

Running Head: MILITARY HISTORY: KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

Military History: Key to Successful Leadership

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SMNRC CLASS 35

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY OUTLINE

I. Introduction

A. Background Information:

Topic: Is it important for military professionals to take time out of their busy schedules to study military history? If so, why? If not, why not?

B. Thesis or Argumentative Statement: Leaders can prevent repeating mistakes or reproducing a trend by studying the history of yesterday's Army and applying the lessons learned.

II. Reasons that Support the Thesis or Argumentative Statement

A. Argument 1

Studying military history can provide enlightenment of the "what not to do" when forming a strategy against an enemy. It does not provide a textbook answer on how to win today's wars, but it can bridge the gap between conceptual ideas against a future fight. A leader's study could prevent him or her from making the same mistake.

B. Argument 2

During times of war history has shown that the military has not been prepared due to downsizing. Also in order to fill the ranks they also accelerate promotions in order to keep up with the operational tempo which degrades forces due to lack of experience. If all leaders studied history they would identify that draw downs and cutting enlisted education is not the formula to keep a ready and reliable Army. Comparisons of historical data from past conflicts will be presented in this argument.

C. Argument 3

In the final argument the application of lessons learned or the continuous trend will show the need for leaders to analyze political ramifications of making a decision. In today's war in Iraq we are fighting a similar enemy of the past. This war requires us to win the hearts and minds through counter insurgency. I will compare and show that lessons learned through the historical studies of war can provide the ideas to improve a leader's position on the ground.

III. Counter Arguments

Often young leaders will take a stance against history. Comments such as "that is outdated" or "it doesn't apply to what we do now" are often heard from their mouths. They believe because we are fighting an asymmetrical war that you cannot apply techniques from an "the cold war era". It is true that technical capabilities, the terrain and the enemy will always evolve but their foundations remain the same.

IV. Conclusion

Since we live in a world with a fast pace society, a leader must take the time to study historical events. He may not learn the exact science of how to win the war, but he will have a better understanding of how to apply techniques and procedures that have or have not been proven successful in the past. Not only will the knowledge gained inspire the leader to win, but it may prevent him from executing the same mistakes that put the lives of Soldiers at risk.

Abstract

Studying military history is an important part of being a leader. Leaders can prevent repeating mistakes or reproducing a trend by studying the history of yesterday's Army and applying the lessons learned. Studying history can point out "what not to do" and provide insight on what can be done to ensure a successful mission. Military history serves as a continuous education model that makes up the shortfalls of standardized training or inexperienced leaders. Many people say history is boring or irrelevant, but if they pay attention they can identify the importance of it.

In a world of fast food and the high-tech gadgets that does everything for you, some leaders struggle in finding the time to study military history. While others may not see the need to study because they believe it is old and dated. Although it is a challenge to get some leaders engaged, one must find the time to professionally educate themselves in order to effectively lead Soldiers. A knowledgeable leader can prevent repeating mistakes or reproducing negative trends through the study of military history. Analyzing and applying the lessons from history minimizes the likelihood of future mistakes that mimic those of the past.

If you study military history you can observe recurring trends. Leaders must be engaged in studying military history in order to deter war or if needed fight and win wars. Studying military history can stimulate the mind and provide enlightenment on “what not to do” when forming a strategy against an enemy. The lessons learned may not provide a textbook answer on how to win today’s wars, but it can bridge the gap between conceptual ideas and current reality. These studies if applied, can serve as a source of professional development and a form of continuing education. This is especially true when we think of a young lieutenant fresh out of the Officer Basic Course or that newly promoted sergeant that was “shaked and baked” into his position with less than three years in the military and no combat experience. An example of military history that paints a clear picture of what not to do and captures a solid lesson learned is the defeat of Task Force Smith during the beginning of the Korean War. Eighth Army built Task Force Smith with a hodgepodge of elements. This battalion would become a part of the 24th Division. Its composition was comprised of two under strength infantry companies, a firing battery, half of the battalion Headquarters Company, two mortar platoons, a recoilless rifle platoon, and a communication section. Task Force Smith’s mission was to make contact with the

enemy, fight the enemy to cause a delaying action. The orders received were a vague brush stroke of the task force commander's intent. This is the first lesson learned. These men were mostly new recruits with no combat experience. Lieutenant Colonel Smith and his Soldiers arrived in Pusan on the 2nd of July. He ordered his men to rest while he conducted a reconnaissance in order to determine where he would establish his blocking positions. He identified a location just north of Osan in which he would emplace his blocking position. (Tucker 2003) LTC Smith returned and deployed his men in order to emplace them into position. He emplaced his artillery pieces and established communication between them. On the morning of the 5th, TF Smith began to engage the enemy. The battle opened up with the standard indirect fire support causing few casualties to the North Korean infantry men traveling on foot, but with no effect on the thirty four T-34 tanks moving upon their position. The bazookas fired multiple volleys with no results; the rounds were too small. The tanks rolled through their position cutting the wire to the communication platform to the Artillery battery. TF Smith fought for a total of seven hours, eventually retreating once the North Koreans began to overrun their positions. (Galvin 1989) From reading this battle from history a leader should have keyed in on a few lessons learned of what not to do. The first one is you have to know your people and what their capabilities are. The Division Commander of the 24th gave this guidance to LTC Smith:

“When you get to Pusan, head for Taejon. We want to stop the North Koreans as far from Pusan as we can. Block the main road as far north as possible. Contact General Church. If you can't locate him, go to Taejon and beyond if you can. Sorry I can't give you more information. That's all I've got. Good luck to you, and God bless you and your men.”
(Collins, 1969 pg 45-46)

Looking at this quote one could speculate that the senior leadership did not know TF Smith's capabilities or strengths or perhaps they did not take that into account when issuing the order for

the mission. This leads to the second lesson learned. With the amount of equipment, personnel and ammunition that TF Smith was lacking to battle 34 tanks and two divisions of ground forces brings into question how effective the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield was.

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield is essential in order to understand the enemy situation and how the friendly forces will match up against them. Lastly, it is important to have redundant communications. With the tanks rolling over the wire and tearing up the lines, communication became ineffective. At the unit level they failed to properly employ the communication assets or establish a second form of communication. During that era if they did not have an abundant FM radio source they had messengers. These are just a few lessons that were gathered but if you look deeper into the mission you can also identify several other shortfalls that spelled disaster for TF Smith at the strategic level.

The second reason to study military history is to teach us the importance of education and training of Noncommissioned Officers. Furthermore, they would see why we must ensure NCOs have the experience needed to be successful on the battlefield. History once again proves this theory of maintaining a trained and ready force. During times of war history has shown that the military accepts substandard Soldiers into service. Example of this is the draft. Also, in order to fill the ranks of the all volunteer army they have lowered the minimum requirements to obtain new recruits as seen in the present day. In addition to that the Army has chosen to also accelerate promotions in order to keep up with the operational tempo which degrades forces due to personnel turnover. If all leaders studied history, they would realize that personnel draw downs and cutting enlisted education is not the formula to keep a ready and reliable Army. The government consistently sacrifices the readiness of the military forces in order to save money. Baron Von Stueben proved the importance of training during the establishment of the first NCO

training for Army in 1778. This training provided a structured force that maintained the discipline of the troops and aided America in gaining their independence. Once the nation gained independence an immediate draw down of forces began, a trend that follows every major conflict. (Arms 1991) In reviewing the history of the military you can establish a trend with the preparedness and readiness of military forces. In order to repair this issue in times of conflict the military made “necessary adjustments” in order to meet the demands of the operation. An example of this is during the Vietnam era. The Army did not have the necessary personnel with the experience to fight in Vietnam during the early 1960’s. Most of the WWII and Korea veterans had left the military or weren’t physically able to maneuver in the jungles which left the newly enlisted draftees to lead the way in combat. The 12 month tours in the jungle were hard on the Soldiers which caused many to exit upon completion of their two year service requirement. In order to repair this issue the Army developed the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course. This course produced NCOs that were willing and able to lead into combat. Initially there was skepticism from leaders and other NCOs in the new NCOs ability to accomplish the mission. “Shake and Bakes” became the title for the new graduates. These individuals proved their worth over time as noted by Col. W. G. Skelton, "within a short time they [NCOCC graduates] proved themselves completely and we were crying for more. Because of their training, they repeatedly surpassed the soldier who had risen from the ranks in combat and provided the quality of leadership at the squad and platoon level which is essential in the type of fighting we are doing." (Elder 2003) Although many exited the military, some stayed and made the military a career. The issue though is that they were not well rounded individuals. These individuals only knew combat and failed to grasp their garrison responsibilities. The well rounded NCO who knew how to write efficiency reports, awards or maintain and enforce

standards in garrison was not there. This caused a degradation of our forces through the late 1970's and into the 1980s. If you look at what is taking place in our current fight with the global war on terrorism (GWOT) we are making a similar mistake. We are looking at short term solutions to solve our problems. Sending PFC's to the warrior leader course, cutting the warrior leader course down to less than 15 days, and the expansion of the nonresident training throughout out the NCOES to reduce in house training is following the same suit. We as a military have cut training down and have accelerated the promotions focusing only on warrior tasks. Forcing nonpromotable Specialists into a promotable status, and the reduction of training for Basic and Advanced Noncommsissioned Officer course to accommodate a war will not be beneficial in the long term. Soldiers should display a balance on and off the battlefield. In order to fight and win our countries next war, leaders at all levels must study history in order to identify the rollercoaster of trends from downsizing forces and reduction of training.

Furthermore, if leaders decide to continue to send the military on this rollercoaster ride of trends, leaders self study of history can help junior leaders learn concepts beneficial to technical and tactical growth.

In today's war in Iraq we are fighting an enemy similar to previous conflicts. This war requires us to win the hearts and minds through counter insurgency. In order to fight this war General Petraeus shows us a prime example on why the study of military history is important. If you look at General Petraeus's article written in January-February Military review, titled Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq, he explores concepts and ideas from past leaders. One of those leaders, T.E. Lawrence, led the revolt in which the Arabs battled the Turks in early 1900. T.E. Lawrence once said:

“Do not try to do too much with your own hands.” and “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.

Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is. It may take them longer and it may not be as good as you think, but if it is theirs, it will be better.” (Petraeus Pg 3)

General Petraeus reflects that “Lawrence’s guidance is as relevant in the 21st century as it was in his own time in the Middle East during World War I.” The lessons gathered from Lawrence were to be culturally sound “do it the Arab way not the American way”. Allow the country you are trying to provide stability to take ownership in their work and to ensure it is not the American producing or managing the product. Another lesson referred to by General Petraeus was from the Commander of U.S. Southern Command in 1986, General Galvin. General Galvin’s experience came from the counter insurgency operations in El Salvador. He once said

“The . . . burden on the military institution is large. Not only must it subdue an armed adversary while attempting to provide security to the civilian population, it must also avoid furthering the insurgents’ cause. If, for example, the military’s actions in killing 50 guerrillas cause 200 previously uncommitted citizens to join the insurgent cause, the use of force will have been counterproductive.”

The actions of General Galvin taught General Petraeus that you can not tear villages and towns apart, and treating everyone as an insurgent is not the answer. This was a mistake made by conventional forces in Vietnam, when innocent people were murdered and villages torched. All in all these experiences of yesterday’s leaders provided tutelage to General Petraeus in successfully combating the insurgency in Iraq. General Petraeus’s study of history shows that it is relevant.

Often young leaders will take a stance against history. AAR comments once collected from a class of BNCOC students about researching a historical battle brief was “that is outdated” or “it doesn’t apply to what we do now” were comments often read. They believe because we are fighting an asymmetrical war that you cannot apply techniques from “the cold war era”. The technical capabilities, the terrain and the enemy will always evolve but the foundations remain

the same. Not everything is a cookie cutter answer, but it is better to have an idea of what the outcome maybe versus a trial by fire venue. In addition if you look back at the past you can establish a trend such as the draw downs after each war. This is an example of history repeating itself. So if it is templated to happen again identify the shortcomings and prepare for what may happen next. Lastly, what other reason is out there not to study history other than laziness or that it is a “dry” or “boring read”? One should want to study military history because it is our history. History is what shaped the military into what it is today, and what it will become in the future. Furthermore, the Army establishes doctrine based off of lessons learned gathered from every conflict we participate in.

Since we live in a world of a fast pace society, leaders needs to take the time to study military history. The study of military history does not always spell out the exact science of winning the war, but a better understanding of how to apply techniques and procedures are very valuable. Studying military history also serves as a form of continuing education. The studies fill the void left by the shortening of military professional development training provided in the institutional training environment. Not only will the knowledge gained inspire a leader to win or make those hard decisions, but it may prevent him from executing the same mistakes that cost Soldiers to lose their lives.

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