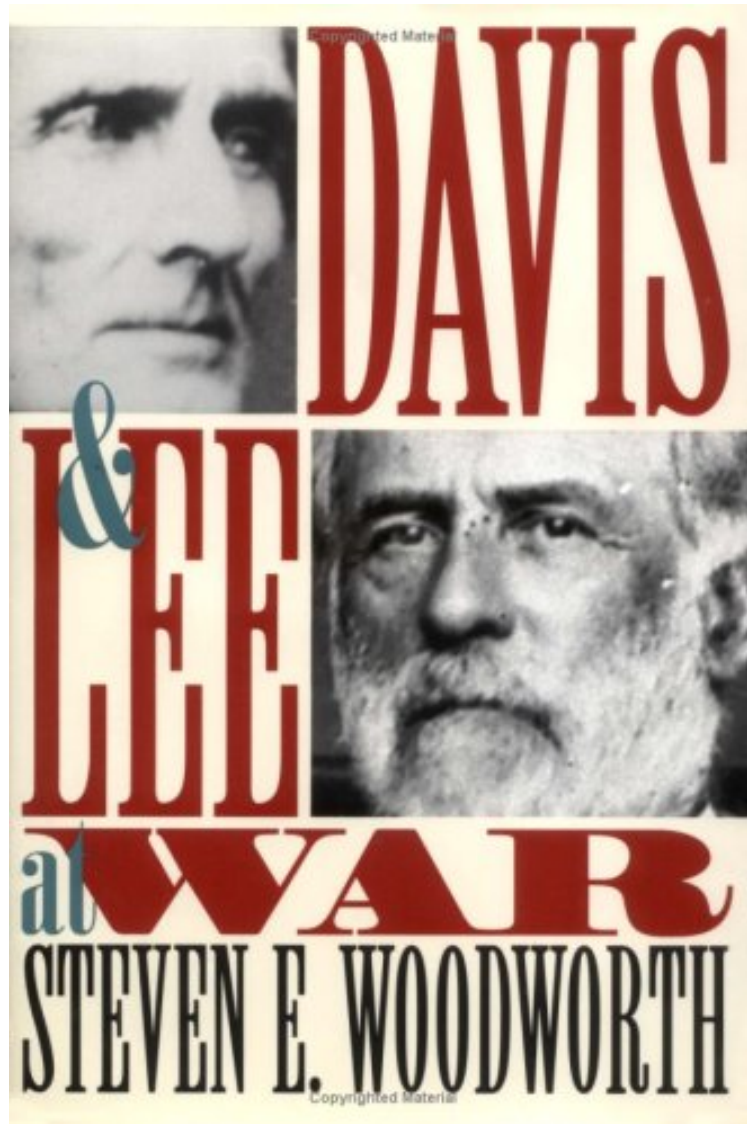


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## Davis and Lee at War (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))

*Steven E. Woodworth*

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#1532933 in Books University Press of Kansas 1995-11-30Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.30 x 1.45 x 6.291, 1.82 #File Name: 0700607188424 pagesCivil WarHistoryConfederacyCampaigns Battlefields | File size: 26.Mb

**Steven E. Woodworth : Davis and Lee at War (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Davis and Lee at War (Modern War Studies (Hardcover)):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Some hits, some missesBy Thomas W. RobinsonWoodworth, who previously looked at Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his generals in the Western Theater, turns his attention to Davis and his Eastern generals. The title is a bit misleading as while the bulk of the book does center on Davis and

Robert E. Lee, the first 150 pages or so deal more with Davis' relationships with Joseph E. Johnson and P.G.T. Beauregard. In the end, Woodworth has crafted a highly readable book that is equally interesting and infuriating. The book is interesting because Woodworth has some new interpretations and posits a clear thesis--namely, Davis and Lee got along mainly because Lee kept Davis "in the loop." This seems a tad bit simple, but sometimes simple answers are the right ones. In this case, one comes away believing that Woodworth has proved his thesis, but also feeling that the author has cherry-picked some of his evidence and came into the work with extreme biases. Fortunately for Woodworth, the main strength of the book is the discussion and description of the working partnership of Lee and Davis. While in hindsight it might appear that the two could obviously get along if for nothing else than Lee's military prowess, Woodworth does well to remind readers that in the first year or so of the war, Lee was actually not a very popular figure in the South. In fact, many Richmond newspapers mocked and ridiculed him, labeling him "Granny Lee" for a disastrous campaign he oversaw in what is now West Virginia. However, Woodworth shows that Davis never lost faith in Lee and when Johnston was wounded, Lee was immediately given command of what would become the Army of Northern Virginia. From there, the book picks up considerable steam. Woodworth argues that Davis did not agree with Lee's proposed offensive tactics, but deferred to his trusted general from the outset. Woodworth argues that this is due in large part to the fact that Lee was willing to share his plans with Davis, ask for Davis' counsel, and treat Davis with respect. This was in direct contrast to Johnston and Beauregard, who both often kept Davis in the dark as to their plans, felt Davis was stepping on their toes, and often treated Davis with contempt. According to Woodworth, what ended up happening is Davis took his respect for Lee's intellect and appreciation of Lee's personality and turned that into unbridled confidence in his generalship. Due to this, Davis set aside his own strategy (more defensive) in favor of Lee's bold tactics. With regard to his analysis of Davis and Lee's relationship, there is not a lot to quarrel with Woodworth over. He seems to treat Lee as somewhat infallible, but he is not the first, or last, Civil War historian to do that. It does seem, however, that Woodworth is a big fan of both Davis and Lee and this brings up the most serious criticism of the book. It is obvious from reading this book that Woodworth has some severe biases at work. All historians and writers in general for that matter, have biases. However, most of them do a good job of hiding them. Woodworth, on the other hand, smacks you over the head with them. This would not be a problem except it leads him to stretch his evidence. Woodworth obviously dislikes both Johnston and Beauregard and this leads to issues in the book. First and foremost, Woodworth paints Johnston as some sort of archvillain. While Woodworth does a good job of pointing out Johnston's faults, he leaves Davis to look as if he played no role in the two's animosity toward each other. The even bigger issue, though, is that Woodworth misses the obvious point that Johnston and Davis agreed on strategy. Despite this, Woodworth argues Davis would have been better off ditching Johnston at the beginning of the war because Johnston lacked the moral courage to fight. While Johnston was notorious for his retreats and slow movements, this seems like a stretch on Woodworth's part. To me, the Davis-Johnston relationship does as much to show Davis' faults as it does Johnston's. Davis was unwilling to work with Johnston, despite their agreement on strategy, simply due to the fact that he did not like him. The other problem in the beginning of the book is that Woodworth jumps back and forth playing the blame game. When Johnston and Davis briefly were getting along after First Manassas, Beauregard is painted as the bad guy. When Beauregard and Davis are getting along, suddenly Johnston is the bad egg. Finally, Woodworth also has a disdain for James Longstreet, who he introduces as basically stupid, which borders on irrationality. Whatever your personal take is on Longstreet, to introduce him as stupid just seems a bit much. Taken individually these are not real problems, but considering Woodworth does this throughout much of the book, his injection of his biases really drags the book down. Woodworth is not uncritical of Davis, but this book, when put side-by-side with his previous work, seems somewhat out of place. While his previous work essentially blamed Davis for losing the war in the West due to his personal character flaws, this work states that Davis had the right strategy and rose above some of his petty personal flaws once Lee took command. Instead, it is more obvious, thanks to Woodworth's work, that Davis did not rise above anything. Lee was willing to tell Davis what he wanted to hear and not clash with the President. Thus, the two got along swimmingly despite having differing strategic ideas. All the while, Davis still clashed with other military and political leaders because of the very personality flaws Woodworth claims he rose above with Lee. It leaves one feeling as if you got half the story, but Woodworth covered up some of the rest so as to paint Davis and Lee in a better light. Still, Woodworth deserves credit for this venture. It gives an excellent look at the Confederate President and his dealings with his generals in the Eastern Theater. It is chock full of detail and contains many primary sources. That being said, the flaws of the book mean it is surely not the last word on this subject and could be improved upon. Still, it is an excellent place to start and gives an interesting comparison to Davis and his generals and Abraham Lincoln and his.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.  
Four Stars  
By Customer  
Met all expectations  
12 of 13 people found the following review helpful.  
One of the best books on war time leadership  
By Aussie Reader  
I found this book to be one of the best books about command decisions and relationships between Politicians and generals during the Civil War I have ever read. It covers the battles and the leaders of the Confederacy, both great and flawed. I found it hard to believe that some Southern leaders/generals fought harder against their own side in stupid little infights and disputes. The book goes a long way in explaining Lee's strategy and that of Davis and how they were different and the results of that difference. This book concentrates on the

Eastern Theatre, the author's other book 'Jefferson Davis and his Generals' covers the Western Theatre of operations and is brilliant in its examination of this area. Both books are well worth reading.

Steven Woodworth's previous book, the critically acclaimed *Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, won the prestigious Fletcher Pratt Award and was a main selection of the History Book Club. In that book he showed how the failures of Davis and his military leaders in the west paved the way for Confederate defeat. In *Davis and Lee at War*, he concludes his study of Davis as rebel commander-in-chief and shows how the lack of a unified purpose and strategy in the east sealed the Confederacy's fate. Woodworth argues that Davis and Robert E. Lee, the South's greatest military leader, had sharply conflicting views over the proper conduct of the war. Davis was convinced that the South should fight a defensive war, to simply outlast the North's political and popular support for the war. By contrast, Lee and the other eastern generals—notably P.G.T. Beauregard, Gustavus Smith, and Stonewall Jackson—were eager for the offensive. They were convinced that only quick and decisive battlefield victories would prevent the North from eventually defeating them with its overwhelming advantage in men and materials. Davis and Lee, Woodworth shows, shared a mutual respect for each other for most of the war. But it was respect mixed with a stubborn resistance to the other's influence. The result of this tense tug-of-war was Davis's misguided pursuit of a middle ground that gave neither strategy its best chance for success. The war finally ground to a bloody conclusion with Davis as indecisive as ever and virtually blind to how little confidence his generals had in his leadership. Drawing extensively upon the papers of Jefferson Davis and the works of leading Civil War historians, Woodworth places the eastern military campaigns in an entirely new light and expands our understanding of Davis as leader of the Confederacy.

From Publishers Weekly In this engaging, well-written account, Woodworth follows his award-winning *Jefferson Davis and His Generals* by analyzing Confederate strategy as it polarized around the South's principal war fighters: Davis and Robert E. Lee. Davis believed the South could win the war by not losing it. This defensive grand strategy, with offensive actions carefully limited, offered the Confederacy a chance to gain independence by exhausting its opponent's will. Lee, in contrast, believed it necessary to use the South's limited resources to strike hard and fast. Quick, decisive victories would convince the North to abandon the conflict. This policy, too, offered prospects for success. Neither, however, was pursued consistently. Woodworth convincingly argues that the successful professional relationship between Lee and Davis prevented a firm decision. Instead, the Confederacy compromised and ultimately fell to ruin between two strategic stools. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Woodworth (*Jefferson Davis and His Generals*, LJ 7/90) presents an in-depth study of the military strategies of Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee and how their differences affected the outcome of the war. Davis was convinced that the South should fight a defensive war, while Lee felt the Confederate armies should take the offensive. Davis wanted to be commander-in-chief of the armies more than president of the Confederacy and therefore took an active role in military affairs. However, he could never develop a strategic plan for conducting military operations that was acceptable to the military. Lee and Davis shared a mutual respect, yet neither truly accepted the other's strategy for fighting the war. Woodworth paints a clear picture of Davis's accomplishments and failures in military strategy and shows how the lack of a unified military strategy determined the fate of the Confederacy. Highly recommended for all Civil War collections. W. Walter Wicker, Louisiana Tech Univ. Lib., Ruston Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. "An insightful examination of the most important command relationship of the Civil War. Anyone seeking to understand the war in Virginia does not dare ignore this penetrating new work."—William C. Davis, author of *Jefferson Davis: The Man and His Hour* "A splendid interpretation of Confederate strategy and command."—James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom* "Illuminating, stimulating, and sometimes even shocking. Not everyone will agree with everything Woodworth says but all will find this book worth reading and pondering."—Albert Castel, author of *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* "Another powerful volume from Steven Woodworth. Crisply written, with choice anecdotes."—Joseph T. Glatthaar, author of *Partners in Command* "We have long needed a good, modern overview of the Confederate war effort. Woodworth has already given us a splendid volume on the West. This new work will be a major help to readers seeking to understand America's greatest military crisis."—Richard McMurry, author of *Two Great Rebel Armies and John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* "A story told with skill and insight."—Brooks D. Simpson, author of *Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction* "Thoroughly entertaining. A real winner that will be useful to scholars and welcomed by buffs."—Michael B. Ballard, author of *Landscapes of Battle: The Civil War*