaled the Union in manpower – coupled with it being a surprise attack - the initial small numerical advantage of the Union would become negligible. With having that many odds in a leaders favor, it would almost be imperative that a leader attack. The Union felt that the Confederacy was at Corinth fortifying their position in anticipation of the Union.<sup>105</sup>

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104. *OR*, 33, part two:378.

105. *Ibid.*, 10.

The largest mistake that was made at Shiloh, which is one that was also made at Pea Ridge and by the Confederacy as a whole, is Johnston tried to control too much of an area of battle at once. He had his line spread out over miles, similarly, Pea Ridge forces were spread out over such a wide area after Van Dorn split the army at Twelve Corners Church, that it proved impossible to control the flow of battle. This is one aspect where Davis, and other leaders, should have taken notice. The Confederacy was trying to defend a vast area of land all at once instead of concentrating its forces at the enemy's weakest points and making a show of force. The concept of spreading out and creating a battle line is an understandable concept. It forces the enemy to fight head to head instead of giving them the chance to utilize flanking movements. However, where Johnston erred was stretching the line out as far as he did – over several miles, similar to Van Dorn. This caused delays in messages and coordination which hindered Johnston's ability to effectively control the flow of the battle, something that Johnston could not afford as he was already delayed and using inferior weaponry.

Like Pea Ridge, many of the soldiers going into the Battle of Shiloh would be seriously short of ammunition and weapons. Some reports show that some units were in need of as much as “75,000 Enfield cartridges and 6,000 Minie.” Prior to moving out, Johnston wanted his officers to ensure their commands were sufficiently supplied with enough ammunition; however, with little ammunition to be had, it would prove difficult to procure it. Men were vastly ill equipped for the battle that lay ahead of them. Many of the men were going into battle with smooth bore muskets, which had horrific accuracy and range - being accurate to about fifty yards. Some troops were carrying shotguns, which are only useful when clearing trenches of houses. Other soldiers going from Corinth to meet Grant had to resort to carrying their own personal weapon, adding to the logistic conundrum of ammunition distribution.<sup>106</sup> Johnston felt

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106. Claude E. Fuller, *Firearms of the Confederacy* (Huntington, West Virginia: Standard publications, Inc., 1944), 289.

that much of the effective fighting was going to end up being done with a bayonet.<sup>107</sup> Had Johnston stayed at Corinth, and entrenched his men, it would have given him a slight advantage over Grant, but the advantage would be so slight that it would almost be negligible due to these issues with arms. Therefore, it is understandable to see why Johnston chose the course of action that he did. By having the element of surprise, he would be able to catch the Union off guard, thereby increasing his odds versus waiting for a far numerically superior army to march to Corinth with hopes that his fortifications and trenches proved successful.

Food was another issue that plays a factor in the Shiloh campaign; however, it was for slightly different reasons than that of Pea Ridge. The orders required three days' worth of cooked rations to be carried by the individual soldier, and two days' worth of cooked rations to be carried by wagon. This planning would have ensured enough food to the end of the Shiloh battle. However, the unanticipated delays would cause the men to run short on rations.<sup>108</sup> Water was also an issue in getting ready for the march. The water at Corinth was good until the army arrived. Due to their lack of sanitation knowledge, the men were drinking out of surface wells (wells only a few feet deep) where run off water from rain would accumulate. This caused the men to become ill from the bacteria that would occur in those types of wells due to the rain carrying the waste created by the soldiers from around camp to the surface wells.<sup>109</sup>

Some of the soldiers were already trying to recover from the horrific conditions they had left in Florida, where things became so bad that over one hundred men died in a span of three months.<sup>110</sup> The soldiers were in want of almost everything, including, “blankets, raincoats,

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107. *OR*, 10:395.

108. *OR*, 10, part 2:379, 381, 383.

109. Thomas D. Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan ; A Confederate Soldier* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1922), 13–14, accessed March 2, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/recollectionsth00dgoog#page/n6/mode/2up>.

110. Crenshaw, “Diary of Captain Edward Crenshaw, 2016.

uniforms, and even shoes.”<sup>111</sup> When a new shipment of crates arrived, carrying new rifles, thirty pair of shoes was found to have been shipped with them. The officers ordered a shooting contest at two-hundred yards since there were not enough shoes for all the men, and the best three shooters in each regiment received a pair of the new shoes.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the struggles that the Confederacy was faced with, the optimism of many felt that it was about to be their last battle. Some soldiers felt that the enemy would simply retreat when faced with the larger enemy; whereas others felt that this war would be over after Shiloh and did not want to take leave for fear of missing the war.<sup>113</sup> Their beliefs at the time were not completely without merit. The Confederates at Corinth outnumbered the amount of Union troops that were at Pittsburg Landing, and, if they attacked in time, the Union would not have reinforcements from Buell in time.<sup>114</sup> In addition, by taking Grant and his forces when, and as, they planned, it would make it easier to fight the men that Buell had sent down once, or if, they arrived. Such a win would seriously cripple the Union army on the East side of the Mississippi River, and would allow the Confederacy to contain a major railway intersection. However, along with inferior weaponry and slightly outnumbered, the Confederacy had the problem of green troops – troops that had never seen combat at any time. At Corinth, Johnston’s army consisted of seventy-nine regiments and battalions, with only fourteen having been exposed to combat, and

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111. O. Edward Cunningham, *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862*, ed. Gary D. Joiner and Timothy B. Smith (New York: Savas Beatie, 2009), 105.

112. William McMurray, Deering J. Roberts, and Ralph J Neal, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment Volunteer Infantry, C.S.A.* (Nashville: Publication Committee, 1904), 84, accessed March 2, 2016, <https://archive.org/stream/historytwentiet00nealgoog#page/n104/mode/2up>.

113. Payson Z. Shumway to wife, March 19, 1862, Payton Z. Shumway Papers, Illinois State Historical Library; Elijah L. Shepard to wife, March 29, 1862, Miscellaneous Collection, Shiloh National Military Park; Enoch C. Colby, Jr. to his father, April 04, 1862, Miscellaneous Collection, Shiloh National Military Park.

114. The Confederates numbered about 55,000 at Corinth, but only 42,000 would go into battle at Shiloh. The Union at the start at the battle had an estimated 48,000. This equals a slight Union advantage of 13.3%, or a ratio of 8:7, which is equates to a fairly balanced battle in respect to unit size. For more information on the numbers, see Eicher, *The Longest Night: A Military History of the Civil War*, 222.

only fourteen percent of the overall personnel were veterans of some form of combat. By comparison, Grant had thirty-two out of sixty-two combat experienced regiments, equaling about one-third at Pittsburg Landing, and at Crumps Landing, Grant had eleven infantry regiments consisting of seven combat experienced regiments.<sup>115</sup> Yet, despite all of the aforementioned disadvantages, the Confederate army still felt they had the advantage over the Union, even knowing the Union had superior weaponry, and felt they were robbed of what should have been their victory.<sup>116</sup>

Having a superior force can be an advantage, but that is not always the case. Being outnumbered did not slow down the Confederate drive on the first day, despite the other odds that were stacked against them. The same can be said for the Union on day two of the Pea Ridge battle; the Confederacy outnumbered the Union and had the higher ground. However, the Union was able to overcome that disadvantage and win the battle. Another example is the Seven Days Battles in which General McClellan outnumbered General Lee and was still driven back day after day – even as Lee suffered greater casualties.

As mentioned earlier, the greatest advantage the Confederacy had was the element of surprise. Some Union troops argued they were not surprised by the Confederacy as they had been having minor skirmishes with them prior to the main battle. However, the Confederate troops involved in those minor skirmishes did not accurately represent the force that would soon be coming down on the Union soldiers. Some Union troops that had been captured after one of the skirmishes remarked, upon seeing what awaited the unaware Union army, “My Lord, our people do not suspect such a thing as this!”<sup>117</sup> When the Confederacy finally pushed through to the first

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115. Cunningham, *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862*, 118-20.

116. Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan ; A Confederate Soldier*, 49, 55.

117. *Ibid.*, 48, 50.

Union camp on the morning of the sixth, they found water boiling and meat still cooking in the frying pans; some Union soldiers were lying dead – still inside their tents, and horses still tied to hitching posts lay dead. Grant always maintained that his troops were not surprised by the Confederacy, and maintains that technically it was the Confederates that were surprised. However, based on the description the Confederates found the Union camp, there is no doubt that the Union was caught by surprise and off guard. This caused the Union troops to leave their encampments with their belongings still lying around; some of the Confederates took the opportunity to pillage the encampments as the encampments became captured.<sup>118</sup> It is at this point those in command of these men should have taken control of the situation to ensure that momentum would not be lost or sacrificed for a few spoils that the soldier may not live through the day to enjoy.

The initial plan of Johnston was, for the most part, a sound one; however, its primary failing point was the distance their attack line covered. This allowed the Union to reach certain points of natural defense and regain a slight, albeit temporary, advantage over the Confederates. The sunken road and hornet's nest are two such examples. The hornet's nest was a small wooded area in the field of battle, and through it ran an old road that had gained a slight depression from years of travel and weather that would serve as an impromptu trench. Woods lay between the approaching Confederates and the sunken road which prevented the Confederacy from being able to see what lay in wait. As the Confederacy would clear the woods, they were met with volleys of fire from the Union troops; the Confederates were unable to see the Union lying in wait until they were within feet of the sunken road. This area is believed to have saved the Union from complete annihilation as it served as a "pitfall of death and disaster for the Confederates"

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118. Ibid., 57.; Ulysses S. Grant, "XXV," in *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Complete* (New York: Charles L Webster & Company, 1885), accessed February 29, 2016, <http://www.bartleby.com/1011/25.html>.; OR, 10:403-04, 391.

and proved to be the “salvation of the Union Army.”<sup>119</sup> At the end of the day’s battle, the worn out Confederates had been fighting for just over eleven hours. Even though they had carried the day, the newly arrived troops of Lew Wallace and Buell, bringing the count of Union troops up by an estimated thirty-three thousand, had to be demoralizing to the exhausted Confederacy. Not only were these new Union troops well rested, but, combined with the soldiers already there, it gave the Union a distinct numerical advantage.

At the end of day one, Beauregard felt the next day would provide a total victory for the Confederates, and sent word to Richmond that they had won the battle.<sup>120</sup> The Confederate Congress prior to finding out that Beauregard was wrong about having a complete victory, gave a resolution on April 15, 1862, thanking Beauregard for the “complete and brilliant” victory over the Union. The decision for Beauregard not to push on was a tactical mistake. It can be argued both ways in regards to if it would have helped or hurt the Confederacy had they pushed on, and it is an argument that will never be solved. However, with all the disadvantages the Confederacy had going into the battle, it would make tactical sense to continue capitalizing on their current advantage for as long as possible, or until the Union surrendered. With the arrival of fresh, supplied Union troops, the days advantage the Confederacy held was now gone. The Confederacy no longer held any advantage at the start of day two. Still, after the Confederate loss of the second day, and regardless of the extremely high number of casualties, they were “more confident of ultimate success than before its encounter with the enemy.”<sup>121</sup>

Beauregard did make a skillful and excellent retreat from the battlefield, ensuring that retreating troops were provided cover until they were certain the Union was not pursuing. Davis’

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119. *Ibid.*, 60, 59.

120. *OR*, 10:384. Beauregard reports a different length of battle than Duncan. Beauregard reports ten hours of fighting versus Duncan’s account of eleven hours. *OR* shows the Confederacy started out at 5AM, with all lines moving by 5:30AM, and the fighting ending around 6PM. See Duncan, *Recollections*, 61, and *OR* 10:386.

121. Matthews, *Statutes*, “Resolutions” (No. 9), 54.; *OR*, 10:388.

rage toward Beauregard grew exponentially after finding out that the initial telegraph stating victory had been had at Shiloh was in fact wrong. Davis believed that the Confederate victory was so much of a sure thing, that he believed that Beauregard could have actually won the battle had the attack on the Union been “vigorously pressed.”<sup>122</sup> Jones, a war Clerk for the Confederacy, said that it was allegedly reported by Bragg that had Beauregard pressed for one more hour then victory would have indeed been in the hands of the Confederacy. After Davis found out about the loss, Jones wrote that Beauregard was “a doomed man.”<sup>123</sup> Davis wrote a letter to Colonel William P. Johnston ordering him to take a letter to Beauregard and deliver it to Beauregard's hands personally. The letter to Beauregard was a list of seven questions that Davis had wanted answered in order to understand the reasoning certain mistakes were made. The list of questions is as follows:

1. I desire to know what were the circumstances and purposes of the retreat from the Charleston and Memphis E. R. to the position now occupied.
2. What is the plan of future operations? And whether an advance of the Army is contemplated and what prospect there is of the recovery of the Territory which has been yielded.
3. Why was it not deemed advisable to occupy the hills north and east of Corinth, and could not a stronger line than that around Corinth have been selected?
4. What was the cause of the sickness at Camp Corinth? Would it have been avoided by occupying the higher ground in front? Has it been avoided by retiring to the present position?
5. Was it at no time practicable to cut the enemy's line of communication, so as to compel him to abandon the Tennessee River, or to permit us to occupy Nashville?
6. What means were employed, after the fall of Island 10, to prevent the descent of the Missi. River by the enemy's gun-boats? What dispositions were made to defend Memphis, and

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122. Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2 vol (1881; repr., New York, N.Y: Da Capo Press, 1990), 2:68.

123. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 1:118. If Bragg felt that an extra hour of fighting would have won the day, perhaps the same could be said about Bragg at Perryville. For more instances of Davis' view of Beauregard, see: *Ibid.*, 371, 392, and also: *Ibid.* vol. 2:277

what was the cause of failure to preserve that most important of our lines of communication t

7. What loss of troops, stores, or arms, occurred at the time of the retreat from Corinth?<sup>124</sup>

Davis had a valid reason for wanting to know some the answers above, and some make very valid points in regards to health and welfare. However, it is more likely that Davis asked these questions because he did not like Beauregard, he was upset and embarrassed that Beauregard lost after saying the battle had been won, and was possibly hurt after the loss of his close friend and was taking it out on Beauregard. In any event, Beauregard never answered the questions having taken sick time with a surgeon's certificate.<sup>125</sup>

Pea Ridge and Shiloh, as previously mentioned, were strategic necessities that were a required part to success of an overall grand strategy. In Both instances, the Confederacy began with a slight advantage over the Union and lost the advantage on the second day of battle. The offensive-defensive plan that Jefferson wanted would not succeed and both of these events should have clued him in to that fact. In the case of Pea Ridge, the offensive-defensive advantage of having the resources of ones on land did not exist as the countryside had already been plundered; in addition, the Union regrouped and reorganized prior to the start of the next morning, thus taking away the "home field advantage." In Shiloh, the offensive-defensive advantage of knowledge of ones on territory failed. The Union was able to utilize the landscape of the South to mount a defense, which lasted long enough to help in the other Union troops fall back to safety. Therefore, there was no "home field advantage" at Shiloh.

With these two battles, Davis should have realized his offensive-defensive would not work. However, the idea and strategy that Johnston had come up with fit into Jefferson's

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124. Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers, and Speeches*, ed. Dunbar Rowland, 10 vol (New York: J.J. Little & Ives Company, 1923), 5:279–80, accessed February 11, 2016, [hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015012910801](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015012910801).

125. *Ibid.*, 5:282.

offensive-defensive plan. While the Confederacy did have some successes in the east, these were relatively small battles by comparison and did not offer an actual representation of what the outcome would be when larger forces were utilized. The Confederacy attacked once with superior numbers and lost, and attacked again later on utilizing the element of surprise – and lost. Many historians ascribe reasons for the overall Confederate defeat to such reasons as “military strategy, military superiority, leadership, political factors, diplomacy...lack of resources, inflation, the blockade, desertion, malnutrition, physical devastation, and inferior manpower.”<sup>126</sup> All of these reasons are right. Each of them played a part in the Confederate defeat, and as they are all required to win a war, they all fall under the grand strategy – something Davis failed to realize he was lacking.

In Grant's memoirs, he discusses the battle of Shiloh and the impact and discussions that still occurred regarding the battle and defends some of the decisions that he made in regards to Shiloh. The Union did not have entrenchments ready at Shiloh, which is something people have criticized Grant over to this day. However, many of the troops that were arriving in the field were regiments of green soldiers that were in more need of military training and discipline than they were in how to dig a trench. If a person does not know how to fight, then the trench will only serve as a ready-made grave. In addition, Grant's engineer informed Grant that the ground was not favorable for creating entrenchments. The argument that Johnston was a brilliant general and was cut down before he was really given a chance to prove his abilities is without merit. Up to the point he was killed, he showed indecisiveness in commanding the troops, which is something that Grant also concludes based on his readings of Johnston following the war. Johnston, much like Davis, was over-estimated in his abilities based on little evidence to support the people's beliefs. Shiloh was not lost when Johnston fell; it was lost when Johnston decided to

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126. Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 5.

attack after being delayed four days – which allowed the enemy’s reinforcements to get within striking distance of the Confederacy. Grant’s reasoning for the Confederate defeat is possibly one of the best reasons, “Ifs defeated the Confederates at Shiloh.”<sup>127</sup> [Italics in original] General Beauregard receives a great deal of criticism for his actions following the death of Johnston. However, Grant believes that he did as good as could have been expected and did not believe that Johnston would have been able to do any better.<sup>128</sup>

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127. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, Complete*, Chapter XXV.

128. Ibid.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

The grand strategy was just beyond Davis' grasp. Not every aspect of a grand strategy must be successful in a war in order to win; however, having them all successful does make the task easier to accomplish. In the case of Jefferson Davis, he wanted to utilize the offensive-defensive; however, he lacked the ability to create the grand strategy necessary in order for the offensive-defensive to be successful.

Davis failed the Confederacy as soon as he was placed in office. His micro-management of the war did more harm than good, and he made decisions for battle plans without actually being in relation to the men or fighting, a necessity for any successful plan creation. There can be no doubt that Davis had many friends, and had war not broke out, many may have fulfilled successful military careers. When Davis took command, he placed his friends in charge, which made it difficult to remove them from power once they began proving to be ineffectual. His micro-management of the troops also played into the fall of the Confederacy. His desire to have rather been in the field spilled over into his presidency, where he began trying to be on the battlefield vicariously through his generals. He rarely paid the same attention to the Navy, thus allowing it more autonomy in its planning and operations. Due to this, the Navy only had one Secretary of the Navy for the duration of the war; whereas, Davis went through five men assigned to be the Secretary of War, not including one interim Secretary of War.<sup>129</sup>

Davis' lack of a grand strategy spilled over into the loss of strategic locations. The plan for the Trans-Mississippi was to have them grow and raise food to be shipped over to the east side of the river. However, Davis did not take notice of the importance of the Trans-Mississippi

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129. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Civil War*, 111.

region until it was too late. This loss would cause the Union to take control of the Mississippi River and severely limit the amount of food resources that would be able to make it across the river to the east side. To be fair, the actual loss of the Battle of Pea Ridge, which gave the Union control of the region, was not entirely at the fault of Davis. The issues that caused the Confederacy to lose the Battle of Pea Ridge are the fault of Earl Van Dorn, and due to his inability to lead, coupled with his desire for glory. The loss of the Trans-Mississippi limited food supply into the east and played a key role in driving up inflation on goods and services to the point where people were starving due to their lack of money to buy food, and the lack of food even if they had the money.

The men that served under Bragg hated the man, just as Van Dorn's men hated Van Dorn after his treatment of them in Arkansas. This would cause issues throughout his command. Men hated serving under Bragg to the point they would become deserters. Although, to be fair, it was common for leaders to have some men become deserters during the war. It would take Joe Johnston to order that rations be given to the troops to increase the morale of the men, and it would take Van Dorn getting transferred to the cavalry after another humiliating defeat, this time at the second battle of Corinth, before he would find his true calling and begin winning battles.<sup>130</sup>

Some people felt, at the time, that the worst thing to happen to the Confederacy was when Joe Johnston was relieved and Davis placed John Bell Hood in command. Some men began dropping their belongings and walk off, becoming deserters as they heard the announcement that Hood had been placed in charge, while other men actually cried. Many soldiers felt Hood was a liar and was willing to throw men needlessly into the face of the enemy, even doing so at the request of Davis. After Hood, the officers themselves would often destroy the morale of the troops. Men felt that the officers would get the glory while the privates would get shot at. The

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130. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 129–31, 88.

lower enlisted soldiers felt that an officer having the ability to resign, while they could not, was unfair – although that probably would have led to a soldier-less Confederate army. However, the point is that an officer being allowed to resign at all can quickly bring down the morale of the men who see it and are longing for home. Hood had it announced that they were within grasp of victory and success” and had continually beaten back the Union. The men knew he was lying from the fierce fighting they had been doing. Some men felt the words of Hood that day were the “cause of a greater demoralization than if our troops had been actually engaged in battle. The Confederacy was already having a hard enough time keeping men in service; therefore, to lose those men to desertion would hurt the Confederacy in terms of having enough able-bodied men to fight.”<sup>131</sup>

Could it be fair to say this was all Davis’ fault due to his lack of a grand strategy? Was he responsible for losing the Civil War? No, Davis could not have predicted the outcome of Lee’s march into Pennsylvania, which Lee and Davis had hoped would rouse the Copperheads and eventually force Lincoln into peace negotiations. Peace negotiations would cause Davis not to have to send any troops to Vicksburg; it was a gamble that failed. The failure cost the Confederacy the Mississippi River, and without the Mississippi River, the Confederacy would have to work with less food in order to pull off a victory. Davis could not have anticipated that the value of the Confederate dollar would plummet and that hyperinflation would take root and cause bread riots and starvation. The only way Davis could have prevented Pea Ridge would be if he had not placed Van Dorn in command. No single point can definitively pinpoint the exact moment when the Confederacy lost the war before they even knew it. That will be debated by historians for years to come, and rightly so. Historian will never cease to discuss the amount of blame that should be placed upon Davis’ shoulders – if any at all. However, Jefferson Davis was

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131. *Ibid.*, 123–124, 129, 148, 175-176.

in charge of the Confederacy, and a leader is responsible for every action and inaction that occurs – regardless if the leader could not have known or prevented the situations from happening. James McPherson wrote the book *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis as Commander and Chief* (2014), on the inside fold of the back flap of the dust cover, it says that “...while Davis did not win the war for the South, he was scantily responsible for losing it.”<sup>132</sup> With all due respect to McPherson, Davis’ negative impact on the Confederacy was detrimental to the Confederacy’s success. In addition, President Harry S. Truman had a saying on his desk, which can explain how historians are able to believe Davis was responsible for losing the war – in whole or in part, that read “The Buck Stops Here” and that is the situation of every leader.

In closing, the words of Sam R. Watkins would be best at describing the sentiment felt by many at the end of the war,

Our cause was lost from the beginning. Our greatest victories – Chickamauga and Franklin – were our greatest defeats. Our people were divided upon the question of Union and secession. Our generals were scrambling for “Who ranked.” The private soldier fought and starved and died for naught. Our hospitals were crowded with sick and wounded, but half provided with food and clothing to sustain life. Our money was depreciated to naught and our cause lost.<sup>133</sup>

Many who believed in the cause the Confederacy had been fighting for no doubt felt the sentiment given by Watkins in his memoirs. Those sentiments could be summed up as a lack of grand strategy on the part of Jefferson Davis.

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132. James M. McPherson, *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), n.p.

133. Watkins, *Co. Aytch*, 181.

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