

# Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime

*Who makes the key decisions in war, elected civilian leaders or professional soldiers? Few questions are more consequential or complex. Using the leadership of Abraham Lincoln, Georges Clemenceau, Winston Churchill, and David Ben-Gurion to build his argument, Cohen offers compelling proof that, as Clemenceau put it, "War is too important to leave to the generals." By examining the shared leadership traits of four politicians who triumphed in extraordinarily varied military campaigns, Cohen argues that active statesmen make the best wartime leaders, pushing their military subordinates to succeed where they might have failed if left to their own devices.*

## Session I - The Soldier and the Statesman

**Topics:** Normal theory of civil-military relations; War as a political instrument; Expertise and error in wartime

**Reading:** Preface, pp. 1-13

## Session II - Lincoln Sends a Letter

**Topics:** Lincoln: inspired amateur; The right strategy and generals; Campaign and statecraft: "inseparable and interdependent"

**Reading:** pp. 15-51

## Session III - Clemenceau Pays a Visit

**Topics:** Going to the front; Balancing strategies: Coalition stresses

**Reading:** pp. 52-94

## Session IV - Churchill Asks a Question

**Topics:** "Public menace;" Art of interrogation; Probing for choices

**Reading:** pp. 95-132

## Session V - Ben-Gurion Holds A Seminar

**Topics:** Starting afresh; Fundamentals amidst complexity

**Reading:** pp. 133-172

## Session VI - Leadership Without Genius

**Topics:** Vietnam's lessons; War and democracy; "Routine methods"

**Reading:** pp. 173-207

## Session VII - The Unequal Dialogue

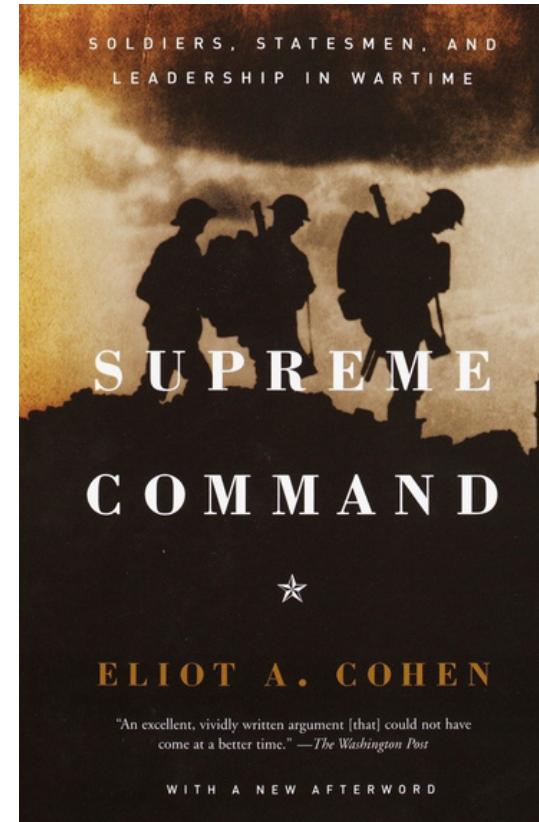
**Topics:** Salutary arguments; Virtues of moderation and change

**Reading:** pp. 208-224

## Session VIII - Rumsfeld's War

**Topics:** Clash at the Pentagon; Rumsfeld's convictions; the Iraq War

**Reading:** pp. 225-240



## Additional Reading

- Samuel Huntington. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*.