

STEEL IN THE SOUL

THE REFINED LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

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API 6999 MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER
SUPERVISOR: DR. DAVID ZUSSMAN
FINAL COPY
AUGUST 7, 2013

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ABSTRACT

STEEL IN THE SOUL

We hold our leaders accountable to and for their decisions. But how accountable do leaders hold themselves? Aspiring politicians respond to public outcries for democratic reform and change with hefty campaign promises. Nevertheless, why are some leaders more successful in achieving their mandate than others? The central premise of this major research paper is that **refined** executive leadership is the deciding factor for an enduring success and legacy. In this context, refined signifies “purified, fine-tuned, characterized by subtlety,”¹ which is cultivated in a humble, resilient, persevering response to recurring failure, disappointment, and adversity. This inner development of leadership is analogous to the purification process of metallurgy that frees the production of metals, such as steel, from impurities and defects. A hybrid-conceptual model based on historical methodology is introduced to trace the path of President Lincoln’s leadership development from young politician till his untimely death. Examples from Lincoln’s speeches, biographies, and various associated resources illustrate each of the model’s components and the pitfalls that can derail from complete refinement.

January 1, 2013 commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln’s executive Civil War order that preceded the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. Similar to our day, President Lincoln faced dilemmas of social injustice, democratic governance, and leadership liability. How and why was he able to successfully legislate change? The conclusion drawn from this research is that he responded to the negative pressures of life by becoming a beacon of accountability. Therefore, his journey towards refined leadership can offer timeless principles to address ever-contemporary issues.

¹ Katherine Barber, Heather Fitzgerald, and Robert Pontisso, “Refined,” in *Student’s Oxford Canadian Dictionary*, ed. Katherine Barber (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2007).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & DEDICATION

A MULTITUDE OF THANKS

Writing a 40-page Major Research Paper (MRP) can be a daunting task – more so when it represents a master candidate’s academic prowess, honed over several grueling semesters. In essence, this final paper is his or her *pièce de résistance* – at least, from my perspective. When I write that what you are about to read is the first draft, with no subsequent revisions, save minor copy edits and these acknowledgements, the thought humbles me – as it should. For what I discovered was that successful scholarly writing involves multiple contributors, whose efforts all count, no matter how insignificant, which reveal their impact over time. Therefore, I am grateful to the following people for this unexpected miracle:

To the librarians at the University of Ottawa’s Geographic, Statistical, and Government (GSG) Information Centre: Téa Rokolj, whose virtuosity at research helped me to acquire the resources for an original topic; and Talia Chung, who after reading the revised abstract, wisely encouraged me to devote myself to this MRP – meanwhile, the job opportunities, post-graduation, would eventually materialize.

To my colleagues at the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Canada, who trained me in qualitative research and conceptual modeling during my CO-OP placements. Their influence permeates this MRP’s structure and made its formulation second nature to me. In particular, Alexandre Chiasson, whose brilliant idea to weave the sword making analogy throughout, empowered me to write a focused and compelling narrative.

To my classmates, from whom I learned much by just listening and asking lots of questions, and who are too numerous to name in a single paragraph. Even so, some are directly linked to this MRP: Nicole Agbayani, who carefully listened when I could barely articulate a thesis, and still managed to recommend the ideal supervisor; Julia Wallace, whose editing skills on my briefing notes impressed me to entrust her with the initial abstract and outline; and Yura Lee, who grasped the creativity of the premise way before I did, and rallied me to write the text in my own unique style.

To the professionals and faculty at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, again too numerous to name, but from which a few deserve special mention: James Lahey, Senior Fellow, who offered me a crash course in historical methodology, which bolstered both the storyline’s objectivity and entertainment caliber; Luc Juillet, my second reader, who expressed confidence in my potential since first semester, and valued the contribution I could make to GSPIA as a non-social science major; and David Zussman, my supervisor, whose skillful guidance and enthusiasm for this project allowed my vision to come to life in a way better than I originally intended. His comment: “Your MRP is stretching me!” will be forever emblazoned in my memory, and his willingness to take it on anyway, an inspiration.

To GSPIA's director, Catherine Liston-Heyes, who surprised me by asking permission for this MRP to be used as a model for other grad students, which I hope will prove beneficial and spur on innovative thinking.

To my parents, Pio and Dionisia, who gave me rock-solid support during this adventure called grad school, and consistently offered the perfect advice, no matter what the occasion. They are the loving constant in my life, whose faith, wisdom, and fidelity I aspire to emulate in my own lifetime. To them I dedicate this MRP.

Lastly, I need to thank a man, whom I have never met, yet whose leadership example remains a tough act to follow. This does not mean that we should stop hoping for or aspiring to be great leaders. Nevertheless, this is the lesson Abraham Lincoln lived and proclaimed: Leaders cannot escape history. Generations and eternity will forever hold them accountable.

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
August 7, 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS REFINED EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP?

Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition is yet to be developed.
- First political announcement, New Salem, March 9, 1832²

A. STEEL AND SOUL

From antiquity to the Renaissance, the sword-smith crafted swords for rulers and nobility. The sword became a perennial symbol for power and wealth; yet this ancient technology was also connected to the breakthroughs in metallurgy that would modernize the world.³ In particular, the quality of a sword's blade (its hardness, strength, flexibility, and balance)⁴ could leverage the prestige of empires. Blades of bronze were superior to blades of copper. Blades of iron were superior to blades of bronze. Finally, blades forged from steel outperformed them all in battle.

The ancient technique of sword making involved three steps: (1) forging to render the metal pliable so it could be molded, (2) quenching with tempering to reduce a blade's brittleness from toughening, and (3) finishing to add decorative touches. It was an art of continual trial and error, until the sword-smith perfected the reliability and consistency in his guarded craft.⁵ As one poet mused,

From a heart of fire and belly of earth
Metal is hammered as a blade gains birth –
Plunged into water then fire again
The steel learns austerity and discipline.⁶

² Steven B. Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012). 6.

³ Robert T. Gonzalez, "A Brief History of the Ancient Science of Sword Making," <http://io9.com/5831683/a-brief-history-of-the-ancient-science-of-sword-making>.

⁴ Brian Garvin, "Ancient Sword Making - How They Made Swords in the Medieval Days," <http://ezinearticles.com/?Ancient-Sword-Making---How-They-Made-Swords-in-the-Medieval-Days&id=3667483>.

⁵ Ibid.; John Clements, "How Were Swords Really Made?," http://www.thearma.org/essays/How_Were_Swords_Made.htm.

⁶ Tim Newfields, "Sword Making," <http://www.tnewfields.info/BambooGroves/sword.htm>.

Crucible steel was natural iron “purified,”⁷ which was cleansed and toughened so that it became sturdy and flexible. Ancient metallurgy was of such a high standard that to this day it remains part mystery: “Some types of swords are so strong that modern science still can’t determine how they were made.”⁸ In short, ancient sword-smiths concentrated on creating an individual masterpiece of art.

By way of analogy, executive leadership could be considered an ancient art form, one within which the raw leadership potential of an individual is put through a series of grueling tests. Jonathan Powell, who served as Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Chief of Staff, observes in his book, *The New Machiavelli*,

Great leaders are both born and bred. They need to be brave and endowed with extraordinary political instincts, but they also have to be armed with a range of skills if they want to carry people with them. In order to come to power, they need to be blessed with fortune and to know how to take advantage of her. But, if they are to stay in power, they have to have steel in their soul.⁹

The above paragraph (which inspired the title of this major research paper) outlines several basic assumptions about leadership: (1) its origins are natural and nurtured, (2) its success fuses destiny and skill, and (3) its power is linked to a leader’s inner being. This research focuses on the development of steel in the soul in the executive. Its thesis is that the quality of an executive’s inner being can determine the prestige of an administration, as the quality of a sword’s blade could determine the prestige of an empire. The presence (or the absence) of steel in the soul is demonstrated by an executive’s response to the continual challenges – or the refinement – to his or her leadership formation. According to Powell: “Strong leaders ... have a sense of direction, while weak leaders are merely buffeted by events.”¹⁰

⁷ Alan Williams, *The Sword and the Crucible* (Boston: Brill, 2012). 27.

⁸ Garvin, "Ancient Sword Making - How They Made Swords in the Medieval Days".

⁹ Jonathan Powell, *The New Machiavelli: How to Wield Power in the Modern World*, (London: The Bodley Head, 2010). 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

Modern textbooks on public administration tend to enumerate the qualities that leaders should already possess or practice. Some examples include forethought, clear vision, broad-mindedness, concern for human, financial, and material resources, wisdom and decisiveness in times of crisis, and a willingness to be self-critical, to learn from others, and to admit mistakes. Johnson notes such traits “set very high standards, but good leadership is integral to government accountability because it means that state power will be exercised in politically, legally, and socially responsive ways.”¹¹ Nevertheless, sound leadership traits are normally presented in checklist form rather than innate qualities of a leader. This present emphasis towards externals can be traced to the history of leadership development theory.

Military figures and industrial icons inspired early leadership development studies. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, trait theory identified the characteristics of great leaders and organizations. It introduced the idea that self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses could help leaders rise to their potential. By the 1960s, behavioural theory stressed that leadership behaviour (i.e. task- versus people-oriented) was the best predictor of influence. The 1970s ushered in situational leadership, which suggested that effective leadership varied with the person or group that was being influenced, and the task to be accomplished. The 1980s and 1990s converged behavioural, situational, and strategic disciplines as leaders were exposed to integrated learning (i.e. case analyses, personality assessment, and behavioural assessment). The 2000s combined classroom and experiential learning, supplanting executive coaching and customized learning programs segmented by theme (i.e. change management) or by management level (i.e. senior executive). Today, a plethora of blended development options are available (i.e. online learning, 360-degree assessments, and interchanges)¹² all designed to enhance performance.

¹¹ David Johnson, *Thinking Government: Public Administration and Politics in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2011). 480, 82.

¹² James Kendrick, "The Right Leadership," *Canadian Government Executive* 19, no. 1 (2013): 14.

Joseph S. Nye labels the current dominant theory relevant to democratic societies as the “Neo-Charismatic and Transformational Leaders Paradigm.”¹³ It combines the elements of charismatic, transactional, and transformational leadership types. *Charismatic leadership* is the special power of a person to inspire fascination and loyalty in others, notably in times of social crisis or a need for change. *Transactional leadership* relies on power to motivate followers through self-interest, reward, and punishment. *Transformational leadership* mobilizes power for change by appealing to followers’ higher ideals and moral values instead of the baser emotions of fear, greed, and hatred.¹⁴ Despite these more participative and relational leadership styles, the focus remains external, namely, how a leader influences the behaviour of others. But what of the influences that shape and mold a leader internally?

Hannah et al. claim that the systematic assessment of leaders’ strengths of character has garnered minimal attention. They state that advancing leader character as the locus of leadership permits a deeper understanding of “who a leader of character *is*, separate from what they *do* or *transmit*.”¹⁵ Quoting Sheehy, Kisling defines *character* as “a pattern of behaviour that is engraved through significant experiences and decisions.”¹⁶ He introduces “an explicit characterological perspective on [transformational leadership theory] that demonstrates how character is the foundation of transformational leadership behaviours.”¹⁷ Kisling’s dissertation is one of the few studies to attempt a quantitative analysis on a cohort of university students preparing for leadership (in this case the ministry). While this type of analysis can prove valuable for broader application, it still leaves the examination of *individual* inner leadership development untouched. Therefore, this major research paper aims to contribute this alternative perspective to the field of leadership studies.

¹³ Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-69.

¹⁵ Sean T. and Bruce J. Avolio Hannah, “The Locus of Leader Character,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 22(2011): 980.

¹⁶ Reid A. Kisling, “Character for Leadership: The Role of Personal Characteristics in Effective Leadership Behaviors” (Regent University, April 2007), 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

B. METHODOLOGY

Disciplines in the Social Sciences (i.e. Economics, International Relations, Political Science) lean towards quantitative methodology to establish empirical proof. If measurable data is unavailable, qualitative methods (i.e. comparative analysis) are an acceptable substitute. The goal is to create conceptual models that can withstand scrutiny under repeated testing. As such, using a solitary sample is typically discouraged (even anathema). By contrast, disciplines in the Arts (i.e. Classics, English, History) rely on qualitative methodology and accept single case studies. Themes, outlines, and unique patterns that emerge from sources, are comparable to the conceptual model. While there are no hard and fast rules, what is required is an objective distillation of the facts.

The methodology in this paper is multidisciplinary. It analyzes a Social Science topic (i.e. executive political leadership) from an Arts perspective (i.e. historical outline) by using a single subject (i.e. Abraham Lincoln). This multidisciplinary approach is ideal for studying a familiar theme, but from a fresh perspective, with novel phenomena. Additionally, it is qualitative since the purpose is to elicit subjective experience, where context is essential, and investigation is exploratory.¹⁸ Moreover, any findings could form the basis of a theory, open to quantitative analysis.

Also, this research paper introduces a hybrid model based upon the above reasons. It suggests a process for internal leadership growth called “Refined Executive Leadership”. As no measures exist for this process, the model’s components represent a historical outline of the major themes (versus a chronology of events) in Lincoln’s leadership development. The five components (stages) of the model are: (1) Crucible of Adversity, (2) Perseverance, (3) Fortitude [Humility], (4) Magnanimity, and (5) Beacon of Accountability. These stages are broad-brush strokes; however, using a single sample allows for better depth of analysis and increases the likelihood of obtaining information-rich data.

¹⁸ Karen Johnson, "Doing Qualitative Research," ed. PSC DSAD Studies Division (Ottawa: Public Service Commission, 2009).

C. DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this context, **refined** signifies “purified, fine-tuned, characterized by subtlety,”¹⁹ which is cultivated in a humble, resilient, persevering response to recurring failure, disappointment, and adversity. Leadership in this paradigm is examined at the **executive**, or chief, echelon. The **crucible of adversity** represents “unpleasant or difficult ... situation[s] of severe trial, in which ... concentrated forces interact ... leading to the creation of something new.”²⁰

The next three components are inner qualities developed in response to the crucible of adversity: **perseverance** is “steady persistence in the course of action, especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, and discouragement,”²¹ **fortitude** is “mental or emotional strength in facing difficulty, adversity, danger, or temptation courageously,”²² which progresses into **humility** or “a modest opinion or estimation of one’s own importance.”²³ This results in **magnanimity** or “the quality of being ... [fearlessly] noble in mind and heart ... free from petty resentfulness or vindictiveness.”²⁴ The executive becomes a **beacon of accountability** or “a person ... [displaying] a willingness to accept responsibility.”²⁵

Unlike past representations of leadership development, the conceptualization in Figure 1 below highlights a refined leader’s proactive responses to negative pressures that can hamper sound inner leadership development. Conversely, an *unrefined* leader does not overcome these same obstacles productively, derailing from his or her complete refinement. The model’s cyclical design demonstrates that this refining process recurs with each and every new challenge in an executive’s life till he or she becomes a beacon of accountability, with ever-maturing steel in the soul.

¹⁹ Barber, "Refined."

²⁰ "Adversity," Oxford University Press, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/adversity?q=adversity>; "Crucible," Oxford University Press, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/crucible?q=crucible>; "Crucible," Merriam-Webster, Inc., <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crucible>.

²¹ "Perseverance," Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/perseverance>.

²² "Fortitude," Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fortitude?s=t>.

²³ "Humility," Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/humility?s=t>.

²⁴ "Magnanimity," Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/magnanimity?s=t>; "Magnanimous," Farlex, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/magnanimous>.

²⁵ "Beacon," Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/beacon?s=t>; "Accountability," Merriam-Webster, Inc., <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/accountability>.

FIGURE 1: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL



D. WHY ABRAHAM LINCOLN?

Great executive leadership can originate from anywhere, so why choose the sixteenth President of the United States? For one simple reason: "Lincoln was a supreme politician ... He understood politics because he understood human nature."²⁶ Few political executives have achieved what Lincoln did, let alone within one term, and under incomparable duress. The Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln's Civil War order, which declared all slaves held in rebellious Confederate states free, will long cement his image as "The Great Emancipator" in American history. Yet this was more than a command based on the principle that all men are created equal under the Declaration of Independence; it was a well-timed decision that gave the Union military edge (black men could enlist), dovetailed with Lincoln's suasion of public opinion on abolition, and helped his re-election over rival abolitionists in his Cabinet.

²⁶ Sidney Blumenthal, "The Great Campaigner," *Newsweek*, October 22 2012, 34.

But Lincoln is equally vilified. The Civil War was the bloodiest war that Americans have ever fought. Four years after the first Confederate shot was fired, an estimated 600,000 lives were lost in a nation of 31.5 million. In proportional terms, were the same war waged today, the death toll in the United States would exceed five million.²⁷ For Blumenthal, Lincoln deserves the title of “The Great Campaigner” – a master of political ruthlessness, who “traded favors, twisted arms, and bullied friends”²⁸ for the sake of the highest ideals.²⁹ He agrees with Thaddeus Stevens, the Radical Republican Congressman of Pennsylvania, who viewed the Thirteenth Amendment to abolish slavery from the U.S. as: “the greatest measure of the nineteenth century [which] was passed by corruption, aided and abetted by the purest man in America.”³⁰

Loved or hated, Lincoln remains an enigma. Biographical works tend to either perpetuate the saintly mythology that surrounds him or deconstruct it. The goal here is to give an honest account of “Honest Abe” – the rise of an ordinary, but flawed man, who was born and bred for two of the most monumental tasks in American history – the preservation of the Union and the freedom of its slaves. By these acts, “Lincoln continued the work begun by the nation’s founders [along with] the re-establishment of the United States of America on its founding principles, in both theory and practice.”³¹

Although more than a century and a half separates his first election from our times, the issues he faced in his day remain remarkably current. Like us, he encountered dilemmas of social injustice, democratic governance, and leadership liability – all of which were subject to intense, and visceral, media and public scrutiny. If he were alive one wonders how he would respond to our modern democratic challenges, such as:

²⁷ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005). 346.

²⁸ Blumenthal, “The Great Campaigner,” Cover.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

³¹ Ronald D. Reitveld, “Lincoln’s View of the Founding Fathers,” in *Abraham Lincoln: Sources and Styles of Leadership*, ed. William D. Pederson Frank J. Williams, and Vincent J. Marsala (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 41.

1. How do you govern if part of a country wants to separate?
2. How do you unite a fledgling party rife with internal strife?
3. Is electoral reform needed? (Lincoln won with only 40% of votes cast³²).
4. What process should govern senior public appointments?
5. How do you legislate social justice or equality?
6. Which freedoms uphold a nation's constitution and which do not?
7. What are the limits to executive power?

One thing is certain: Abraham Lincoln's leadership matured during his time as President. But this was more than *doing* the right thing or *transmitting* values. It was at the same time *being* a person of credibility or "worthy of ... esteem."³³ As Wilson writes:

[Little has been studied of] Lincoln's early life[,] and the circumstances that brought about his emergence as a man of consequence ... are in particular need of attention. The rough conditions in which Lincoln was raised and made his way as a young man are undeniable, but they are all too easily rationalized as what he rose above, rather than what stamped his character ... To fully appreciate the historical phenomenon of Lincoln's rise from obscurity to greatness, we must come to terms with the process by which he emerged and distinguished himself.³⁴

As such, this paper proposes that Abraham Lincoln's journey to the executive was not instant success; *au contraire*, it was partly the culmination of inner leadership refinement – by the stamping *and* surmounting of circumstances – before any instantaneous recognition.

³² Edward L. Ayers, "What Lincoln Was Up Against: The Context of Leadership," in *Lincoln's Legacy of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Gary L. McDowell, *Jepson Studies in Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 14.

³³ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*: 6.

³⁴ Douglas L. Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998). 4.

2. CRUCIBLE OF ADVERSITY

THE TRIALS OF LIFE

A. LEADERSHIP: NATURE & NURTURE

Can refined executive leadership be learned? On the one hand, yes, if what is being taught is a set of theories or principles. On the other hand, no, if this knowledge remains untested. Theory is the easy part; application is much harder. But even application can fall short of refinement if actions and character are disconnected. For instance, a leader's ability to articulate a clear vision can prove dangerous (even fatal) to followers if motivated by deception or delusion, as seen in cult leaders. Head knowledge can convert into an arsenal of techniques motivated out of self-interest. Plus, high standards of ethical behaviour linked to good intentions are mutable: a leader's behaviour can falter at the first signs of adversity, if ruled by circumstances. To be refined, leadership actions and motivations are rooted in and emanate from character. They encompass both the mind and the heart of a true leader. This is not soul with steel, but steel *in* the soul.

Refinement is a process of purification. Williams refers to the books of the medieval Arabic philosopher al-Kindi, who explained that crucible steel is "iron, that is not natural ... into which *one throws something that cleans it and hardens it.*"³⁵ Natural iron or any residual carbon content from imperfect melting resulted in "slushy"³⁶ swords. Quick et al. describe the fusion of character with sustained ethical behaviour:

Strength of character is often forged in a crisis, which offers both danger and opportunity. In such crucibles, the leader has the opportunity to both draw on the character strengths formed to that point in the life experience while at the same time having the opportunity to make decisions and refine or redefine the inner strengths of character so vital to moral leadership.³⁷

³⁵ Williams, *The Sword and the Crucible*: 27.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27, 120.

³⁷ James Campbell Quick, Thomas A. Wright, "Character-Based Leadership, Context, and Consequences," *The Leadership Quarterly* 22(2011): 987.

Forging involved heating metal at red-hot temperatures to make it malleable. Without it, crude iron could not become steel. Similarly, raw potential needs severe testing. At a young age, Lincoln was already displaying keen political instincts and bravery. According to White, his stepsister, Mathilda, recollected his stump speaking: “He would call the children and friends around him ... get up on a [tree] stump and repeat almost word for word the sermon he had heard from the Sunday before.”³⁸ While averse to unfair fighting, Lincoln enjoyed wrestling, a popular frontier sport considered a test of strength and skill. When he was on the verge of besting New Salem champion, Jack Armstrong, his opponent’s gang moved in to “help”. Lincoln forestalled disaster by declaring he would fight all of them – one at a time. No one accepted. The match was declared a draw. By this, “[Lincoln] at once won their hearts and was invited to become one of the company.”³⁹ All who were present understood the purpose of this rite of passage: to test the mettle of a newcomer.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Lincoln was far from purified, fine-tuned, or characterized by subtlety. He had grown up a Hoosier – the nickname for poor white farmers from Kentucky and Tennessee who had migrated into the newly created states of Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. Their distinctive twang and vocabulary stood at variance with 19th century printed English. To an aspiring youth fascinated by words, poetry, and literature, writing Standard English would open doors, with books his avenues. On his own, Lincoln tackled English grammar.⁴¹ Despite this greater exposure to the outside world, the frontier was not polite society. Lincoln’s storytelling was a notorious repertoire of off-coloured humour, which included racial and ethnic stereotypes. Rude impropriety was the cultural staple of his surroundings, and Lincoln’s affinity for performance and public speaking undoubtedly raised his status.⁴²

³⁸ Jr. White, Ronald C., *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009). 36.

³⁹ Wilson, *Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*: 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 26-27, 33; Paul Findley, *A. Lincoln: The Crucible of Congress* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1979). 4.

⁴¹ Wilson, *Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*: 63.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 67-69.

Also, Lincoln's insatiable hunger for learning was hardly praised. Life on the frontier required hard manual labour, particularly in clearing thick forests and brush for farming. Schooling would typically last one to three months and in remote districts was often held every two years.⁴³ The odd sight of a young man reading, which Lincoln apparently indulged in at the expense of his work duties, was a continual source of frustration to his employers. One of them, his neighbor John Ronnie remarked: "Abe was awful lazy: he worked for me – was always reading and thinking – used to get mad at him."⁴⁴ While Lincoln's stepmother, Sarah, encouraged his industry, his father, Thomas, saw it as sloth and would sometimes slash him for neglecting work.⁴⁵ "Lincoln's motivation would have to come from within."⁴⁶

But more than anything else, working the frontier put pioneers in constant brushes with lawsuit, loss, danger, disease, and death. Inadequate title claims meant boundary lines were frequently disputed, spurring further migration westward. Rail fences had to be built "horse high, bull strong, and pig tight"⁴⁷ to prevent these farm animals from escaping. Migration incurred the wrath of American Indians, who retaliated by raiding settler homes. By the time Lincoln reached eighteen, his birth mother had died from contaminated milk, his weakly brother shortly after birth, and his sister after birthing a stillborn child.⁴⁸ Edwards Pierrepont, an American statesman and loyal Democrat who supported Lincoln, eulogized at the Seventh District Assembly of the Lincoln Club:

Abraham Lincoln was purely a representative American ... If Lincoln had been born to a million he would never have been the man he was. A good governor of other men must have known something of the sorrows and trials of this life. No man is ever made strong who does not exercise his own muscles.⁴⁹

⁴³ White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography*: 31.

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*: 57.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁴⁶ White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography*: 31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 36, 12, 27, 18, 38-39.

⁴⁹ "Abraham Lincoln's Birthday; Its Seventy-Second Anniversary Celebrated by the Lincoln Club," *The New York Times* February 13, 1881.

B. LEADERSHIP: DESTINY & SKILL

Can refined executive leadership be determined? Refinement itself is a matter of choice open to any level of leadership; however, attainment of the *executive* is a matter of destiny, subject to providential circumstances and events. Part of an executive's path is beyond mere human control and uniquely fitted for his or her time. American philosopher and author, Mark Twain, recognized this about Lincoln's time and place of birth:

It was no accident that planted Lincoln on a Kentucky farm, half way between the lakes and the Gulf ... If the Union was to be saved ... [no] wintry New England Brahmin could have done it, or any torrid cotton planter, regarding the distant Yankee as a species of obnoxious foreigner. It needed a man of the border, where civil war meant the grapple of brother and brother and disunion a raw and gaping wound ... who knew slavery not from books only, but as a living thing ... It needed one who knew how human all the parties to the quarrel were ... who saw them all reflected in himself, and felt their dissensions like the tearing apart of his own soul. ... [This] man, in whose heart knowledge and charity had left no room for malice, was marked by Providence as the one to "bind up the Nation's wounds."⁵⁰

Even Lincoln's physical traits and interpersonal skills had a unique and paradoxical quality. Despite his lanky and gawky appearance, Lincoln had "the strength of a giant."⁵¹ He could hold an axe at arm's length for minutes, using only thumb and forefinger to grip the handle, dumbfounding powerful sailors who tried in vain to imitate him.⁵² As Carwardine observes: "It was easy to underestimate Lincoln – though from that he derived advantage."⁵³ Just as he had the self-confidence to outwrestle physical rivals, he could outmaneuver political ones. Quoting Leonard Swett, one of Lincoln's advisors, Carwardine writes: "[Anyone] who took Lincoln for a simple-minded man would very soon wake up with his back in a ditch."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Mark Twain, "On Abraham Lincoln," History Blog Project, <http://marktwainblog.org/on-abraham-lincoln/>.

⁵¹ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 436.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Richard Carwardine, "Wonderful Self-Reliance: Abraham Lincoln's Leadership," in *Lincoln's Legacy of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Gary L. McDowell, *Jepson Studies in Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 113.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

C. LEADERSHIP: POWER & INNER BEING

Lincoln's formative years corresponded with America's search for its own sense of identity.

The coincidental deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams on July 4, 1826, both icons of the Revolutionary movement, meant that a chapter in the nation's history had concluded.⁵⁵

The veterans of 1812 had fought to prevent British re-colonization of America's borders.

But what was the *raison d'être* for Lincoln's generation? There was the expansion westward, but with slavery a nagging issue, how could this endeavor match the War of Independence?

The time seemed ripe for America to birth new heroes and establish its legitimacy in the world. It was an equally vulnerable and pivotal moment for the new fledgling nation.

The quest for the "right man", yet devoid of inner strength, could do harm. As Spitz explains:

The temptations of power, though resisted by some overcome many more. The lure of glory, of pride, of material gain, no less than the conviction that given the power to implement his will one can achieve great things, the right things, for the whole of his people – all these combine to make the pursuit, and later the retention, of power a more than necessary thing. Good men may begin the quest reluctantly, but they rarely end that way. The game is too serious, the weapons too biting, the stakes too high, for them to remain in fact what they strive to be – selfless and genteel servants or would-be servants of the body politic.⁵⁶

By contrast, as Lincoln's prestige and power increased, his character remained consistent.

His first political announcement hints as to why:

I am young and unknown to many of you. I was born and have ever remained in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealth or popular relations to recommend me ... But if the good people [i.e. the independent voters] in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Leigh Sedgwick, "Abraham Lincoln and the Search for American Identity," in *Lincoln's Legacy of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Gary L. McDowell, *Jepson Studies in Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 57.

⁵⁶ David Spitz, "Power and Personality: The Appeal to the "Right Man" in Democratic States," in *Personality and Politics*, ed. Gordon J. DiRenzo (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press - Doubleday, 1974), 400.

⁵⁷ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*: 6.

3. PERSEVERANCE

DEVELOPING STEADY PERSISTENCE

A. REFINEMENT IN OBSCURITY

Forging iron into steel involved sweat. The sword-smith had to shape and fuse metals of differing qualities, some softer for the core or sides, some harder for the edge and point. Harder steel “sandwiched” softer iron so that the blade could flex under sudden impact but resist deformation. Alternating between an anvil and a hot coal furnace, the sword-smith gently and repeatedly “nudged” the block of glowing metal, keeping it at the right “colour” temperature to maintain pliability. Hence, the sword’s sides, edges, and tang were molded, none of them exactly identical to the other in their characteristics.⁵⁸

Rare is the leader who has never experienced hardship. Scarcer still is the leader who can patiently endure severe testing without quitting. Admittedly, withdrawing from the leadership path is easier than struggling on it. Part of inner refinement calls for a leader to persist after setbacks, learn from mistakes, and develop patience.

Bell claims that the vast majority of leadership is about making tough decisions – and that humans are inherently bad at this. He offers an anecdote for self-improvement:

A [top] business leader visited an MBA class to enlighten the students. At the end of the talk [one of the students] asked the leader the secret of success. “Two words—good decisions.” [Another] asked, “Well, how do you learn to make good decisions?” “One word—experience.” A third [one] asked, “So how do you get the experience?” “Two words” answered the business leader, “bad decisions.”⁵⁹

People often resort to what political scientist Herbert Simon called “bounded rationality”⁶⁰ – making decisions based on convenience, habit, and expediency versus optimal pay-offs.

⁵⁸ Clements, “How Were Swords *Really* Made?”.

⁵⁹ Steven Bell, “Learning to be a Better Decision Maker | Leading From the Library,” *Library Journal*, <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2012/04/opinion/leading-from-the-library/learning-to-be-a-better-decision-maker-leading-from-the-library/>.

⁶⁰ “Bounded Rationality,” *Business Dictionary.com*, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/bounded-rationality.html>.

Lincoln's own career meandered before settling into politics. By the time Thomas decided to relocate to Illinois, Lincoln had turned twenty-one, and legally a man, could have struck out on his own. Instead, he helped his father move in spite of their estrangement. Before he left home, Lincoln sidelined as a farmhand, rail-splitter, woodcutter, ferryman, and boatman along the Ohio River. In the absence of railways, rivers were the lifelines of undeveloped country. When receding water levels forced the disposal of the *Talisman*, Lincoln's speculative business venture into steamboat transport, he voluntarily enlisted in the Black Hawk War. His month-spell as captain ended when his company was routed out. He never engaged in battle: his service amounted to desultory marching between outposts. He re-enlisted as a private, serving only three months. Despite a lackluster military career, Lincoln distinguished himself as a leader of men by commanding unruly volunteers, defending the company's honour, and making friends everywhere, including John T. Stuart, a well-connected lawyer from Springfield, Illinois.⁶¹

Struggling with poverty, and with nowhere else to go, Lincoln managed to acquire half interest in a general store by signing a promissory note. The investment was a disaster. Before long, Lincoln had fallen into huge debt and nearly jeopardized his honest reputation. In a last-ditch effort to escape bankruptcy, his partner William Greene applied to sell liquor by the drink – a controversial move that tainted Lincoln's storekeeping practices – and later resurfaced in the Lincoln-Douglas presidential debates. Fortunately, living in New Salem was inexpensive; however, Lincoln stumbled between unemployment and low-paying jobs. At his lowest point, the Surveyor of Sangamon offered him work in which he excelled. Surveying not only paid decently, it also used Lincoln's self-taught mathematical abilities, his familiarity with the dense forest, and allowed him to travel and get widely acquainted.⁶²

⁶¹ White, A. *Lincoln: A Biography*: 40; Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*: 86-90.

⁶² Wilson, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*: 91-97.

Lincoln had already displayed a considerable interest in the law back in Indiana, when relatives noticed his penchant for attending lawsuit hearings around age seventeen. While studying law books he even began drafting legal documents (deeds, wills, and letters) for neighbours without charging them a cent. In his first case, Lincoln defended the honour of a disgraced young lady after a young man refused to marry her. His amateur pleading used an analogy: the man was a white dress and the lady was a glass bottle. Lincoln argued that a soiled dress could be restored, but strike the bottle and it was gone. The young man had struck the bottle and was at fault. The lady received a hundred dollars in damages. Lincoln, though, later felt this first victory was hardly respectable: he had been ignorant of the duties and manners of a Justice of the Peace.⁶³ He decided that he had “thought of trying to study law – rather thought he could not succeed at that without a better education.”⁶⁴

Nonetheless, he committed himself to his dream. While he received encouragement from Stuart after his election to the Illinois General Assembly in 1834, it took great effort. He ploughed through Sir William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765) with its technical vocabulary and intellectual presuppositions, using a pocket dictionary. Meanwhile, he mixed in surveying to pay the bills, endured the merciless teasing of friends who saw no purpose for an esoteric subject like law, and suffered heartbreak at the death of his fiancé, Ann Rutledge. Although his mastery of the subject was incomplete, he was able to found a vocation without the formal education, knowledge of Latin, or the apprenticeship or legal training possessed by professional men. It took a total of two years of solitary and intermittent study, which he had seen as impractical three years before. Yet on his own, Lincoln was developing the inner strength as well as independent thinking to stand alone – what Wilson would see in the young Lincoln as “an act of self-definition.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 100-03.

⁶⁴ Abraham Lincoln, “The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,” ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press in association with the Abraham Lincoln Association, 1953-1955), 4:65.

⁶⁵ Wilson, *Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*: 105, 04-08.

Lincoln's political education was advanced through the businessmen in New Salem. They routinely gathered at Denton Offut's store, where Lincoln worked as an assistant clerk, to discuss the political issues of the day. Here Lincoln could gauge political sentiments, and within a year, announced his candidacy. By 1834, his second attempt at election succeeded and he ventured to the State House in Vandalia, which would eventually lead to Congress – and the White House. Throughout his political career, Lincoln rarely ran for nomination as the preferred candidate. What's more, he was often called to support his rival after a loss, such as his election to chair Edward D. Baker's delegation, his opponent for Congressman.⁶⁶ Findley indicates that Lincoln learned and refined a political doctrine, which would become one of his greatest contributions to statecraft, namely:

The best way to accomplish a worthy political goal is to reject steps that seem extreme or impractical and concentrate instead on steps that are reachable, small though each may be. In years to come, [Lincoln] applied the doctrine repeatedly as he dealt with slavery and rebellion.⁶⁷

In spite of Lincoln's early recognition of leadership accountability, his pride and ambition did get in the way. When he finally became a freshman U.S. House Representative at the age of thirty-eight, barely three weeks in Congress, he resolved to have the last word. In the *Spot Resolutions*, Lincoln openly voiced his opposition to the Mexican War, and within President Polk's presence, claimed the U.S. was waging a war of "the sheerest deception,"⁶⁸ evoked by the executive branch in defiance of Congress' constitutional war-making power. Although Lincoln did expose an illegal act of aggression (later confirmed by Polk's diary), the war was popular and he had failed to discern public opinion. He served a solitary term. Lincoln retired to private law practice until galvanized by the *Kansas-Nebraska Act* (1854).⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Findley, *A. Lincoln: The Crucible of Congress*: 4, 7, 23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁸ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," 1:433.

⁶⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, "Lincoln's Opposition to the Mexican War," in *Lincoln's Legacy of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Gary L. McDowell, *Jepson Studies in Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 87, 95.

B. STUCK IN THE CRUCIBLE

The process of refinement is not a formula for electability. Leadership can be *unrefined* and still reach the executive branch. The difference between refined and unrefined leadership lies in the example of accountability, and legacy, each leaves behind. Refined leaders engage in self-discipline: they own their thoughts and actions. Unrefined leaders lack self-restraint: they let circumstances govern them; fault lies outside themselves. Therefore, it is possible to attain success without inner refinement – in other words, to be stuck in the crucible.

One example was Lincoln's contemporary and rival for the American presidency, Salmon P. Chase. In an era that had a life expectancy of forty-five, death was commonplace. Chase lost his father and a comfortable home at eight, to be raised in a rigid boarding school by a domineering uncle who only bestowed conditional affection. His temperament would be defined by a restless, insatiable drive for acknowledgement and the trappings of success. Like Lincoln, he was a lawyer and just as brave. He shunned politics until fellow abolitionist, James G. Birney, faced certain death from a hostile mob. At six foot two and broadly built, Chase commandingly rebuffed their threats: "I can be found at any time."⁷⁰ The angry crowd backed down and instantly Chase became a hero of the anti-slavery community. However, Goodwin writes: "Chase could not separate his own ambition from the cause he championed ... His personal defeats would be regarded as setbacks for freedom itself."⁷¹ Unintuitive to human nature, his calculating tactics "betrayed old associates and made lifelong enemies"⁷² that cost him the 1860 presidential nomination. (He never forgave his home state of Ohio). Even as Lincoln's U.S. Treasury Secretary and Chief Justice, Chase continually undermined the President's authority. Chase failed at two more presidential bids, suffered a heart attack and a stroke, fell into depression, and tragically died a broken man at the age of sixty-five.⁷³

⁷⁰ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 109.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 136.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 48, 109, 752.

4. FORTITUDE

DEVELOPING HUMBLE RESILIENCE

A. PROVEN CHARACTER

Ancient tempering refers to the initial quenching (plunging) of red-hot steel into cold water. Modern tempering refers to the reheating of steel after quenching it to reduce its hardness. Gentle reheating, however, raises the toughness of steel considerably; thus, full quenching remains the preferred technique. Combining carbon with iron was a meticulous process, and difficult to control, making ancient steelmaking largely guesswork. Even so, this step was crucial as rapid cooling prevented unwanted crystallization, brittleness, and improved the overall structural integrity of a sword. Tempering kept the blade flexible to facilitate forging without compromising toughness.⁷⁴ Therefore, the crafting of swords paid attention to details *inside* as well as outside of a blade.

A refined leader develops a keen understanding of human nature – that of others but particularly of his or her own. This objectivity requires mental and emotional strength, regardless of criticism or praise. Giftedness may set leaders apart, but refinement infuses them with humanity. The American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, claimed that: “He is great who is what he is from nature, and who never reminds us of others. But he must be related to us, and our life receive from him some promise of explanation.”⁷⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau interpreted Emerson’s words this way: a great statesman possesses more than rare talent; he “approaches perfection in certain qualities of mind, character, and action that illuminate the very nature of man ... [He] demonstrates in actual experience how far great men can go and, hence how much farther ... a man can go who aspires to be great.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Gonzalez, “A Brief History of the Ancient Science of Sword Making”; Williams, *The Sword and the Crucible*: 21, 26; Garvin, “Ancient Sword Making - How They Made Swords in the Medieval Days”.

⁷⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Uses of Great Men,” ed. Jim Manley, 12 vols., vol. 4, *Representative Men* (Boston: The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1850), <http://www.rwe.org/complete-works/iv---representative-men/uses-of-great-men.html>.

⁷⁶ Hans J. and David Hein Morgenthau, *Essays on Lincoln’s Faith and Politics*, ed. Kenneth W. Thompson (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1983). 4.

Morgenthau furthermore suggests that Lincoln's greatness uniquely surpassed those of other great statesman, as none perfected a combination of qualities like he did. Some of these fine-tuned qualities included objectivity, humour, compassion, and humility. Looking more closely at humility, Morgenthau describes it as impartial self-evaluation:

Objectivity in relations between the self and ... the outside world becomes humility when applied to the self ... Most men are proud of themselves ... Their ego inflates their own merits at the expense of others. They are proud ... unjust towards others. It is the rare humble man who sees himself as he ought to be seen in view of his objective merits. He neither yields to the inflated claims of his ego, nor does he make concessions to the adulation and denigration of others ... His humility is the absence of pride with which most men look at themselves in comparison with others, elevating themselves at the expense of others.⁷⁷

Humility is not self-denigration or false modesty. Neither does it mean forgetting oneself. Self-evaluation is enabled by an emotional detachment rather than a separation from self. Pride points an accusing finger; humility dares to look in the mirror. Because of impartiality, humility is not emotional weakness but mental resilience. It tempers or refines leadership perseverance with adaptability. This healthy sense of self-worth shields a leader internally from offense, flattery, arrogance, vengefulness, and temptations associated with power.

Carwardine mentions that certain aspects of Lincoln's temperament and personality suited him well for the loneliness of executive office and in his political management. However, this came at a great personal cost: "[Lincoln's] mental fortitude – forged through his dark passages of depression – gave him more resilience in extremity than some of those around him."⁷⁸ By tempering resilience with modesty, Lincoln's humility liberated him to let bygones be bygones: "A man has not time to spend half his life in quarrels. If any man ceases to attack me, I never remember the past against him."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

⁷⁸ Carwardine, "Wonderful Self-Reliance: Abraham Lincoln's Leadership," 112.

⁷⁹ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 665.

Lincoln underwent a metamorphosis between 1849, when he temporarily retired from public life at forty, and 1854, when he re-emerged from a self-imposed political exile. In his twenties and thirties, Lincoln was regarded as “something of a party hack, known best for his talents as a skilled wheeler-dealer in legislative halls and as a clever belittler of Democrats on the stump.”⁸⁰ His forties and fifties, however, marked his great statesmanship. This was a far cry from his past: Lincoln was “especially adept at cruel mimicry of accents, mannerisms, gestures, and physical defects”⁸¹ that one political antagonist, Jesse B. Thomas, “began to blubber like a baby, and left the assembly.”⁸² (A grieved Lincoln later apologized). In obscurity, Lincoln said: “With *me*, the race of ambition has been a failure – a flat failure.”⁸³ His refinement would echo Emerson’s words: “A great man is always willing to be little ... Pushed, tormented, defeated, [he] is cured ... of conceit; has got moderation and real skill.”⁸⁴

Before the *Kansas-Nebraska Act* (1854), Lincoln had mastered Euclid’s *Elements* and marshaled his arguments on the politically hot issues of slavery and popular sovereignty. Illinois Democratic Senator, Stephen A. Douglas, designed the Act to open new land to farming and a transcontinental railroad. By writing in popular sovereignty, he could avoid taking a stance on slavery: let the voters decide on its extension into the new territories. Anti-slavery coalitions decried a breach of the *Missouri Compromise* (1820), which closed Kansas to slavery. Lincoln finally embraced “the compelling issue he had long sought.”⁸⁵ With “Euclidean coherence”⁸⁶ – simple, clear, precise logic – he argued against the extension of slavery and was once again elected to the Illinois General Assembly. This “demotion” to the Legislature proved pivotal: it gave Lincoln the chance to campaign for the U.S. Senate.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Michael Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994). xiv.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 152.

⁸³ Lincoln, “The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,” 2:383.

⁸⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Compensation,” ed. Jim Manley, 12 vols., vol. 2, *Essays I* (Boston: The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1841), <http://rwe.org/complete-works/ii---essays-i/iii-compensation.html>.

⁸⁵ Findley, *A. Lincoln: The Crucible of Congress*: 222.

⁸⁶ Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*: 5.

⁸⁷ Findley, *A. Lincoln: The Crucible of Congress*: 223.

In protest to *Kansas-Nebraska*, a new political movement – the Republican Party – emerged and convened in Chicago on May 18, 1860 to nominate its presidential candidate. Lincoln’s name was on the ballot, paradoxically, because he had failed to become a Senator. In 1855, Lincoln’s maiden bid for the Senate seemed assured of victory. During the first poll, he received 47 votes, four shy of a majority. Douglas Democrat, James Shields, had 41 votes. Anti-*Nebraska* Democrat, Lyman Trumbull, was a distant third with 5 votes. Trumbull won. Lincoln had uncovered a plot by Trumbull supporters to sell out to a clandestine candidate, Governor Joel A. Matheson of Illinois. Lincoln directed his supporters to back up Trumbull. Electing a former Democrat helped Lincoln to unite feuding anti-*Nebraska* Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. It further disclosed him as the visionary leader long sought by Northerners. Even so, he secretly agonized at being “wounded in the house of friends.”⁸⁸

Trumbull backed Lincoln for the 1858 Illinois Senate race, which he lost to Douglas. Except this time, defeat propelled Lincoln into federal politics. His debates against Douglas had captured national attention. Notably, Lincoln’s moderation on slavery raised his appeal:

I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institutions of slavery in the States where it exists ... I have no lawful right to do so ... [but] there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence.⁸⁹

Lincoln had learned a valuable lesson: “Whoever moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statues, or pronounces judicial decisions. He makes possible the enforcement of these, else impossible.”⁹⁰ He no longer disgraced political adversaries to advance a cause. Abolition was a radical platform, equivalent in the public mind to extremism and anarchy.⁹¹ Advocating it cost Lincoln’s rivals; guarding the Union won him the Republican nomination.

⁸⁸ Matthew Pinsker, “Senator Abraham Lincoln,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 2, 19-21; Findley, *A. Lincoln: The Crucible of Congress*: 223-25; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 173.

⁸⁹ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*: 165.

⁹⁰ Lincoln, “The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,” 2:553.

⁹¹ Findley, *A. Lincoln: The Crucible of Congress*: 232.

B. INCONSISTENCY

The U.S. Declaration of Independence states that, “governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”⁹² In the U.S., democracy took on the form of a republic – a government absent of a constitutional monarch – to prevent the abuses and usurpations of absolute despotism. Conversely, Middle English had a phrase, *The Law of the Medes and Persians*, referring to ancient kings that issued unalterable laws.⁹³ From a modern perspective, popular suffrage is the only choice for democratic governance. However, it incurs a trade-off: a sense of personal accountability coming from the executive. If a king’s word became law, his word was his bond. Ergo, he could not “flip-flop” on issues.

William Henry Seward was the front-runner for the 1860 Republican nomination. Confident, energetic, sociable, educated, and privileged, he made an impressive candidate. The New York Governor’s progressive platforms on education, immigration, and slavery made him an influential and controversial figure. What’s more, he was a man of principle who braved hostility. His choice to defend the losing case of William Freeman, a deranged negro convicted of murder, won Chase’s admiration: “Considering his own personal position and the circumstances, [it] was magnanimous in the highest degree.”⁹⁴ Although eloquent, Seward’s radical language (i.e. slavery is a political and moral evil) damaged his prospects. Like Lincoln, he was not an abolitionist, maintaining that where slavery already existed was beyond the reach of federal power; rather, he envisioned it dying out through urbanization. Opportunistic, he upset liberal Republicans when he softened his tone to placate moderates. Repositioning his image months before Chicago only demonstrated Lincoln’s consistency⁹⁵ – a quality Seward would later come to admire serving as Lincoln’s Secretary of State.

⁹² The Continental Congress, “The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html.

⁹³ “Law of the Medes and Persians,” Oxford University Press, http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/law%2Bof%2Bthe%2Bmedes%2Bband%2Bpersians__1; “Law of the Medes and the Persians,” Dictionary.com, LLC, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/law+of+the+medes+and+the+persians>.

⁹⁴ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 87.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29, 83, 133-34, 92, 255-56.

5. MAGNANIMITY

EXERCISING INTEGRITY

A. GREATNESS OF SOUL

Ancient tempering had a triple effect on a blade: one, it increased its pliability for molding; two, it increased its toughness for strength; three, it modulated its hardness for sharpness without brittleness. Williams states: “The best swords needed to be both hard ... to be given the sharpest edges, and tough, to resist cracking under use ... steel was the best material.”⁹⁶ Effects one and two treated the inside of a blade; effect number three treated its outside. Using simile, Perseverance and Fortitude [Humility] are a refined leader’s inner responses to the Crucible of Adversity. Magnanimity translates these qualities to the outside world. Two schools of thought on magnanimity are Classical (Aristotelian) and Christian (Biblical). Both ways of thinking were pertinent in Lincoln’s time.

Holloway addresses if relevancy exists between magnanimity and modern politics. For one, the two seem incompatible. Aristotelian magnanimity is “the noble self-confidence of the man who knows that he has the moral and intellectual qualities to execute the duties of the highest political office in an excellent manner ... he is capable of ... statesmanship.”⁹⁷ This elitist notion is at odds with a current belief in equality. Next, modern government seeks to protect the individual rights of men, not direct them to a place of moral excellence. Nevertheless, Holloway asserts: “A thirst for greatness continues to influence our politics.”⁹⁸ Voters still long for statesmanship with personal conviction and despise vote-getting tactics. Modern politicians still aspire to be great statesmen with a vision for the common good. Policymaking still needs good judgment. Modern societies still encounter moral dilemmas.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Williams, *The Sword and the Crucible*: 230.

⁹⁷ Carson Holloway, “Introduction,” in *Magnanimity and Statesmanship*, ed. Carson Holloway (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

Greatness of soul (Gk. *megalopsuchia*) characterized Aristotle's magnanimous man: he accurately assessed his worth and significance. Because of his worthiness, he merited society's greatest honours. His behaviour was moderate, his virtue independent of wealth, and his patronizing owing to a *bona fide* moral superiority. He could be entrusted to execute prudence in noble enterprises to serve fellow citizens. He was a statesman *par excellence*. Men with smallness of soul (Gk. *micropsuchia*) renounced self-love as well as self-less virtue. They fell short of their potential and noble service, becoming slaves to less worthy pursuits. Conversely, vain men liberally offered a good beyond their capacity to achieve successfully. The magnanimous man was a guardian of well-being, free from pride or ulterior motives.¹⁰⁰

Biblical magnanimity was marked by humility, charity, and lasting forgiveness. Greatness and honour derived from service: "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant."¹⁰¹ According to Fornieri, Augustine cautioned that inordinate love of honour could morph into the lust for power if unchecked by charity and humility. To this, Aquinas also maintained the complimentary nature of magnanimity and humility¹⁰²:

While magnanimity urges the mind to great things in accord with right reason ...
Humility restrains the appetite from aiming at great things against right reason ...
Although [they] agree as to matter, they differ as to mode, by reason of which
magnanimity is reckoned a part of fortitude, and humility a part of temperance.¹⁰³

Lincoln's magnanimity was purified in the truest sense as evidenced from the noble ends of his political ambition – preservation of the Union and the principles for which it stood.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Holloway, "Aristotle's Magnanimous Man," 13-27.

¹⁰¹ The Apostle Matthew, "Matthew 20:25-27," vol. 2013, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2007), <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2020:%2025-27&version=NLT>.

¹⁰² Joseph R. Fornieri, "Lincoln and Biblical Magnanimity," in *Magnanimity and Statesmanship*, ed. Carson Holloway (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 178-79.

¹⁰³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Kindle Version), (The Project Gutenberg Ebook of Summa Theologica (Secunda), 1225-1274), Q. 161, A.1 and A.4.

¹⁰⁴ Fornieri, "Lincoln and Biblical Magnanimity," 181.

Now centre stage, Lincoln faced challenges that tested the depth of his magnanimity. As Goodwin observes, Democratic newspapers, such as *The New York Herald*, had a field day attacking the Republican Party leader's inexperience, education, and appearance:

A third rate Western lawyer ... [and] lecturer, who cannot speak good grammar ... Lincoln is the leanest, lankiest, most ungainly mass of legs, arms, and hatchet-face ever strung upon a single frame. He has most unwarrantably abused the privilege which all politicians have of being ugly.¹⁰⁵

In 1860, opinion polls did not exist and photography was in its infancy. Newspapers relayed "audio-visual" information by circulating political speeches with embellished commentary. Hence, politicians relied on print to communicate with the public and influence sentiments. Lincoln grasped its potency and "celebrated the power of lucidity, logic and reason to speak to the intelligence, self-respect and moral sense of the people."¹⁰⁶ Rather than retaliating with inflammatory rhetoric, he consistently turned to reasoned argument.¹⁰⁷

The dissolution of the United States seemed imminent as national debate ensued, and impending war loomed, in connection with slavery. The nation needed *megalopsuchia* while it grappled to find a solution for slavery and Union – as did Lincoln. On the one hand, he had imbibed his parents' belief that slavery was "not only bad for blacks, but corrosive of the values of whites as well."¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, he likely shared the biases of his youth: "He could ... use the word "nigger," but almost never do so to inflict pain or condemn."¹⁰⁹ While Gates asserts this vacillation proves that "Lincoln wrestled with race until the end,"¹¹⁰ if Lincoln had endorsed abolition, the Union could have dissolved without ending slavery. To secure the nation's future, Lincoln's anti-slavery policy accomplished dual politic aims: (1) condemnation of slavery and its expansion, and (2) preservation of the United States.

¹⁰⁵ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 257.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Carwardine, *Lincoln*, Profiles in Power (Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2003). 46.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography*: 448.

¹⁰⁹ Phillip Shaw Paludan, "Lincoln and Negro Slavery: I Haven't Got Time for the Pain," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 27, no. 2 (2006): 14, 20.

¹¹⁰ Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Was Lincoln a Racist?," *The Root*(2009), <http://www.theroot.com/print/3990>.

If Lincoln had *micropsuchia*, he would have been indifferent to the suffering of slaves or purely devoted to power. In reality, his struggle against slavery comprised the ambition, honour, humility, and noble ends of tempered magnanimity:

I have never professed an indifference to the honors of official station ... Yet I ... remember that in the republican cause there is a higher aim than that of mere office ... the abolition of the Slave-trade by Great Brittain, was agitated a hundred years before it was a final success ... Wilberforce, [along with] Granville Sharpe helped that cause forward; but who can now name a single man who labored to retard it? ... The higher object of this contest may not be completely attained within the term of my natural life. But ... it will come in due time. Even in this view, I am proud, in my passing speck of time, to contribute an humble mite to that glorious consummation, which my own poor eyes may not last to see.¹¹¹

Lincoln's preference for gradual emancipation would embolden his critics to accuse him of covert abolition (pro-slavery Democrats) or tepid equivocation (pro-abolition Republicans). Pro-slavery leaders were militant, arrogant, and dogmatic, who silenced moral conscience. Pro-abolition firebrands, like William Lloyd Garrison, approached the brink of anarchism.¹¹² Lincoln spoke to the public's sense of justice and loyalty to the Declaration of Independence:

'We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal ... endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ... to secure these rights, governments are instituted ... DERIVING THEIR JUST POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED' ... The master not only governs the slave without his consent; but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those ... for himself. Allow ALL the governed an equal voice in the government, and that, and that only is self-government.¹¹³

By defending, without compromise, the principle of equality within the Declaration's ideals, Lincoln revealed and elevated the original magnanimity of the nation's Founding Fathers.

¹¹¹ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," Volume 2, Fragment on the Struggle Against Slavery.

¹¹² Richard Striner, "Abraham Lincoln and the Antislavery Movement," in *Lincoln's America: 1809-1865*, ed. Joseph R. Fornieri and Sara Vaughn Gabbard (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 153, 55, 57.

¹¹³ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," 2:266.

B. SMALLNESS OF SOUL

During America's Revolutionary War, the Thirteen Colonies set up a Continental Congress, which adopted a statement declaring their independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain on July 4, 1776. When the Declaration of Independence was initially signed, it was in effect, a compromise with slavery – introduced by Britain's monarchs in the course of colonization. The Declaration's author, Thomas Jefferson, penned the words "all men are created equal" as a clear rebuke of the institution. Without a common enemy, slave-owning and free states now disputed over the democratic ideals of the document.¹¹⁴

Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln's nemesis, was the Democrats' presidential nominee. Nicknamed "Little Giant", Douglas was small in stature but a dominant rising star in politics. He had Lincoln's principled consistency, but advocated the doctrine of popular sovereignty. To protect himself against the anti-*Nebraska* backlash, he played upon the deepest fears of white Illinoisans by associating abolition with social equality, citizenship, and racial mixing. According to Lander, Douglas upheld Polygenism, a view that "blacks are inferior by nature and somehow had to be controlled by whites."¹¹⁵ Therefore, slavery was not a moral issue, but a political one, to be voted upon by the Revolutionaries' offspring:

I believe this government was made ... by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever ... I do not regard the negro as my equal, and positively deny that he is my brother or any kin to me whatever.¹¹⁶

His manifesto unraveled. Douglas stunned Democrats by siding with Republicans against the *Lecompton Constitution* (1857), since it admitted Kansas as a slave state by voter fraud. Douglas' platform of false patriotism and apathy to injustice caused a three-way split within the Democratic Party, foiled his nomination, and in effect, handed Lincoln the Presidency.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Matthew Spalding, "How to Understand Slavery and the American Founding," The Heritage Foundation: Leadership for America, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2002/08/how-to-understand-slavery-and-americas>.

¹¹⁵ James Lander, "The Politics of Race," in *Lincoln & Darwin: Shared Visions of Race, Science, and Religion* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 99.

¹¹⁶ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*: 159.

¹¹⁷ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 196.

6. BEACON OF ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

A. THE REAL DEAL

Producing steel swords involved many steps. Mistakes at any point could lead to failure. Decorating a sword was no exception: “Etching a blade was a skilled and complex process that required patience, a steady hand and a sharp eye for quality.”¹¹⁸ While decor enabled the veneration of a blade, techniques like etching and gilding (applying a thin layer of gold), would have made hardening more difficult.¹¹⁹ With etching, an artist applied a weak acid to a blade’s decorative surface.¹²⁰ If engraving or branding was involved, the additional cuts could weaken a blade, compromising its functionality. Furthermore, it was only after hours of polishing and sharpening that a sword’s quality could be verified.¹²¹

Becoming a beacon of accountability represents the apex of leadership refinement, but is not a final point of destination. In fact, this stage presents the most perilous challenge to the executive: a state of complacency or self-satisfaction. While the other components of internal leadership development occur in relative obscurity, a beacon is on public display. Past stages negotiate the pitfalls of failure; this stage deals with the trappings of success. The attainment of power can lull into a sense of entitlement, self-preservation, and what Hood calls “blame-avoidance,”¹²² in which he aptly quotes social reformer Edwin Chadwick:

Those who have attained the chief places are led to seek the character of ‘safe men,’ – which is gained by avoiding entering into questions or giving reasons, that they may ‘not commit themselves;’ by evading difficulties neatly ... applying the rule – ‘Never to act until you are obliged, and then to do as little as you can.’¹²³

¹¹⁸ Roy Shadbolt, “The Etched Blade,” Wilkinson F-S Collection, http://www.wilkinsonscollection.com/wilkinsonscollection.com/The_Etched_Blade.html.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Dewitt, “Sword Etching,” Demand Media, Inc., http://www.ehow.com/about_4680242_sword-etching.html; Williams, *The Sword and the Crucible*: 223.

¹²⁰ Dirk H. Breiding, “Techniques of Decoration on Arms and Armor,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dect/hd_dect.htm.

¹²¹ Peter Yost, “Secrets of the Viking Sword,” in *NOVA* (PBS, 2012).

¹²² Christopher Hood, *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011). 157.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

One caveat: perseverance, fortitude, humility, magnanimity, and accountability are not age-dependent. Rather, the dedication and courage to practice refinement are essential. Lincoln's advice in a letter to discouraged West Point cadet, Quintin Campbell, is insightful vis-à-vis resolve and self-accountability:

Allow me to assure you it is a perfect certainty that you will, very soon, feel better--- quite happy---if you only stick to [your] resolution ... to procure a military education. I am older than you, ... and know, what I tell you is true. Adhere to your purpose and you will soon feel as well as you ever did. On the contrary, if you falter, and give up, you will lose the power of keeping any resolution, and will regret it all your life.¹²⁴

Length of time, if connected, could be related to an increasing magnitude of responsibility. Hence, character out of the limelight converts into character in the spotlight. For instance, Fornieri foreshadows Lincoln's presidential magnanimity during the Black Hawk War:

During his short-stint ... [Lincoln] intervened to save the life of an Indian scout who had stumbled into his camp. He stood up to the blood lust of his fellow volunteers who wanted to kill the Indian ... A lesser man would have given into the rabble. Lincoln could have found cause to hate Indians since [one killed] his grandfather ... At an early age he displayed the strength of character to break the vicious cycle of hatred and revenge, [as well as] the moral fortitude to confront the ugly impulses of the mob.¹²⁵

Thus, steel in the soul is a maturation process. Without it, the executive risks losing sight of a primary function demanded of the top public office: leadership accountability. Worse still, a leader risks losing touch with the people who have entrusted him or her with leadership. Citing the *Chicago Tribune*, Naveh suggests: "The profound lesson of Lincoln's career is not that he rose from the people, but that he did not rise away from the people, that his triumph was by them and through them."¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," Volume 5, To Cadet Quintin Campbell Washington, D.C.

¹²⁵ Fornieri, "Lincoln and Biblical Magnanimity," 174.

¹²⁶ Eyal J. Naveh, "Abraham Lincoln - The National Martyr," in *Crown of Thorns: Political Martyrdom in America from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1990), 82.

On November 6, 1860, the Republicans secured both the White House and Congress. Winning by suffrage entirely from the North and the West, Lincoln's name had been omitted from ballots in 10 out of the 15 Southern slave states. The Electoral College had generated "a convincing mandate from a narrow popular difference, just as it was designed to do [as] the two-party system suppressed fragmentation and dissent."¹²⁷ While Lincoln was forming his Cabinet, South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860. Before Lincoln's inaugural on March 4, 1861, six states – Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas – had followed suit, adopting a constitution for the Confederate States of America, and selecting its first President, Jefferson Davis. The crux of the rage: their rights to slavery.

In his First Inaugural Address, Lincoln attempted to reassure the Southern states that a Republican administration would not impede the Constitution's fugitive slave clause:

No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.¹²⁸

Yet he maintained that: "The Union of these States is perpetual."¹²⁹ Formed by the Articles of Association of 1774, its creation had preceded the Constitution (U.S. supreme law) of 1787, which had been adopted "to form a more perfect union."¹³⁰ Hence, succession was anarchy, and "the executive ... [was] to administer the present government, as it came to his hands, and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor."¹³¹ Southerners were not to blame for instituting slavery; still, his fidelity was to "my rightful masters, the American people."¹³² Lincoln appealed for a peaceful solution to enmities and a restoration of fraternal affections. In return, Confederates opened fire on Fort Sumter, South Carolina and the Civil War began.

¹²⁷ Ayers, "What Lincoln Was Up Against: The Context of Leadership," 17.

¹²⁸ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*: 325.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 326.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 327.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 331.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 327.

No one had expected a four-year struggle. Union victory at the Battle of Gettysburg ended General Robert E. Lee's invasion of the North, marking a turning point in the war. Lincoln's homage to Gettysburg redefined the conflict as a struggle for equality:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal ... from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion ... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom ... that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.¹³³

Throughout, Lincoln's primary motivation was to preserve the Union, not abolish slavery. His Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in seized Confederate territory, enabling them to enlist in Union forces, giving the North a decided advantage.¹³⁴ But as the war dragged on, Lincoln awoke to a crystalized conclusion: the freedom of slaves would preserve the Union. Gradual emancipation *had* materialized, but in a manner completely unexpected by Lincoln: the war's persistence had hastened the liberation of slaves – who helped defend the Union. Peace, like liberty, would be as providential, declared Lincoln at his Second Inaugural:

One eighth of the population were colored slaves ... All knew that this [was], somehow, the cause of the war ... Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration ... but let us judge not that we not be judged ... Yet, if God wills that it continue, [till] all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, [till] every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."¹³⁵

The end to the Civil War did not come, could not come, until American Slavery was ended. Lincoln acknowledged the limits of his presidential power to influence the course of history. Just the same, he willingly accepted and shouldered the responsibility for an entire nation.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹³⁴ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 462.

¹³⁵ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*.

B. AN IMITATION

Like all high quality items, forgeries infiltrated the sword market. The difference, however, lay in performance. Swords of genuine crucible steel could withstand the pressure of battle. Imitations would crack under the pressure. It was steel's luster that made it highly coveted. In spite of this, acid-based etching tested if inlays (inserted decor of contrasting material) had survived the grinding stage, revealing authentic or counterfeit branding.¹³⁶

George Brinton McClellan served as a major general, then briefly as General-in-Chief, of the Union Army during the Civil War. A salutatorian of West Point's Military Academy, and brevetted Mexican War veteran, the press dubbed him "Young Napoleon." "The Union was ready for a hero, and McClellan, with an erect, strong build, and a handsome face with grey eyes and dark hair, looked and acted the part."¹³⁷ Confident, talented, and magnetic, McClellan fine-tuned the famed Army of Potomac, earning the love and devotion of his men. Regrettably, he was dithering, having fought just one battle, Antietam, from start to finish.¹³⁸ Worse, accolades gave him delusions. He told his wife: "I must not unnecessarily risk my life – for the fate of my army depends on me and they all know it."¹³⁹ Goodwin further unveils McClellan's blame-avoidance in a telegram directed to U.S. Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton: "I have lost this battle because my force was too small [and] I am not responsible for this ... If I save this Army now ... I owe no thanks to you or to any other persons in Washington."¹⁴⁰ Relieved of command for his chronic delays, he went on to campaign unsuccessfully against Lincoln's 1864 re-election victory. As a beacon of *unaccountability*, McClellan demonstrated that he was no match for the President, who saw "the Executive ... so vast, so sacred a trust, as ... free people had confided in him."¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Yost, "Secrets of the Viking Sword."

¹³⁷ White, *A. Lincoln: A Biography*: 439.

¹³⁸ Stephen Sears, "McClellan at Antietam," Civil War Trust, <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/antietam/history/mcclellan-at-antietam.html>.

¹³⁹ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*: 443.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 443-44.

¹⁴¹ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," 4:440.

7. CONCLUSION

LESSONS FOR LIFE

A. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

One lingering question is this: “What relevance does refined executive leadership have to public policy and international relations?” Since individuals still play an essential role in public and international affairs, refined executive leadership can be significantly important. Byman et al. cite an apt quote from former U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Alfred Kissinger: “As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make.”¹⁴²

However, political scientists often focus on impersonal events instead of individuals, Byman et al. maintain, for three reasons. First, individuals do not ultimately matter within the anarchic system, domestic politics, and institutional dynamics that shape world events. Second, exceptional individual cases do not lend themselves to forming generalizations. Third, several leading international relations scholars have raised objections, which makes the study of individuals theoretically futile. Even so, when pressed, most scholars concede that, “because they do not attempt to explain the roles of either human error or personality in international relations, they cannot explain all of the variance in the affairs of nations.”¹⁴³

Byman et al. claim that: “Giants still walk the earth.”¹⁴⁴ Ignoring the goals, abilities, and idiosyncrasies of world leaders, because of exceptional cases, would be like trying to understand art or music, minus Michaelangelo or Mozart, due to their talent and genius.¹⁴⁵ What’s more, they recommend scholarly work into the personalities of non-state leaders,¹⁴⁶ as a leader’s impact can become synonymous with states, administrations, or phenomena, like Bashar al-Assad and Syria, Thatcher’s Government, or Osama Bin Laden and Terrorism.

¹⁴² Daniel L. and Kenneth M. Pollack Byman, “Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In,” *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 108.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

While incorporating world leaders into the “black box” – the state as unitary actor – is essential to international relations, it all the same focuses on the externals of behaviour. Alexander L. George, a pioneer in political psychology, once noted: “Although scholars have provided a number of models of rational decision making, I know of no theory of ‘effective’ decision making that seeks to improve the ad hoc judgments top policymakers often feel obliged to make.”¹⁴⁷ He proposes three suggestions for additional research and reflection. First, develop a typology of the different kinds of judgment facing top-level decision-makers. Second, assess the various levels of support policymakers deem necessary to a given issue. Third, account for “‘personality variables’ that probably affect how different individuals diagnose and deal with trade-off problems.”¹⁴⁸ With his third suggestion, George encourages public policy schools and business schools to generate case studies for education.¹⁴⁹

This paper offers a case study, but from an alternative context for decision-making. Circumstances surrounding the executive will constantly change and likely present novelty. Conversely, the sure constant factor in the executive’s sphere of influence is the executive. Said in other words, before a leader faces the world, he or she must face himself or herself. Part of the frustration attached to leadership is the inability to change one’s surroundings or influence others according to one’s vision. Refined executive leadership knows the limits to its own power, and more importantly, recognizes that change is not a double standard. Looking to the executive as the locus of accountability is not new. People do this constantly. The refined executive does likewise. A natural tendency for leaders and followers is to focus on appearances and talent. But these can be devoid of character and gloss over a vital fact: the number of people the executive can help is the number of people the executive can hurt. Therefore, the life of a refined executive, like Lincoln, can offer valuable leadership lessons.

¹⁴⁷ Alexander L. George, “Analysis and Political Judgment in Policymaking,” in *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy*, ed. Stanley A. and Deborah Welch Larson Renshon (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2003), 266.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 266-67.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

B. HANDLING FAILURE, HANDLING SUCCESS

One telling insight into Lincoln's frame of mind about his own leadership comes in a letter to Albert G. Hodges, *Franklin Commonwealth* editor, on the recruitment of black regiments:

"I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."¹⁵⁰ Goethals compliments this perspective:

It does seem clear that effective presidential leadership in the past has come from men with energy, intelligence, vision, articulacy, optimism, and commitment. [But,] it is also apparent that success depends on personal qualities interacting with contextual variables in a favorable way, and that much that affects presidential success is simply a matter of good fortune.¹⁵¹

Even so, a refined leader focuses on deftly handling adversity to skillfully deal with success. The following list comprises the broad motifs that encapsulate Lincoln's refined leadership:

1. SEAMLESS WITHIN CIRCUMSTANCES

Leaders emerge from the Crucible of Adversity, each with a unique set of trials to overcome.

Circumstances and tests unveil character – whether a leader has consistently responded in a refined manner or not, regardless of failure or success. One of the remarkable attributes about Lincoln's leadership is its seamless consistency. The man that he was in obscurity was the man that he was with fame. Naveh writes: "Lincoln's great school was his poverty and the difficulties [which] provided him with the necessary strength to overcome obstacles."¹⁵²

Yet as President: "Regular and frequent conversations with ordinary folk kept Lincoln both grounded and informed, and further encouraged his natural faith in his own judgment."¹⁵³

Considering that Lincoln overcame his impoverished background by working as a lawyer, attaining wealth, and entering into the circles of the elite, the steadfastness of his character becomes more impressive in light of his meteoric rise.

¹⁵⁰ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," 7:282.

¹⁵¹ George R. Goethals, "Presidential Leadership," *Annual Review of Psychology*, no. 56 (2005): 568-69.

¹⁵² Naveh, "Abraham Lincoln - The National Martyr," 69.

¹⁵³ Carwardine, "Wonderful Self-Reliance: Abraham Lincoln's Leadership," 115.

2. PRINCIPLED WITH RESILIENCE

Standing up for principles involves sacrifice and the rejection of friends and enemies alike.

As an unknown, Lincoln had sifted out the essence of issues and formulated his arguments.

Guelzo adds his resilience: "Lincoln's long history as a trial lawyer had prepared him to lose as well as win ... As President, Lincoln was hammered with blows that would have broken almost anyone else."¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, his careful deliberation was misjudged as cowardice.

According to Doyle, however, all benefitted from Lincoln's endurance:

In retrospect, even his harshest critics in the North realised that it was Lincoln's perseverance in war that had saved the Union. More than just winning the war, Lincoln elevated the moral purpose of the war, making it into a war of emancipation but also one dedicated to upholding the principle of self-government.¹⁵⁵

3. COMFORTABLE IN CONTRADICTION

Lincoln wrote to fellow lawyer Cuthbert Bullitt: "I shall do all I can to save the government, which is my sworn duty as well as my personal inclination. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing."¹⁵⁶ Lincoln knew that national stability had to follow revolution. Though the Civil War represented the greatest crisis in U.S. history, "Lincoln's power came not from subverting the routine political system, but from acting as the defender of the constitutional status quo."¹⁵⁷ To do this, the nation had to move as one. To this end, Lincoln assembled a Cabinet of former rivals with a gamut of political views and carefully worded his speeches to persuade racist public sentiment towards Emancipation. Unlike charismatic leaders who demanded unquestioning loyalty and endorsed lawlessness, Lincoln understood the value of testing his own convictions against opposing perspectives. Therefore, he evaded groupthink as his perseverance, fortitude, humility, and magnanimity enabled him to accept where people were at – without tarnishing his own accountability.

¹⁵⁴ Allen C. Guelzo, "Lincoln and Leadership: An Afterword," in *Lincoln and Leadership: Military, Political, and Religious Decision-Making*, ed. Allen C. Guelzo, Randall M. Miller, Matthew Pinsker, Harry S. Stout, and Gregory J. W. Urwin (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 98.

¹⁵⁵ Don H. Doyle, "Abraham Lincoln: The Apotheosis of a Republican Hero," in *Political Leadership, Nations and Charisma*, ed. Vivian Ibrahim and Margit Wunsch (Great Britain: Routledge, 2012), 87.

¹⁵⁶ Lincoln, "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," 5:346.

¹⁵⁷ Carwardine, "Wonderful Self-Reliance: Abraham Lincoln's Leadership," 118.

C. WHAT TYPE OF LEGACY?

The art of sword making was used throughout this paper to illustrate character refinement. Genuine productions made all the difference in battle and raised the prestige of empires. Steel in the soul, or the refined executive, can grace an administration with a lasting legacy. Lincoln originally thought that by preserving the Union he could eventually end slavery. What Lincoln discovered was that he needed to end slavery so that he could save the Union. An assassin's bullet cut Lincoln's life short on April 15, 1865. He was fifty-six years old.

However, that was not the end. In the wake of his death, "a remarkable outpouring of sympathy and admiration for Lincoln [came] from all parts of the world,"¹⁵⁸ as eulogized by the Confederate veteran, Maurice Thompson, in his poem *Lincoln's Grave* (1890):

He is not dead. France knows he is not dead;
He stirs strong hearts in Spain and Germany,
In far Siberian mines his words are said,
He tells the English Ireland shall be free,
He calls poor serfs about him in the night,
And whispers of a power that laughs at kings,
And of a force that breaks the strongest chain.¹⁵⁹

Even from as far away as the small fishing village of Acireale, located on Sicily's west coast, came this tribute of brotherhood and solidarity on May 10, 1865:

Your President, Abraham Lincoln, has fallen ... may his blood weigh in the balance for the regeneration of your States ... We assure you that throughout [our] nation, as if it were one individual, the human heart could not restrain its grief and staggered beneath the weight of so great a calamity. Abraham Lincoln was not yours only – he was also ours, because he was a brother whose great mind and fearless conscience guided a people to union, and courageously uprooted slavery.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Doyle, "Abraham Lincoln: The Apotheosis of a Republican Hero," 93.

¹⁵⁹ Maurice Thompson, "Lincoln's Grave," Stone and Kimball, http://www.archive.org/stream/lincolnsgrave00thomuoft/lincolnsgrave00thomuoft_djvu.txt.

¹⁶⁰ The United States Department of State, "The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Late President of the United States of America, and the Attempted Assassination of William H. Seward, Secretary of State, and Frederick W. Seward, Assistant Secretary, on the Evening of the 14th of April, 1865," Government Printing Office, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p4.p0506&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p4&isize=M>.

In his Annual Message to Congress in 1861, Lincoln declared: “The struggle of today, is not altogether for today – it is for a vast future also.”¹⁶¹ The impact of those words had reached the rest of the world. And outlived him, as he intended. He had fulfilled his ambition to contribute a humble role to the consummation of abolition. Time and space do not permit a narration of all the details of Lincoln’s leadership. Fortunately, testimonies abound that recount the refinement of his presidency as he extended “magnanimity to rivals and critics, mercy to the accused, patience with insolent generals, eloquent sympathy to the bereaved, generosity to associates and subordinates, [and] non-vindictiveness to enemies.”¹⁶²

The final paragraph of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address best expresses the depth of accountability he felt within himself, which he hoped would be demonstrated in others:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan – to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.¹⁶³

Although not a perfect man, beset with his own set of weaknesses, Lincoln strove to become the kind of leader others could respect. Biographical works state that Lincoln accomplished two major feats in his lifetime: the preservation of the Union and the freedom of its slaves. But there was a third: he became a beacon of accountability.

¹⁶¹ Lincoln, “The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,” 5:53.

¹⁶² William Lee Miller, “The Magnanimity of Abraham Lincoln,” in *Lincoln’s Legacy of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Gary L. McDowell, *Jepson Studies in Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 77.

¹⁶³ Smith, *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*: 429.

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