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Abstract

Military history is beyond history of war. It plays an important role in global economics, national security, and everyday life. Military history ranges from events such as the Holocaust to developing the budget for government spending. Proven over time, military decision making has evolved into complex formulations and processes that stemmed from basic but sturdy, concrete ideas.

By embracing an education of military history, one will be versed in magnificent events of past men as well as a deepened understanding on current military layouts. While learning about glorious military achievements, one will also be informed of the disappointments and failures of the past.

When one studies military history, one sees the direct correlation between the military and economic conditions. A current example of this correlation can be seen in the U.S. military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office found the following: “The “war on terror” since 2001 is on track to exceed \$750 billion” (Kirchhoff, 1). “That figure reflects only a small fraction of the economic cost of the war, according to analysts such as Columbia University economist Joseph Stiglitz. He says the ultimate price tag for Iraq - which administration officials initially pegged at \$50 billion to \$60 billion – is easily \$3 trillion or above when factors such as the cost of healthcare for disabled veterans, surging oil prices and the economic impact on families who have lost breadwinners are considered. Disability and health care payments for veterans alone could amount to \$600 billion. This (war) is an unfunded entitlement (program) we have created in the past few years” (Kirchhoff, 1).

In addition to accessing the cost of military actions and its impact on the United States economy, studying military history helps to see the benefit of such actions. “The cost must be balanced against other intangibles, however, such as the benefits of military action on overall U.S. security, some argue...Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England stated that the large U.S. economy could support the rising military spending, which he said should be considered a sort of national insurance policy” (Kirchhoff, 2).

The U.S. is often drawn into conflict when there is a threat to national security. “Following World War II. U.S. foreign policy redefined itself to focus on the role of defender, not only of the freedom of its own citizens, but also of the freedom of people everywhere”(Rice, 5). With the increasing global threat of terrorism, it is more important to study military history. Studying military history will allow us to see what worked and did not work. Having an understanding of foreign policy and how they were shaped will allow us to utilize strategies that could aid in negotiations with other countries to prevent wars.

Gerda Lerner, a historian, author, and teacher stated “We can learn from history how past generations thought and acted, how they responded to the demands of their time and how they solved their problems. We can learn by analogy, not by example, for our circumstances will always be different than theirs were. The main thing history can teach us is that human actions have consequences and that certain choices, once made, cannot be undone. They foreclose the possibility of making other choices and thus they determine future events”(Lewis, 1). The truth of this statement can be confirmed by studying the conditions leading to World War II, which in turn created the world we live in today.

“The underlying cause of conflict lay in the precarious equilibrium that had arisen from the peace conference of Versailles in 1919, which did not produce a stable, lasting order. The ‘peace of the victors’ (Great Britain, France, United States and Italy) rested on the predominance they exercised over the losers. Germany, the most powerful of the defeated nations, had to accept territorial losses both on its western border (restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France and the occupation of the Saar) and to the east (Poznan, part of East Prussia and the Silesia became part of Poland)” (David and Charles, 12). The conditions set forth at the peace conference of Versailles set the stage for World War II. By studying past military strategies, future diplomatic leaders can avoid making the same decisions that affected the lives of so many people just not within the United States, but the international community as well.

In addition to studying military strategies to be used in current global conditions, the development of soldiers is a crucial aspect of military history. It is the soldiers that comprise the nation armies. The soldiers are human beings that carry the responsibilities of representing their country. “Common to basic training in virtually all nations are weapons training, physical conditioning and martial discipline. The intensity, sophistication and duration (in the U.S., eight weeks for the Navy, eight and a half weeks for the Air Force, 10 weeks for the Army, 13 weeks for the Marines) of that training vary widely with predictable results. But there is another, not-so-quantifiable and not-so-obvious element of training that may well influence battlefield outcomes once the shooting starts: initiative. The mental aspects of training, the

emphases on personal competence and responsibility—particularly among the NCOs who comprise the backbones of the forces—have long been hallmarks of democratic national armies and may well be a secret of their series”(Military History, 27).

Educating the soldier is another crucial aspect in the development of the soldier. Educating the soldier serves to help build the soldier sense of responsibility, honor, and leadership. Whether serving in the battlefield or offering a hand in times of crisis, a soldier must be ready at all times to produce the results needed on a moment notice. Past experience has shown the importance of educating the soldier. “The emergence of mass, conscript armies helped make ‘military education’ more elitist. Officers who attended military schools and academies intending to pursue a military career were differentiated from the conscript soldiers and short-service officers who formed the bulk of the armies. The latter underwent military ‘training’—but hardly ‘education’. The majority of those who fought in both world wars were in this category. With a few exceptions, the generals and admirals on all sides were all the products of a professional military education. But one of the positive legacies of the world war experience was the introduction of first-rate education for non-officers. The increasing complexity of military technology meant that soldiers, sailors, and airmen had to do complex jobs which required quick thinking, initiative, literacy, and numeracy. Many gained an education they had missed out on in civilian life, as examinations in basic educational skills accompanied selection for promotion to senior, non-commissioned ranks. With the end of conscription in the armies of the developed world, military education is more important than ever in attracting and retaining high-quality recruits. Increasingly, armed forces try to ensure that, besides gaining the necessary qualifications to do difficult military jobs, those skills are recognized with the award of equivalent civilian qualifications, which will help the serviceman or -woman on return to civilian life”(Bellamy, 1).

It has been said that the basic strategies of battle have not changed only the technology surrounding it. While this may be true, there is another factor that needs to be considered and that is the

human factor. Technology is continually evolving. At the heart of the evolution of technology is the brainpower that produces the technology. “It was the skill of the pilot, the tank officer, and the common infantryman with his rifle that demonstrated how effective a weapon could be. And it was men, not machines, who would ultimately have to seize the enemy’s ground in order to claim victory”(American War Library, 7-8). It takes the human intelligence to develop the technology used in battle. The technology is developed based on lessons learned from previous warfares. New modern technology cannot be developed if previous battle strategies have not been studied to determine what could have been done differently. One may say that time spent on educating the past takes away from preparing for the present, but that is not true. Studying the past aids in preparing for the future. There are always lessons to be learned.

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