

Running Head: THE MEASURABLE VALUE OF THE STUDY OF MILITARY HISTORY

The Measurable Value of the Study of Military History

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Abstract

Leadership in the military encourages their subordinates to study military history. Will the study of military history yield results and should a Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) sacrifice important time out of a busy schedule to study military history? If the study of history is required to review strategy and/or tactical analysis, the argument may be null. Armed conflict or counterinsurgency, the study of the current and future enemies' culture, norms and values should provide measurable results. The asymmetrical battlefield requires a more informed and adaptable soldier. The Department of Defense budgets millions of dollars for training and education to improve and retain talent. Knowledge of the enemy or a host nations culture, norms and values will produce a combat multiplier for future leaders. In any event, leadership cannot measure an individual's quantitative value of historical perspective in an applied measurement.

The Measurable Value of the Study of Military History

The Non Commissioned Officers (NCO) and Army professional's responsibilities have evolved throughout our countries short history. The challenges of linear tactics in the revolutionary war while having the status of a private. To a status and responsibilities increased significantly referenced by what General David Petraeus coined the "strategic-corporal" (2006, p. 1-28). The responsibility carried out by the NCO has significantly increased, yet the role has remained functionally the same. As a catalyst during this evolution, leadership may demand more time spent on study of military history by the professional. Will the study of military history serve a purpose that can produce measurable results on the battlefield?

The Story of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps (2007) reviews the evolution of the NCO. But one thing remains clear. No reference is made to the study of military history or a resulting measurable observation of value. There are numerous references pertaining to responsibilities, training, pay, discipline, dress, inspections and accountability, but would a measure in the study of history and its value be described? One measurable value that may have some relevance to the study of military history was the low numbers of experienced NCOs' during the civil war. A measurable observation was an increased amount of casualties and human loss. A tragic tactical deficiency of experience created by an increase in the number of volunteers and a lack of training to prepare them for the linear tactics based on previous war fighting. Losses should be attributed to a technology improvement in the rifle and artillery and lack of foresight to change tactics. The NCO at that time had limited resources available to provide a soldier with doctrine describing soldier responsibility, actions and tactical conduct of formations of maneuver. The study of tactics in historical maneuver conducting battle with

evolving weapons technological was a measurable disaster in human loss. Is this an example in the study of military history?

The NCO today has lessons in the study of the battlefields of the past, but what relevance to the NCO will study provide? The NCO professional is responsible for doctrinal service training and soldier care. Training in the special service of their trade, Infantry, Artillery, Armor, Logistics, Maintenance, Engineering or truck drivers, the NCO has to enforce a discipline and standard required for the training of the individual soldier. Hard training, physical fitness, collective lanes training, battle drills, crew drills, and mentored individual leadership training to ensure the individual soldier is ready for combat. The current deployment cycle transform soldiers and units competent in one specialty, mobilized in non-related specialty or non-existent specialty, retrained and deployed as military police, transportation or a convoy security company. This requires the NCO to adapt (BE and KNOW), to follow instructions and orders (DO) that facilitate transformation. The NCO conducts training for the specific deployment mission. The soldiers train a new set of collective skills not to any particular doctrine. During deployment training the study of military history provides no measurable value to the deployment training unit. It provides no value to the small unit leader. During a mobilization the unit does not collectively study military history to ensure the unit success. The focus of all training, individual warrior tasks and collective unit training is based on a system of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) formulated for a specific system and/or mission set based on the current operating environment. The study of history is not allocated time in a training schedule. During deployment training in 2009 for OIF, soldiers and leadership received nearly 30 hours of cultural awareness, geography, economic, and religious studies. Units do not receive one hour of military history

training. The reality of the NCO responsibilities is summed up in the phrase from *The Story of the Non Commissioned Officer* (2007) “Exceptional units stand out simply because their training allows them to do ordinary things well, resulting in self –confident and self-reliant soldiers who believe in their leaders and trust the soldiers they serve alongside. The cornerstone of this success revolves around the discipline and adherence to standards. Both are an NCOs’ basic responsibility” (p. 228).

The counterinsurgency battle in Iraq and Afghanistan endure our leaders to be adaptable and flexible. Their abilities to bring decisive combat power to bear are outstanding. However their ability to win the hearts and minds of citizens is challenged by the soldier’s limited knowledge of the contemporary operating environment and how to interact with a population where you cannot determine who is the combatant. Understanding can be improved through study of host nation demographics, their economies, values, religions, and culture. The ethnic diversity and belief systems of countries embattled for 1000’s of years, subjugated by other nations, founded in a fundamentally strict religious system. Full spectrum operations require leaders with a situational knowledge that the Army has not required in past doctrinal training. In 2006 General David Petraeus with other contributors updated the Counterinsurgency (COIN) Field Manual to provide guidance based on lessons learned. A strategic perspective of change in the doctrinal Combat development of the Army was outlined by Maj. Gen Peter Chiarelli and Maj. Patrick Michaelis as they authored in an article from *Military Review* (2005)

From an organization perspective, the Army has successfully created the most modern, effective set of systems for rapid execution of combat operations.....What we have not been able to do is create the systems and process to execute the non-lethal side as effortlessly as combat operations.... Our

traditional training model, still shuddering from the echo of our Cold War mentality, has infused our organization to think in kinetic terms. This demands new modalities of thinking and a renewed sense of importance to the education of our officer corps.(July-August 2005).

This statement is directed at the officer corps; however COIN operations require a broader knowledge base in small unit leaders, the NCOs'. Gen David Petraeus focused his guidance to a lower level on the importance of understanding culture to impact strategic initiatives by stating, (2006) "Conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign requires a flexible, adaptive force led by agile, well-informed, culturally astute leaders." (2006, Foreword). He goes on to say, "Indeed, young leaders—so-called "strategic corporals"—often make decisions at the tactical level that have strategic consequences"(p. 1-28). The intent of Chiarelli and Petraeus was direct. Leaders need to understand the culture of the host nation and the demographics of the population which is exercising combatant behavior to exact control. To further understand the fundamental grounding of the beliefs and norms of the population and social systems to assist a non-kinetic, non-lethal application of strategy influencing soldier behavior to attain a solution that will apply the art to war to victory. Stewart provides his observation regarding military history and the art of war, (2005)"Over and above the techniques, the successful conduct of war at all levels of command requires assessing unpredictable variables and taking calculated risks under circumstances for which no precise precedent exists." (p. 6). With this in mind, the study of military history outside of the contemporary environment may not provide a measurable value as a combat multiplier. However, professionals will continue to study military history.

Soldiers continue their military education by enrolling in courses which the study of military history may be a portion of the curriculum. The United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) course has a component in the distance learning course dedicated to the study of military history. The military academies conducting officer training require military history studies as part of the curriculum. The First Sergeants course contains a requirement to provide a military historical battle briefing including an analysis of weapons, tactics, strategy, and outcomes of the battle. The Non Commissioned Officers Guide (FM 7-22.7) provides a suggested reading list asserting a professional will realize that other soldiers have faced and overcome some of the same obstacles or problems you could endure. There may be some truth to the statement; however it is extremely difficult to measure the outcome based on relevance. It may be more for guidance and entertainment.

The study of tactics and strategy may provide insight for future planners, but the combat small unit leader may find the study more for entertainment and debate. It may inspire thought provoking images of what may have been going on in the mind of George Custer at his last stand. It may inspire arguments the Civil War could have ended at Sharpsburg, Maryland. The analysis of a breakdown in communications at the Viet Nam village of My Lai and its affect on combat operations provides value. The actions on contact of Marcus Luttrell and his Seal team in the mountains of Afghanistan will be studied or read. The notion the study of military history having value is true, however no quantitative measurement exists of such study. Even so, the Department of Defense continues a budget to educate its force on military history, is there a measurement to determining value in dollars?

The Department of Defense budgets millions of dollars for the education of its force. The officer and the enlisted soldier are encouraged to study military, civilian, language and

doctrinal specialty courses to advance their career and holding to the tenet of life long learning. The Non Commissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) has transformed itself in efforts to adapt with the changing needs of the Army while forecasting to the future training a more knowledgeable soldier. The strategy to adapt and train each soldier with a broader base of knowledge; recruit and train multilingual soldiers, develop more technically and tactically proficient soldiers in kinetic applications while skimming those non kinetic applications to apply towards the demands of the asymmetrical battlefield. The study of history, language, economics, culture, religion, and geography will provide value to a future soldier. Doctrinally, the military and its training programs advisors should assess the reward of a more knowledgeable soldier in efforts to combat potential enemy threats. General Petraeus made this point (2006) “Preparation for tactical-level leaders requires more than just mastering Service doctrine; they must also be trained and educated to adapt to their local situations, understand the legal and ethical implications of their actions, and exercise initiative and sound judgment” (p.1-28). Combat development at the Army level will require leadership to allocate time and resources to facilitate the paradigm. He goes on to say “guidance must be grounded in historical studies. However, it also must be informed by contemporary experiences.”(p. 1-28). Our professionals have contemporary experience on the battlefield. The battle against fundamentalist terrorism doesn’t appear to have an end strategy or exit plan. Where is the defined basis for victory? Can the Army train a non-kinetic application for victory?

An art of war echoed through history is taken from *The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation* states (2005) “the best path to victory is by indirect methods and approaches that avoid confrontations and rely upon maneuver and psychological pressure.”(p. 6). Sun Tzu articulated it more clearly hundreds of years earlier in his historical quotations;

The Art of War, (2003) “Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting” (p. 15) translated by Lionel Giles in 1910.

If there is an example of a quantitative value for the study of history a student could analyze the assessment and affects of the decision to disband the entire Iraqi Army in 2004. The resulting affects of the stabilization effort in number of years to rebuild the army. Sun Tzu believed “In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy’s country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to capture an army entire than to destroy it.”(2003, p. 16). Would the situation in Iraq look differently if the Iraqi Army remained in tact? Could this be an example to determine the measurable quantitative study of the application of a study in military history?

The study of military history will continue to be discussed and debated. The value of which is derived in the ownership of such knowledge. The application and transference of such knowledge will create the multiplier.

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