

Editorial

The articles in the second issue of *POINTER* are all about people – our human capital and the need to invest in their growth, development and safety. In the Addendum to the President’s Address, Defence Minister, Dr Ng Eng Hen had stated that “... we will hone and validate our fighting capabilities through tough and realistic training, even as we continue to strengthen our training safety and medical systems to ensure our soldiers’ safety and well-being.”¹ Our articles will cover a varied list ranging from the learning process in the SAF, the perennial challenges of motivation and retention as well as the development of a strong safety culture in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

The article, “*Learning in the SAF’s Context*” is by SLTC Karuna Ramanathan. In this article, SLTC Karuna argues for a deeper understanding of the nature of learning as it applies to developing future SAF leaders who will need to be more adaptive. SLTC Karuna focuses on the SAF Action Learning Process (ALP) as a systematic methodology to build the necessary skills, action and enduring habits for learning in context. He also discusses commonly referenced areas related to learning and the ALP in the SAF, namely team learning, operational learning, the concept of lessons learnt, institutional learning and self-directed learning. Finally, SLTC Karuna also highlights the importance of understanding and preparing to learn in context, rather than only focusing on the content and its delivery as in pedagogical aspects, and the recall of that content for learning.

In “*Shaping Human Capital in the SAF*”, MAJ Goh Jia Yong examines three main issues that the SAF should consider in order to deliver her *raison d’être* of military deterrence. Firstly, the SAF needs to stay at the forefront of the latest military technology and doctrines to protect Singapore’s national sovereignty. Secondly, National Service

(NS) must continue to remain an invaluable process and experience in the hearts and minds of our conscript and reserve soldiers. Thirdly, the SAF must provide a strong career proposition for our regular soldiers who form the foundation of SAF’s full-force potential capabilities. MAJ Goh concludes that the future SAF will continue to secure the physiological and safety needs of the entire country and, at the same time, enrich society by continuing to train the hearts and minds of future generations, and equip them with the necessary skills to think out of the box and grapple with the complex problems that the country will encounter in the future.

LTC Quek Seoh Hiong’s article on “*Motivation and Retention in the SAF*” highlights the growing Human Resource (HR) challenges for the SAF in light of the changing societal trends such as shifting demographics, social evolution, globalisation, entrepreneurship practices, ageing population and declining birth rates. He stresses that HR management today cannot merely be a series of ‘corporate’ strategies consisting of cold and pragmatic methods, e.g. monetary incentives but instead should encompass policies that recognise and appeal to the intangibles such as job satisfaction, sense of achievement and nationalistic sentiments. LTC Quek expounds the impact of ‘corporatising’ motivation in the institutional concept of the SAF and adds that to ensure the continual transformation to a formidable and operationally ready SAF, there is a need to rekindle the values, soldiering instincts and learning abilities of our new soldiers.

The fourth article, “*Safety As An Operational Enabler*” is by CPT Bertram Ang. In this article, CPT Ang points out there is a need to refute the assumption that people are perfectly rational and that safety is simply “common sense.” He emphasises that accidents should be seen as the product of a causal chain of separate, yet interdependent factors

rather than solely the result of an unlucky twist of fate or a moment of carelessness. In his opinion, the building of a strong autonomous-team safety culture in the SAF is imperative, not only to ensure that the SAF retains public confidence, but also because it will act as an enabler for the SAF to grow its operational capacity. He further adds that a focus on safety is likely to ensure that the SAF remains a force that can continue to achieve mission success even when undertaking a much wider scope of operations in the future.

In the article, *“Portraying The National Image of Singapore Through The Armed Forces And Its Leaders,”* LTC Psalm Lew examines Joseph Nye’s three definitions of power – hard, soft and smart power and states that smart power is frequently associated with planned national branding, an endeavor that requires multi-agency collaboration. Whilst the SAF does not lead such an effort, it does run NS, which is a leading effort in the whole-of-government approach to national branding. According to LTC Lew, national branding has been a critical part of Singapore’s success, an integral part of nation building and survival in a globalised world saturated with moving images. As the institution with the most national branding ambassadors, the SAF has an important role to play in portraying the national image of Singapore.

The article *“Airpower and Small States”* by ME5 Bernard Cai Hanjie takes a critical look at the strategic value that airpower offers to geo-strategically vulnerable small states. He highlights the underlying need for small states to defend their sovereignty, examines the use of militaries as an effective option to achieve such a purpose and stresses the importance of airpower to a small state’s defence. ME5 Cai argues that airpower should not only serve as a useful operational tool for small states to achieve quick victory in war, but that the non-lethal aspects of airpower are equally important to small states in helping them to preserve peace.

ME5 Calvin Seah’s article *“Forget Logistics, You Lose!”* discusses how during the American Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant managed to turn what was initially a long and costly war into a victory through excellent logistics support. According to ME5 Seah, it was the superior logistics system with its vast network of supply, transport, maintenance and medical links that was a decisive factor in winning the war. He feels that logistics can be a force multiplier and a critical consideration in the outcome of a war. He stresses the relevance of logistics even in today’s context and the important role our Combat Service Support (CSS) plays in the SAF today.

At this point, we would like to bid farewell to our Asst Editor, Mr Amos Khan as he leaves to pursue an academic career. We thank him for all his contributions and wish him the very best in his future endeavours.

POINTER would also like to extend a very warm welcome to LTC Huang Miaw Yi and Mr Eddie Lim as they join the *POINTER* Editorial Board.

The *POINTER* Editorial Team

ENDNOTES

1. http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press-room/official_releases/nr/2014/may14_nr2.print.noimg.html