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Military Transformation Through History

Argumentative Essay

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Abstract

Every war brings about different challenges that the military adapts to either during the conflict or after. How well the Army transforms from past experiences will have an impact on the success or failure as it continues to engage in future conflicts. History shows us that the Army must continue transformation in technology and operations to combat the ever-changing battlefield, in order to defeat future adversaries on the full spectrum battlefield as the Army continues to engage in this persistent war on terrorism. I will cover two time frames where the Army underwent significant transformation. It also will focus on the changes needed to keep up with the technology, diverse operations and personnel as the Army continues to face an ever-changing battlefield. Also, it will briefly mention where the Army is heading with the Future Combat Systems.

Military Transformation through History

No one can determine what kind of conflict we will be fighting or where it will be. However, history shows us that the Army must continue transformation in technology and operations to combat the ever-changing battlefield, in order to defeat future adversaries as the Army continues to engage in this persistent war on terrorism.

The Army must continue to focus on the full spectrum battlefield past and present as it continues transformation. This includes areas such as counter insurgency and stability operations as well as homeland security and humanitarian services. As the Army transforms they can not over focus on asymmetric warfare and an unconventional enemy that is tied to no particular Nation State. They need to also remain focused and vigilant on the possibility of facing a Nation State in conventional conflict.

Clearly, the Army adapted well and defeated many Nation States during past conflicts in conventional warfare but it had a notorious problem when the enemy reverts to irregular fighting. I will look back at history when the Army made major transformation in an effort to keep up with the ever changing conflict that faces our nation. I will cover two time frames where the Army underwent transformation: Civil war up to World War I and from World War II through the Cold War. I will focus on the changes needed to keep up with the technology, diverse operations and personnel as the Army continues to face an ever changing battlefield. I will also briefly mention where the Army is heading with the Future Combat Systems.

Advance Technology

The emerging technology in weapons and equipment were major factors that brought about the need for transformation in the Army. It will continue to bring about transformation as the Army moves through the 21st century. For the Army to remain a preeminent land power it will be required to make continuous changes.

The advancement in weapons and equipment started around the civil war time. These weapons forced change, which cause an individual by the name of Emory Upton to emerge. He realized that transformation must occur to combat these new systems. With the introduction of new weapons such as the rifled musket and the breach loading carbine rifle which were accurate out to 250 yards, to the Gatling gun that could fire as many as 65 rounds per-minute would force changes in the tactics used to fight wars. Artillery also would become more advanced with the introduction of the rifled bore and different type of munitions used. They could shoot certain types of munitions over a mile, which allowed them to engage the enemy's, smooth bore artillery without fear of being engaged in return. They also used canister munitions for targets within 250 yards, which was a very murderous round.

Emory Upton would further study the Armies of Europe and Asia. Through his study he concluded the need to transform in many areas to make the Army stronger and a more capable military to fight a foreign adversary. With the changing times in the world there was going to be a need to reorient the Army from constabulary duties within the United States to one that could focus on and defeat a conventional force of a Nation State. The transformation that proceeded would be utilized in some form as late as 2003.

Transformation occurred all across the Army and in almost every facet. Doctrine was rewritten changing the fundamental way the infantry was to fight from linear to one based on columns and maneuvering by groups of four, three battalion elements so that momentum could be maintained. Other areas that were changed was the advanced military education system, the need for an evaluation and retirement system as well as a volunteer force and conscript in time of war. All this geared the Nation toward the need to have a stronger regular standing professional

Army. With the transformation it would provide the Army with an increased chance of victory in wars while at the same time diminishing the loss of life.

The Army continued to transform based off the recommendations of Emory Upton through out the early 1900s and past wars. At one point it was referred to as Upton's Army as late as 2003 (Cassidy, 2003). This would not be the most significant transformation that the Army would undergo. However, significant as it was World War II would bring about even more changes as the advancement in technology continued to grow.

Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States entering into World War II the Army was transforming. It was using information that it was receiving from the battlefields of Europe and Asia to reconstruct military tactics and develop weapons and equipment. Individual weapons and artillery changed tremendously over the first half of the century but there were other technologies introduced that were going to change the course of wars and how they were going to be fought; it was the tank and the airplane. With the introduction of these two weapons systems transformation shifted from not more technology but to superior technology. It also would bring about tactic transformation in the way the Army would fight.

The tank was first introduced in World War I but didn't play a significant role in military tactics until World War II. It brought several things to the battlefield that would make it a combat multiplier. It offered firepower, protection and mobility to the Soldiers. It also produced a psychological effect on the battlefield. This weapon continued to evolve not only as the war continued but to this day.

Airplanes became another dominant weapon at this time, which forced the Army to transform. Fighters, bombers, and transport planes were introduced rapidly into the fight. Each came with its own specialty. At the beginning the planes were biplanes but before the war would

end the Army would be flying jet aircraft. With the utilization of the airplane to drop proximity fuse bombs, and guided missiles and the tank to support the ground infantry the Army would transform the way it fights into combined arms operation.

After the Korean War the Army would finalize the transformation that it had stated before World War II. It would transform its triangular divisions with a system referred to as pentomic divisions. These divisions were composed of five self-contained elements capable of independent actions (Stewart, 2004). Unique to these units was the integration of tactical nuclear weapons.

With the advancement in technology and equipment it posed questions to the Army as to how it was going to employ them. Others services were also advancing at a rapid pace. This would generate transformation in how we trained and employ our assets during military operations. All these advancements would increase lethality of weapons and result in a change in military tactics and operations.

Diverse Military Operations

Transformation or change in the Army is inevitable. With the increased complexity of weapons and equipment, it was sure to cause the Army to look at how it could best use them in future military operations. Combined arms operations, as well as Joint Military Operation was a result of these advancements.

Combined arms operations became very effective in the implementation of conventional warfare. It allowed the Army to use an overwhelming amount of firepower from various weapons systems in synchronized harmony with ground troops to inflict mass destruction on a Nation State while preserving life of the American Soldier. Joint Operations further enhanced the effectiveness of conventional warfare by implementing fighter jets as well as cruise missile,

which could be launched from carrier fleets. Army doctrine was also transforming to support these operations. Conventional warfare or force on force was tested during several conflicts and proved very effective. This validated and supported the need for the transformation. However, the Army engaged in other conflicts that exploited a weakness in transformation.

The Army had previously engaged in irregular or insurgency warfare during these time periods. How well did the military use history in implementing transformation after these wars? This is a question that we are trying to answer today. Without a doubt the Army has the military might to destroy these adversaries force on force and history shows that we never lost a major battle during these engagements. It was the lack of organization by this evasive enemy that causes conventional armies to have problems. Irregular warfare or insurgents excels at other tactics while at the same time avoiding major direct conflict.

How the Army advanced in technology and military operations continues to play a significant role in how it functions. It will continue to play an even bigger role as we look at future combat systems (FCS). Hopefully FCS will network or integrate all the systems used by the various branches for combined arms as well as joint operations. However, as the Army continues with transformation it cannot forget its most valuable asset the American Soldier.

Personnel

When talking about transformation one important part of it certainly can be labeled as the American Soldier. The advancement in technology along with Military Operations would be a mute topic without them. The area that I want to focus on is the Professional Military Education (PME) system and the effort to transform it as the Army transformed. No one realized the need for a professional Army and the importance of it more than Emory Upton did. While conducting

his studies with the European and Asian Army's he further realized that the Army needed to become a professional organization and to do so it needed to become educated.

The Army established educational institutions as well as integrating military science and history into the curriculum of school systems that were already established. This newly designed education system as well as professional Soldiering at first focused on the officer branch. It would not get interjected into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps until 1947 with the 2nd Constabulary Brigade's NCO school. Later in the mid 1960s the Army began the NCO Candidate school which, eventually transformed into the Noncommissioned Officer Education System in 1971 (FM 7-22.7, 2002). This allowed NCOs the opportunity to receive primary leadership training on the basis of being a NCO. It further forced NCOs to receive basic and advanced training in their career fields. The pinnacle of the system was the Sergeants Major Academy that brought all the career fields back together to study and learn from each other as well as lessons learned.

Issues with Transformation

It's hard to argue that the current transformation the Army is going through is or isn't right. Only history will tell how well the Army orchestrated it as we face the various adversaries or Nation States. However, past transformations can be looked at and opinions drawn as to how well it was executed from the conflicts that the Army underwent with various Nation States after it transformed or failed to transform.

I provide no argument to the fact that we got the conventional warfare part of transformation correct. On the other hand we have two areas that we need to work on as well as some missed opportunities. The Army also needs to remain vigilant on conventional warfare as it continues the current transformation. I have focused on two eras as mentioned earlier where

the Army underwent significant transformation. Within this time frame the Army failed to transform or interject any formal education or training after it was involved in the Philippine insurgency. Training in this area would not be rigorously tested until Vietnam and as history indicates the Army executed it poorly. The Military won every conventional battle but failed to deal with the daily irregular/guerilla tactics used by the enemy. This type of fighting the Army will see again in OIF.

The Army has placed a tremendous value on transformation of the noncommissioned office education system in the last 30 plus years. However, this should have been the focus as far back as when Emory Upton realized the importance of a professional educated Soldier. West Point, the War College as well as Command and General Staff College have been part of transformation for the officer corps for over 100 years. It would take the Army over 70 years to realize the need to institute some type of formal training for all NCOs. Who knows the impact the NCO could have made in the military or on history if they received the same formal training.

Conclusion

Transformation or change in the Army is inevitable and how well we use history plays an important role in this process. As we have transformed through out time many adversaries and Nation States have tested the Army. The Army today is the result of lessons learned from these hard fought battles. It adapted, changed and transformed to become the mighty force that it is today. The Army is a more versatile combat power that is capable of complex operational maneuvers both combined arms as well as joint operations as a result of transformation. Whether the Army got it right will only be determined by future conflicts or its ability to express itself with the advanced military might that will deter conflict. The later is not possible.

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