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### **Civil War Strategy and its Lasting Impact**

Gunshots ring amid the field as the battle continues throughout the trenches. The battleground is littered with the corpses of the fallen and injured soldiers. The Civil War, America's bloodiest conflict, was influenced by a series of events including: Abraham Lincoln becoming president causing tension between Northern and Southern states, the seceding of the southern states and the attack of Fort Sumter. The attack on Fort Sumter began the Civil War in the year 1861. The southern states elected their own president, Jefferson Davis, after seceding and became the Confederate States of America. During the Civil War, multiple tactics were used by both sides. Not only would the tactics used decide whether the North or South won, but the tactics also would be the precursors for other war tactics. The tactics between North and South included the Anaconda plan, trench battles, and supply cut offs. The purpose of these was not only to eliminate the enemy but also to gain a strategic advantage over the enemy. These are just a few of the tactics used that would decide the victor of the war. However, the tactics used in the Civil War were not as valuable as the mistakes that were made during battle. Such mistakes would shape future war tactics and guide the training procedures used in the US military today. The lessons learned from both the successful war tactics and failed strategies of the American Civil War have influenced the current practices of the US military today.

### **Ulysses S. Grant & Robert E. Lee: A comparison of strategy**

Ulysses S. Grant & Robert E. Lee some of the most important generals in the Civil war. They would determine which side would win the war. According to the Civil War Trust, “On May 1, 1863, Grant's army crossed the Mississippi River at the battle of Port Gibson. With Confederate forces unclear of his intentions, Grant sent a portion of his army under Gen. William T. Sherman to capture the state capital, Jackson. While setting his sights on Vicksburg with a view toward permanently closing the Confederate supply. On July 4, 1863, Confederate general John Pemberton's 30,000-man army surrendered.” Ulysses S. Grant’s strategy was to cut off the supply of the Confederacy, rendering them weak and vulnerable. The confederacy was forced to surrender due to the lack of supply. Grant chose to focus the myriad resources at his disposal on destroying Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The Confederates had been forced into waging trench warfare outside of Petersburg. on April 9, 1865, Lee was forced to surrender his weary and depleted army to Grant at Appomattox Court House, effectively ending the Civil War.”

After the defeat of Vicksburg, Grant decided on destroying Ulysses S. Grant’s army. In the History Channel video called *American Civil War: Lee vs. Grant*, the documentary highlights that during the heat of the war Ulysses S. Grant gained multiple strategic victories such as the unconditional surrender at Fort Henry or the victory at Vicksburg. These victories were the precursors for some more advanced tactics and victories such as the Siege of Malta during WWII. Malta was the gateway between Europe and Africa and the defeat of Malta gave the allies the strategic victory they needed during WWII. Thus the strategy of cutting off an integral location from the enemy was proven to be very effective during the Civil War and would shape many future victories in American warfare.

### **Civil War Strategy Influence**

Guerrilla warfare took place during the Civil War and America would once again see similar conflicts during the Vietnam war. During the Civil War, “the guerrilla war, as waged by both Confederate guerrillas and Unionists in the South, gathered in intensity between 1861 and 1865 and had a profound impact on the outcome of the war (Kozikowski, “Guerilla Warfare”). Guerilla warfare is a form of irregular warfare that have citizen combatants fight against an organized military through raids or ambushes and other ways. Guerilla warfare was introduced during the Civil War because there were many groups of people on both the North and South that wanted to fight for the opposing side. The Civil War gave the US Military the experience of fighting against an informal enemy in guerilla warfare. These lessons would be later repeated during the Vietnam War, which was made up of guerilla warfare. Since Vietnam used guerilla warfare, the Americans never really knew their enemies. Guerilla warfare was one of the many reasons America lost the Vietnam War in the same way that it made the American Civil War very confusing and deadly for soldiers. Therefore, through the Civil War and again through the Vietnam War, the conflict of guerilla warfare continued to be a problem that the US military is still learning how to overcome.

### **The Anaconda Plan**

Guerrilla warfare may have raged on throughout the nation. However, another act of war known as the Anaconda Plan affected the supplies and trade done by the south leaving them without supply or profit. In fact, “by adopting the Anaconda Plan, Lincoln ran the risk of committing diplomatic suicide. To meet this new challenge the navy began a massive expansion of its fleet. In the spring of 1861, the navy consisted of 82 largely obsolete ships; by December of that year there would be 264 ships in the navy. By the end of the war, the United States Navy

would maintain a force of over 600 ships” (Mariners’ Museum). Therefore, this special plan would make the south be without supplies. The U.S. military today and foreign policy incorporates a sort of Anaconda Plan called sanctions. Instead of blocking off supplies, they are blocking off trade and other economic opportunities from the enemy country. The Anaconda Plan was successfully used during the Civil War to basically cut off all southern ports leaving the Confederacy without foreign supplies. As a result, this was a benefit to the north due to the fact that the South would have no choice to but surrender. This type of Anaconda Plan has been continuously used throughout American warfare and foreign policy even today. In fact, the current conflicts with Russia include sanctions. For example, according to Forbes, the US has announced further sanctions on Russia by the US Treasury “increasing the cost of economic isolation for key Russian firms,” and the US government has also cut ties with Russian firms that have contracts with the U.S. financial system or depend on the U.S. economy ([Frances Coppola](#)). Therefore, the Anaconda Plan has influenced many more sanctions much like this and may influence many more to come.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the tactics used in the Civil war have influenced present day U.S. military tactics. For instance the Anaconda plan has influenced a more modern blockade such as the sanction that was planned to take place. It would cut off more economic opportunities with Russia. The Union used a sort of sanction in the Civil war but they just cut off supplies from the Confederacy. The importance of this research is the fact that society can learn from the past and input that knowledge into a present day situation. After researching this topic, further investigation is needed to understand the success of those strategies and if these strategies have influenced the tactics of other countries. Furthermore, it is important to note that some of the

tactics used during the Civil War that were helpful and beneficial might not be as successful in other contexts. It might be that the success of a war strategy or topic is limited to a specific war, culture, and time. The modern day military uses the strategies and tactics that were used in the Civil War. The war has influenced our military and may influence society for years to come.

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