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Abstract

The study of history for the military professional is time well spent to hone individual and institutional skills. Understanding lessons learned and the continued development of the lesson will provide current and future leaders a firm foundation in choosing courses of action when confronted with a challenge. The three historical examples in his paper address different reasons to study history with the end result being the same. A better understanding of our past will better help us develop and train our present and future Soldiers which are ethical obligations of all military professionals.

Why is it Important to Study History?

It is important for military professionals to take time out of their busy schedules to study military history because a better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for future challenges by providing both good and bad lessons learned. Also, gaining different perspectives of the same historical event will broaden knowledge and allow the learner to draw their own conclusions of the actual circumstances of an historical event.

This paper will discuss different reasons for studying history and the importance for military leaders. Examples from the Indian wars demonstrate the importance of understanding different perspectives in an effort to eliminate biases or single source learning when studying history. The second example deals with good counterinsurgency tactics in the Philippines that we have sustained and are using in current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The final example is about using lessons learned to eliminate complacency and to maintain the trust of the world.

We should study history so we get an accurate account of what has happened in our past. Studying history gives us the opportunity of looking at one event from many different perspectives. When we look at historical events from different perspectives we gain a greater understanding of the true happenings at that time in history. By studying just one book or one movies' portrayal of an account in history we get a skewed view due to the prejudices of that author or movie director. By looking at accounts of history from different individuals we gain a greater understanding of what really happened because we are now seeing events from different angles, perspectives, biases, and agendas.

A good example of that is what has happened in the past with the Native Americans. Growing up and attending the American school system taught me that Native American Tribes were often mean spirited and malicious in nature. I learned that free roaming warriors raided, killed and

scalped as a way of life on the western frontier. Many movies that I watched as a child left me with the same impression. When one looks at just the US Army account from the 9th and 10th cavalry, many similarities exist with those of my early learning. As an adult learner with an interest in early American history, I find those accounts vary greatly from the accounts of Native Americans when they tell of history from their perspective. Military officers state that there was rampant scalping done by the Apache (Gott, 2004), but when you read the accounts from Native Americans they say that scalping never happened.

An example of this different perspective is in the book written by Eve Ball, called *Recollections of a Warm Spring Apache in the days of Victorio*. Native Americans that were actually in the field with Victorio have stated that they had never witnessed Apache scalp either a Mexican or American (Ball, 1970). These accounts differ greatly depending on who is giving the account. This provides us with a good reason of why it's important to study different accounts of history.

A second good reason why we should study military history is that as leaders and professionals we need to do everything we can to learn Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) from the leaders of the past, from those that built the foundation of our chosen profession. Gaining a better understanding of what happened in the past, both good, and bad, through the after action process is a valuable study of history. We benefit from studying history by looking at what was supposed to happen, what actually did happen, and how we can improve in the future when performing similar missions. Studying and learning to use examples from prior experiences allows us to continually improve on the successes of our past and also to correct the failures of our past so they don't ever happen again.

A good historical example from the lesson plans in H100 is the military mission in the Philippines. When Aguinaldo realized that he could no longer fight toe-to-toe, face-to-face with the American Soldier and their superior equipment, he changed his tactics from conventional to guerrilla warfare. Aguinaldo's "Army of Liberation" was successful in using guerrilla tactics to not only repulse the American Army, but also to strengthen their will over their own people. However, the adaptability, persistence, and goodwill of the American Soldier combined with positive diplomatic efforts from the American government started making improvements for the Filipino society. President McKinley gave the military instructions to "win the confidence, respect and admiration of the inhabitants of the Philippines," in order to restore civil society (Stewart, 2005).

In today's conflict with Iraq we use the terminology "win the hearts and the minds," an obvious similarity that comes from a positive lesson learned and sustained by knowing and using history. This example clearly shows why we as military leaders should study, learn, and teach military history to our Soldiers so that we build on strengths, improve weaknesses, and sustain all successful TTPs during future conflicts.

Several senior Army officers were relieved of duty after the Battle of Kasserine Pass. Major General Fredendall, the US II Corps Commander in charge of the Central Task Force landing in North Africa during Operation Torch was one of these officers (Kumioko, 2008). The complacent nature of many military leaders in the Army at this and the time leading up to the Second World War is evident in the study of history. On 1 September 1939, on the same day that Germany invaded Poland, Gen. George C. Marshall became U.S. Army Chief of Staff. He immediately implemented policies to retire older officers, reassign those who were incompetent,

and bring younger and more energetic men to responsible positions (Blumenson, 1986). This action is the epitome of why we need to study military history.

My belief is that there should be such a firm understanding by elected officials, military leaders, and the American people of the mission of our Armed Forces that there is no doubt that we are the best trained and equipped military in the world. Whether our Armed Forces are properly led, trained, and resourced is not an issue that should be figured out as we are on the verge of the next war. The American people have great respect for military leadership and are willing to give their sons and daughters to fight for our countries freedoms and we as military leaders must take that role seriously and always remain ready when the nation needs us to fight. Studying history and the time it takes to study history is time well spent in the development of military leaders. Creating an atmosphere that fosters the pursuit of excellence will help us remain the best Army in the world. Maintaining the trust and confidence of the American people and the world's population is aided through the knowledge of history.

OPPOSING VIEW

The study of history is a time consuming effort with little benefit to the present military objectives. A mission focused leader will devote training time to mission essential tasks that will ensure success on the battlefield. Time spent learning outdated tactics, memorizing chronologic events, or studying old battlefields is time lost on new tactics and technology.

One could also argue that history is no better a guide to ethical behavior than present society. We develop our values and build character through everyday coexistence with family, friends, and associates. We as military leaders instill the seven Army Values into Soldiers through our daily personal example, not through books and movies.

CONCLUSION

A better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for the challenges that lie ahead by providing lessons learned. A familiar saying in the military is that we learn just as much from bad examples as we can from good examples. Studying history allows us to learn from the past experiences, both good and bad, from those that came before us. Our charge as military professionals is to learn to use these historical experiences to the advantage of our Soldiers and units to positively impact the outcome of our missions. The examples presented in this paper are but a few historical examples that we as busy military professionals can draw on to extract valuable lessons from history that will assist Soldiers in preparing for future challenges.

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