

“War Is Hell!” A Look at Modern Total Warfare

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HISTORY 489

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Abstract

This paper examines modern strategy at the general officer level in the context of modern total warfare. This analysis attempts to prove that General William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea campaign influenced grand strategy and tactics in future wars. Sherman's understanding of war and the need to defeat enemies psychologically will be compared to the strategy and tactics of French General Napoleon Bonaparte and German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel. Sherman's melding of battlefield and rear make him the first of the modern generals. This study uses military theory to define the chief characteristics of a modern general as well as modern total war. Sherman's tactics and strategies, the way he psychologically waged war on his opponents, as well as the technology he implemented will be compared to Bonaparte and Rommel. This comparative analysis demonstrates Napoleon was the prototype of a modern general, albeit with tactical and technological deficits. It was Sherman who implemented tactics that would later be used by Rommel and other World War II generals that allow Sherman to be considered a truly modern general who had ideas of waging war that were ahead of his time.

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Introduction/Historiography

Throughout history, warfare and how it is waged has changed considerably. Many military theorists and historians have reflected on previous wars and attempted to apply their lessons to the next war. Today, many of these theorists and historians debate who, or what war, created the modern principles of warfare. This paper argues that one of these transformative moments occurred during the closing months of the American Civil War. This event was a campaign being led by Union General William Tecumseh Sherman.

“Sherman’s March,” as it became known, changed conventional warfare to look very similar to how we see it fought today. The campaign was the advent of what is known as “modern total war.” Sherman’s tactics took the objective away from destroying the enemy’s army, and put it on destroying the enemy’s morale and developed a new way of waging war by attacking factories, plantations, and marching Union troops through the heart of Georgia. Sherman’s March revolutionized warfare in two ways; first, it stressed the importance of taking the war to the enemy population; and second, it developed new methods of conducting a fast moving, efficient campaign.

Twentieth century military theorist and historian Basil Henry Liddel-Hart credited Sherman as the first modern general when he stated: “there are vital lessons to be learnt from this man, his character and his career, his struggle with his environment and his ascendancy over it- keys to the modern world and modern war.”¹ This paper, by analyzing modern generalship in the context of a modern total war, will argue that William Tecumseh Sherman can indeed be labeled the first “modern general.” This argument will develop in two parts. First, it focuses on modern

¹ Liddel-Hart, B.H. *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*. New York, Frederick Praeger, 1960, vii.

military theory to define the characteristics of modern military command in a total war. Second, this paper will analyze comparatively the tactics, strategies (military and psychological), and the technology used by Sherman and two other generals of the modern era, French General Napoleon Bonaparte and German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel.

In order to complete this study, the first thing to do was to define what the required criteria for a modern general are. For this study, the definition that will be used includes several characteristics. First, a modern general must understand the importance of balanced forces. That war is to destroy the enemy, as well as to affect the enemy's ability to fight war (through the destruction of supplies and material). Second, war requires mobility, initiative and opportunity. Lastly, a modern general fights as if they have no rear lines. This means they must be mobile or they will not be successful.

The last definition to determine is what constitutes a modern war. A modern war also comprises key characteristics, the most important being that: it must be a total war. The entire population of the belligerents must be involved, militarily, politically, and economically. This also means that the civilian population of a belligerent may be targeted by another belligerent. Destruction of the enemy's way of making war is as important as the destruction of their army. Likewise, the destruction of the enemy population's morale is as important as the destruction of their army. Lastly, the preservation of the army by attacking non-military targets defines what we see in a modern total war. Sherman was successful because he did all of these. He marched in the complete opposite direction of the enemy army and he was hailed as a hero for doing so.

For the purpose of this paper (and in line with most general textbooks on western civilization) modernity begins with the French Revolution of 1789. It is thus important to

consider the contributions of modern warfare of modernity's first general, Napoleon Bonaparte. A review of secondary literature on modern military theory, modern warfare, and the careers of these generals illustrates the challenges of doing a comparative analysis. Military theorists that will be examined in this study are Carl von Clausewitz and his book, *On War*. British military theorist Basil Henry (B.H) Liddel-Hart will also heavily influence this study with many of his works on nearly all subjects involved. Other important 19th and 20th century military theorists to be examined include Antoine Jomini, and J.F.C Fuller.²³ Lastly, General Rupert Smith and his work *The Utility of Force* will analyze modern warfare and explore the role of industry and the media and their respective roles in a war.⁴

The historiography on Napoleon is vast and explores nearly every aspect of his military and role as Emperor in some sort of depth. This historiography has changed drastically in the two hundred years since his reign. There are two main schools of study when looking at Napoleon, his worshippers and detractors. Both sides have written histories that defend him as a brilliant militarist or condemn him as a military opportunist. The strategies that Napoleon used in his campaigns will be looked at in this analysis, especially the campaigns that he directly led before he became Emperor of France. An important source in the study of the strategy of Napoleon is David G. Chandler's *The Campaigns of Napoleon*.⁵ This source studies the strategic aspects of all of Napoleon's campaigns and how his strategies and tactics changed warfare and made him the prototype of a modern general.

² Jomini, Antoine Henri. *The Art of War. Translated from the French by G.H. Mendell and W.P. Craighill*. Westport, Conn, Greenwood Press, 1971.

³ Fuller, John Fredrick Charles. *Armored Warfare*. Harrisburg, Pa, The Military Service Publishing Co., 1943.

⁴ Smith, Rupert. *The Utility of Force*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007

⁵ Chandler, David G. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. The MacMillan Co., 1966.

A study of the historiography on William T. Sherman will provide a researcher with numerous biographies and studies of the March to the Sea dating back to the end of the Civil War. Not all of the historiography regarding Sherman holds him in a positive light; many works regard Sherman as a war criminal. B.H Liddel- Hart's *Sherman: Soldier, American, Realist* is a great book that studies his strategy in depth; in contrast, most works on the subject study the March as an event and give little attention to its contribution to military science. Liddel- Hart examines Sherman's abilities with the use of topography, his ability to effectively use supply and transport, his reliance on speed and mobility, as well as his views on taking the war to the Confederate population. As a military theorist, Liddel- Hart stresses the importance of Sherman's strategy and tactics on the history of warfare and how it has been applied in subsequent wars. Liddel- Hart places emphasis his ability to measure his own capabilities as Sherman's greatest success during his campaigns. Liddel- Hart's analysis of Sherman's strategy and abilities as a general provides an excellent argument supporting that Sherman was a modern general.

A historiography on Erwin Rommel can be found in numerous books on World War II and the study of the German Army. Many of the works associated with Rommel study his rise as a Field Marshall and examine his role in the North African Campaign that made him famous. Many of these works were written within twenty years of the Second World War. Many current books on World War II study Rommel within the larger picture of the war, especially when the study involves the Afrika Corps or the study of Blitzkrieg tactics. One useful source is David Irving's *The Trail of The Desert Fox*.⁶ This book is a narrative view of Rommel from his relationship with Hitler, through the African campaign, to his participation in the assassination

⁶ Irving, David. *The Trail of The Fox*. E.P. Dutton, 1977.

attempt on Hitler. The bulk of the book looks at Rommel's campaigns in Africa in World War II. Irving portrays Rommel's invincibility to both himself and to the Allies. While it is undisputed that Rommel was a modern general in the definition used for this study, this book contains analysis that will be important when comparing his campaign with that of Sherman's during the Civil War. This source is also useful when comparing the interactions that Rommel had with his colleagues to Sherman and his fellow generals.

Primary sources used in this analysis include Sherman's *Memoirs*⁷, which provide a firsthand look at the March to the Sea. Included throughout the book, and more heavily in the second half, are numerous letters and telegrams between him and other figures of the war. Usually Sherman lets these letters tell the story of where he placed his troops, or what he said to other people through the course of the war. The correspondence between him and his fellow generals shows Sherman's willingness to listen to others even if he thought he was right. His relationship with General Grant is also portrayed in the letters the two wrote back and forth to each other.

When looking at Napoleon, a great source proved to be the memoirs of his Aide-de-Camp Louis Antoine Fauvelet De Bourrienne.⁸ This book provided a look at the conduct of Napoleon from one of his closest friends. The book gave some reasoning regarding the decisions that Napoleon made and helped to explain the decisions in the context of the overall strategy employed by Napoleon. Finally, *The Rommel Papers*, edited by B.H. Liddel-Hart, provide a great study of Rommel. This source, like Sherman's *Memoirs* provides a military view of the war and a clear explanation of his reasoning. *The Rommel Papers* include an invaluable section on

7 Sherman, William Tecumseh. *Memoirs*. Michael Fellman, 2000.

8 Bourrienne, Louis Antoine Fauvelet De. *Memoirs of Napoleon*. London: Hutchinson and Co. 1903.

the conduct of desert warfare. Other primary sources used in this paper include diaries of soldiers within Napoleon's and Sherman's armies to give a sense of what it was like to fight under these generals.

Military Theory in the 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries.

In order to study the innovations that these generals had on modern total warfare, one must look at where they themselves were influenced. The notion of military theory and the study of warfare has been around as long as war. In 5th century B.C China, Sun Tzu was writing his *Art of War*, a work that is still highly published and even looked to by modern military leaders (including our own). Ancient Greece was also home to many military theorists. These authors may either come from a military background or in some cases may even be civilians. Military theorists explore what went right and wrong in previous wars. They then draw conclusions about the tactics and strategies used and make speculations as to how the next war will be fought and what strategies and tactics may be useful.

For this study, we must span the realm of military theory from the 18th century to the 20th century. An exhausting analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but we can learn much about the influence of military science on these three generals by studying the French scholars, Comte Guibert and the Du Teil brothers of France and their influence on Napoleon in the 18th century. Antoine Jomini and Carl Von Clausewitz in the 19th Century and how they influenced Sherman in the American Civil War. Lastly, the German High Command with the two Britons: B.H Liddel-Hart and J.F.C Fuller in the 20th century will give the reader a look into early Blitzkrieg tactics which were brought to fruition during World War II.

When studying military doctrine in 18th century France, one will find an ongoing fight over infantry formations. The argument centered on the formation of the *ordre profond* or the *ordre mince*. These two formations advocated for different uses of the musket. The *ordre profond* stressed deep formations, which would mean that the musket would be used more as a shock weapon rather than a fire weapon.⁹ Being in the infantry would require a soldier to use the musket and bayonet in attacking formations and use its role of shooting a projectile secondarily. A visual example would be something similar to the Greek phalanx. The *ordre mince* was the opposite. It meant that the formations of infantry would be spread into a thin line two or three ranks deep to bring the maximum amount of fire power to bear on the enemy.¹⁰ The French army was divided over which of these tactics was superior throughout the 18th century.

The Comte de Guibert engaged in this debate in his 1772 work entitled *A General Essay on Tactics*. This study greatly influenced leading French Generals. Guibert advocated for the coordination of infantry, artillery, and cavalry. Most theorists of the time separated the three branches. This coordination of arms was heavily sought by Napoleon.¹¹ By 1790, Guibert's concepts were adopted by the French army, just in time to be made famous by Napoleon in his wars of conquest and his Italian campaign of 1796-7 in particular. Further study of Guibert and Napoleon's use of these tactics will be looked at in more depth later in the paper. The influence of the DuTeil brothers, the elder being Joseph and the younger being Jean (who would become an assistant to Napoleon on his first Italian campaign), on Napoleon must not go unnoticed in this study. It was under Du Teil that Napoleon, at the time a lieutenant, would be entrusted to

⁹ Quimby, Robert S. *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*. Columbia University Press, 1957, 6.

¹⁰ Quimby, 6.

¹¹ Quimby, 106.

construct an artillery range, much to the disdain of some superior officers.¹² It was work in the French artillery that Napoleon began his rise to the Emperor's throne.

After the Napoleonic era, military theorists were left to pick up the pieces of nearly twenty years of war. The 1830's saw the entrance of two heavyweights in the field of military theory, whose doctrines are still taught to students at the present time. These heavyweights were Antoine Jomini of Switzerland and Carl von Clausewitz of Germany. Jomini published his *Art of War* among other small works on military theory. Jomini's work covers all subjects of war simply, yet effectively, and very in-depth. In other words, he uses an analytic approach to his writing. Subjects covered include topics of forming a strategy, battlefield tactics, the use of terrain, logistics, and on forming troops for battle.

Clausewitz on the other hand, takes a much more philosophical approach to his study of war. For example, Clausewitz defines war as "an act of force to compel our enemies to do our will."¹³ The book goes on to discuss the philosophy of war as an end to political means. Clausewitz is similar to Jomini, in that he presents theories of strategy, attack and defense, as well as troop formations during battle. While there are fundamental differences between the two, they were rivals and their works provided a base for European armies in the late 19th century.

At the close of the American Civil War, many Europeans did not take anything away from the tactics used by the Americans. After all, the Americans across the Atlantic Ocean knew nothing of fighting wars; it was inconceivable to think they had the capacity to hold their own in a Napoleonic style land battle. In early days of World War I tactics were employed relatively similar to those seen a century earlier by Napoleon; however, they proved inadequate in the face

¹² Kircheisen, F.M. *Memoirs of Napoleon I*. London:Hutchinson and co. 25.

¹³ Clausewitz, Carl von. Ed. Howard, Michael and Paret, Peter. *On War*. Princeton University Press, 1976, 75.

of a style of war- prolonged trench warfare- that was remarkably similar to Virginia in the Eastern Theater of the Civil War, in that any battle favored the defender. Before World War I both the Germans and the French had developed offensive plans designed to achieve quick victory. The Germans employed their Schlieffen Plan while the French countered with Plan XVII. After the war, the French redesigned their army for defensive purposes, while the German high command kept their offensive scheme in place.

The twenty years between the two world wars saw a limited German army due to the Versailles treaty of 1919. General von Seeckt and the German High command, which was the best of its kind in the world, still felt that in the event of another war the offensive was still the best tactic.¹⁴ During the interwar period, Erwin Rommel went from an obscure lieutenant to teaching at an infantry school; he did not work with tanks until the few years prior to World War II.¹⁵ It is a matter of interest that Heinz Guderian, the “father of Blitzkrieg” (as well as Rommel), learned his trade from two British tank theorists. These theorists were B.H Liddel-Hart and J.F.C Fuller who explored possibilities of the tank working with infantry.

Both of these theorists expressed the need for mobility and the element of surprise. Fuller states: “In field warfare protection loses the greater part of its value unless coupled with mobility. Therefore power to surprise is vastly increased; therefore the moral attack will grow in importance, its aim being the destruction through demoralization rather than destruction.”¹⁶ These are principles that Rommel would utilize during the North Africa campaign. Under the theories prescribed by Fuller and Liddel- Hart would be the importance of putting the modern

¹⁴ Posen, Barry. *The Sources of Military Doctrine; France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*. Cornell University Press, 1984, 185.

¹⁵ Posen, 210.

¹⁶ Fuller, J.F.C. *Armored Warfare*. The Military Service Publishing Company, 1943, 46.

army around a mechanized tank corps.¹⁷ It was hoped that the infantry, through the muscle of the tank, could travel farther distances (something the armies of the World War I western front did not do). It could combine firepower, shock action, and protect a smaller number of troops as well as have the benefit of mobility.¹⁸ It is from here that the study of modern warfare can begin. The late 18th century saw a rising French nation with a certain rising general taking the reins. This general was Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon

Tactics/Strategy

The study of modern generals in modern total warfare begins with Napoleon Bonaparte. More importantly, it begins with his first Italian Campaign which took place between 1796 and 1797. These battles, in the mountains of what is present day northern Italy, set the stage for the battlefield tactics he would make famous throughout his career. These tactics would also lead to the demise of Napoleon as his enemies found ways to counter Napoleon's moves on the battlefield.

Napoleon is important to this study because he was the *prototype* of a modern general in a modern total war. He still did not have all of the requirements that make a full modern general. The one main strategic downfall that Napoleon possessed was the fact that his entire aim was to destroy the enemy army. In subsequent wars we see modern military generals looking to destroy the enemy's means of making war and taking the enemy population's support of the war away,

¹⁷ Larson, Robert H. *The British Army and the Theory of Armored Warfare, 1918-1940*. University Of Delaware Press, 1984, 89.

¹⁸ Larson, 89.

therefore forcing them to sue for peace. On the other hand, Napoleon does exhibit some of the tactical components that were seen on a larger scale by Sherman and Rommel, these tactics being flanking maneuvers that surprise and confuse the enemy.

While speed and mobility has been an essential tactic of warfare for centuries, Napoleon made it a standard for his army. For one to attack the flanks of an enemy one must have a fast and mobile army to exploit the opportunities it is given. An example of this was the engagement of Castiglione in which French General Augereau marched his division 50 miles in 36 hours.¹⁹ This speed was allowed because the French military was designed around a divisional and corps organizational system which made movement more efficient. Large supply trains were also non-existent because many times Napoleon's troops lived off of the land, although there were cases in which theft from civilian populations were not allowed because Napoleon was attempting to portray the French army as liberators, not plunderers.²⁰

Another example of this flanking maneuver, and a tactic that would be used numerous times, was the battle of Lodi in the first Italian campaign. This maneuver, the *La manoeuvre sur les derrieres* ("maneuver on the rear"), as it has been called, meant that Napoleon would let the main force of his enemy attack a small portion of his own force from the front. This way, the enemy would think they were engaging Napoleon's entire force. This diversionary force would allow the enemy to slowly gain ground as the main force of Napoleon's army worked its way around the flank to capture the rear of the enemy.²¹ This is where the speed and maneuverability of the army came to be a great advantage.

¹⁹ Chandler, David G. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1966, 148.

²⁰ Chandler, 149.

²¹ Chandler, 164.

This is also what caused Napoleon's downfall. In many battles he used the same tactics that he had forged early in his career. By 1810, his adversaries had caught on to these tactics and made the necessary preparations to combat them. For a modern general to be successful, they must be *adaptable* and change their tactics as dictated by terrain, the enemy force, and other outside factors. While Napoleon has many of the tactical traits of a modern general, his lack of adaptability caused by his own ego does not allow him to be the first truly modern general.

Psychology

At the young age of twenty six, Napoleon was sent by the French Directory to command the troops in Italy. It was here that the old knowledge of war and tactics would be challenged and changed. To say that the Army of Italy was in poor shape when Napoleon took over would be an understatement. The young general had something to prove. He had to win over his troops if he was going to one day lead the nation; he then had to win over the civilians if he was going to rule over them peacefully.

To the army of Italy, he stated:

Soldiers! You are half-naked, and badly clothed. Your patience, and the courage you show amid these rocks (the Alps) are admirable, but you are not getting any fame. I will lead you into the most fruitful plains in the world. Rich provinces and great cities shall be in your possession, and then you will have wealth, honor, and fame in full measure. Soldiers of the army of Italy, will your courage fail?²²

²² Kircheisen, F.M. *Memoirs of Napoleon I*. London: Hutchinson and Co. 1903, 48.

Certainly a most uplifting speech if one is a soldier of the hungry, cold, and almost forgotten army of Italy. It was not just his promises of glory that won him fame, it was the fact that he actually came through with his promise.

Napoleon's next problem was winning over the civilians of territories that were quickly coming under France's possession. One goal of the Italian invasion, according to a private secretary of Napoleon as well as Minister of State under the Directory, Louis Antoine Fauvelet De Bourrienne stated: "if possible to stir up the Italian subjects of that crown to adopt the revolutionary system, and emancipate themselves for ever from its yoke."²³ In order to keep the peace among the civilians, as well as promote a positive image for the French, he had to keep the looting by his soldiers in check. He issued an order stating that any general of a division was "authorized to have any officer or soldier summarily shot," if they were to "incite others to pillage, promote the destruction of discipline, or compromise its (the army's) reputation and glory,"²⁴

It is important to recognize the psychological impact that Napoleon had over his citizens, his army, as well as the civilians in the territories that he took over. After his success in Italy, he achieved a fame that he would not relinquish. We can see Napoleon's use of psychology on the French people by looking at his dispatches home from the front. These dispatches were published in newspapers throughout France; he was able to reach the public without being at home. This is some of the first uses of the media to garner support for a war effort.²⁵ What is

²³ Bourrienne, Louis Antoine Fauvelet De. *Memoirs of Napoleon*. London: Hutchinson and Co. 1903, 25.

²⁴ Carr, Albert. *Napoleon Speaks*. New York: The Viking Press, 1941, 73.

²⁵ Hanley, Wayne. *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda*. The Gutenberg Project. <<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/haw01/frames/fhaw02.html>> Accessed 4-6-2009.

interesting to look at is Napoleon's use of active voice and first person in his dispatches. One example comes from the Italian campaign in which Napoleon states:

I was not surprised by the true intentions of the enemy. The instant that I received information of the attack on the right, I ordered General Cervoni to wait out the night and to retreat by forced march, screening his movements from the enemy, to my center.²⁶

It is evident from this passage that Napoleon is using the first person to show that he was directly involved in the battle and that he was doing a majority of the work. He was taking the credit away from the entire army and placing it solely on himself.²⁷ The next passage will show how Napoleon uses a positive rhetoric to turn a defeat into a minor setback. On June 8th, 1796 after a battle in which the French lost, Napoleon states:

Despite the canister-shot from the fortress, the grenadiers advanced in order on the causeway; they even formed a column to storm Mantua; and when someone pointed out the enemy batteries on the ramparts, they said: "At Lodi, there had been many more." But the circumstances were not the same; I had them withdraw. It was an extremely interesting day for us, and the advance guard performed well. The enemy lost a hundred men, more killed than taken prisoners; we lost two hundred men.²⁸

Here we see the reference to a past victory as well as praise for his troops. He makes it seem as if this minor setback is nothing to worry about in the larger scheme of things.²⁹ The psychological war that Napoleon had to fight was much different from that of either Sherman or

²⁶ Hanley, Wayne. *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda*. The Gutenberg Project. <<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/haw01/frames/fhaw02.html>> Accessed 4-6-2009.

²⁷ Hanley, Wayne. *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda*. The Gutenberg Project. <<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/haw01/frames/fhaw02.html>> Accessed 4-6-2009.

²⁸ Hanley, Wayne. *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda*. The Gutenberg Project. <<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/haw01/frames/fhaw02.html>> Accessed 4-6-2009.

²⁹ Hanley, Wayne. *The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda*. The Gutenberg Project. <<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/haw01/frames/fhaw02.html>> Accessed 4-6-2009.

Rommel. His ambitions drove him to the necessity to control the citizens of an enemy nation, as well as his own, rather than strike fear in them as was necessary in the strategy of Sherman.

Nonetheless, Napoleon struck fear into the enemy military as well. His tactics early in his career made him much feared by his enemies, much the same way that Rommel did in World War II.

Technology

The main weapons of Napoleonic warfare were the musket and the cannon for the infantry, and the horse and saber for the cavalry. Many of these weapons had been in use for the previous few centuries. The poor accuracy of the muskets as well as the time it took for them to be reloaded meant that numerous ranks of soldiers were necessary to hurl as many projectiles as possible towards the enemy soldiers. Because it was expensive to mass produce rifled barrels at this time, only elite regiments had them and were used more as skirmishers than as front line troops. The lack of rifled barrels meant that these weapons were only accurate to less than 100 yards. This meant that the opposing lines of soldiers would have to stand very close to each other for the musket to be very effective. The use of the musket in this capacity would remain unchanged until the American Civil War.

On the other hand, just before the Napoleonic period, French artillery took on a new look. As stated earlier, the Du Teil brothers changed the face of artillery and how it was used. Their influence on Napoleon dictated his use of artillery in the battles he fought. Jean Du Teil, the younger of the two brothers, was the most influential. He advocated for mobility of the artillery in battle. In this sense, the artillery was to be used as an extension of the infantry, rather than a separate entity.³⁰

³⁰ Quimby, 292.

To do this, the heavy artillery pieces of the day would have to shed a few pounds if they were to be as mobile and fast moving as the infantry. Between 1765 and 1774 the French artillery were redesigned under the careful eye of Jean Baptiste Vaquette de Gribeauval. Under the Gribeauval diet, the French artillery became one third lighter than the cannon of any other nation and were able to shoot the heavy 12 pound cannon balls (the standard of the day).³¹ This emphasis on lighter artillery would come to help Sherman as he marched through the hilly terrain of northern Georgia in the Atlanta Campaign of 1864. It would also help him achieve the speed he hoped on the March to the Sea.

Sherman

Strategy/Tactics

On November 15th, 1864 William T. Sherman began his march into the history books. This was the “March to the Sea,” and the continuation of the march to modern total warfare. A campaign such as this does not just happen, it takes planning. After taking Atlanta in early September, Sherman sat idle waiting for orders from General Grant. A restless man, Sherman could not stand being on the inside of Atlanta with his supply route to Tennessee exposed like a long finger next the knife that was John Bell Hood’s Confederate Army. He had a couple of choices, the first was to retreat back into Tennessee, which would amount to a propaganda failure in the North, because it would mean the abandonment of the South’s second largest city and one of its largest supply hubs. Not to mention, the evacuation would mean the waste of an entire summer of campaigning. Sherman’s next option, which Grant urged the most, was to

³¹ Connolly, Owen. *Blundering To Glory, Napoleon’s Military Campaigns*. Scholarly Resources Inc. 1999, 3.

chase and destroy Hood's army. This was not a viable option to Sherman because Hood's army was much smaller, and therefore, could move much faster than Sherman's. Going after Hood would exhaust Sherman's supplies as well as the morale of his soldiers. His last option was to destroy the Confederacy's capability of waging war. It would also mean he would have to march his entire army overland with no supply route. He would have to do it quickly, efficiently, and with few losses. This option was the most appealing to Sherman; all he had to do was to get Grant and Lincoln to back it.

On September 20th, 1864 Sherman wrote to Grant:

I would not hesitate to cross the state of Georgia with sixty-thousand men, and depending on the country . . . my army won't starve. . . I could rapidly move to Milledgeville, where there is an abundance of corn and meat, and could threaten Macon and Augusta that the enemy would doubtless give up Macon for Augusta; then I would move so as to interpose between Augusta and Savannah. . . This campaign can be made in the winter.³²

General Grant, in Virginia, was more concerned about the destruction of Hood's army; which would take nearly 45,000 Confederate soldiers out of the war. The loss of that army would mean that Sherman could shift his nearly 100,000 soldiers to the effort in Virginia. Sherman persisted. He explains in his *Memoirs* that "there we were, and we could not remain on the defensive, simply holding Atlanta and fighting for the safety of its railroad."³³ By late September, Hood was trying to draw Sherman out of Atlanta. Sherman recognized this and wired to Grant on October 1st:

If he tries to get on our side of the road I shall attack him; but if he goes to the Selma and Talladega road (towards Alabama), why will it not do to leave

³² Sherman, William T. *Memoirs*. Penguin Books, 2000, 482-483.

³³ Sherman, 498.

Tennessee to the forces which Thomas has (Union general George Thomas, who was in Nashville) . . . and for me to destroy Atlanta and march across Georgia to Savannah or Charleston, breaking roads and doing irreparable damage? We cannot remain on the defensive.³⁴

In the first week of October, Sherman's worries that Hood would attempt to cut Sherman's supply line from Nashville came true. On October 9th, Sherman gave one more plea to Grant in Virginia. He telegraphed:

It will be a physical impossibility to protect the roads, now that Hood, Forrest, Wheeler, and the whole batch of devils, are turned loose without home or habitation. . . I propose that we break up the railroad from Chattanooga forward, and that we strike out with our wagons for Milledgeville, Millen, and Savannah. . . It is useless for us to occupy it (Georgia); but the utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people, will cripple their military resources. By attempting to hold the roads, we will lose a thousand men each month, and gain no result. I can make this march, and make Georgia howl! We have on hand over eight thousand head of cattle and three million rations of bread, but no corn. We can find plenty of forage in the interior of the state.³⁵

By late October, Hood had retreated into Alabama, and Sherman was making the moves necessary to begin his campaign. He transferred more troops to General Thomas in Nashville for the pursuit of Hood, as Sherman began his campaign. Grant telegraphed Sherman on November 1st, asking him if it was "advisable, to entirely ruin him (Hood) before starting your proposed campaign." The next day, Grant telegraphed back: "I do not see that you can withdraw from where you are to follow Hood. I say, then, go on as you propose."³⁶ Sherman now had the green light to take the war to the Confederate civilians.

³⁴ Sherman, 512.

³⁵ Sherman, 519.

³⁶ Sherman, 532.

One might ask why this process of Sherman repeatedly pleading to continue the offensive is important to the study of strategy in modern warfare. While total war, or the involvement of a belligerent's population in the equipping and support of the military, had been around for centuries; the tactic of total war and its use on a civilian population had not been used in "civilized warfare." The formalized nature of warfare in Europe had worked to formalize the war as something strictly between the military of two or more diplomatically warring nations. The battlefield was a glorified chess match between the elite, in which the rules of honorable engagement were strictly followed. It is evident that Grant's first objective was to destroy Hood's army and take away the Confederacy's means of fighting by destroying their manpower. Sherman, however, brought in a new version of the old tactic of total warfare. This is what Gen. Rupert Smith calls modern, or industrialized, total warfare.³⁷ The destruction of railways, factories, mills, etc; was just as destructive to the South if Sherman had attacked and defeated Hood's army. The difference is that the march would cost a lot less to Sherman in men and supplies, plus he could thoroughly demoralize the Confederate population and ruin its capacity to wage war.

Now that we have looked at the reason for the march, we must look at how it was conducted. While mobility and speed had been important to war since the beginning of time, it was becoming apparent after the Civil War that it was becoming a necessity. Sherman needed to keep his troops moving toward the Atlantic coast, mainly because they had no supply line, but also to keep the Confederates from gathering all of their strength to counterattack his movements. If the campaign was stalled out at any point, there was a good chance that Sherman's army would have starved and gotten picked apart by bands of Confederate guerrillas.

³⁷ Smith, Rupert. *The Utility of Force*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007

Sherman kept his troops marching at the tone of fifteen miles per day, a fast pace on foot.³⁸ The march was split into four separate corps who would take four different routes. In all the march would be about forty to sixty miles wide.³⁹ Sherman created confusion and surprise upon the Confederates when he threatened the main towns of Macon and Augusta, places where the Rebels placed most of the available troops, yet bypassed them to avoid a major conflict that would slow the progress of his march. The cutting of telegraph wires and rail lines further induced confusion upon the Confederates.⁴⁰

As this is a study of how the March to the Sea changed total warfare, we must now look at how it was perceived after the war. An Aide- de- camp for Sherman, Brevet Major George Ward Nichols writes: “In a military point of view there is no precedent to the campaign though Georgia, for the history of war records no similar conditions.”⁴¹ Sherman’s *Memoirs* includes a chapter on the lessons he learned from the Civil War. At the time, Sherman felt that his march differed from European wars in that “we are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people, and must make the old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies.”⁴² Sherman goes on to say:

Very few of the battles in which I have participated were fought as described in European textbooks, viz., in great masses, in perfect order, maneuvering by corps, divisions and brigades. We were generally in wooded country, and, though our lines were deployed according to tactics, the men generally fought in strong skirmish lines, taking advantage of the shape of the ground and of every corner.⁴³

³⁸ Liddel-Hart, *Sherman, Soldier, American, Realist* 332.

³⁹ Liddel-Hart, *Sherman, Soldier, American, Realist* 338.

⁴⁰ Liddel-Hart, *Sherman, Soldier, American, Realist* 337.

⁴¹ Nichols, George Ward. *The Story of the Great March*. Corner House Publishers, 1984, 109.

⁴² Sherman, 588.

⁴³ Sherman, 747.

Indeed, the American Civil War was truly different from any European war. Tactically, the Civil War was fought in lines according to brigades, divisions and corps; much the same as what Napoleon had perfected earlier in the century. The big difference was, as Sherman noted, because of the wooded areas that many Civil War battles were fought in. True, there were some battles that allowed the use of tight formations (Ex: First Bull Run), but there were many more that did not, especially in the west where Sherman was. Adding to this was the fact that the Civil War, especially near the end in the east, became an entrenched defensive war.

The defensive war is precisely what Europe did not or prepare for when they took up arms from 1914-1918. The twentieth century British military theorist B.H. Liddel Hart, who called Sherman the “most original genius of the Civil War,” goes on to say: “There are vital lessons to be learned from this man . . . keys to the modern world and modern warfare.”⁴⁴ These lessons being a fast and mobile campaign that takes out the enemy’s morale and military infrastructure, lessons that were not put to use until after the bloodshed of the First World War. The Second World War would see the expansion of Sherman’s tactics with the fast and mobile blitzkrieg campaigns by the Germans that had the same battlefield affect that Sherman’s March had. The Allied bombing campaign to destroy Germany and Japan’s military infrastructure matched Sherman’s burning of Confederate factories, mills, and the destruction of its railways. It is for these reasons that Sherman’s March can be considered the first modern military campaign, and crediting Sherman as the first of the truly modern generals.

⁴⁴ Liddel-Hart, B.H. *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*. New York, Frederick Praeger, 1960, vii.

Psychology

As is important in any war, the psychology of the army as well as the people of the belligerent countries is vitally important. Through the use of propaganda and manipulation, both sides worked to play up minor successes or setbacks and downplay gains by the other side. The March to the Sea had a profound effect on the southern capacity to wage war, both on their mental capacity as well as their physical capacity. The effect on the mental capacity came in the belief that the Confederate cause was lost after a Union army had marched through one of its most important states unopposed. The physical capacity being that the Confederate infrastructure in Georgia had been severely crippled. This section will show the affect Sherman's march had on Southern propaganda.

Throughout the course of the march, southern propaganda worked to downplay the effects it was having on the Confederate war effort. Before the March began, Sherman wrote to Lincoln trying to get Georgia politically out of the war (to force its surrender).⁴⁵ While the Georgia legislature considered this move, it ultimately decided against it. During the March to the Sea, Sherman encountered newspapers stating that Sherman's army was "fleeing for its life to the sea." From Corinth, Mississippi, Confederate general P.G.T Beauregard implored southerners to "Arise for the defense of your native soil! Obstruct and destroy all the roads in Sherman's front, flank, and rear, and his army will soon starve in your midst." Confederate Senator B.H Hill urged: "Every citizen with his gun, and every negro with his spade and axe, can do the work of a soldier."⁴⁶ It is easy to see the Confederates were getting desperate if they are willing to give slaves the work of a soldier. Confederate press portrayed Sherman's soldiers as

⁴⁵ Sherman, 507.

⁴⁶ Sherman, 552-3.

villains who “respected neither age nor sex; that we burned everything we came across; that we ravished the women and killed the men, and perpetrated all manner of outrages on the inhabitants.”⁴⁷

This use of lies and desperation shows that the Confederacy knew it was in its last months. It clearly did not work on the citizens because there were very few of them who actually attempted to get in the way of the March. The few brave individuals who did challenge the Union troops were decimated in battle. As Sherman’s troops encountered Confederate civilians, they knew the war was lost. One Confederate lamented: “The state of Georgia is being split right through from end to end. It is these rich fellows who are making this war, and keeping their precious bodies out of harm’s way.”⁴⁸

On the other hand, Sherman’s troops were having a great time. At the Georgian capital of Milledgeville, some soldiers gathered in the Capital building and mocked a session of the legislature that resulted in the repeal of the “ordinance of secession by a fair vote.”⁴⁹ Their ability to freely move about the countryside and forage off of the Confederate homes gave them a confidence that they were nearly invincible.⁵⁰ The March to the Sea was viewed with apprehension in northern newspapers because Sherman cut all telegraph lines, therefore the reporters had to wait until the end of the March to relay their reports to their respective newspapers. Once word got out of the destruction that Sherman’s March had done to the Confederates, victory was much closer for the citizens of the Union.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Sherman, 596.

⁴⁸ Nichols, 75.

⁴⁹ Sherman, 553.

⁵⁰ Nichols, 87.

⁵¹ Lidell-Hart, 354.

The March to the Sea proved that a Union force could march through the heartland of the Confederacy and do irreparable damage to the southern infrastructure. The campaign had shown to the Confederate citizens that the war could not be won. A correlation here can be made between Sherman's march and the blitzkrieg tactics of World War II. The nations of France and Poland, while being physically defeated on the battlefield, were also mentally defeated. The rapidity of the German columns and seeing them in their towns first hand demoralized the citizens and government, forcing them to sue for peace.⁵² Sherman's March was the first *modern* campaign to use of psychology to force the enemy to surrender.

Technology

Changes in technology did not make very large strides between the wars of Napoleon and the American Civil War, but there were some significant changes by the end of the war. The major technology change between Napoleon and Sherman was the use of rifles compared to smoothbore muskets. By the time of the March to the Sea in 1864, the newest technology was the breach loading rifle which meant that a soldier could fire more rounds than with the conventional muzzle loading rifle. Sherman did not have great access to the breech loading rifles during the March to the Sea; therefore he could not make great use of them.

What is important to note, is the impact the rifle had on the Civil War. The rifling in the barrel meant that the projectile, which at this time was the bullet shaped "minie ball", was much more accurate at a farther range. By the end of the war, both sides were carrying rifles, which

⁵² Smith, Rupert. *The Utility of Force*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, 134.

increased the casualties on the battlefield, and led to the strengthening of the tactical offensive.⁵³ Generals used to close order battles were slow to change their ways to faster and more mobile offensive tactics. The defensive quickly became the strategy of choice as defenders behind entrenchments could easily take out close order attacking formations of men.⁵⁴ This became the scene in Virginia at the end of the war.

Sherman embraced the new change in technology, along with the strengthening of the tactical offensive. Although his choice to spread out his men was more out of necessity due to the wooded and hilly terrain of the west, rather than a purely tactical choice to gain superiority on the battlefield.

Sherman said of this new technology:

The only change that breech-loading arms will probably make in the art and practice of war will be to increase the amount of ammunition to be expended. . . to still further 'thin out' the lines of attack, and to reduce battles to short, quick, decisive conflicts. . . The companies and battalions will be more dispersed, and the men will be less under the immediate eye of their officers, and therefore a higher order of intelligence and courage on the part of the individual soldier will be an element of strength.⁵⁵

Ultimately, Sherman's prediction of "thin lines" and dispersed battalions was the way of the future. While the repeating rifle did lead to a larger battlefield, it did not lead to quick decisive battles. The lines of communication from higher ranking officers to officers in the field would become longer. New inventions such as the radio would facilitate this need and would add speed and mobility to the battle, but it would not shorten it. As will be discussed in the next

⁵³ McPherson, James. *The Battle Cry of Freedom*. Oxford University Press, 1988, 475.

⁵⁴ McPherson, 475-476.

⁵⁵ Sherman, 747.

section, the need for higher intelligence by the average soldier would be a large part of Rommel's army in the future.

Rommel

Tactics/ Strategy

The study of Rommel is best exemplified by the blitzkrieg tactics developed by the Germans in World War II and executed in the deserts of North Africa by Erwin Rommel from 1941-1943. The "Desert Fox," as Rommel became known, was one of the most effective tacticians with armor who spread fear into the allied command. This section will look at Rommel as a strategist by examining his campaigns in North Africa, as well as why he was successful, and how he was able to use fast and mobile tactics to make his army feared by the Allies.

It is important to note that between the world wars, and even during the early stages of World War II, that Rommel was still working exclusively with the infantry, and had no experience with tanks or armored warfare. It was his *adaptability* that allowed him to bring the same principles that he advocated in the infantry to the panzer corps. These principles being leading from the front, deep penetrations into the enemies lines, the exploitation of the flanks, and to always maintain the advance and to keep the momentum of the battle on your side.⁵⁶ This adaptability made him unpredictable on the battlefield, something that always seemed to work to his advantage. It was the use of the principles listed above that makes him one of the best examples of a modern general in the modern age of industrialized total warfare.

⁵⁶ Lewin, Ronald. *Rommel As Military Commander*. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968, 11.

Rommel advocated for speed and mobility on the battlefield. At the Second Battle of Tobruk, Rommel writes:

One of the first lessons I had drawn from my experience of motorized warfare was that speed of maneuver in operations and quick reaction in command are decisive. Troops must be able to carry out operations at top speed and in complete coordination. To be satisfied with norms is fatal. One must constantly demand and strive for maximum performance, for the side which makes the greater effort is the faster- and the faster wins the battle.⁵⁷

The deserts of North Africa were well suited to fast paced and mobile warfare due to the low number of natural obstacles. This environment helped facilitate the speed and mobility necessary for the blitzkrieg tactics that Rommel used (these tactics were also very successful on the steppes of Russia). It was also because of this environment that the British, and later the Americans were also able to employ a mobile style of warfare. The attack and defend style that developed in the desert that Rommel used the “shield and sword” or the defensive- offensive tactic. This tactic advocated for making offensive gains, the sword, and then building defensive traps for the enemy counterattack, the shield.⁵⁸

This strategy in North Africa was used throughout the campaign from 1941 to the evacuation of German forces in the spring of 1943. A closer look at the war in North Africa will show that the war between Rommel’s Afrika Corps and Montgomery’s Eighth Army, and later an American contingent led by General Patton, was very back and forth. Both sides achieved large victories and received defeats that sent them retreating. It seems as if the shield and sword tactic was effective for both sides, and in every case, too effective. Every thrust of the sword was halted by the shield even after significant gains were taken. In many cases it was the loss of

⁵⁷ Rommel, Erwin, Ed. By B.H. Liddel Hart. *The Rommel Papers*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953, 225.

⁵⁸ Rommel, 138.

momentum, and a shortage of supplies that ultimately stopped each offensive, especially for the Germans. When this happened, the other side would generally take up the offensive.⁵⁹

While the Germans eventually did lose the battle for North Africa, it was not because of Rommel's incompetence. At the same time the Germans were in Africa, they were also battling Russia. The war with Russia meant that Rommel and the troops in North Africa were playing second fiddle to the forces in Russia. Rommel was not receiving the vital supplies that he needed to maintain his offensives. In many cases, especially toward the end of the campaign in late 1942 and early 1943, Rommel had no oil to fuel his tanks, was receiving less men, less ammunition, and other vital supplies. On this, Rommel wrote: "When it is remembered that in modern warfare supplies decide the battle, it is easy to see the clouds of disaster were gathering for my army."⁶⁰

It might be hard to consider a losing general as an innovator of modern warfare, but the tactics that Rommel used on the battlefield were very effective. American General George S. Patton learned many of his tactics from Rommel, as did British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery. What made Rommel different is that he used speed and mobility as his greatest weapon, and exposed the flanks of his stunned and confused enemy. Rommel led at the point of advance and always exploited his opportunities. This "battlefield instinct" so to speak is what made Rommel successful. It was the lack of supplies in the face of a more powerful enemy that nullified these tactics.

Rommel advocated his battlefield instincts in his memoirs. He writes:

The commander must be the prime mover of the battle and the troops must always have to reckon with his appearance in personal control . . . It is also greatly in the commander's own interest to have a personal picture of the front and a clear idea

⁵⁹ Rommel, 138.

⁶⁰ Rommel, 244.

of the problems his subordinates face. . . If he fights battles as a game of chess, he will become rigidly fixed in academic theory and admiration of his own ideas. Success comes most readily to the commander whose ideas have not been canalized into any one fixed channel, but can develop freely from the conditions around him.⁶¹

This passage clearly shows the adaptability that is required of a general on a fast moving battlefield. In modern mechanized warfare leading from the front and taking advantage of the opportunities given is a necessary component of victory. It is easy to see why Rommel was as potent as he was and why he inflicted fear into the allied high command. Rommel, as well as Sherman were, unlike Napoleon, very adaptable. It is this trait that makes them truly modern generals. It is Rommel's ability to lead from the front, as well as other tactics that are still used today that make him a "late modern" general.

Psychology

In the early stages of the war, even the mention of Rommel's name made British officers cringe. His speedy and bold attacks meant that large groups of troops at the front of a battle could find themselves surrounded in a short amount of time. In many cases, small local attacks by the Germans were thought to be large scale frontal assaults. Rommel writes: "it is becoming increasingly clear that the enemy believed us to be far stronger than we actually were- a belief that was essential to maintain."⁶² It was this confusion of the allied troops that Rommel used to his advantage.

Rommel's tactics earned him the nickname the "Desert Fox" because he moved fast and outwitted his opponents. His presence on the battlefield made him both feared and respected.

⁶¹ Rommel, 226.

⁶² Rommel, 110.

Many of the British soldiers respected Rommel, so much so, that their commanders had to curb the effect of the “Rommel legend.”⁶³ They could not have their troops going into battle already defeated.

Rommel’s psychological warfare was very different from both Napoleon and Sherman. Rommel did not fight an overtly psychological warfare the way that the others did. Rommel let his battlefield successes, as well as the Nazi propaganda machine; build him into a larger than life being that was seemingly invincible. Even after Rommel’s defeat in North Africa, the allies were worried if they knew that Rommel was going to be on the battlefield. His only psychological effect was against the enemy troop morale rather than the morale of the citizens.

Technology

It is with Rommel that technology in modern total warfare reached its pinnacle. Mechanized warfare made speed on the battlefield possible. Radio and telephone lines made intelligence gathering much faster and made the reaction times for decisions all the faster. The use of air planes added a whole new dimension to total warfare.⁶⁴ Rommel’s use of tanks brought fast and mobile armored warfare into the mainstream. While he was proficient in infantry tactics, he brought many of these tactics to bear with tanks. What was more important to the blitzkrieg style of warfare, was bringing together all portions of the armed forces, otherwise called

⁶³ Rommel, xv.

⁶⁴ Smith, 131.

“combined arms.” It was this combination of air power, artillery, armor, and the infantry, that has defined land battles from World War II to the present day.⁶⁵

The setback to this advanced technology meant that there would be a need for more supplies and a much deeper industrial capacity required of a nation at war. All tanks and airplanes need gasoline and oil. In part, the need for these essential supplies drove the German strategy in World War II. The North African campaign looked to close off the Suez Canal to the British and to open up the Middle East to the Germans. The same held true with the advances in southern Russia. The Battle of the Bulge at the end of the war was hinged almost completely on the faith that the Germans would capture American oil dumps to keep their offensive alive. In addition to oil, new and diverse weapons required ammunition. With so many different types of weapons there was a need to create many different kinds of ammunition. While there was some overlap, the sheer amount of numbers of weapons meant that there had to be an exponentially higher rate of production in ammunition. This required the acquisition of metals and factories with a sufficient workforce to keep up production.⁶⁶

This is where total war took on a new dimension. What Sherman did by destroying the Confederate’s ability to wage war, the allies did in World War II by bombing German factories from the air. This version of total warfare showed that the front lines could be nowhere near a nation’s homeland and could be entirely safe from enemy infantry; yet, it was not safe from air attack. By the end of the war, the allies had established air superiority over Germany and could

⁶⁵ Smith 131-132

⁶⁶ Smith, 131-133.

bomb German factories at will. This was the same superiority that Sherman's troops had over Confederate factories.⁶⁷

Conclusions:

The study of modern warfare does not end with Erwin Rommel or World War II. All three of the dimensions of warfare mentioned in this paper continue to evolve in the second half of the 20th century. For the most part, the tactics stay the same with many armies being centered on speed and mobility to surprise and confuse the enemy. A good portion of the world's armies saw the need to become built around tanks and mechanized warfare. The United States and the Soviet Union were two countries that built their land forces around armored and ballistic arsenals.⁶⁸

Psychological warfare also developed into a political game. As seen in the American Civil War, Vietnam, and today's war in Iraq, the public must to be swayed to support the war and keep the troops supplied. Without public support, as was the case in the Vietnam War, the war becomes unfavorable and one side is forced to concede. This is a great psychological as well as battlefield tactic for an army that is outnumbered. The ability to fight a guerilla style of warfare saps the energy of the larger force and they eventually tire of chasing an enemy that they cannot easily defeat or never gives up fighting. The longer a nation is at war, the more unfavorable it becomes to the side making the least gains.

In addition to this form of psychological warfare, there is more of an emphasis on propaganda in the media. Television and the Vietnam War brought the war home for the first time and allowed people to follow the war as it was happening. As shown above, the Napoleonic

⁶⁷ Smith, 141.

⁶⁸ Smith, 220-224.

era brought about the use of propaganda to fuel the war effort and keep support and morale high. The use of propaganda by the Nazi's turned minor defeats into large ones as well as promoted Rommel to the status of national hero, much to the chagrin of his colleagues. The same can be said of Sherman after the Civil War. What can be learned from this is that if the media can get the public to believe the nation is winning the war, the people will support it.⁶⁹

Technology, especially battlefield technology, is one area that will never stop innovating. One side will always look to have a technological edge over the other. The use of computers has made war even faster and more mobile than it was in the first half of the 20th century. Entire nations can be destroyed with the push of a button and decisions must be made in a shorter length of time. The one standard that will not change is the use of human beings as the decision makers and controllers of the battlefield. As long as there is a point of contention there will be the need of an armed force to fight the battles.⁷⁰

This analysis has defined a modern general as well as a modern total war. This work adds to the existing literature by providing a comparative analysis of modern generalship by looking at the three main factors of the battlefield: Strategy/tactics, psychology, and technology. As shown above, it is evident that General William T. Sherman can be considered the first modern general. His tactics both on the battlefield and use of psychological warfare were seen in subsequent warfare. While Napoleon laid the groundwork for a fast and mobile army, Sherman put it to work against the non-military, as well as military targets of his enemy. Thus, Sherman ushered in the advent of modern total warfare. By World War II, Erwin Rommel had the technology to make total warfare even more mobile and more deadly.

⁶⁹ Smith, 400-401.

⁷⁰ Smith, 377.

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