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Lee and the Operational Art: The Right Place, The Right Time.

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Abstract : A few days after the battle of Gettysburg, the official Prussian military observer who had accompanied Confederate headquarters during the campaign asked General Robert E. Lee about his command philosophy. I think and work with all my powers to bring my troops to the right place at the right time, Lee explained, then I leave the matter up to God and the

subordinate officers. To interfere at this stage does more harm than good. The right place at the right time! This is the essence of the operational art as it is defined in the most recent edition of the Army's Field Manual 100-5, Operations: Operational art ... involves fundamental decisions about when and where to fight and whether to accept or decline battle. Its essence is the identification of the enemy's operational center-of-gravity and the concentration of superior combat power against that point to achieve a decisive success. Until recently Western soldiers and historians have separated military activity into strategy and tactics. The theater of war belonged to the province of strategy, the battlefield to tactics. Operations was simply a term loosely applied to any of the various types of combat activity in the field -- offensive, defensive, siege, etc. Or, if the theater of war should itself be partitioned into sub-theaters, these might be called theaters of operations. But with the insertion in U.S. doctrine in 1982 of a third level of war -- the operational level -- the word took on added significance. We now have an additional tool for analyzing generalship, providing fresh insights into old campaigns and perhaps a fuller understanding of history's commanders. To illustrate this point, let us look anew at Lee during Gettysburg.

Descriptors : *CIVIL WAR(UNITED STATES) , *MILITARY HISTORY , *BATTLES , *MILITARY COMMANDERS , *CENTER OF GRAVITY , PENNSYLVANIA , MILITARY TACTICS , ARMY PERSONNEL , MILITARY STRATEGY , COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS , REPRINTS , LEADERSHIP

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