

Running head: HISTORIES LESSONS

Histories Lessons

SGM Samuel G. Murphy

USASMA - Student Number 515

Argumentative essay

SGM Gonzales

18 March 2008

Introduction

History is a great teacher. We as Non-commissioned officers must learn all that we can about our history and the history of our Army. We can learn so much about the way we fight, the reasons for fighting (good or bad), our fighting techniques and more importantly, how our enemy fought. We must study our enemy's history and understand why he fights, how he fights and what his goals are for fighting.

Revolutionary War

During the War for independence from Britain; the United States forces were the Rebels (insurgents). We fought for our freedom and for our religious rights, which is why our ancestors came to this country in the first place. If we were to study our approach to the typical form of fighting during this time, we can see that we truly went away from the norm. We used tactics that were called barbaric and ungentlemanly. We were supposed to gather in a big field, face off against the enemy and if I shoot more of you than you did of me, I win. We were facing the worlds "Super Power" Britain. We could not have won in this manner. We did do some of this fighting but we also used insurgent techniques, such as ambush and sneak attacks that left the British unmotivated and fearful of where they would be attacked next. When the British tried to turn the south colonies (who were long supporters of the Queen) against us by moving through there to gain support, they alienated the people during a riot and caused the southern colonies to turn against them also. We were finally able to organize with the help of the French and drive the British out of our country only to fight them again in basically the same manner in the War of 1812. The British failed to understand our culture and to adapt to the techniques we were using in order to win the fight against us, which in my opinion is a very good thing at this time.

Spanish American War and the Philippine insurrection

During the Spanish American war, we were the saviors (in a word) for the people of the Philippine islands. They did not know we had a hidden agenda to use the islands as a port for our new trade partnership with China. We went over there and with the help of the unofficial Filipino Army threw Spain out in a very short period. However, we had struck a deal with the Filipino's that said we would turn over their country to them once the Spanish were thrown out. We did not do that until the Great Depression caused us to have to pull out. Our lying to the Filipinos caused them to take up arms against us. The Filipinos tried to fight us in the "Gentleman fashion" but they stood no chance against us in that form of fight. So they went back to what they had been doing, fighting an insurgent battle in which the United States Army was unprepared and untrained for. We attempted to continue to fight using the current doctrine of the day only to realize that we could not win in that manner. Therefore, the Army came up with new ideas and plans to defeat the insurgency. We rounded the people up from their lands, tortured people, and made a grand mess of things in that country. The idea was to make war so unbearable that peace of any kind would be welcomed. It did work but at a great cost to the people of the Philippine islands. We changed our tactics in order to win this war, but at the same time also gave up the moral high ground to our barbaric ways of fighting. You may win the war but loose the respect of the population and world opinion at the same time.

World War II

World War II was a different war than the Spanish American war, the Philippine insurrection, and World War I. It was fought for many different reasons but there are many valuable lessons to be gleaned from studying the way we fought and how the enemy fought. The Germans decided that they wanted to take over all of Europe or most of it anyways. This is

incorrect but you get the picture. United States policy at the time was one of isolationism, meaning we thought that since oceans separated us that we could let Europe fend for themselves. This of course was just plain stupidity but such was the sentiment at the time. Many Americans were mad at Britain and France for their failure to pay us back from World War I and did not want anything to do with them. In addition, we were still recovering ourselves from the Great Depression and really could not look beyond our own borders. These thoughts caused Spain who was one of our allies to fall the Normandy and finally France fell to the Germans. The United States still firmly routed in isolationism decided to start supplying the British with war supplies on the bases that they pick them up from the United States with their own ships and pay cash. We did offer this deal to all countries to remain neutral but knew that only Britain could actually come and get these supplies. Finally, we started to bring the supplies ourselves and to start a lend-lease program, which meant that the countries had to return the war supplies to us when they were done using them. This was like asking for a piece of gum back that you gave to someone after he chewed it. We supplied many countries with war supplies. When we finally entered the war, we had to commit many millions of our service people to actually win it. Much that happened in Europe could have been avoided, many peoples lives could have been saved if we would have gotten involved sooner. Our “head in the sand” politics was a root cause for the spread of German influence and maybe was the cause of the cold war. These events have shaped our current foreign policy and made it what it is today. We no longer keep our head in the sand. We are now involved more intimately than ever before in the Worlds problems. Part of this policy is to avoid another World War and another part is that as a Super Power we have the inherent responsibility to stand up for our weaker brothers whom are in trouble.

The war in Iraq

Since our invasion of Iraq in 2003, we have had to change our doctrine to fight an insurgent fight. We are no longer fighting a force on force battle. It is a difficult adjustment for the military especially one so deeply routed in the “Cold War fight”. We have made leaps and bounds in the right direction and are winning this war not through attrition but through our use of the local populace. We have tried not to alienate the populace of Iraq, and have built many schools, stood up many of the basic functions like sewage, electricity and the like. We have a long ways to go but we are getting it done over there. The reason we are doing well is that we have learned from our mistakes in previous wars like Vietnam, the Philippine insurrection, and many other skirmishes. This is a very important lesson and one that I hope that the United States remembers. If we do not study our History, we are doomed to repeat it.

Conclusion

It is truly necessary to learn all we can from history, especially our history, making sure we capitalize our successes and not repeat our mistakes. During this counter insurgency fight we can use examples of our past to help us win in a timely manner.

References

Stewart, Richard W. (2005). American Military History Volume I & II. Washington D.C. Center of Military History.