

Reasons for Studying History

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## Introduction

In this new age of technology allowing ease of learning anywhere at any time soldiers need to take the time to study history. The troubles in Iraq appear to be unique we can see similarities throughout history. Every turn in history leading up to the Iraq war can provide lessons to soldiers. The French and Indian wars showed how colonist incorporated British line tactics and guerrilla tactics used by the Indians to plan and execute missions. This war also showed how lack of discipline and camaraderie could prolong conflicts. During the Revolutionary War the colonist used the lessons learned during the French and Indian wars to create a united force fighting for one cause. Today's soldiers need not look so far back in history. History happens somewhere every day. Soldiers can read about the current trends that can prevent large scale tragedies from happening. Incidents such as Abu Ghraib and Mogadishu, Somalia are just a few examples.

This report will look at the lessons learned by some of the previous conflicts. The report will also compare and contrast different aspects of the issues that the colonist faced with today's troubles in Iraq. In conclusion we will address some present day conflicts that can be utilized as training tools emphasizing the reasons we need to study history.

## Similarities to the French and Indian War

Similarities to the War on Terrorism began prior to the colonist gaining their independence. During the French and Indian war the Colonist Militia learned that open line battles would not hold up. Militias quickly adopted the strategy of seeking cover and ambushing the supply chains of their enemies. The British found these guerrilla tactics to be barbaric. Even if you were outnumbered, enemies should skirmish face to face and die as gentlemen. The greatly outnumber Colonist look at these tactics as a means of survival taken from the Indians

who had lasted for years in the country. This technique of survival can be seen today in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The greatly outnumbered extremist using today's sophisticated technologies are carefully choosing when and where to strike. The insurgents rarely carry out an assault on US troops opting for the hit and run guerrilla technique. This strategy does not yield great numbers of loss, however; overtime the numbers are devastating. This also creates a psychological weapon more powerful than gunpowder. Troops can never rest easy due to the unknowing next attack. The civilian populations of both countries become restless as the death tolls rise with no end in sight. These techniques can make the occupation of another country nearly impossible.

Similarities in the way we see the host nation's armies in the Middle East and the way they see us mirror how the British saw the Colonist Militia. The Revolutionary War may have been averted had the British seen the colonies as equals. During the French and Indian War the colonist were treated as second class citizens. The outcome of the war held no benefit for the colonist. Should the British lose the colonist would be abandoned. If the British won there was no benefit to the colonist. All spoils would go to the king. Therefore the Colonist Militia held no allegiance to the British Army. The same can be said for the United States presents in the Middle East. The Iraqi civilian population must side with the occupying forces or the militia groups. Should the occupying troops pull out all of their loyalist will be sought out and killed or imprisoned as traitors.

While the US is not ruling Iraq we can see the same dissention in the ranks of the Iraqi's. The US Coalition Forces (USCF) sees the Iraqi's and Afghanistan's in much the same light as the British saw us. The host nation's army smells, eats bad food, are disorganized, and hold no military bearing. This opinion was told to me by several instructors of the Iraqi and Afghanistan armies and mirrors the British opinion of the colonist militia. How we look at our counterparts

reflects on how they see us and how they cooperate. The USCF also sees the host nation army's as reluctance to take orders from us even for training purposes. We are seen by the Iraqi's as the British where to us pushing our ideals on them without totally understanding their culture. The USCF does not have confidence in the armies it trains and has a hard time giving them command and control of missions. So we tend to give them only the missions that will yield little impact on the overall operation. As seen below View VTG-17, TWO OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES, pg18 in the History 102A TSP. could easily be compared to today's armies in Iraq.

**Two Opposing Perspectives**

<p><b><u>British view of Colonial Militias</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of discipline</b></li> <li>• <b>Colonies can't cooperate</b></li> <li>• <b>Apathy</b></li> <li>• <b>Artificial constraints on military campaigns</b></li> <li>• <b>Volunteer mentality</b></li> <li>• <b>Localism, greed</b></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Colonial View/ Criticism of Redcoats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Arbitrary Discipline</b></li> <li>• <b>Contemptuous Manner</b></li> <li>• <b>Discrimination against colonial militia officers</b></li> <li>• <b>Colonists receive only Fatigue duties</b></li> <li>• <b>Utilization of Press Gangs</b></li> </ul>
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Commonality with the Revolutionary War

The Revolutionary War holds many lessons. However; we should pay close attention to the lesson taught by General Nathaniel Greene. General Greene realized that the army that wins the hearts of the population will prevail. General Greene lost nearly every battle with the British that he fought. Fighting through the south Greene was able to stop the inner fighting of American colonies and show the brutality inflicted by the British. This helped him win the populations

support. He wore the British down by dragging them back and forth throughout the country side while constantly ambushing the British armies. This also created mental stress along with the physical stress of fighting. How could a small group of colonial insurgents disrupt and avoid capture of the highly organized British forces? Sound familiar? In an article of the Concord Scientist Monitor a US soldier is quoted as saying of a previous operation in the Anbar Province we are simply “playing whack-a-mole”. I believe the British must have felt the same way. Every time you put an insurgent down another one popped up to take its place.

Insurgencies during war time have shown throughout history they can yield a devastating blow to armies and the civilian population. Insurgents’ ability to blend in with the civilian population allows them to strike fast and disappear before troops can retaliate. Should the soldiers retaliate against the civilian populous they create resentment and risk creating new enemies? While dragging out the war the insurgents are also able to gain sympathy from the civilians. Civilians become tired of the war and the cost of war. This trend can be seen in the example of General Greene above during the Revolutionary War. We can also see this trend in the War on Terrorism. The Iraqi people where originally happy to have the USCF, however; as time dragged on they wanted us out. The Iraqi population grew tired of curfews and check points. They became weary of being told what to do and how to do it. Much as the colonist grew tired of the British taxation and laws enforced upon them.

#### Lessons from recent events

Lessons from recent events are immeasurable. Soldiers today must keep up with the ever-changing cultural, political, and tactical environment. In October of 1993, the Battle of Mogadishu, Somalia teaches us once again to never underestimate our enemies. Troops went into battle unprepared to deal with the Somalia Militia’s. The Militia had women and children mixed

in with them on the battlefield causing a moral dilemma for the troops. Having two helicopters down with no backup cover or procedures to provide cover and recovery also impeded the mission. The militia's strategy combined with poor equipment (unarmored vehicles), and no planned exit strategy lead to lethal consequences. Helicopters in theater now have fighter wing backup to cover combat missions as a direct result of this conflict.

Abu Ghraib Prison certainly shows how one incident can affect the mood of a population. Soldiers have to realize the consequences of their actions. Had the insurgents treated US soldiers or citizens in the same manner, justice would have been threefold and swift. The incident showed the world that the American Soldiers where no better than the insurgents they hunted. The Abu Ghraib incident can be utilized to show soldiers the severity of not upholding the army values.

### Conclusion

The examples above are a small portion of the lessons from previous conflicts in the US that make it imperative for soldiers to study history. Our emotions lead us into situations that we have done time and time again throughout history. It may be wise to require a qualified military historian to assist in the military decision making process prior to executing the mission. The historian could show the past mistakes made by previous commands or administrations in similar conflicts. This is a great dream but it is not bound to happen. We as soldiers need to study history. We need to learn the customs, culture, and history of the country we are going to be in along with our own. Studying the countries history we can gain valuable planning resources on what methods have worked in the past to resolve conflicts in their region. In order to create a swift smooth timely mission we as soldiers need to lead the way by knowing our environment and how best to operate. We need to be part of the overall solution and not the problem. The lessons mentioned above are the reasons we need to study history.

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