

Challenges to military leadership in 21st century management essay



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INTRODUCTION

“ During an operation decisions have usually to be made at once; there may be no time to review the situation or even to think it through If the mind is to emerge unscathed from this relentless struggle with the unforeseen, two qualities are indispensable: first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and second, the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead.”

– Carl Von Clausewitz

Leadership is inherent in a military officer’s function. It has been variously defined. A general accepted view is that leadership is the ability to inspire and direct a group of people to achieve an objective. Leadership is an art that can be scientifically studied and developed. Leadership in the military has often been a deciding factor in war.

2. While going through the leadership traits, it might appear impossible to have a perfect military leader. Human nature by design is flawed. So, it will be futile to look for perfection. If we study the life and works of great military leaders we find that each had his strong points and his weaknesses. What distinguished them from common mortals is their ability to appreciate their strong and weak areas. They then capitalized on their strength and shunned their weaknesses. Through training, practice and a positive attitude to improve oneself, it is possible to acquire the qualities of a good military leader.

3. Vision is a senior leader's source of effectiveness. In a Clausewitzian sense it is his "inner light." It can be an intuitive sensing, a precise mission, or a higher commander's intent for a campaign or battle. Regardless, it is the reference point against which the senior leader measures progress. In fact, when properly formed, it provides its own capability to change or affirm its direction.

4. Vision provides the capability to organize because it establishes focus for actions and guidance to the organization which will follow. Moreover, it is the basis on which senior leaders or commanders generate the moral leadership power, activate the professional resources needed to muster and sustain organizational trust, cohesion, commitment, and will to meet any challenge.

(Check that all the points are covered that I am going to explain in subsequent paragraph)

METHODOLOGY

Statement of Problem

5. The aim of this dissertation is to study and understand the nature of plausible challenges faced by a military leader of developing countries in the 21st century and the requirement of traits for the military leader to combat these challenges.

Hypothesis

6. Understanding of human dimensions by the leaders merits serious considerations. While the impact of technology on campaigns and battles is significant, the man behind the gun still remains in the centre stage during

conduct of the operation. The facet is more pertinent for the developing countries where the doctrine can't afford to drive the technology. A commander must possess an electrifying personality to energize the under command and drive them to the point of exhaustion when needed. Success in the battlefield will depend on the combined effect of many teams, units, formations, and organizations. Effective command, control, coordination and interoperability amongst the services will be essential. Simplicity in orders and actions will be required. Most importantly, soldiers and units will be led and sustained in a manner that ensures they are physically and psychologically capable of responding.

7. To meet the requirements of the battlefield and deal with its challenges, military leaders require special characteristics. First, they need the ability to assess the situation rapidly and form their battlefield vision. Second, they should have a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. Finally, they should have a capability to learn rapidly since the free will of the opponent will ensure that most situations and circumstances appear different from what is expected. Combined, these characteristics provide a capability to make timely decisions. The importance of timely decision is even more to those leaders who don't possess the capability to compress and shorten response times with the help of technology. And to have a timely and correct decision a leader must have a clear vision.

8. The treatment of leadership draws no distinction between peace and war. Those who lead look beyond peace to determine what units and soldiers need for war, set the standards, and then train accordingly. The most

important trait of a military leader of a developing country is vision and to have skill and knowledge to implement the vision.

Justification of the Study

9. The changing face of war in twenty first century poses special challenges. Two major factors impact on the military forces and on its senior leadership. First, the military forces require preparing for the entire spectrum of conflict – from nuclear war to counterterrorist action. Second, the continued application of technology to war fighting, coupled with changes in threat capabilities and posture, has altered dramatically the human demands of combat.

10. The traditions and precepts in the military career provide the ethical and lawful basis for our leadership actions, establishing the moral guides for what senior leaders must be prepared to do. Leader acts as the glue that binds different elements of a force together and provides the focus and motivation for all the military activities. The leaders have to train themselves in peacetime in the art and science of prosecuting war. Leaders of the developing countries do not have the luxury to utilize the advantage of superior technology. But still they need to be aware of likely challenges for them. Only then they will be able to make a faster decision making cycle conceptualizing their vision.

SCOPE

11. This dissertation would study and analyse the requirement of leadership trait for the military leaders of developing countries to face the challenges of 21st century.

Methods of Data Collection

12. This research paper is a blending of primary and secondary sources. For primary sources the content analysis method is used where data were collected from various publications, books written by eminent scholars, daily news papers and previous research carried out on the subject. For secondary sources the survey method is used where data were collected through the discussion with number of mid level military officers and civilian officers and lectures delivered at the DSSC by various renowned scholars.

Organisation of the Dissertation

13. The dissertation is organised in seven chapters. Chapters one deals with introducing the subject of the topic of dissertation and the methodology of the research. The chapters following them deal with issues as given under:-

- (a) Chapter II Leadership and its Principles.
- (b) Chapter III Challenges of 21st century.
- (c) Chapter IV Skill and Knowledge to implement Vision.
- (d) Chapter V Conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LEADERSHIP AND ITS PRINCIPLES

Leadership

14. Leadership is essentially a human activity dealing with people grouped for a specific purpose. “ Is leadership an art or a science?” has often been debated. Scientific studies, such as psychology, group dynamics, work study,

management techniques and statistics are important tools that a leader can use to help achieve his objective. Actual leadership function remains an art simply because each person reacts differently under the same condition. In the field of battle, a leader is dealing with too many unpredictable and unforeseen events. Therefore, in the realm of military leadership, the trend has been to treat it as an art. James L Stokesbury says in his article on “Leadership as an Art”, “As long as we do not know exactly what makes men get up of a hole in the ground and go forward in the face of death at a word from another man, then leadership will remain one of the highest and elusive of qualities. It will remain an art.” Field Marshal Montgomery defined leadership as “the capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character that will inspire confidence.” Leadership is defined in the USAF (USAF AFP-35-49) as “the art of influencing and directing people to accomplish the mission.”

15. No one is a born leader, although some people may have been endowed by nature with a higher intellect or learning ability. A person with reasonable intelligence, sound character and a strong will-power can be a leader, provided his innate qualities are developed, and he is taught the art and techniques of practicing leadership through a training programme.

Principles of Leadership

16. Principles of leadership provide the cornerstone for action. They are universal and are founded on the general requirements for effective military operations. Leadership principles represent fundamental truths that have stood the test of time. They apply to all leaders and commanders regardless of rank or responsibility.

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17. Know Yourself and Seek Self-Improvement. Professional development is a continuous process. It is fundamental to understanding and achieving results in military units and formations. Through self-evaluation a leader or commander is able to recognize his strengths and weaknesses in order to determine his particular capabilities and limitations. As a result, he can take specific actions to further develop his strengths and work on correcting his weaknesses. This process enhances self-confidence as well as facilitates the ability to lead and command effectively at succeeding higher levels of responsibility.

18. Be Technically and Tactically Proficient. This principle is key. Effective leaders are thoroughly familiar with the operations, training, and technical aspects of their assignments. They know demonstrating technical and tactical competence inspires confidence. This principle is related to the principle of “ know yourself and seek self-improvement” by including preparation to assume the duties and requirements of leading or commanding at the next echelon. Combat won’t allow time for detailed preparation to assume new responsibilities. This principle also demands that leaders and commanders take responsibility for staying abreast of current military developments through service school training, field experience, professional reading, and personal study.

19. Seek and Take Responsibility. Achieving organizational results means accepting responsibility. While responsibility for portions of the mission may be delegated, ultimate responsibility for success or failure is borne by the leader or commander. Leaders cannot be omnipresent and omnipotent, but they can exercise initiative, resourcefulness, and imagination – and be <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-to-military-leadership-in-21st-century-management-essay/>

responsible. Responsibility is demonstrated by decisiveness in times of crisis – not hesitating to make decisions or to act to achieve operational results. Combat is dynamic, and leaders act in the absence of orders to take advantage of fleeting windows of opportunity. Leaders see problems as challenges rather than obstacles. Leaders accept just criticism and admit mistakes; they encourage others to do likewise. Any efforts to evade responsibility destroy the bonds of loyalty and trust that must exist between leaders and those they lead. Seeking additional responsibility will assist in preparing for duties at higher levels of responsibility and is essential to operating within the established intent. Leaders adhere to what they believe is right and have the courage to accept the results of their actions.

20. Make Sound and Timely Decisions. Combat demands rapid estimates of situations, sound decisions, and timely initiation of actions to accomplish those decisions. The leader who delays or attempts to avoid making a decision may cause unnecessary casualties as well as failure of the mission. Success hinges on creative flexible leaders who can quickly adapt, anticipate opposing force reactions, then make and rapidly execute sound decisions. This principle is related to the Army's emphasis on manoeuvre and is consonant with taking responsibility for one's actions. When making decisions, leaders and commanders consider all available information, to include the immediate and follow-on impact that decisions will have on soldiers, units and formations.

21. Set the Example. The power of example is great. Leaders win confidence and loyalty through their actions. Soldiers emulate the behaviour of their leaders. Implementing this principle requires both moral and physical

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courage. Leaders set the example by maintaining high, but attainable, goals and standards and ensuring that their own actions match what they require. This principle is related to all the other leadership principles. It is essential that leaders share the dangers and hardships of their units and formations because they demonstrate their professionalism by every-thing they say and do.

22. Know Your Soldiers and Look Out for Their Well-Being. This principle focuses on instilling trust and confidence in soldiers, units and formations. Trust and confidence develop and sustain loyalty and cohesion, thereby creating better units and formations. This is important because cohesive units and formations are more successful than those that are not. Loyalty reinforces this confidence and is the foundation for motivating soldiers. Loyalty begins at the top - not at the bottom - and is two-way. Soldiers who respect their leaders expend more effort to ensure their tasks are accomplished to the best of their abilities. Leaders know their soldiers in order to motivate and influence them to accomplish the mission. Cohesion then flows from loyalty and becomes the bedrock which keeps units and formations together during the stress and chaos of combat.

23. Keep Your Soldiers Informed. Battlefield success is founded upon actions taken in the absence of orders. Informing subordinates supports the ability of subordinate leaders to make and execute decisions within the context of the established intent. Information also greatly reduces fears and rumours that affect the attitude and morale of soldiers. Keeping soldiers informed enhances initiative, team-work, cohesion, and morale. Subordinates must understand their tasks and how their personal roles relate to accomplishing

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the mission. It enhances their purposefulness, determination, and fortitude. This principle is directly related to establishing trust between the leader and the led.

24. Develop A Sense of Responsibility in Your Subordinates. The human emotions of pride and determination can be employed to develop a sense of responsibility through delegation. Effective units and formations perform well even in the absence of critical leaders. Delegation of tasks with commensurate resources develops subordinate leaders to assume leadership roles at succeeding higher levels. Leaders are teachers and are responsible for professionally developing subordinate leaders. Establishing an environment where leaders accept the honest mistakes of subordinate leaders ensures that capable leaders are developed.

25. Ensure the Task is Understood, Supervised and Accomplished This principle is essential to accomplishing the mission and is a critical element of effective leadership and command. Understanding the task ensures that soldiers know what is to be accomplished, how it is to be accomplished, when it is to be accomplished, and who is to accomplish it. Since the battlefield is dynamic and characterized by change, this enhances the ability of soldiers to accomplish the task, even in the absence of detailed orders or when adjustments to the plan must be made because of unforeseen circumstances. Supervision must take place at the appropriate level. It ensures that actions are performed properly and mistakes are corrected in training so that actions will be performed properly in combat. Care must be exercised in supervising; over supervising stifles subordinate leaders and insufficient supervising leads to not accomplishing the mission. This principle <https://assignbuster.com/challenges-to-military-leadership-in-21st-century-management-essay/>

is employed with the principles of “ developing a sense of responsibility in your subordinates” and “ keeping your soldiers informed.”

26. Build the Team. Cohesion is essential to success. Soldiers will fight resolutely when they are well trained, when they respect and have confidence in their leaders and buddies, and when they know they are part of a good team. Failure to foster a sense of teamwork can produce an ineffective organization. Soldiers must be proficient in basic skills and then trained to integrate those skills into effective team operations. Performance as a unit provides the foundation for effective performance at each succeeding echelon. An all-prevailing unity of effort contributes to team integration.

27. Employ Your Unit in Accordance with Its Capabilities. This principle combines all leadership principles and focuses on the precept of accomplishing the mission while looking out for the well-being of soldiers. All units and formations, regardless of size, have capabilities and limitations. While it is necessary that leaders continually train their units and formations on tough and challenging tasks and strive for improved performance, they must make tasks attainable. Otherwise, the unit or formations begins to lose confidence in itself and in its leaders.

(Revise the principles and make it more relevant)

Developing Countries

28. A developing country is a country with low average income compared to the world average. The term ‘ developing country’ often refers mainly to

countries with low levels of economic development, but this is usually closely
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associated with social development, in terms of education, healthcare, life expectancy, etc. The “developing” part of “developing country” may be considered euphemistic or perhaps optimistic, as many of the poorest countries are hardly developing at all; some have even experienced prolonged periods of negative economic growth. Developing countries are in general countries that have not achieved a significant degree of industrialization relative to their populations, and which have a low standard of living.

CHAPTER III

CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY

Socio-economic Challenges

29. The working environment within the armed Forces is changing at a rapid pace, greatly influenced by the growing manpower challenges of attracting and retaining a quality workforce, shifting changes in social value systems and technological advancements. These trends cannot be treated as separate issues. Their interdependent effects will continue to exert powerful influences on the armed forces, its culture, and how leadership is viewed. It is important to re-appreciate traditional motivation tools and philosophies in the light of modern social changes. By adapting emerging leadership approaches in a manner suitable for the armed forces, its overall efficiency can be enhanced in the future. Despite these social changes, the need for military leaders with strong fundamentals- character, integrity, and ethics will not change.

30. The changing nature of warfare and expansion of national interests well beyond geographical boundaries have placed fresh challenges on leadership. Materialism and economic progress have exerted their own pressures on the moderately paid practitioners of the military profession. Intense media scrutiny has also resulted in many leadership aberrations being made in the public, forcing the military leadership to increasingly look inwards and focus on ethics and values. There has been pyramidal structure in the armed forces; competition has always been intense and soldiers in the past have retired or exited from service gracefully and with minimum fuss. This was mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, there was very little transparency in the assessment and promotion system and secondly, the honour code was so ingrained in officers that aberrations were kept in-house, to preserve the 'izzat' of the defence services and not wash dirty linen in public. Today, things are completely different. Military leaders do not want to retire young because of economic and resettlement uncertainties. There is, at times, an intense desire in many leaders whose ambition exceeds their ability to rise in rank by 'hook or crook'. Increasing transparency has now come into play and leaders who feel they have been denied rightful place in the sun have started taking the legal route to redress their grievances, bringing issues of fairplay, ethics and values into the limelight.

Changes in Value System

31. Degradation of the value system in society as a whole has had a profound effect on the officer corps. Individualism, materialism, economic gains and success at all costs are all traits embedded in the present day society. The individuals joining the service also form part of this society and

therefore cannot totally escape from its effects. Today's armed forces reflect many of the trends of the modern society. The self-motivation levels of the officers have become abysmally low seeing the very rulers of the country indulging in all sorts of corruption and malpractice. A small section of officers have indulged in mere career advancements to gain power and monetary benefits rather than working towards the betterment of the organisation. The young officers view the 'service' as a mere contractual obligation. The officer cadre comprises people from all walks of life, increasingly from middle to lower middle class strata. Their first exposure to command and the values associated with leadership is only after being exposed to the pressures of leadership. In the absence of experience and leadership training from the very basic levels, it is not surprising that this novel responsibility is inadequately handled.

Human Resource Challenges

32. It may have become a cliché that men behind the machine are the key to winning wars. But it remains as true today as it ever was in the days of bows and arrows. In fact, as the armed forces are evolving towards being a higher-technology force, the role of manpower, especially the modern generation of leadership at the tactical level, would become more crucial. Officers at junior levels as in previous conflicts in the sub continent would constitute key tactical leadership and in future their roles would become even more critical. Their ability to take the right decisions in split seconds on every occasion is paramount.

33.

34.

35. It is a fact that the manpower problem would continue to persist for some time to come and thus the challenges of grooming leadership from the quality of manpower available is only going to increase in the future. It may be necessary to formally identify the leaders amongst officers at various stages of their careers beginning at the inception level. These leaders could be appropriately groomed and rewarded on the basis of professional, organisational and leadership skills. Incorporating contemporary leadership practices across the armed forces may help in recruitment and retention. While everyone enters the armed forces as a volunteer, the decision to stay or leave often depends on overall satisfaction with the organisation and the opportunities it provides.

Implication of Technology

36. During the last two decades, technology advances have surged across the world affecting almost every facet of daily lives. Unlike any time in history, it is imperative that leaders master the consequences of new technological changes and, in particular, developments in information technology as they apply to leadership practices. The Revolutions in the Military affairs (RMA) will be primarily driven by the technology. While sophisticated weapons and sensors have greatly enhanced the combat efficiency, developments in information technology have enabled greater connectivity and the information sharing among widely spread force components.

37. Network Centric Warfare (NCW). The nature of combat and combatants has altered. Future conflicts are expected to be short, fast paced and intense. In both pro-active and reactive roles, early prediction of information would become a key to success. Information has become time sensitive and continuous. NCW is about military response to the information age. This military response is directly proportional to the quality of military leaders our armed forces possess. The present day military leaders need to keep pace with the technology and put their best foot forward to learn know-how of the technology available in the armed forces. In spite of Technology being a modern day leadership tool, it cannot account for many intangibles which fall under the purview of leadership such as discipline, motivation and morale. Some of the best military decisions in the past have been based on what a leader “felt” was the best course of action.

38. The skills of mastering technology to use it as an effective supplement to instinctive leadership practices would be one of the challenges facing developing countries armed forces leaders of the 21st century. Leaders in addition would have to skillfully ensure the integration of a wide range of diverse technologies likely to be encountered in the joint operations of the future. They would have to be thorough in the understanding of the individual nature and synergistic applications of air, space and cyber systems of the future. The way leaders will communicate with their subordinates in training and combat is changing. Leaders also have a responsibility to become technically proficient with new informational technologies centred on computer literacy.

Organisational Challenges

39. Many military sociologists believe that the strength or weakness of military structure by and large depends on the conditions and climate generated by the organisation. When officers join the services from the civilian background there is a drastic change in the environment into which they are pushed and major adjustments need to be made by them. Whether these officers turn out to be useful or not depends to a large extent on the organisational climate in which they are pushed. A number of factors related to organisational climate have also contributed to the decline of our armed forces.

40. There are a few other challenges of a fundamental nature which need to be addressed. They are as follows:-

(a) Credibility and trust.

(b) Risk Vs Ethics and Duty Vs Conscience Dilemmas.

(c) Humanity.

(d) Professional and personal ethics.

Challenges Posed by an Invisible Enemy

41. 'Counter Insurgency Warfare' has undertaken a new and broader dimension especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In 'Counter Insurgency Warfare', terror is employed by the irregular adversary as a means to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear. Insurgency is an asymmetric conflict driven by a philosophy that

undermines human needs and aspirations. At the bedrock of such an armed struggle, therefore, always exist grievances that could be historical or generated by inefficient and at times partisan governance. Inept governance provides conditions for the generation of discontent on economic, social, religious, cultural or ethnic lines that over a period manifest into collective aggression and ultimately an armed struggle. Such warfare seeks to overthrow a constituted mechanism or arrangement of governance and employs subversion and terror as its primary means. Countering insurgency therefore, entails executing an imaginatively evolved campaign on multiple fronts to address the root causes of the imbroglio. It therefore, needs to be remembered by the military pundits formulating asymmetrical war fighting strategies that neutralizing armed cadres of the movement is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Such warfare besides impinging on the conventional war fighting capabilities of the militaries also imposes on them restrictive rules of engagement, in a battle space marked by a very high degree of unconventionality, uncertainty and irrationality.

42. The armed cadres of almost all contemporary insurgency movements show scant regard for the security of civilians, which the traditional insurgents or guerillas of the yester years showed. Today, almost all insurgency movements are witnessing a very high proliferation of terrorist activity that aims to cause anarchy, paralysis and disorder and helps the perpetrators to shape the asymmetrical battle space. This trend has blurred the distinction between an insurgent and a terrorist. Hence, the noun ‘terrorist’ is more appropriate to be used to describe all armed cadres of an insurrectionist movement. The terrorists, beyond doubt are the most critical

element of any asymmetric environment as they introduce asymmetry into the environment through an irrational, indiscriminate, unpredictable and ruthlessly destructive modus operandi. Knowing their characteristics, capabilities, sources of power from which they derive freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight are, therefore, sine qua non for a military leader to combat the menace of terrorism by Sub conventional Operations. The essential aspects that need to be understood by the military leaders engaged in such operations are as highlighted in the subsequent paragraphs.

43. Sub conventional operational arena poses the most difficult challenge for testing the leadership acumen of commanders at various levels. The volatility, uncertainty and ambiguity of the environment impacts on the decision making and, therefore, underscores the importance of suitable frames of references and training to enable commanders to operate effectively in an arena, which is not clearly demarcated.

CHAPTER IV

SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE TO IMPLEMENT VISION

44. The skills of leaders represent the knowledge base required for action to implement the vision of what must be accomplished. If properly developed, skills provide the means to plan and direct the battles and campaigns. Further, they sustain those at senior levels through times of great crisis, allowing them to make timely decisions, issue appropriate orders, and execute plans decisively in the absence of detailed information. Not every

skill needed will be important in every situation. But having a broad range of highly developed skills will greatly increase the chances for success.

45. Professional capabilities are most commonly expressed using descriptive attributes. Describing the attributes of successful senior leaders and commanders would be interesting, but as a source for action they are limited. Underpinning every attribute are skills or abilities which give rise to the descriptive attributes. One can never predict accurately which skill or skills may be critical. Certainly, no one can hope to be strong in every war fighting skill. One hallmark of good senior level leadership is recognizing one's weaknesses and making appropriate adjustments. Professional skills build on the basic leadership tenets of knowing yourself, knowing human nature, knowing your job, and knowing your unit. Professional skills can be broadly divided into three groups. These are : Conceptual skill, Competency skill and Communication skill.

Conceptual Skill

46. Well developed conceptual skills allow leaders or commanders to think and act in terms of the total system with an understanding of the constraints time places on all actions. Such skills are their first line of defence when dealing with complexity, allowing them to shape the future, be good planners, and generate the timely capability to outthink the enemy. A broad conceptual focus enables senior leaders to establish