

Analysis of Abraham Lincoln's Leadership Style in Managing the American Civil War Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Abraham Lincoln's leadership style during the American Civil War through a qualitative approach based on literature review. Lincoln successfully blended the principles of democratic leadership with strategic flexibility, using a "team of rivals" strategy to involve various views in decision-making. This approach creates legitimacy and a solid consensus in the midst of a crisis. In public communication, Lincoln used an educative, gradual strategy to rally support for the abolition of slavery, leveraging crucial momentum such as the Emancipation Proclamation. This approach succeeded in building people's moral awareness while reducing resistance. This research highlights the relevance of Lincoln's leadership style in facing modern challenges, such as political polarization and global crises. Lincoln's participatory approach, transparency, and long-term vision provide valuable lessons for today's leadership.

Keywords: Leadership Style; Abraham Lincoln; Managing; American Civil; War Crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Democratic leadership is one of the approaches that is often chosen by leaders in the context of decision-making by involving active participation from various parties. In situations of major national crises, such as war, this style of leadership has its own challenges because the demands for quick and decisive action often contradict the consultative process that characterizes democratic leadership. Leadership in crisis situations is a crucial aspect that determines the success of a nation in facing challenges. The American Civil War (1861-1865) was one of the most decisive periods in the history of the United States, where Abraham Lincoln's leadership style as the 16th president had a significant impact on the resolution of conflicts and the reunification of the country.

The American Civil War was a national crisis that showed how political, social, and military challenges came together in a tense period. In an emergency situation, a leader is expected to not only be able to make quick and strategic decisions but also consider democratic dynamics involving various stakeholders. Lincoln demonstrated the ability to maintain a balance between strong executive authority and democratic values while still involving various parties in the decision-making process, both through the cabinet and through interaction with the people and the legislature. The democratic leadership applied is also based on the principles of openness, consultation, and collaboration that remain respected even in the midst of crisis conditions.

Theoretically, democratic leadership is a style that emphasizes participation, collaboration, and inclusivity. Leaders with this style are indicated to involve others in decision-making and value diverse opinions. However, in crisis situations this leadership style is often considered inefficient due to the longer consultative process. This study aims to analyze how Lincoln successfully incorporated elements of democratic leadership in the face of major crises such as the civil war as well as how flexibility in his leadership style allowed for an effective response to rapidly evolving situations.

One of the main challenges in crisis leadership is the tension between the need to act quickly and the demand to maintain participation in the decision-making process. Previous studies have examined aspects of Lincoln's leadership from various perspectives. (Decker, 2020) analyzed Lincoln's communication and rhetoric skills in uniting the nation, while (Islamoglu, 2024). focusing on strategic decision-making aspects during wartime. However, these studies have not fully explored how Lincoln's democratic leadership style played a role

in managing the complexity of crises involving internal divisions and fundamental social transformation.

Research gaps were identified in terms of understanding the specific mechanisms Lincoln used to apply democratic leadership principles in situations that demanded quick and decisive decision-making. (Beliakova, 2021) highlights that the majority of studies on Civil War-era leadership focus more on military and political aspects, while the managerial dimension and leadership style in internal crisis management still require more in-depth exploration. Lincoln's leadership is not only relevant from a historical perspective, but it also provides important insights for contemporary studies of crisis leadership. By combining democratic leadership and crisis theory, this study seeks to explore the strategies and approaches taken by Lincoln in maintaining a balance between these two often conflicting demands. The study will also consider the dimensions of public communication that successfully manage public opinion and build consensus in the midst of highly polarized situations.

Although several previous studies have discussed Lincoln's success in winning the civil war, there are still gaps in the literature that analyze in depth how democratic principles are applied in crisis contexts. Most studies focus on the military or political aspects of his leadership without paying enough attention to how a multi-stakeholder decision-making process can affect the results achieved. Therefore, this research will contribute to the leadership literature by offering a more comprehensive analysis of how Lincoln navigated democratic challenges in the midst of conflict.

The main question that will be answered in this study is: how did Abraham Lincoln apply the principles of democratic leadership in decision-making and the approach of the public communication dimension during the Civil War? The research will also identify key elements of democratic leadership that can be applied in contemporary crisis situations as well as offer reflections on the relevance of Lincoln's approach in the context of modern leadership. Thus, this research aims to make a significant contribution to the leadership literature, especially in understanding the dynamics between democratic leadership and crisis. This study will combine modern leadership theories with historical analysis of the actions taken by Lincoln during the Civil War to provide deeper insights into how this leadership style can be adapted to face similar challenges in the future.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach to analyze Abraham Lincoln's leadership style during the American Civil War from the perspective of democratic leadership. The study collected secondary data from a variety of academic sources, including books, scientific journal articles and relevant historical documents. The conceptual definition of democratic leadership refers to a leadership style that involves active participation and collaboration in decision-making, while its operational definition in this context is seen from how Lincoln involved various stakeholders in policies taken during the crisis.

The data was collected through a systematic review of the literature from sources available on academic platforms such as Google Scholar and major historical documents, including Lincoln's speeches. The data analysis process is carried out by thematic analysis that identifies key themes such as participation in decision-making, leadership flexibility, and public communication strategies. These themes are analyzed based on democratic leadership theory and crisis leadership. To ensure validity, the study uses verified and relevant academic sources to the topic. Reliability is maintained with a consistent approach in the selection of literature and transparent analysis. This research has limitations on the use of secondary data, but still provides a deep understanding of the application of democratic leadership in the context of national crises.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Lincoln's Democratic Leadership in Decision-Making

Abraham Lincoln is one of the most influential presidents in the history of the United States who is known for his democratic leadership style (Suryana et al., 2022). This style is reflected in its ability to embrace various views and opinions from various parties before making important decisions (Radionovna, 2013). Lincoln's leadership style approach was relevant in the context of a national crisis during the American Civil War (1861-1865) where his decisions had a profound impact on the country's survival and profound social change.

Abraham Lincoln demonstrated a unique leadership pattern in the context of managing the American Civil War crisis through a structured democratic approach. Based on Davis's analysis (Rodney O, 1998), Lincoln's leadership is characterized by his ability to combine aspects of executive firmness with the principles of participatory democracy. This is in line with the concept of crisis leadership presented by (Ramadani et al., 2024), where a leader must be able to make strategic decisions while still maintaining consultative values.

In decision-making, Lincoln applies what (Badarusyamsi, 2021) calls a "philosophical-pragmatic approach", which is a method that integrates practical considerations with the fundamental values of democracy. This approach allowed Lincoln to maintain the legitimacy of his leadership even in the midst of a crisis while still accommodating a variety of different views in the decision-making process. (Guelzo, 2019) also underlines how Lincoln managed to build a decision-making system that involved various parties in his cabinet, including those who were previously his rivals in the presidential election or familiarly known as "*team of rivals*". This strategy not only enriched perspectives in decision-making but also strengthened the cross-faction political support that was indispensable during times of war. By uniting different sounds. Lincoln was able to create an open discussion space and encourage healthy debate before deciding on a strategic move (Hesselbein & Goldsmith, 2013).

This team of rival strategy also contributes to the creation of an inclusive decision-making system, where each cabinet member feels they have the opportunity to have an opinion not only from the coalition but also from the opposition's perspective. Lincoln encourages open discussion and considers different views before making a decision. This is especially important in a crisis when cross-faction political support is urgently needed to maintain unity and strengthen the legitimacy of government. In managing the cabinet, Lincoln not only gave instructions but also allowed the cabinet members to express their views freely. This principle of openness allowed for deep dialogue, and Lincoln considered dissent to be part of a healthy dynamic in a democratic government. It also illustrates his ability not to put forward personal egos but rather focus on the national interest.

In addition, Lincoln not only acted as the final decision-maker, but also played the role of a mediator who harmonized the different voices in the cabinet. Lincoln creates a work environment conducive to healthy debate that ultimately results in more mature and acceptable decisions for all parties. This debate became a strong foundation for major decisions during the war. Lincoln's success in maintaining the legitimacy of leadership in the midst of a precarious situation is greatly supported by his adaptability in managing public aspirations and responding to changes in the situation wisely. Lincoln's strategic steps show that in a crisis situation, one of them is that a leader must not only rely on his own authority, but must also be able to embrace the aspirations of the parties involved.

In addition, Lincoln also showed proficiency in navigating internal conflicts within his administration, especially when facing pressure from opposing parties. This strategy proves that inclusive and participatory leadership not only maintains public trust but also establishes a stable government in the midst of major challenges. By maintaining democratic values, Lincoln managed to maintain the legitimacy of his leadership which was recognized not only by the American people at that time but also by the international world. Lincoln's democratic approach provided a solid foundation for the sustainability of government, despite the pressures of prolonged war.

In decision-making related to the Civil War, Lincoln showed flexibility by accommodating different views. For example, in terms of the emancipation of slaves, Lincoln initially faced a lot of pressure from both sides both from those who supported an immediate end to slavery and from those who feared that this drastic change would threaten unity. Lincoln chose to listen to these views, but ultimately decided wisely through the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This decision not only considers morality but also political tactics to strengthen the Union's position in the war (Montefiore, 2006).

In his leadership style, Lincoln showed that he was able to put the greater interests above personal or group interests. Lincoln prioritized the unity of the country and the survival of the Republic of the United States. Although some of his strategic decisions have caused controversy, he has never hesitated to weigh conflicting arguments in order to reach the most appropriate solution. This shows its democratic qualities that allow various parties to feel heard and considered. In addition, Lincoln is also able to cope with pressure and criticism with a cool head. During his reign, many harsh criticisms were leveled against him, especially in the handling of the war. However, Lincoln did not respond to the criticism with a direct confrontation. Instead, he often considers his opponent's views to improve the strategies and policies that are being implemented. The ability to accept criticism and maintain the direction of policies that he believes is right is a hallmark of a mature democratic leader.

Lincoln's ability to remain calm and think long in decision-making is key to maintaining his integrity as a leader. In the midst of chaotic conditions during the war, Lincoln showed that a leader must have the ability to refrain from impulsive decisions. In many situations Lincoln chooses to wait until all the necessary information is available before taking action, reflecting the fundamental principles of inclusive and participatory leadership. Lincoln's democratic leadership is also reflected in how he upholds the principles of law and the constitution (Rohmanurmeta, 2022). In every policy taken. Lincoln ensured that his decisions were based

not only on personal feelings or political views but also on the rules that had been agreed upon within the framework of the United States constitution. This can be seen in the way he viewed the issue of slavery and how he managed the post-war reconstruction process.

Clear and effective communication is also a hallmark of Lincoln's democratic leadership (Wahjono, S, 2022) In his speeches, Lincoln always tried to explain the decisions taken in a language that could be understood by the people. Gettysburg's speech, for example, is notable not only for its brevity, but also for its clearly conveyed moral and political message. Lincoln understands the importance of building trust through transparency and openness to the public. Overall, Lincoln's democratic leadership is characterized by its ability to balance between different views, listen to aspirations and decide with long-term interests in mind. This leadership style made Lincoln one of the most respected and remembered leaders of all time not only for his success in winning the Civil War, but also for being able to maintain the integrity of democracy and the values of freedom that were the foundation of his country.

2. Lincoln's Public Communication Dimension Against Slavery Abolition

In the aspect of public communication, especially related to the sensitive issue of slavery abolition, Lincoln showed extraordinary rhetorical skills. (Williams, 2023) suggests that Lincoln implements a gradual communication strategy, starting with a moderate approach and gradually moving towards a more assertive position. This strategy made it possible to build public support in a safer way as well as avoid direct confrontation with pro-slavery groups. The moderate approach initially made the idea of abolition more acceptable in a society divided over the issue so that Lincoln's anti-slavery messages could grow in the public consciousness without causing extreme resistance.

Over time, Lincoln used these stages of communication to gradually raise public awareness of the importance of abolishing slavery. This gradual approach has proven effective, not only in attracting support from anti-slavery groups but also in mitigating potential conflicts from groups that still support slavery. In this way, Lincoln managed to expand the public support base for his policies without creating a sharper divide among society. (Farid, 2020) also highlights the importance of the role of education in public communication, especially in building public understanding of the importance of human values and justice. Through public communication, Lincoln not only conveyed policies but also taught society to see slavery as a

violation of moral and humanitarian values. This strategy allowed Lincoln to form a deeper and more fundamental public opinion on abolition that strengthened long-term support for the abolition of slavery policy.

This educational approach became a strong foundation for Lincoln to build awareness of the issue of abolition among the wider community. On many occasions of speeches, he said that slavery is contrary to the principles of humanity and democracy held by the state. Thus, Lincoln's public communication not only focuses on providing policy information but also on efforts to educate the public to understand the issue in depth. In addition, (Rodney O, 1998) reveals how Lincoln used critical momentum to reinforce his message. One example is the Emancipation Proclamation which was issued at a time when momentum was in favor in the midst of the Civil War. Lincoln was able to read the right time to deliver an important message so that it had a strong impact in directing public opinion towards support for abolition. The use of this right moment shows Lincoln's skill in choosing an effective time to influence public perception.

This timing strategy also helped Lincoln in building a broader and more solid consensus among abolition advocates so that the policy gained more solid support. By taking advantage of a certain momentum, Lincoln managed to strengthen the abolition position without triggering a strong reaction from the pro-slavery group directly. This shows how important time sensitivity is in public communication, especially when conveying sensitive messages. Through a gradual, educational, and momentum-based approach, Lincoln succeeded in driving social change in the American society's view of slavery. The public communication implemented by Lincoln is not only strategic in terms of conveying messages but also profound in efforts to transform people's moral views. This approach effectively strengthens the position of abolition as an essential humanitarian issue on the national agenda. Through the use of moderate rhetoric, Lincoln also emphasized the importance of the principle of national unity above all else, realizing that the issue of slavery could divide the nation, so Lincoln sought to convey the message of abolition in a way that did not directly threaten or cause further division. This underscores Lincoln's ability to maintain national integrity while championing historic change.

Lincoln's inclusive approach to public communication also played an important role in building legitimacy in the eyes of the public. By using simple but meaningful language, Lincoln succeeded in conveying a message that was easily accepted by various circles, from intellectuals to ordinary people. This communication strategy makes the message easier to

understand and accept so that public support for the abolition policy is increasing. Lincoln was also able to create a strong perception in society that abolition was not just a political policy, but the embodiment of noble moral values. With thoughtful communication, he managed to build widespread support while educating the public about the importance of freedom and equality. Through a structured and empathetic approach to communication, Lincoln managed to gain support for the abolition agenda he was fighting for.

This success of public communication ultimately pinned Abraham Lincoln as one of the presidents of the United States known for his role in abolishing slavery through the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 (Wardhani & Supratman, 2019). At the beginning of his tenure, Lincoln was not a radical abolitionist. He focused more on maintaining the unity of the country than on abolishing slavery outright. However, through his democratic leadership, Lincoln was open to input from groups opposed to slavery and understood the need to adapt to the demands of the times. An open dialogue with his advisors, including with anti-slavery figures, helped him form a clearer view of the importance of abolition as a way to maintain unity (Faidi & Hum, 2015).

The Emancipation Proclamation is not only a moral step, but also an important political and military strategy. By freeing slaves in the Confederate states, Lincoln not only hit the economic base of the southern countries that depended on slavery, but also opened up opportunities for freed slaves to join the Union army. This decision is a testament to Lincoln's ability to see the long-term impact, not only on the issue of slavery, but also on the survival of the war (Yonita & Darmawan, 2021). Lincoln also understood that the abolition of slavery had to be supported by stronger laws. After the Emancipation Proclamation, he worked hard to push for the 13th Amendment that formally abolished slavery throughout the United States. In this case, his democratic leadership is evident in how he embraced members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to support the amendment. Lincoln did not impose his views, but used persuasion and negotiation approaches to reach a consensus.

Lincoln's success in abolishing slavery was also marked by his ability to unite various factions that had previously been divided. During the Civil War, tensions existed between various factions within his government, including those who supported peace with the unconditional Confederation and those who demanded immediate abolition. Lincoln with his democratic leadership managed to navigate these differences wisely, ensuring that the steps

taken were always focused on the ultimate goal of maintaining unity and restoring the country from division.

The process of abolishing slavery did not happen overnight but faced many challenges. But as a democratic leader, Lincoln remained open to dialogue even with those who did not align with his views. He often listens to critics and considers proposed alternatives but remains committed to ending slavery as part of his long-term vision for a free United States. The influence of Lincoln's leadership on the abolition of slavery is also evident in the way he inspired and mobilized public support. Although there was a lot of uncertainty among the American people about the drastic steps taken, Lincoln used his speeches and public communications to build broad support for abolition. Gettysburg's famous speech, though brief, emphasized the importance of equality and freedom as the basis of the country's survival. Through his democratic leadership style, Lincoln was able to touch the conscience of the people, reinforcing the idea that slavery was contrary to the nation's core values (Eskelner et al., 2014).

3. The Relevance of Lincoln's Democratic Leadership Style in the Modern Era

An analysis of the relevance of Abraham Lincoln's leadership style in the modern context shows that many of the principles he applied remain relevant and offer important lessons for today's leaders. (Ramadani et al., 2024) argue that leadership principles that balance assertiveness and a consultative approach are very appropriate in facing the challenges of contemporary crises. This approach provides stability as well as flexibility, allowing leaders to be assertive while remaining open to constructive feedback. (Badarusyamsi, 2021) suggests that Lincoln's philosophical-pragmatic approach can be used as a model in managing conflicts in the modern era. This approach allows leaders to consider fundamental values while taking realistic actions, blending idealism with pragmatism to keep policies oriented towards the larger goal without ignoring the realities at hand. This is especially important in a modern world full of complex challenges.

(Williams, 2023) highlights Lincoln's communication techniques that can be adapted for today's digital era. Although communication platforms and media have changed drastically, basic principles such as message clarity, consistency, and the ability to build narratives that connect different groups of people remain relevant. In a world where information spreads rapidly and sometimes inaccurately, this skill set is key to maintaining public trust. (Farid, 2020) added that modern leadership demands the role of leaders as educators for society. This

aspect was then applied by Lincoln in his communication. In addition to making policies, leaders must be able to guide the community towards positive change. This is relevant in the current era where social and economic transformation often requires a change in people's mindsets, so that leaders who are able to educate the public are very valuable.

Lincoln's ability to build cross-faction coalitions, as expressed by (Guelzo, 2019) is also increasingly important in the current era of political polarization. His "*Team of Rivals*" strategy shows how a leader can embrace people with different views to work together. In the context of modern politics that is often divided, this strategy can help leaders to manage differences of opinion and create consensus. This analysis shows that, although the historical context is far different, many of the basic principles of Lincoln's leadership style remain applicable. Leaders who are able to make participatory decision-making, maintain effective public communication, and build consensus among groups with different views can be more successful in facing today's challenges.

Abraham Lincoln is one of the most respected leaders in history, especially because of his democratic leadership style. In the midst of difficult situations such as the Civil War and moral debates about slavery, Lincoln showed that democratic leadership can bring about great change. Although Lincoln lived in the 19th century, the leadership principles he demonstrated are still very relevant in the modern era. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the democratic leadership that Lincoln demonstrated, especially in terms of listening, involving many parties, and focusing on unity is a much-needed leadership style.

One of the important lessons of Lincoln's leadership style is the ability to listen to different points of view before making decisions (O'toole, 2000). Lincoln always opens the door to listen to advice from his advisors, even from those who have different views. In the modern era, with political, economic, and social dynamics changing rapidly, leaders who are able to listen to and accommodate various views will be more effective in making inclusive and sustainable decisions. This is especially important in a world full of cultural, social, and political diversity like today.

In addition, Lincoln also pointed out the importance of maintaining unity in crisis situations. During the Civil War, Lincoln prioritized the unification of the nation despite the challenges faced by various parties. In the modern era, national unity remains a very important issue, especially in countries with diverse populations. Leaders who are able to balance the

interests of various groups and maintain political and social stability will be able to face growing global challenges, such as climate change, economic inequality, and migration problems.

Lincoln's leadership style is also relevant in the context of freedom and human rights. Lincoln led with strong morals, especially when it came to defending the principle of freedom through the abolition of slavery. In the modern era, the values of freedom, justice, and human rights remain an important foundation for many countries. Leaders who can maintain a commitment to these principles, while remaining open to dialogue and change, are indispensable in addressing contemporary issues such as racial discrimination, women's human rights, and gender equality.

Lincoln's leadership also stands out for not imposing his will authoritarian, but preferring a persuasive and negotiation approach. In a modern political world that is often divided by polarization, leaders who are able to avoid confrontation and find a middle ground through dialogue will be better able to maintain stability and build consensus. For example, in many modern democracies, the ability to reach an agreement between different political parties is key to maintaining stable and effective government. On the other hand, Lincoln's leadership also emphasized the importance of adapting to the situation. Initially, Lincoln did not explicitly support the abolition of slavery, but as the situation developed and people's views changed, he decided that abolition was the right step to save the unity of the nation. In the modern context, leaders who are flexible and able to adjust strategies based on changing situations, especially in the midst of uncertainties such as pandemics or economic crises, will be more successful in maintaining stability and achieving goals.

Lincoln's principle of transparency is also still relevant. Lincoln is known for his openness in communicating with the public. He often used speeches to explain his policies and build support from the people. In the modern era, where social media and the internet allow for fast and wide access to information, leaders must be transparent and accountable to the public. This openness not only increases public trust, but also creates a stronger relationship between leaders and the people. In addition, Lincoln shows responsible leadership by always taking full responsibility for his decisions, even when the results are not in line with expectations. In the modern era, responsible leaders are those who not only take credit when things are going well, but also dare to admit mistakes and learn from failures. This responsible leadership is important in maintaining integrity, especially in the midst of ever-changing political and economic pressures. Lincoln also deeply understood the importance of a long-term vision by looking

beyond the crisis of the time and making decisions that would shape the future of the United States. In the modern context, visionary leaders are essential to confront complex global challenges, such as climate change, technological advancements, and social inequality. Leaders who focus only on short-term solutions may miss out on opportunities to bring about greater positive change in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study examines three main aspects of Abraham Lincoln's leadership, namely the democratic leadership style in decision-making, the dimension of public communication related to the abolition of slavery, and its relevance in the modern era. In decision-making, Lincoln applied a "philosophical-pragmatic" approach that integrated practical considerations with the fundamental values of democracy which was reflected through a "team of rivals" strategy involving various parties including his political rivals. Regarding public communication on the issue of slavery abolition, Lincoln used a gradual and educational communication strategy, starting from a moderate approach to a more assertive position by taking advantage of critical momentum such as the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.

Lincoln's democratic leadership style has significant relevance in the modern era, especially in terms of participatory decision-making, the ability to build consensus between groups of different views, and a transparent communication approach. His leadership principles such as openness to dialogue, the ability to listen to different viewpoints, and a focus on unity are still very relevant in the face of contemporary challenges such as political polarization, global crises, and social complexity. Lincoln's success in managing national crises through a structured democratic approach provides valuable lessons for modern leadership in addressing complex challenges while upholding democratic and humanitarian values.

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