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History, Theory and Doctrine

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### Abstract

The relationships between history, theory and doctrine as they pertain to military operations and the conduct of warfare are related and repeating. The NCO is a critical part of that doctrine as it stems from the actions of the NCO's and officers in battle. The doctrine that is in effect today will not be the doctrine that will be in effect in the future. The three segments are linked and are constantly revisited in the process of improving the way that we conduct war.

### History, Theory and Doctrine:

The first step in the process to determine doctrine is history. We look at history and the outcome of conflict and take it apart piece by piece as objectively as possible to try to find root causes and their effect. We take this knowledge from first person experiences, from books and articles published and from images captured on film or drawn out on paper. History has to be looked at from all angles to include the enemies to gain a complete objective understanding. History must also be learned from the opponent's sources as well. To simply look back at the smoldering crater filled battlefield and declare victory and a sound approach to engaging the enemy from this day forward would be a mistake. You would soon learn that the enemy has learned to change his tactics and he will not make the same mistake repeatedly. He will gain insight into your techniques and weaknesses to determine another strategy. He will adapt with new weapons and resources to attempt and increase the odds in his favor.

The second step in the process is theory. Theory as defined by the dictionary is 1.General principles of a subject 2.plausible or scientifically acceptable explanation 3.Judgment,

guess or opinion Merriam-Webster (2000). The goal of this step is to absorb the material and develop theories as to why each event happened. Why did the enemy engage from the high ground, when there was a covered approach to the flank? What did we do to gain the tactical edge and defeat the enemy? What or how could we have done things differently to reduce the amount of casualties we received in the ranks? If we employed our forces differently would the outcome have yielded better results? If the enemy would have deployed a different tactic how would the results differ? The theories are discussed and agreed upon to reach many conclusions that will lead to the next step. The vulnerability of this step is that you are developing solutions to the battles of the past. The future warfare can only be assessed and predicted using technology and studies of the enemy and his capabilities.

The third step in the process is the development of doctrine. This step is where we have a determined course of action for how we conduct war. The Doctrine will never be the 100 percent solution because the doctrine was generated from the past. The tools and techniques that we have fought historically are simply put, in the past. There have been very few battles fought the same since the colonial days when soldiers would line up and face the enemy and slug it out in formation. The

Americans learned with their irregular soldiers like Mosby's Rangers that they could inflict better losses on the enemy by not going to battle toe to toe with their better equipped enemy but that by ambushing them from positions that held the tactical advantage and conducting raids on their softer targets in the rear of the enemy's forward lines.

The three segments: history, theory and doctrine apply to big picture applications but are actually partially practiced at the lower levers with the NCO's and soldiers in training and combat. When it is possible to conduct a proper and thorough after action review where everyone has input you will do these things at a micro level. The company comprised of teams, squads, platoons will learn from the actions of the enemy in the current fight and adapt to these actions. The process will be more direct and there will be less theorizing and more direction from the leadership. The potential of gaining insight from the enemy will also most likely not be present until much later. However every unit returns from battle with better doctrine than when they arrive. Units that return to battle find that they too need to adjust their doctrine due to changing political environments and the techniques; tactics and procedures used by the enemy are most likely different from their last rotation.

The first example I will use for this process is MG Emory Upton. He had visited Europe and Asia and had observed their tactics. MG Upton returned and using the things he had observed from overseas and a cross study of our terrain and the improved weapons. He developed a new system of infantry tactics for double and single rank adapted to the American topography and the improved firearms (Sarabia, 2008). He understood the differences between breech and muzzle loading rifles and the difference of the terrain in which to employ them. He also understood the importance of good noncommissioned officers and their education as it pertains to the conduct of battle. This change enabled him to maximize the improvements of the weapons and to make smarter use of the terrain. This served him well in his campaigns.

The second example of the history, theory and doctrine system is the use of torture. French Colonel Roger Trinquier of the 10<sup>th</sup> paratrooper division during the battle for Algiers sanctioned the use of torture on captured enemy. This torture was immediately effective in cracking and dismantling the FLN's network in the Casbah. (Sarabia, 2008) With the use of torture he was able to make captured enemy insurgents produce information. This information would bring immediate success because the enemy had not learned to compartmentalize

information and keep the cells separate. The unseen result of the torture at the time was the increased general hatred of the French because of the torture. The French would later write "I am saying it (torture) is not effective. Sure we obtain information from those we torture and humiliate. But looking beyond that, we sow hatred, which, in terms of effectiveness, isn't productive at all. Just the opposite. Every time torture is used throughout history, it leads to revolt, not only of those tortured but also others. Algeria is a failure. We won the battle of Algiers and lost Algeria, because it was already lost." (Sarabia, 2008). The French learned, from the use of torture as a means of accepted doctrine, the battle would never be won. The text leads to the French changing this doctrine; however it does not clearly state this. I will show the change that the United States, in recent history, adapted its doctrine towards the care and interrogation of enemy combatants. The United States have clearly laid out guidelines, rules and orders to ensure that no one in our custody is tortured or treated in an extreme measure. The incident at Abu Ghraib would be an example of our doctrine being modified following the same history, theory and doctrine format. The incidents occurred and were made public (history). Discussion of the effects and the legal, moral and ethical issues were held. The probable inflammation of the Muslim people due to the treatment of

prisoners in our care acknowledged (Theory). There have been changes in the care of prisoners with regards to interrogation housing and release. The greater oversight of prisoners, in the custody of the United States and the stricter rules imposed to soldiers when capturing a suspected enemy combatant. The new requirement to collect forensic evidence to be used in a court of law when arresting a combatant are examples of and how it has changed for American soldiers during the current conflict (Doctrine).

The developments of technology and science do not always have successful impact on doctrine due to political and or physical environment. The ongoing battle in Afghanistan is a testament to this fact. The enemy has only rough desolate and a border to a neighboring country to use in defense. When the battle cannot be carried to the enemy in the next valley over the enemy can continue to fight and survive. When the air is filled with sand, and the aircraft that provide cover cannot protect you, the enemy can survive.

#### Conclusion

The NCO must know doctrine and have an understanding of what caused it to be so. He or she must study history and understand the different effects that battle has produced. The NCO must be culturally aware of his battlefield and the second

and third order affects of his actions. The NCO is constantly shaping future doctrine because his actions will be part of history. The wars he fights will be dissected and analyzed in the future to further refine the art of war using his battles for example. The results of NCO's acts will directly change the way we fight in the future because NCO's are part of the sequence of history, theory and doctrine.

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