POINTER

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Editorial Board

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Editorial

In this first issue of *POINTER* for 2013, the main theme of the articles lined up for you is on people, our most important asset, and their development in the SAF. Four of these articles discuss the importance of nurturing and engaging the people to ensure a competent and committed workforce in the SAF, and stress the role of the leaders in this endeavor. In the words of our new Chief of Defence Force, MG Ng Chee Meng at the Chief of Defence Force Change of Command Parade held on 27 March 2013, "Our Commanders and senior enlisted leaders will continue to own People Development for the people they lead. In so doing, we will strengthen our foundation for mission success for many years to come."

In the article *Understanding the Millennial Generation: Developing a More Effective Workforce for the Future SAF,* MAJ Fu Wei'en Eugene and CPT Nah Jinping point out that current enlistees, i.e. Generation Y are better educated, more adaptive and learn faster. They are also more acquainted with social media and technology. Compared to their predecessors, these soldiers' characteristics, requirements and expectations are manifestly different. The authors propose that the leadership can develop them into an effective and committed workforce for the future SAF through proper training and engagement.

The next article, *Inspiring Commitment in the RSN: Insights from Organizational Psychology* by CPT Hou Minzheng, examines the importance of organizational commitment in the people development of the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). CPT Hou articulates that the adoption and implementation of the RSN Nurturing Philosophy symbolizes the first decisive step that the Navy is taking to systematically nurture and train its people to ensure that they are competent, committed and confident. He highlights that the organizational support given to the serviceman through his supervisor represents recognition of the value and importance of the serviceman to the success of the organization. The serviceman might feel a stronger sense of obligation and responsibility to reciprocate by improving his performance. CPT Hou concludes that an organization needs to be sincere and genuine to ensure the development and well-being of its personnel.

Revisiting "Putting People First": An Organizational Culture Perspective by CPT Chong Shi Hao discusses how a People-First Culture would give us the ability to handle the challenges ahead, in the midst of economic, cultural and political transformation. According to CPT Chong, each of us has a role to play as subordinate and leader, wherever we may be in the SAF. We need to respect one another as individuals, not merely as human resources or digits in the establishment. A People-First Culture means developing our people through work and using intrinsic motivation to generate results and a sense of purpose.

The fourth article entitled *A Culture-Centric Strategy for Sustaining Change* is by CPT Daxson Yap. In this article, CPT Yap highlights the need for the SAF to focus on understanding its own organizational culture as a first step towards implementing change. He states that if SAF leaders are better able to understand their own units, identify those areas resistant to change and design effective transition plans, it is likely that change will be sustained to the benefit of the organization.

The next two articles, while not about people development or organizational culture, still cover the theme of people—one article delves into the case of conscription in Singapore while the other is an examination of the causes of the Arab Spring and its impact on the rest of the world.

In *The Citizen-Soldier in Modern Democracies: The Case for Conscription in Singapore,* LTC Chan Ching Hao discusses the main forms of military service, the history of the rise of conscription from 18th century revolutionary France to its widespread proliferation during the Second World War (WWII) and the factors for its decline in the years after WWII. He then provides reasons why Singapore's defense needs are still best served by conscription and

concludes with the key factors for the continued success of Singapore's National Service system.

Our final article is by CPT John Samuel and is entitled *Contested Revolutions: The Arab Spring and Its Impact*. Here, CPT Samuel discusses the causes of the Arab Spring—the revolutionary wave of demonstrations, protests and civil wars that occurred in the Arab World in 2011. He further explores how the Arab Spring has shaped the domestic political arena in the Arab states and how the regional power balance and key geostrategic concerns such as the Arab-Israeli conflict have been affected and what are the general implications for international politics.

We would like at this point to bid farewell to two key members of the *POINTER* Editorial Board. As Deputy Chairman of the Board, LTC (NS) David Lee Wei Boon has been a committed member, giving invaluable advice and support these past three years. Thank you, David. We will miss your guidance and many contributions. We would also like to thank Ms Judith d'Silva for her invaluable contributions and wish her all the best. We warmly welcome COL Irvin Lim who will take over as Deputy Chairman of the *POINTER* Editorial Board. A warm welcome also to Ms Deanne Tan Ling Hui, who joins the *POINTER* Editorial Board.

The *POINTER* Editorial Team

Understanding the Millennial Generation:
Developing a More Effective Workforce for the Future SAF

by **MAJ Fu Wei'en Eugene and CPT Nah Jinping**

Abstract:

Singapore's current enlistees are better educated, more adaptive and learn faster. They are also more acquainted with social media and technology. Compared to their predecessors, these soldiers' characteristics, requirements and expectations are vastly different. Current junior ranks will eventually take over as senior commanders within the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). Each generation has its own unique characteristics with their strengths and shortfalls. With proper training and engagement, Generation Y's unique qualities can be harnessed to build an effective and committed workforce for the future SAF. The current leadership can achieve this by understanding this generation's unique characteristics through better engagement rather than stifling their natural talents.

Keywords: Leadership; Strategies; Future Planning; Generation Y

INTRODUCTION

Chief of Army (COA) MG Ravinder Singh described Singapore's current enlistees as "better educated, more adaptive and learn faster."[1] This generation of soldiers is also more acquainted with social media and technology. The unique differences in generations might be exaggerated,[2] however, the current generation does have unique characteristics, requirements and expectations that are vastly different from their predecessors. Current leadership must be aware that cross generation tension can inhibit teamwork, cripple communication and severely limit the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) mission to "enhance Singapore's peace and security through deterrence and diplomacy, and should these fail, to secure a swift and decisive victory over the aggressor."[3]

The SAF's current soldiers consists of three generations, characterized by their unique generational traits: Baby Boomers (born 1945-1962), Generation X (born 1963-1981) and Generation Y (born 1982-2001).[4] Gen Y is the newest generation to join the SAF and currently fills most of its junior ranks. This enigmatic group of young people has puzzled

commanders in recent years and could well catalyze fundamental changes in training methodologies. It is an inevitable reality that leadership must transfer to each new generation as they mature. Gen Y soldiers will eventually be senior commanders and policy makers shaping the future SAF. Hence, there is a need for senior commanders to better understand Gen Y members and adapt current management and training techniques to better engage them. While the organization attempts to mould this new generation of soldiers to operate more advanced weaponry and undertake increasingly complex tasks and missions, it is important that the SAF revises its management and training methodologies to leverage on their strengths and address their shortcomings. The repercussions cannot be underestimated. Unlike in the private sector, leadership at the top cannot be bought—a military commander must be groomed through time and effort. Thus, this article will provide principles for the development and management of the new Gen Y soldiers for the future SAF.

THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND GENERATION Y

Bruce Tulgan, founder of the leading generational research firm, Rainmaker Thinking, argued that Gen

Y is "the most high-maintenance workforce" seen.[5] However, they will also be "the most high-performing workforce in the history of the world."[6] By first understanding the workings of this new generation and then channeling the right amount of resources into their management, the SAF will be able to fully utilize them as a formidable workforce. Interestingly, the United States (US) report, "The Relationship of the Officer Evaluation Report to Captain Attrition" reported that, "senior officers in the US Army think they understand the world of lieutenants and captains," however, "many junior officers and others are convinced that they do not."[7] The SAF must learn and not fall prey to such pitfalls. There is a need to understand the characteristics of Gen Y soldiers before implementing methods to train them up as professionals. These characteristics will be the key impetus for change since the SAF can no longer hold steadfast to ways of training that brought success in the past but are less effective for future generations.

William Strauss and Neil Howe, historians who were influential in defining American generations, define Gen Y members as those who were born between 1982 and 2001.[8] However, there are other experts who generally disagree with this range, arguing that demographics differ for different cultures and countries, and thus find it hard to qualify Gen Y in terms of year of birth.[9] To avoid this dispute, this paper will focus on qualifying Gen Y as a generation which possesses its own unique generational characteristics, rather than the year of birth. It should be noted that even though these characteristics are a broad generalization of how the new soldiers are, it nevertheless depicts how majority of them act. Generalization is inevitable in any attempt to define characteristics of large masses of people.

GENERATION Y CHARACTERISTICS

Technologically Savvy and Interconnected

Gen Y soldiers are technologically savvy and interconnected. Based on IDA's "Annual Survey on Infocomm Usage in Households for 2010,"[10] 82% of Singaporean households have access to the Internet

and at least 96% of households with school-going children have access to computers at home. The Gen Y grew up with gadgets like computers, mobile phones, iPods, social networking sites such as Facebook and online games like *World of Warcraft*. It has also become a norm for youths to use the Internet and its connectivity for activities such as communicating, gaming, information gathering and interaction.[11] In addition, according to a survey conducted by Synovate in 2010, 85% of Singaporean youths (aged 8 to 24) own a mobile phone, a startlingly high proportion compared to the regional average of 64%.[12] Caused by an evolving landscape of technology and media, the heavy reliance on communication technologies and digital media appears to be the main drivers distinguishing Gen Y from its predecessors. The pervasiveness of technology has radically altered underlying ways of learning, socializing, leisure and self expression. It has also spearheaded a new form of media literacy whereby Gen Y is developing different forms of competencies, skills and literacy practices. Digital communication (e.g. social networking sites, text messaging, instant messaging etc.) has spawned new avenues for youths to communicate and interact through mobile phones, instant messaging as well as public social networking sites like Facebook.[13]

Unfortunately, such comfort in technology does have trade-offs. First, their widespread use of technology and increasingly open culture has fostered a comparatively more flippant attitude towards privacy and security matters.[14] However, their honesty and balanced perspectives about the pros and cons of technology leave room for reasonable negotiations about its use in the workplace.[15] It is imperative for training methodologies to address this without compromising their open nature. Second, their comfort in online communication stems from trade-offs in face-to-face social interaction skills and the ability to negotiate disagreements.[16] This is exacerbated if online communication masks the inadequacies of their social skills. This complicates management and may also affect future Gen Y commanders' communication

skills and ability to win the hearts and minds of their soldiers.

Better Educated

A recent and detailed study conducted by Pew Research Centre in America revealed that Gen Y is the most educated group in comparison to preceding generations.[17] This characteristic is also observable in Singapore, where the results obtained from the Singapore's Census of Population showed that the percentages of Singaporeans aged between 20 and 29 years old with higher education in 2000 and 2010 were 47% and 65% respectively.[18] Gen Y is more adaptive and learns faster, which makes up for its lack of experience when creatively approaching problems.[19] However, their enthusiasm for finding an efficient means to solve a problem and the curiosity for answers to every challenge are often misinterpreted as laziness and disrespect for authority.[20]

Intrinsically Motivated and Optimistic

Gen Y is an intrinsically motivated and optimistic generation,[21] perhaps fostered by the economic prosperity they were born into. They are financially stable, having been the main beneficiaries of the economic boom from the 1970s right through the 1990s.[22] In addition, as a result of their upbringing, most Gen Y members have been pampered by their Baby Boomer parents who have been actively removing obstacles and bad experiences from their lives. Parents and society have rewarded them for every achievement made, making them believe optimistically that anything that they seek is possible.[23] This has caused them to be more sheltered and optimistic about work, life and their future.[24] Barbara Dwyer, CEO of the Job Journey argued that Gen Y members think they can alter the world upon entering the workforce. This is aggravated by their high confidence level, resulting in sometimes unrealistic expectations, tied with the need for instant gratification and a sense of entitlement.

The SAF can no longer hold steadfast to ways of training that brought success in the past but are less effective for future generations.

Partly due to their higher level of education, Gen Y members have a strong need to understand the meaning of their work.[25] As such, they have a desire for meaningful jobs and are more willing to work hard as long as the job provides fulfillment.[26] Once a purpose and value has been identified, Gen Y members will be more willing to make job sacrifices despite unstable economic conditions and job uncertainties (i.e. accepting a lower wage for a more meaningful job). This is a double-edged sword. While having a purposeful and fulfilling career serves as a great motivation for Gen Y, they are less tolerant when their aspirations are not met. This is due to an optimistic belief that they can be better employed, utilized and paid elsewhere in the job market. However, the optimism of Gen Y members should not cause unique challenges in the workforce since they are candid about their shortcomings and have positive attitudes about their potential.[27] Therefore, this characteristic might prove more of an asset than a liability to the military since the higher their expectations of the future, the more likely they are to work hard. The SAF must find ways to intrinsically motivate them.

Intolerance of Hierarchical Structure

The changes in upbringing have altered the way Gen Y relates to authority. First, being more educated than their predecessors, Gen Y members have a tendency to want to know the reason and intent of an instruction before carrying it out. Education has taught them to think rationally and independent, thus the traditional "do as I say" is not as effective anymore. Second, as a byproduct of education, teachers are more lenient towards their students in an effort to encourage creativity and curiosity. Third is parenting. Baby Boomer parents tend to see the child as the centre of the family, often pampering and sheltering them.[28] Parents are more attentive to the needs of their children and encourage them to raise questions every time they are in doubt. Consequently, this has made them more apt to question authority and more

App used to track suspicious personnel

intolerant of traditional hierarchical structures.[29] They prefer communicating through interactivity to the authoritative "command and control" communication styles typical of a military organization.[30] Therein lies a danger of Gen Y soldiers defying orders from higher command.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations for the development and management of the new Gen Y soldiers in the future SAF target their underlying characteristics. They are divided into National Education, leadership, training, communication, respect and resilience training.

Engagement in National Education

Gen Y members have benefited much from the economic boom experienced by the country over the past few decades and most have been brought up with a sense of entitlement and "taking things for granted."[31] Being born in a privileged environment, Gen Y members perceive the current higher standards of living as a given, and may not appreciate what their forefathers worked hard for many decades ago. Coupled with Singapore's globalizing economy, Gen Y members may run the risk of losing a sense of belonging to the country and a national identity.[32] A survey conducted in 2006 revealed that 53% of Singaporean youths would consider emigration in search for greener pastures.[33] During the 2006 National Day speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong admitted that Singaporean talents have been increasingly scouted by overseas multinational companies. The significance of this should not be underestimated as the government, in response to concerns about Singapore talent not returning from overseas, established a Singapore Overseas Unit which strives to maintain strong connections with them.[34] In addition, the Ministry of Education followed up with the creation of a new steering committee on National Education (NE) to revisit its NE program in an effort to engage Singaporean youths to foster a greater sense of belonging and national identity.[35] These rising concerns will definitely affect the work attitude of the Gen Y members within a military organization charged with national defense. In order to maintain its effectiveness, the SAF must ensure that its people are deeply rooted in its core value of "Loyalty to Country."

As Gen Y members are more willing to work harder if they are engaged in a meaningful and purposeful job, a call to the nation's defense would serve as a strong foundation for building their work commitment to the SAF. Regardless of the nature of their jobs within the SAF, be it Full-Time National Servicemen (NSFs), staff appointments, operational duties, officers or specialists, the fundamental purpose in the SAF is national defense. With a strong sense of belonging to Singapore and knowing that their individual efforts contribute to the defense of their country, these Gen Y members will be more willing to make job sacrifices, thus providing the psychological motivation to enhance the effectiveness of this workforce. The SAF should engage Gen Y in NE and make it a continual effort with strong command emphasis.

The challenge is to find the best approach to reach out to the Gen Y soldiers, as time has rendered most of the older methodologies obsolete. With Gen Y being more technologically savvy and educated, the medium for engagement must adapt to its characteristics in order to be effective. In a speech at Connexion 2009, Dr Ng Eng Hen, then-Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defense, emphasized the need to "refine the approaches to reach the new generation of Singaporeans who are web-savvy and well-travelled."[36] He argued that NE should not be disseminated purely as information but must be adapted to the way the new generation lives, works and communicates. It should no longer be a one-sided, passive communication of information but should encourage greater interactivity and room for creative discussion. In addition, greater command emphasis on NE engagement should be observed at the unit level, as this is where direct interaction with junior soldiers takes place on a daily basis. Unit Commanders should, therefore, proactively engage their units in engaging and experiential NE activities that allow robust and creative discussions on a regular basis. Such activities can include research-based project work, debates, discussion forums, scenario-based role playing, tours, etc.[37]

Adapting Leadership Styles to Better Engage Gen Y

The SAF defines leadership as "a process of influencing others to accomplish the mission, inspiring their commitment, and improving the organization,"[38] It is imperative for the SAF to not just groom officers to lead the Third Generation Fighting Force, but also to know what type of leaders appeal to these young officers. Research from Global Manpower Professionals on a group of Asian-based Gen Y members reported that while they are more inclined to "relationship-oriented leaders,"[39] current leadership is biased towards a "task-oriented" approach. While Gen Y members deem it pertinent for leaders to be caring and inspiring, current leadership believes in demonstrating competency, honesty and forward thinking. Gen Y members' higher educational level, coupled with helicopter parenting and changes in teaching methodologies, have caused them to prefer leadership styles inclined to being more democratic than directive, engaging than domineering, and more flexible than hierarchical.[40] As such, Commanders should learn to adapt their intangible leadership styles towards being caring and inspirational figures, especially in a peacetime training environment. This does not imply discarding the directive and authoritative "command and control" style completely, which is necessary for a military organization.

To effectively bridge the extremes of these two styles of leadership, a recommendation is to develop and train the Gen Y soldiers through coaching. The SAF defines coaching as "the responsibility of the chain of command to improve the performance, skills, learning, and commitment of their subordinates. It is a process to help subordinates learn from their experience, which can then be translated into effective new actions in present and future roles, thus contributing to the SAF's transformation."[41] In a recent news article published in *The Straits Times*, the emphasis on coaching to enhance workforce effectiveness is achieved by moving away from the traditional authoritative leadership style of command and control to one that facilitates an individual's learning and achievement of clearly defined goals.[42] Commanders are responsible for their soldiers' goals through tracking their

progress and constantly providing feedback through focused coaching conversations.[43] This will help Gen Y members maintain their intrinsic motivation to work hard for their future and, at the same time, keep their sometimes unrealistic optimism in check. Coaching efforts were introduced in SAF's Leadership Developmental Doctrine Directive in 2005 which adopted the GROW coaching model. This model helps to facilitate goals setting, reviewing the reality

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of the desired goals and options available, as well as the next step to take in order to achieve these goals.[44] Therefore, commanders can still afford to be authoritative at the organizational level whilst engaging the soldiers at the individual, more personal level through coaching.

Redeveloping Training and Education

Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely, former Director of the Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, defines training as a process that allows leaders to prepare for foreseeable functions in a set of known circumstances.[45] Training in the SAF and Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute (SAFTI) is primarily supported by SAF's Instructional Design and Development Branch (IDD), tasked with instructional design for training purposes. To achieve their desired instructional design, the IDD facilitates instructor development programs and seeks out relevant learning systems and pedagogies for training purposes. It is imperative for the SAF's instructional designers to acknowledge that the advent of technology, particularly the Internet, has caused instruction to be more challenging.[46] The Internet has not only increased information accessibility, it has changed who we learn from, what and where we learn.[47] Technological advancements like accessible mobile phones have spawned different ways of socializing and self-expression.

Despite such changes, organizations have been reluctant to transform. Instructional designs in the past were primarily based on the Behaviorism philosophy.[48] Behaviorism believes actions can be trained and changed, depending on the conditions a learner is in. In the training process, the learner is trained by responding to cues given by the instructor. This translates to high levels of control on the part of the instructor for providing learning reinforcement. However, Marcy P. Driscoll, author and coauthor of instruction and learning books argued that the Internet has led to a constructivist philosophy of learning whereby learners construct knowledge based on their experiences through assimilation and accommodation.[49] Assimilation refers to a process of incorporating experiences into an existing framework of knowledge while accommodation refers to the changing of current frameworks of knowledge. This means that instructors are no longer just reinforcers. They are now facilitators of learning who provides timely feedback to trainees about what, where and how to acquire the necessary resources for learning.

Even though IDD recognizes changes in education philosophy, instructors that are directly in charge of the Gen Y members must acknowledge this shift. The key to engaging Gen Y members lies within the relationship with their immediate superior, and not merely the organization.[50] Instructors must start to reappraise old instructional designs and procedures to ensure processes remain valid.[51] SAF can look to expanding coaching into a dynamic partnership that goes beyond current face-to-face interactions through the use of technology. It is commendable that SAF has been keeping up with technological trends by supplying 8000 iPads to recruits recently.[52] Such devices, when utilized appropriately, can be used for online learning as well as coaching. Commanders can now provide advice and insights to recruits they would have never had personal contact with. Mentors can provide continual feedback to help improve the soldiers' training.

Communication and Respect

In order to develop a more effective workforce, Commanders must understand their people through effective communication and gaining their respect. In the case of Gen Y soldiers, comprehension is not difficult—all that is required is a change in the management's perception in order to develop them into a more effective workforce.[53]

To understand Gen Y, commanders should embrace its unique characteristics of curiosity, increased adaptiveness and sometimes unrealistic expectations. Suspending judgment about Gen Y members' curiosity and not viewing "why" as challenging authority but as a reflection of their higher education as "thinking" soldiers, may be the first step towards bridging the communications barrier. Understanding the tendency of Gen Y members to search for efficient solutions as being adaptive rather than perceiving it as being lazy may empower them to perform more creatively. Empathizing with their often unrealistic expectations as a form of optimism and guiding them towards more realistic approaches will certainly motivate them to work harder for the organization. An unprecedented level of openness by Commanders is required to accept the new generation's behavior if effective change is to take place.[54]

Gen Y members appreciate leaders that communicate, connect and create safe environments for them to express their ideas freely.[55] US Army Brigadier General James Schwitters, Commander of US Army Training Centre in Fort Jackson, asserts that fear and intimidation used during training was no longer as effective as before.[56] Gen Y soldiers do not respond to shouting and offensive treatment but connect with those that lead by example and respect those that have earned it. Unlike before, their intolerance of hierarchy structures means that authority is no longer synonymous with respect. Commanders should be more authentic and approachable, yet not overly soft-hearted. Commanders must also be prepared to give rationales behind their decisions, be fluid and open up to questions and not to misinterpret the Gen Y as challenging authority.

Incorporating Resilience Training

Although the recommendations thus far have been focused on the organization in adapting training and development methodologies to address the unique characteristics of Gen Y, Gen Y soldiers must also understand the challenges posed by a military environment and must, in turn, adapt to certain inevitable demands of being employed in military service. The SAF was established to defend the sovereignty of Singapore against potential adversaries. In recent years, the SAF has also increased its participation in global Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief operations and United Nations (UN)-sanctioned international peace and support missions in order to enhance Singapore's overall security.[57] The nature of war, disaster relief and peace support missions irrevocably places soldiers in environments that are physically, mentally and emotionally stressful.[58] As such, Gen Y soldiers must learn to cope with such pressure in order to perform at their best.

A systematic approach is recommended to engage all Gen Y soldiers in attending resilience training courses as part of their military service. The key of these courses would be to teach soldiers coping strategies to overcome stressful situations, thus improving their adaptability and resilience.[59] Lazarus and Folkman, who developed the Stress and Coping Model, defines coping as "the ability to manage internal and external demands appraised as adverse or exceeding one's ability."[60] Since these demands vary in different situations, resilience training programs must impart flexible coping strategies to resolve the different stressors to make it more effective in a military environment.[61]

Some other countries have recently introduced comprehensive resilience training as part of their basic military training program. The US Army commenced the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) in 2009 as an approach to incorporate resilience training for its soldiers.[62] The resilience skills taught in this program can be loosely summarized as: identifying

and leveraging on individual strengths within a team to overcome challenges; identifying the possible outcomes, both positive and negative, when facing a crisis and preparing oneself to move past the event; recognizing the degrading effects of negative energy and reframing them as advantages; building strong relationships with others for mutual support; and formulating a plan to address the crisis.[63] The Australian Defense Force also has a coping skills training program which was redeveloped in 2009 as BattleSMART (Self-Management and Resilience Training).[64] Similar to the CSF, the BattleSMART teaches its soldiers to assess whether their initial response to an event is the best one, and thereafter identifies various options to adjust or change the response if necessary.[65]

Then-US Army Chief of Staff, General George W. Casey Jr., directed that, after completion of the initial course, continual resilience training should be conducted on a monthly basis for at least one to two hours. Furthermore, since 2011, CSF has been incorporated at every level of military training, from the private in basic military training to the more advanced courses offered to senior commanders up to Brigadier General.[66] Although these resilience programs are relatively new and under trial, the extent of their implementation suggests the significance of building psychologically resilient soldiers in modern war conditions. The SAF has also recently conducted a study between 2007 and 2008 on the development of such a resilience training program. Branded as Bridge (Building Resilience in Individuals for Growth and Emotional Well-being), the program has seen positive results from recruits undergoing basic military training.[67] The next step is to develop the resilience training program to encompass all levels of its military education system. Resilience training will help train Gen Y soldiers, who have a reputation for being "spoilt and pampered," to be a more adaptive and effective workforce for employment in current and future SAF operations.

CONCLUSION

It is inevitable that leadership must be passed from one generation to the next and that current junior ranks will eventually take over as senior SAF commanders. Each generation has its own unique characteristics with their strengths and shortfalls. Today's point in question lies with Gen Y, a generation that has often been perceived negatively as lazy, spoilt, unrealistic and disrespectful of authority by preceding generations. However, with proper training and engagement, Gen Y's unique qualities can be harnessed to build an effective and committed workforce for the future SAF. This can be achieved by understanding the generation's unique characteristics and adapting the current leadership to better engage it rather than stifle its natural talents.

With proper training and engagement, Gen Y's unique qualities can be harnessed to build an effective and committed workforce for the future SAF.

The real challenge surrounding the dynamic millennial generation and the SAF lies in balance. Besides understanding Gen Y and adapting training methodologies to it, "the military leadership can ensure that those in positions of command at all levels are trained and stress-tested to maintain a delicate balance—the balance between empowering Gen Y troops and providing them with direction, discipline, and cohesion. Indeed, balanced leadership is the only way to empower a millennial-dominated military to think and act creatively, responsibly, and with the right sense of mission."[68]

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Inspiring Commitment in the RSN:
Insights from Organizational Psychology

by **CPT Hou Minzheng**

Abstract:

The RSN aims to nurture competent, capable, committed and confident individuals as well as cohesive and resilient teams and units. Of the qualities that are critical to achieving sustained mission success, the most pivotal factor is the commitment of our people to the organization. This article shares thoughts on augmenting the framework used to approach nurturing and engagement in the Republic of Singapore Navy, based on insights drawn from organizational psychology.

Keywords: Human Resource; RSN; Organizational Psychology; Organizational Commitment

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) embarked on a journey that for the first time articulated its whole-of-Navy approach towards people development in the organization. The adoption and implementation of the RSN Nurturing Philosophy symbolizes the first decisive step that the Navy is taking to systematically nurture and train its people to ensure that they are competent, committed and confident. This effort is imperative as the organization continues to acquire cutting-edge technology and sophisticated weapon systems. In the words of then-Chief of Navy, RADM Chew Men Leong, "the success of [the RSN's] transformation depends on our people's ability to adapt and cope effectively with the increasingly complex operating environment and expanding scope of operational demands. We need to take training and nurturing of our people seriously, in order to ensure that they are ready for the future and stay ahead of the challenges."

In the RSN Nurturing Manifesto promulgated in 2010, it is said that the RSN aims to nurture competent, capable, committed and confident individuals as well as cohesive and resilient teams and units in order to deliver sustained success in the Navy's missions. The vision is to achieve sustained mission success. Each servicemen's competency, capability, commitment, confidence, cohesiveness and resilience is needed to achieve this. Of these qualities that are critical to achieving the vision stipulated in the manifesto, it is arguable that the single most pivotal factor in determining the success of the formula is the commitment of our people to the organization—without which *sustained* mission success may not be achievable regardless of how competent, capable and adaptable our people are. Organizational commitment can be seen as cardinal to the aligning of personal goals and organizational interests, and the synergy of individuals' efforts with the organization's direction. The emphasis on the paramount importance of commitment in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) was echoed in a speech by Mr. Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense in 2010, who said at the Committee for Supply Debate that "people are the key resources that will enable us to realize our transformation efforts. This means that we will have to attract and retain the best people." In addition, similar acknowledgements have been made in the RSAF, where the importance of inspiring and managing Commitment to Defense through a framework known as CARDINAL has been widely discussed.[1]

In its infancy, with slightly more than a year since its formalization, the RSN's Nurturing Manifesto is a bold step to chart out the RSN's nurturing framework. It is likely that we continue to see changes and improvements made as the organization evaluates the effectiveness of this effort at the end of 2015. Through this article, I hope to share some thoughts on augmenting the framework used to approach nurturing and engagement efforts in the RSN, based on insights drawn from organizational psychology. I will begin by providing an outline of what the nurturing framework encompasses and how it is related to strengthening commitment in our servicemen. I will then describe some ideas and key concepts concerning organizational commitment that have been extensively discussed in the literature of organizational psychology. Following this, I will offer suggestions for a more holistic approach to implementing the nurturing framework.

RSN'S NURTURING PHILOSOPHY

The RSN aims to nurture our people to be:

a. Competent individuals who perform their roles with confidence, to the satisfaction of their units.

b. Capable, self-directed learners who constantly strive for excellence.

c. Committed, resilient and energized by the purpose and meaningfulness of their work.

d. Effective and caring leaders, leading strong cohesive teams and units.

e. Enriched with meaningful experiences, working and playing as One Navy Family.

In order to do so, there have been several key enablers elucidated in the Nurturing Manifesto. Some of these include explicating the training and development roadmaps for Officers and Military Domain Experts (MDES), as well as providing opportunities to nurture and engage stakeholders. Each key enabler contains initiatives such as the Market Adjustable Specialization Component (MASC) for Military Experts, Leadership and Professional Development (L&PD) modules for RSN personnel and Continuing Education (CE) opportunities for good performers. Many of these initiatives and modules have been implemented in order to allow individuals to be better rewarded and recognized for their contributions to the organization, and also to provide more opportunities for self-enrichment and the fulfillment of aspirations. More fundamentally, the impetus of such initiatives can be said to stem from an organizational need to attract and retain the best people through the provision of support for individual needs, in order to ensure that our people remain committed to the Navy—a key ingredient in ensuring sustained mission success.

FORMS OF COMMITMENT

With this understanding, we now turn to ways in which we can effectively manage commitment in our people. This is one primary area where research in organizational psychology comes in very useful. In fact, the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF) has recognized the importance and contribution that organizational psychology can offer since the formative years of the SAF. For example, a Psychological Testing Centre was established in 1967 to perform screening and selection functions. The centre has evolved to become the Defense Psychology Department (DPD) today, with the aim of enhancing the psychological well-being, psychological readiness for operations and human performance of personnel and troops in MINDEF and the SAF.[2] In addition, DPD has acknowledged the importance of having a structured means of assessing levels of commitment of servicemen in the SAF. Since 2000, it has researched and constructed a model of Full-Time National Servicemen (NSF) commitment in the SAF to better understand the underlying psychological processes of commitment.[3]

Because we are dealing with a pool of employees in the RSN who, similar to most organizations, have voluntarily signed up for and entered a contract

of employment, we need to refer to research that addresses the commitment of employees of this nature. In this regard, it is important to first define organizational commitment. In the field of organizational psychology, organizational commitment denotes employees' attachment to the organization.[4] This construct of organizational commitment can be further broken down into three constituent components: Affective Commitment (AC), Continuance Commitment (CC) and Normative Commitment (NC).[5]

According to Sumer,[6] AC refers to a soldier's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the military service or unit; it is the "*want to*" part of the construct of commitment. Affectively committed servicemen are seen as having a sense of belonging and identification that increases their involvement in the organization's activities, their willingness to pursue the organization's goals, and their desire to remain with the organization.[7]

Affectively committed servicemen are seen as having a sense of belonging and identification that increases their involvement in the organization's activities, their willingness to pursue the organization's goals, and their desire to remain with the organization.

CC refers to perceptions of the costs associated with leaving the military and is related to the "*need to*" aspect of commitment. CC deals with perceptions of available job alternatives and the personal sacrifices made by leaving the organization. Specifically, individuals who are high in CC remain with the organization in which they are employed not because they feel belonging or alignment with the organization's goals but because they feel that the opportunity cost involved in leaving is much greater than any dissatisfaction they might experience if they stay. CC is a relatively materialistic and superficial form of commitment.

Lastly, NC refers to a soldier's feeling of moral obligation to stay with the military. In other words, NC points to the "*ought to*" aspect of commitment. For example, an individual might feel that he ought to be committed because others around him are committed, or he ought to be committed because the organization has invested a lot in his training and development. In this respect, NC can be seen as an external force acting upon the individual, extrinsically facilitating a sense of commitment to the organization.

Most importantly, research has shown that all three forms of commitment are negatively correlated with turnover rates.[8] This means to say that individuals who are Affectively, Continually, or Normatively committed will tend not to leave the organization. Of course, there are very distinct forces influencing their behavior: intrinsic motivation, opportunistic motivation and extrinsic motivation. What is most desirable and sustainable from the perspective of the RSN would be to manage the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of its personnel, which corresponds to AC and NC respectively. This is because these two forms of commitment can be readily influenced by human resource structures and leadership behavior—for example, job design, organizational support for the individual, and equitable rewards and recognition—all of which are easily malleable and improved. Opportunistic motivation that drives CC, on the other hand, is relatively fluid and determined by forces such as market conditions and available opportunities outside the RSN. Focusing our efforts on increasing CC will, unfortunately, lead to an unsustainable and superficial form of commitment that is based largely on calculated exchange instead of stronger, psychological forces.[9]

PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

Of the myriad variables that have been researched to determine what really drives AC and NC, Perceived Organizational Support (POS) has been repeatedly found to be of the greatest criticality.[10] POS refers to employee beliefs concerning the extent to which

Midshipmen during colors ceremony

the organization values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing.[11] This construct encompasses key factors such as employee beliefs about the organization's appreciation of their value; consideration of their goals and opinions; willingness to help the employee in times of difficulty; and recognition of their contributions. POS works through a mechanism known as felt obligation, driven by the norm of reciprocity. To put it simply, the greater one feels that the organization cares about him, values him, and invests in him, the more he will feel the need to reciprocate, sacrificing personal time and effort, and ultimately helping the organization achieve its goals.[12] Intrinsically, the individual will feel recognized and valued, thus enabling the formation of positive affections i.e. experiences, feelings. He will

To put it simply, the greater one feels that the organization cares about him, values him, and invests in him, the more he will feel the need to reciprocate, sacrificing personal time and effort, and ultimately helping the organization achieve its goals.

want to belong to the organization to which he can attribute these positive affections; internalize a sense of shared identity with the organization and weather the ups and downs with the organization. Higher POS thus leads to higher AC. At the same time, extrinsically the individual will feel a greater sense of moral obligation to perform in order to ensure the success of the organization, to reciprocate what was received. He will feel that he *ought to* commit because of what he has received from the organization. As a result, NC increases when POS increases.

TAKING STOCK

Thus far, I have described the importance of organizational commitment to the success of the RSN's Nurturing Framework. Specifically, strong

organizational commitment is vital in ensuring that we have people who are willing to be part of and contribute to the Navy, ensuring mission success. I have also discussed the two main forms of organizational commitment: AC and NC, and the need to prioritize when deciding how best to inspire commitment in our servicemen. Both AC and NC have a longer lasting and more pronounced psychological effect on the sustainability of commitment of our personnel to the RSN. Finally, I have illustrated that in order to achieve commitment, the role of POS as a driver towards AC and NC must not be neglected. Almost every effort to inspire commitment hinges upon the extent to which an individual perceives genuine organizational support—without it, levels of commitment may deteriorate. Now that we have a clearer perspective on things, how then can we ensure that the RSN's nurturing framework, which hinges upon the commitment of our servicemen, pans out successfully? How do we know that the initiatives put in place have been effective in raising commitment levels?

If we were to reward our personnel predominantly with the perks of financial remuneration, we will soon find ourselves in a rat race with many other organizations just to attract and retain qualified people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to first establish a structured method of assessing levels of commitment in the RSN. This is so that any effort aimed at inspiring commitment can be evaluated in terms of its success and effectiveness. A structured method of assessment allows for cross comparison between cohorts and the measurement of changes in the levels of commitment of an individual or a cohort over time. It provides a means of cross-sectional and longitudinal assessment that will inform us of changes from the baseline level of commitment. One simple way of implementing such an assessment method is through surveys such as the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire,[13] and the Perceived Organizational Support Questionnaire.[14]

These can be implemented together with the Organizational Climate Survey (OCS) that takes place once every two years. In addition to obtaining responses from across the RSN population as a whole, it is important to distinguish between groups of interest, such as the Officer Corps and MDES Corps. Each Corps can be further divided into its subsidiaries, based on seniority, appointment level, MASC level and so on. The more exact the demographic information, the easier it is to tease out intricacies that differentiate groups of people in the RSN. There are, after all, varying circumstances that confront each group, and these circumstances serve as a vital source of analysis. With these information at hand, we can then identify the key areas of concern that each group faces, which groups perceive the greatest or least organizational support and why, and which is the group that exhibits the greatest AC and NC and why.

Next, it is crucial to identify exactly what is the intended effect each initiative aims to achieve. It may be helpful to categorize each of them into the various types of commitment it intends to strengthen. Thereafter, it is essential to determine whether or not these initiatives are effective in enhancing commitment. For example, the MASC is a scheme that financially rewards our MDES personnel on their attainment of key competencies in the RSN. The purpose of the MASC is to encourage people to self-direct their learning in pursuit of expertise that the RSN requires.

In terms of AC, the financial aspect of MASC does little to promote an increase in emotional attachment, identification with and involvement with the RSN. On the other hand, the associated assumption of higher appointment levels that come alongside higher MASC levels bring greater challenges and scopes

of responsibility, which may be more beneficial in increasing AC. This is because those who qualify for a higher MASC level may feel more valued and that their efforts are being recognized. At the same time, as they now hold a higher appointment, they may feel more empowered to make a difference in the organization.

In terms of CC, the MASC scheme may inadvertently lead to an increase in the opportunity cost associated with leaving the organization. This however, is not good news. Research has shown that because CC represents an exchange-oriented contract with the employing organization and is the result of a cost-benefit analysis about continued membership in the organization, increased CC may lead to greater turnover whenever an opportunity arises.[15] To put it simply, if we were to reward our personnel predominantly with the perks of financial remuneration, we will soon find ourselves in a rat race with many other organizations just to attract and retain qualified people.

In terms of NC, there exists a caveat in which individuals may feel that the amount of remuneration they receive is incongruent with the contributions and sacrifices made. If that is so, the sense of moral obligation to perform or to be committed may be weakened. However, if the individual's understanding is such that the organization has entrusted him with a job encompassing more responsibilities because of his consistent good performance, then he may feel more obliged to live up to expectations. Thus, in accordance with this line of analysis, it might be more constructive to frame the MASC in a way that emphasizes intrinsic rewards such as having greater empowerment and earning the confidence of the organization that come along with higher job appointments, rather than to focus on monetary rewards as a form of recognition of one's effort and contribution. Alternatively, there could be a different pay grade pegged to different appointment levels so that remuneration is seen as a by-product, and not a main incentive, for assuming higher appointments. Ultimately, what matters is whether our people feel more valued, recognized, and are driven by the right motivations.

To provide another example, let us analyze the effects of coaching on the levels of commitment of a serviceman. A supervisor who spends time and effort beyond his required job scope to coach a serviceman regularly and sincerely might be able to increase the levels of AC and NC in the serviceman. This is because the organizational support given to the serviceman through his supervisor represents an effort above and beyond what is expected—it symbolizes a recognition of the value and importance of the serviceman to the success of the organization. In turn, the serviceman might feel a stronger sense of obligation or responsibility to reciprocate by improving his performance. On the other hand, if coaching sessions are mandated by a framework such that supervisors are expected and required to coach their subordinates at specified intervals, then such positive effects on AC and NC may be lost because of the perception that the coach may not be as sincere or genuine as in the former situation.[16] Any effort that goes into providing organizational support for the service personnel must therefore be as unconditional as possible. Providing sufficient and appropriate avenues for feedback, showing that the organization does care about the opinions and wellbeing of the servicemen are all examples of ways to increase POS.

CONCLUSION

In sum, I have shared about the primacy of organizational commitment in the people development of RSN. I have also highlighted various forms of commitment and how they can be used to analyze and evaluate our efforts at inspiring commitment. Specifically, we need to consider all the systems that we have in place in the domains of human resource, leadership, training and development, and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of POS. We need to ensure that our process of evaluation remains rigorous, so that we can arrive at a holistic appreciation of the desired effects that our initiatives should achieve. More importantly, we need to ensure that we as an organization are sincere and genuine in ensuring the development and wellbeing of our personnel. We need

to ensure that through right framing and emphasis, we strengthen our people's affective and normative commitment and reduce our reliance on continuance commitment. With a structured method of assessing the commitment levels and perceived organizational support of our people, we will be able to track and manage changes in such sentiments effectively. Moving forward, our Navy will be able to better inspire commitment in our people as we continue our process of transformation. 🌐

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Revisiting "Putting People First": An Organizational Culture Perspective

by **CPT Chong Shi Hao**

Abstract:

Transformations in societal fabric and shifting norms within the composition and demographics of the population are affecting the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). As culture, values, engagement in politics and work all interact in a complex manner, there is a need to reexamine the SAF introspectively. Wherever we may be in the SAF, each of us has a role to play as subordinates and leaders. There is a need to respect each other as individuals, not merely as human resources or digits in the establishment. A People-First culture means developing our people through work and using intrinsic motivation to generate results and a sense of purpose.

Keywords: Human Resource; Military Transformation; Organizational Culture; Third Generation SAF

INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing transformations in our social fabric that will affect the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). Our culture and values, the way we engage in politics and how we work interact in a complex manner that calls for us to introspectively reexamine the SAF. Social norms are shifting with the changing population demographics. Changing attitudes toward authority, aging population, a higher proportion of foreigners *vis-à-vis* locals, a greater sense of entitlement and different expectations in life have all transformed our society. This in turn has affected our political culture. Economically, the world has been affected by the debt malaise plaguing Europe and America. On the home front, although we registered the world's highest GDP growth in 2010, a different kind of malaise haunts us—minuscule progress in productivity.

We need to make sense of these transformations. This article begins by analyzing what these shifts are in the areas of culture, politics and economics. By contextualizing the milieu in which SAF operates, we can determine its impact and challenges. The analysis will be done through the lens of organizational culture theory. In determine the way forward, I suggest revisiting what the late COL Bernard Tan wrote in 2004's issue of *POINTER*—"Putting People First in Our Army." Writing at the beginning of our Army Transformation, he argued that fostering a People-First culture would give us the capacity to handle the challenges of the time. Likewise, it may also give us the ability to handle the challenges ahead.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Culture is shifting subtly. With our open society, Singapore is constantly bombarded by a range of influences associated with the processes of globalization—information, human capital and technology. With 26.8 percent of our population composed of foreigners, our culture inevitably evolves.[1] As the people who enter SAF become more diverse, it becomes important to learn more about their values and outlooks.[2]

Culture is often understood as a set of discrete practices, traditions and rituals, symbolized by overt manifestations such as clothing and architecture.[3] According to Edgar Schein, this is the level of *artifacts* that includes all observable phenomena in a culture.[4] The next level is that of *espoused beliefs and values*,

cyberpioneer

Regimentation in the RSN

which predict the behavior of the members and which have been validated in experience. The third and most difficult to uncover are *basic underlying assumptions*. They are strongly held and difficult to change. The set of assumptions each related member holds "defines for [them] what to pay attention to, what things mean ... what actions to take in various situations."[5]

Therefore, Schein defines organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."[6]

HOW OUR CULTURE HAS SHIFTED

Dr Geert Hofstede, a psychologist who worked at IBM in the 1970s, investigated the influence of culture on values at the workplace. Through his analysis,

he created a model that consists of four primary dimensions that define culture:[7]

1. Power Distance Relationships

2. Masculinity vs. Femininity

3. Individualism vs. Collectivism

4. Uncertainty Avoidance

He defines culture as Schein's third level, "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from the other."[8] The fourth dimension will not be analyzed here.[9] Though Hofstede's research may be outdated, it provides a snapshot of the values of an earlier generation. Though generalizations are made, the dimensions provide a useful heuristic in deciphering and understanding a complex issue such as culture.

Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that

power is distributed unequally."[10] In countries with high power distance, bosses are seen as "autocratic or paternalistic" while employees are less likely to disagree with them.[11] Power distance in Singapore is decreasing.[12] Hao noted that Generation Y (Gen-Y) displayed a greater aversion to hierarchy than their older Generation X counterparts.[13] Anecdotally, we also see a greater inclination to question the intent behind decisions and a dislike of rank hierarchy from our soldiers.

An increasing number of Singaporeans are searching for more to life than simply growing their bank accounts. We have reached a level of prosperity where people desire to better their lives beyond the material aspect. Maslow's hierarchy of needs posits that as Man finds his basic needs met, he aspires to self-actualize through higher order wants, be it artistic expression, political participation or sports (see Figure 1). This marks a

Anecdotally, we also see a greater inclination to question the intent behind decisions and a dislike of rank hierarchy from our soldiers.

move to more "feminine" values. Societies with high masculine scores value competitiveness, accumulation of wealth and material success as opposed to more feminine values such as relationship building and quality of life.[14] For example, the younger Gen-Y want flexible working hours more than older generations, preferring work-life balance in their careers.[15]

In individualistic societies, ties between people are loose and they are expected to look after themselves, whereas collectivists possess strong cohesive units in families or communities. In the IBM survey, countries identified as highly individualistic have employees who value personal time, freedom and challenging work over training, good physical working conditions and use of skills (the last three emphasize the employee's dependence on the organization, hence indicating collectivist values).[17] In general, younger
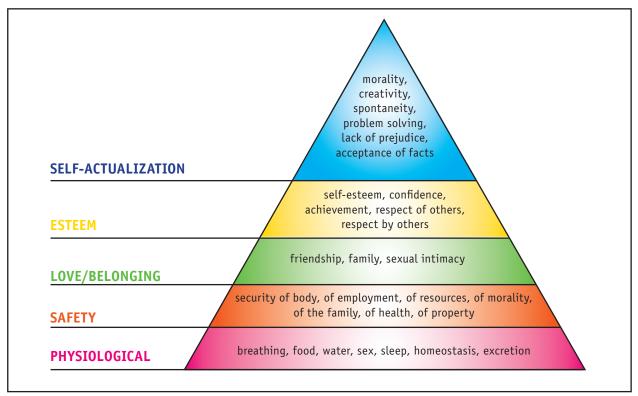

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs[16]

Singaporeans are becoming more individualistic in their outlook,[18] though not necessarily becoming more self-centered and selfish. The desire of Gen-Y for constant or more frequent feedback to evaluate their performance and to seek affirmation or approval for their ability relates to a greater focus on their individual identity.[19]

Impact on the SAF

Consequently, the espoused beliefs and underlying assumptions that our servicemen carry with them when they enter National Service incontrovertibly clash with certain aspects of SAF's organizational culture. Hierarchy is the *modus operandi* in the military. It is important for command and control, discipline and regimentation, which inevitably creates power distance between individuals. The soldiers see themselves as equals and find it hard to accept their peers who outrank them simply because they have gone through command school and become their superiors. Such difference in assumptions about how relationships should be ordered (unequal) and as a corollary how interactions should be governed (boss-subordinate) creates tension. The new soldiers will not accept orders unquestioningly, often preferring a consultative process with a say in decisions. This creates friction when orders need to be quickly executed or when commanders find it difficult to engage subordinates and rationalize decisions. The challenge then lies in how commanders exercise their leadership effectively to convince and command their soldiers.

A second point on the increased value placed on quality of life pertains more to regulars. The military profession necessarily entails sacrifice and places unlimited liability on the soldier during operations.[20] While this bestows dignity on the soldier, the often onerous nature of the work is perceived as impinging on good quality living.

Individualism vs. collectivism creates the organization-individual dialectic that is another source of tension. For example, the balance between organizational requirements and individual preferences in posting is hard to deliver, and there are cases where people leave because they could not get their desired posting. It is also more challenging to socialize with new recruits, convincing them to put their team before themselves and understand the logic of being punished as a group for one member's mistake. However, it is crucial for our organizational culture to inculcate the correct way for them to perceive and think as a team and unit. Indeed, this makes recruit training vital, as it is the gateway into the SAF's organizational culture.

POLITICS – WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

There has been a tectonic shift in local politics. The last election marked the dilution of support for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP). It was a watershed event because there was higher political engagement, greater competition among parties and increased support for opposition groups.[21] The departure of the PAP Old Guard and the loss of a Group Representation Constituency (GRC) point towards a political shift. This shift has pressured the PAP to "heed the people's choice for greater political consultation and participation, and with genuine alternative voices in parliament."[22]

There are two possible theories to account for such a development. One is the aforementioned Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[23] The other is that as a society becomes wealthier, its people increasingly subscribe to post material values such as autonomy and greater say in political decision making.[24] Both theories reaffirm the "feminization of society" and reduction in power distance according to Hofstede. Indeed, the electorate's concerns in the last election pertained more to quality of life than standards of living. Improving their quality of life involves the attainment of more abstract notions such as greater rights and liberties, greater voice in society and political expression. An expanding middle class now aspire to a different notion of a good life due to our

economic progress.[25] We thus witness how cultural and political shifts take place concomitantly.

The election also highlighted the affective element in politics and policy-making—the need to maintain an emotional connection with the people. It had been argued that politicians and policymakers are too technocratic, indifferent to ground sentiment and apathetic towards the common man. As Lord Mandelson succinctly put, "Emotional connection is your political leaders understanding as much about people's hopes and fears as they do the world around them and connecting the two things."[26] PAP Chairman Mr. Khaw Boon Wan also noted that the party had to "strengthen its emotional connection with the people" and "able to connect with the younger generation, understand their aspirations, engage them, work with them as one Team Singapore."[27] Similarly, Head of Civil Service Mr. Peter Ong called for public servants to not just craft policies with their heads, but also with "more heart" and more empathy, away from a one-size-fits-all approach.[28]

The importance of social media was highlighted during the election. Its role has widespread repercussions in how organizations rethink information dissemination and public engagement. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter amplified the opinions of individuals. Information was transmitted virally through tagging and sharing—spreading opinions, photos and videos the moment they were published. Candidates capitalized on it to engage the electorate and sustained their interest in various campaign issues. Social media also democratized the agenda by circumventing traditional media such as newspapers and television, the original gatekeeper of the public space.[29]

However, we ought to be wary of too much triumphalism over social media's role. The complex interaction between traditional and social media cautions us on giving excessive credit to social platforms. Agenda setting took place in both directions between mainstream and new media, rather than one dominating the other.[30] Researchers from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) concluded that the Internet was not a decisive player during the General Elections because only three out of ten voters used social media for election information, while mainstream media remained the preferred choice.[31]

IMPACT ON THE SAF

The louder voice of our people calls for greater accountability of the SAF to the country. We face a more skeptical public that questions the government's longstanding stance on the importance of defense. If males gained nothing from National Service, we will have half the population unconvinced of the utility of military training. The new generation tends to show less reverence for traditional out-of-bounds markers (OB markers), as evidenced by the range of humorous to outrageous political jokes, podcasts, and videos.[32] This new form of political culture can lead to the trivialization of fundamental issues held dear by the authority the new generation no longer defers to.

Rationalizing with clear and convincing arguments with people may not be enough—the commander somehow must connect and reach into the hearts of our soldiers in order to gain their trust and respect.

The affective element in leadership also cannot be neglected. One has to forge an emotional connection with the ground elements through engagement. This refers to leaders at all levels of the SAF, from the unit commanders to those in higher headquarters. Rationalizing with clear and convincing arguments with people may not be enough—the commander somehow must connect and reach into the hearts of our soldiers in order to gain their trust and respect. One way is through our personal interaction—our soldiers must feel that we genuinely care for their wellbeing and growth.

Being connected via social networks is the mark of the 21st century. A study by Cisco discovered that salary is no longer enough in attracting young talent—the freedom to use social media and mobile devices has even greater influence on their job choices.[33] The new generation who prefer a more accommodating environment could prove challenging to the SAF's recruitment, given existing security policies that clash with the prevalent culture and the younger generation's view of "good quality living."

PRODUCTIVITY

The lack of improvement in productivity has been a grave concern for a country that is used to success. The economy has grown by 5 percent annually but productivity only grew by 1 percent per annum in the last decade.[34] Productivity is defined as the value of output per unit input, or how much work a person has done in a certain time. Therefore, our proclivity to resort to migration as a cost-effective quick fix has worked against us, due to the influx of cheap foreign labor and over hiring during boom time.[35]

The government has thus gone on a productivity push, setting the target of raising productivity growth to two to three percent annually for the next decade. A high-level National Productivity and Continuing Education Council (NPCEC) was established to coordinate national effort to boost productivity.[36] Programs such as the Productivity and Innovation Credit Scheme (offers cash payouts), Productivity Management Program (offers free workshops to improve business models) and Inclusive Growth Program (to help fund investments in high-tech equipment) were developed.[37] These aim to upgrade the skills of our workers through continuing education, improve innovation and competitiveness at the enterprise and sector level.[38]

These schemes are well intended and useful, but tend to ignore what drives the productivity of a worker—his individual motivation. Ultimately,

the productivity of a company boils down to how motivated its workers are at work. This is especially pertinent as we rise up the value chain into knowledge-based service industries such as business, consultancy and research and development services, away from lower-end manufacturing industries. Knowing what motivates the new generation of workers will complement our productivity drives by targeting policies from the appropriate angle.

The way we work and what drives us has shifted. Daniel Pink in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates* Us detects a shift in the nature of our work and the difference in motivation it requires.[39] Twentieth century work is generally routine and characterized by mass production best served by a "Toyotist" mode of production. The motivation required seeks reward and avoids punishment (Motivation 2.0). It is governed by carrots and sticks and leads to a type of behavior that concerns itself less with the inherent enjoyment of the work but more with the rewards it bestows.[40] An intense focus on rewards may increase performance in the short term, but fails to engage the worker in the long run. It stifles creativity, extinguishes intrinsic motivation and fosters short-term thinking. However, work has now become more complex, creative, self-directed and less routine. Its products are more individualized, variegated and specialized. The motivation it seeks is intrinsic (Motivation 3.0). This shift discovered that we are not "wealth-maximizers" but "purpose-maximizers."[41] We all work for more than just money.

Therefore, to make a quantum leap in productivity, one has to work on intrinsic motivation. Here, Pink makes three observations about what account for the intrinsic—autonomy, mastery and purpose. Our basic nature is being self-directed.[42] *Autonomy* is "behaving with a full sense of volition and choice."[43] It is not about being totally independent, but acting out of personal choice. It is about an environment where bosses set clear expectations while giving

employees the space and support for execution and encouraging them to undertake new projects of their own. This leads to increased job satisfaction and thus higher performance.[44] As he states, "control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement."[45] While Motivation 2.0 demanded compliance, Motivation 3.0 desires engagement, which produces mastery.[46] *Mastery* is becoming better at what you do, centered on quick critical feedback. It is a mindset that emphasizes learning goals over performance ones and encourages a person to improve his work. Having a sense of *Purpose* allows an autonomous worker working towards mastery to achieve even more.[47] This requires the worker to be constantly mindful of the big picture or larger meaning behind his work. To work towards something that is bigger than oneself instills a sense of purpose.

Our culture at work has to be cognizant of this shift. Doing so requires a People-First approach where leadership is key.

NEGOTIATING THE SHIFTS—LEADERSHIP IS KEY

So far, we have identified three shifts that have an impact on the SAF. Culturally, what Singaporeans value has changed. Power distance in our society is decreasing, causing people to question authority more. We have also become more individualistic in outlook, though not necessarily more selfish. Our preferences in life have become more well balanced as we go beyond material wellbeing. Politically, a more engaged citizenry has made social media more salient in communication and increases the need for leadership in political and public service to maintain emotional connection with the grassroots. More "heart" in interacting with people and in policymaking has to replace the usual practical and technocratic organizational approach. Economically, the kind of work we engage in requires substantial transformation in the way we motivate people. Extrinsic rewards and recognition do not work for tasks that require

creativity, and deep problem-solving and horizon-scanning skills. Intrinsic motivators—autonomy, mastery and purpose—is what will give us the quantum leap in future productivity.

Leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin.

COL Bernard Tan wrote at the start of Army's transformation that a People-First culture would strengthen the core of the Army Transformation. To him, "putting people first means putting what is important to them first." He suggested three Cs that would build this culture. We need to be *Career* pacesetters—to help people see the big picture, break out of their mindsets and accept change while helping them build their career—this engenders *purpose*. We need to be *Community* spinners—we do not just work for SAF, we also build close-knit families in our units and departments—this promotes a sense of togetherness that improves our *quality of life*. We need to be *Climate* shapers—to forge a good working environment that exploits the potential of our people and help them find mastery. I would add a fourth C in that we need to be *Choice* givers—to not accept "I will just suck thumb" situations but find ways to contextualize *autonomy* for the SAF—to endow freedom, but with clear expectations and outcomes. To build this culture, leadership is critical.

Schein argues that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin. It is imperative that leaders perceive and manage cultural evolution so that the organization can adapt to a changing environment.[48] Two factors to successful cultural change are the management of anxiety that arises from the relearning of basic assumptions underlying an organization's culture; and assessing whether the "genetic potential" for learning is present.[49] In the latter case, our organization learning efforts have enabled such a potential.

Figure 2 illustrates how leadership mediates various aspects of the organization. Hofstede's original model excludes the leadership aspect, which has been added to emphasis the role leaders have in bringing the four elements together. The values of leaders shape cultures by translating them into shared practices for the members that cause their underlying assumptions to evolve, leading to eventual change.[50] When objectives are translated to strategy, strategy is then executed through a structure and control system.[51] However, strategic options are circumscribed by the organization's culture.[52] If the external environment has called for a change in strategy, a re-articulation of a new strategy map will encounter obstacles when the values and assumptions behind people's behavior have not moved in sync. Therefore, for the SAF to adapt to the shifts elucidated above, we need to reaffirm COL Bernard's People-First culture.

Leaders play a role in embedding and transmitting culture through their personal influence and authority. Schein lists six primary mechanisms:[53]

1. What to pay attention to, measure and control on a regular basis

2. Leaders' reaction to critical incidents and organizational crises

3. Allocation of resources

4. Deliberate role modeling, teaching and coaching

5. Allocation of rewards and status

6. How leaders recruit, promote and excommunicate

These are the tools that leaders use to influence their organizations based on their strategy. They are levers which one can tweak and adjust in order to get the desired cultural change needed to facilitate a new strategy for the SAF.
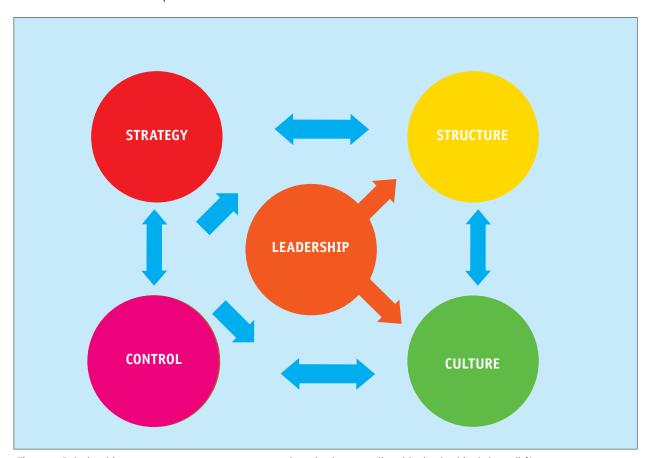

Figure 2: Relationships among strategy, structure, control, and culture, mediated by leadership (adapted).[54]

CONCLUSION: OUR INDIVIDUAL ROLES[55]

Wherever we may be in the SAF, we are both a subordinate and a leader. Each of us has a role to play. Instilling a People-First culture starts with each of us. We need to see people not as human resources or digits in the establishment,[56] but as individuals. At times, we let practical expediency take over and treat people as a means to an end, as resources to be deployed for various purposes. We should see workers as an asset, to be grown and cultivated, not as a cost to the organization to be controlled and reduced.[57]

The purpose of leadership is to help others realize their different gifts and talents. Coaching comes to mind. Just as technology is a force multiplier, realizing a subordinate's talents multiplies his existing knowledge and expertise, making him a better performer at work. We base our management on their strengths, while giving timely feedback on their weaknesses. For the new generation, feedback is best given informally and quickly, through daily interactions or social media, on top of the annual feedback report. A People-First culture also means *developing our people through work*, rather than *getting work done through people*. This appeals to the intrinsic motivation that also generates the results we need. We can translate these ideas and effect cultural change through the correct exercise of the six mechanisms listed above.

We need to stress that prioritizing people does not equate to going soft and avoiding tough and realistic training. It is also not about removing regimentation and being lax about discipline, which many in the older generation complain about. We still need to do what is painful but necessary for a military to be operationally ready.

Returning to Schein's definition of organizational culture, it is important that our assumptions be informed by these shifts as we solve the problems of external adaptation, especially the political aspects.

Hofstede's dimensions help us to understand the clashes in culture that the new generation brings to the SAF, in order to facilitate our internal integration. We must socialize our people, both new and old, to think People-First when we try to solve our problems.

In conclusion, SAF is facing rapid external change in the context of shifts in the socio-cultural, political and economic realms. As we rethink our role in Singapore, we are faced with the need to re-strategize. However, we can only move as much as our organizational culture allows. The evolution of our culture is mediated through our leaders and our own individual spheres of influence. A People-First organizational culture will be conducive to a new strategy that tackles the challenges ahead. ☯

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A Culture-Centric Strategy for Sustaining Change

by **CPT Daxson Yap**

Abstract:

This essay highlights the need for the SAF to focus on understanding its own organizational culture (as opposed to continuing to define and espouse it) as a first step towards implementing change. Only with an understanding of the mechanics of culture and the elements of the SAF's culture can a coherent plan be formulated for building a mindset that embraces change. This culture-centric strategy will be a cornerstone of the SAF's ability to continually adapt and remain relevant in a dynamic environment.

Keywords: Organizational Culture; SAF Core Values; Culture-Centric Strategy; Military Culture

INTRODUCTION

> *"Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times."*
>
> *– Niccolo Machiavelli*

In March 2004, then-Minister for Defense Teo Chee Hean announced in Parliament that the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) would embark on a transformation journey to ensure that it meets current and future operational requirements.[1] Six years later in 2010, he reported that the "key building blocks" for transformation into the Third Generation SAF were in place[2]—new platforms had been delivered, the Army, Air Force and Navy had been fundamentally reorganized, and new people development schemes were introduced to recruit and retain the personnel needed. Consolidating these fundamental changes and combining new platforms into an integrated capability occupied the SAF, along with the high tempo of overseas deployments to Afghanistan and the Gulf of Aden. Then in 2011, the watershed General Elections and the Presidential Elections heralded the "tipping point" where societal agitation for participatory politics and information "democratization" came to a head in the most competitive elections since the People's Action

Party came to power. Notwithstanding the backdrop of an uncertain global geopolitical landscape, these internal and domestic issues highlight the sustained pace of change that the SAF has had to undertake. If anything, the consistent theme since the 9/11 bombings has been the need for the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF) and the SAF to continue maintaining this pace in order to successfully navigate its future course in this dynamic environment.

The challenge of remaining relevant in the face of change is evergreen. Over the past four decades, MINDEF and the SAF have always been able to successfully forecast the drivers of change, identify trends, formulate strategies and implement plans to stay ahead of the game. Organizational culture also became part of the dialog in the early 1990s, resulting in the promulgation of the SAF Core Values in 1996 as a larger effort to create a value-based culture.[3] These broad strategies of building a value-based culture and focusing on nurturing strong leaders in order to sustain change might not be sufficient as the events of recent years have shown that global, domestic and internal drivers of change will manifest at a rapid pace. In addition, the mental models and strategies that have worked well in the past, and that

current leaders hold to be true, might not be valid in a "new normal" environment. The game has changed—and without instilling the ability to sustain change within the organization's culture, the risk is that the necessary changes will not take root in people's beliefs and therefore behaviors, despite the leadership's best efforts.

The SAF needs to focus on understanding its own organizational culture (as opposed to continuing to define and espouse it) as a first step towards implementing change. Only with an understanding of the mechanics of culture and the elements of SAF culture can a coherent plan be formulated to effectively build a mindset that embraces change. This culture-centric strategy will be a cornerstone of the SAF's capability to continually adapt and remain relevant in a dynamic environment.

Only with an understanding of the mechanics of culture and the elements of SAF culture can a coherent plan be formulated to effective build a mindset that embraces change.

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

There are many definitions of organizational culture but the most widely accepted definitions revolve around a similar understanding of culture as a set of shared beliefs learned from past experience. Edgar Schein, Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan School of Management defines organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."[4]

This definition breaks down an amorphous word and provides insight into the tangible elements of culture as assumptions or habits that are learned from past experience and considered valid due to past successes. It further leads easily to an explanation that culture is

often the hardest organizational attribute to change—because it represents group habits that are basic and difficult to unlearn. Schein posits that organizational culture can be viewed on three levels: (1) artifacts, (2) espoused values and (3) assumptions. Artifacts refer to the tangible or visibly identifiable elements in an organization. These are the unique rituals or items that can be recognized by people not part of the culture. Militaries all over the world have a comprehensive set of artifacts (uniforms, hair-cut, parades, protocol, unit slogans, initiations—just to name a few) which uniquely identify military personnel from normal citizens. Espoused values are the organization's stated or desired cultural elements. Most obviously, the SAF's values are represented by the SAF Code of Conduct and our Seven Core Values. The Officer's Creed and Warrant Officer's Creed are also espoused values for the respective communities. Assumptions are then the actual underlying, implicit beliefs of the culture, which are not necessarily the same values that are espoused. Linking this back to Schein's definition, these assumptions are the "truths" that have "worked well" in the past and therefore are seen as valid by the collective community. These beliefs may be subconscious and hard to recognize even for members of the culture.

This frame of organizational culture is appealing because it gives an idea for how one should go about effecting cultural change. The issue to focus on is the underlying assumptions of the group, and not the superficial artifacts or espoused values. It leads to the realization that if one were to merely change the visible artifacts and dictate a set of values, organizational culture—that is, the way that "things are done around here"—will not change. The key is finding a means of surfacing these assumptions, and to convince the group that these assumptions are no longer valid. Until the leaders are aware of this and find a way of changing those shared assumptions which have worked well enough in the past to be

considered valid, the desired culture will remain superficial and the artifacts, that are not anchored by deeply held beliefs, will disappear with the leadership that espouses it.

WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT?

Precisely because culture offers a means of creating lasting change, it is a hugely important area for all leaders to understand. Many management authors have written well-known books on the importance of organizational culture in affecting organizational behavior and performance. Stanford professors Jim Collins and Jerry Porras wrote *Built to Last*, a book that studied dominant companies in 18 key industries to find out the secret that made them successful for so long. What they found was that the key distinguishing characteristic between companies that "lasted" compared to those that did not, was the strength and clarity of their cultures—their espoused ideology, values and purpose for existence. They hypothesized that culture leads to success because it motivates people to greater performance by engaging with the emotional elements that drive them—the need for identity, camaraderie, and purpose.

In the military domain, historians often neglect the role of culture and focus on areas such as leadership, doctrine or training in analyzing the reasons for victory. Yet military culture may be "the most important factor not only in military effectiveness, but also in the processes involved in military innovation, which is essential to preparing military organizations for the next war."[5] In *Does Military Culture Matter*, Murray uses the example of the German Army between the two World Wars as a prime example of the importance of military culture. The Treaty of Versailles had imposed a limit on the size of the German army's officer corps and Hans Von Seeckt, the Chief of Staff at the time, turned the officer corps over to the control of the general staff. This resulted in fundamental change in the organizational culture to include "thorough, systematic analysis, a willingness to grapple with what was really happening on the battlefield, and a rigorous leadership selection process."[6]

In 1932, Generals Werner von Fritsch and Ludwig Beck, who would go on to assume control of the German army after Hitler came to power, rewrote their basic doctrinal manual, *Die Truppenführung*

Commanders discussing tactics

(Troop Leadership), which served as the basis for the combined-arms battle doctrine which the Germans used in World War II. The opening paragraphs of that manual encompassed the fundamental cultural assumptions of the German army:

1. The conduct of war is an art, depending upon free, creative activity, scientifically grounded. It makes the highest demands on individuals.

2. The conduct of war is based on continuous development. New means of warfare call forth ever changing employment.

3. Situations in war are of unlimited variety. They change often and suddenly and are rarely discernible at an early point. Incalculable elements are often of great influence. The independent will of the enemy is pitted against ours. Frictions and mistakes are an everyday occurrence.[7]

While this does not suggest that the German Army's culture is the paragon of all cultures, the point to take away from this example is the power of culture in shaping military effectiveness. It is crucial for the SAF to take this "culture-centric" approach as a complement to the current "people-centric" approach as a strategy that not only reflects the primary importance of developing our people, but also addresses the issue of how they work together and respond in the face of change.

WHAT CULTURE IS NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN CHANGE?

This perspective that the SAF needs to continually adapt is not original. In 2010, CPT Sean Wat suggested building a culture of innovation and explained the need for "not just the leadership but every member of the armed forces to be an innovative element" on the battlefield.[8] He made the point that innovation will be necessary in an era of increasing complexity on the battlefield and as a means of better engaging soldiers who are very comfortable with technology.[9]

The pace of technological advances is astounding and continues to accelerate. It used to be the case that civilian commercial applications were found through technological breakthroughs made in the process of military research. The Internet is the most famous example of this process. Today, however, given the ever-shrinking commercial product cycle and the labyrinthine bureaucracy of defense procurement programs, it is now civilian commercial technology breakthroughs that are leading to military applications. The use of smartphones with customized applications on the battlefield demonstrates the paradigm of centralized information turned on its head.[10]

In *Capacity to Change* (C2C), the authors suggest that large organizations like the SAF are akin to complex adaptive systems and its leaders "should find ways to allow creativity to emerge naturally within organizations rather than impose pre-conceived solutions."[11] With the technological trend laid out earlier, more power is placed in the hands of each individual soldier—competitive elections in 2011 have also shown that the younger generations are agitating for greater participation in all areas of society. The evolution of war-fighting in a networked manner requires soldiers to take more initiative and adapt tactics according to the tactical situation on the ground. Such trends mean that the SAF will need to be comfortable in a environment that shares information more readily, decentralizes decision making and places more responsibility on each soldier on the ground.

Innovation will be necessary in an era of increasing complexity on the battlefield and as a means of better engaging soldiers who are very comfortable with technology.

The authors of *C2C* also argued that the existing MINDEF and SAF mindset is focused on efficiency and effectiveness. Effectiveness because we will always need an organization aligned to mission-driven outcomes, and efficiency because resources will always be outstripped by an inexhaustible list of legitimate demands.[12] These twin precepts will unfortunately come into tension with the capacity to change—"to continuously reinvent, to remake oneself to stay relevant, to be able to respond to disruptive changes."[13] It is clear however, that in order to stay relevant and

remain successful, MINDEF and the SAF must manage these tensions.

WHAT IS OUR CURRENT CULTURE?

Before we can even proceed to lay out a roadmap for cultural change, it is necessary to attempt to understand the SAF's culture. If you know your destination but do not know your current location, how will it be possible to decide which route to take? In *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras argue that any cultural change should start with the existing core values of the organization in an effort to preserve them while stimulating progress. In addition, it is useful to identify potential elements of the SAF's culture that might be at odds with change readiness. This task of attempting to unpack the cultural elements of a large and complex organization is impossible to accomplish in this article, and will require months of interviews, surveys and open access to and observation of the conduct of the SAF's daily operations. This was exactly what Schein did when he authored *Strategic Pragmatism – The Culture of Singapore's Economic Development Board*. The book's first chapter notes that the EDB was a "spirited, proud, high-morale organization that believed in itself completely yet wanted to find a way to become more conscious of its vulnerabilities and shortcomings."[14] Sound familiar?

In COL Kelvin Koh's essay, "Communicating the Third Generation SAF: An Inter-Cultural Challenge?,"[15] he attempted to analyze the SAF's culture and hypothesized that Singapore's culture can serve as a proxy for the SAF's. To that end, he cited Dutch social scientist Geert Hofstede's typology of cultural dimensions at the workplace and the associated ranking of Singapore under this framework to infer several characteristics of the SAF's culture. Of the four cultural dimensions used by Hofstede (Power-Distance, Individualist-Collectivist, Feminine-Masculine, and Uncertainty Avoidance), of particular interest is Singapore's ranking as the top nation most comfortable with uncertainty. Without delving

into the research methodology, this finding clashes with lay impressions of the Singapore work culture and COL Koh admits this as much when he suggests that a more detailed study into these findings are needed before drawing any conclusions.[16] This is an example of the difficulty in attempting to understand an organization's culture by proxy. The point is that there is a need for a serious and academically sound study into the SAF's culture.

It is interesting to note that as early as 1972, Dr Goh Keng Swee had already recognized the need to anchor the SAF on a common set of unique beliefs and habits to overcome our lack of a strong military tradition or history of successful campaigns.[17]

> The British Army, especially the infantry arm, cultivates pride, loyalty and comradeship among its officers within the framework of the regimental tradition. ... We have tried to transplant these practices in our army. I have come to the conclusion that they do not work, and possibly cannot be made to work. Indeed, it would be astonishing if it were, otherwise, seeing that not only are our military systems different, but also that we are two different peoples, with different histories, customs, social values, individual perceptions and group responses. We will have to find our own methods of fostering esprit in the officer corps, which will fit into our own social environment as well as our systems of military organization. I do not believe that this can be achieved by resorting to gimmicks; it will be a long term and long haul effort over many years.[18]

However, our efforts to imbue behavioral traits in our people have relied on espoused values such as the SAF Code of Conduct, Oath of Allegiance and Officer's Creed. Even with the promulgation of the SAF Core Values in 1996,[19] the authors of *Spirit and System* acknowledged that the decade of educating SAF personnel on the core values had likely been overly prescriptive.[20] The seven values of Loyalty to Country, Leadership, Discipline, Professionalism, Fighting Spirit, Ethics, and Care for Soldiers were meant to "act as the foundation upon which a quality armed forces is built" and were expected to "shape the SAF's professional beliefs and attitude and

determine how members of the SAF go about doing their task."[21] Artifacts such as the recitation of core values prior to water parades were widely used to drum them into the minds of our young soldiers. Such artifacts are representative of the prescriptive approach which misses the point of instilling these values as fundamental beliefs. This superficial treatment of group behavior will prove ineffective in grooming leaders and men to be adaptive and make value-based decisions in situations without clear right or wrong choices.

If one were to scan the *POINTER* articles written on culture in recent years, only COL Koh's piece attempted to analyze the SAF's current culture. Perhaps the *POINTER* monograph *Spirit and System* comes closest, with its historical re-telling of organizational beliefs, albeit from the perspective of leadership development. Thus far, only the most visible feature of the SAF's culture has been highlighted and it is not the purpose of this article to decipher the essence of the SAF's culture. Rather, in laying out a framework for organizational culture and a method for understanding a group's culture, leaders on the ground can apply this understanding to their necessarily unique situations and personalities. What follows is a model for viewing the SAF's culture, in a bid to decipher how to proceed with changing it.

Besides the need to understand culture as a framework and identity, the role of leaders in the formulation and execution of this strategy is the key success factor.

It should first be recognized that the SAF is not a homogeneous organization. It is made up of three services, each with a distinct history, set of experiences and therefore, culture. Taking this structural breakdown another step, the services are themselves made up of fighting units and staff departments which necessarily operate differently based on platform, mission role, training and purpose. This zooming in on the cultures of the "sub-groups"

that make up the SAF offers some traction in thinking of the SAF's culture. Seen in this light, the culture of the SAF mostly consists of the various cultures of its constituent units. More practically, to the individual servicemen and women of the SAF, the unit's culture is the organization's culture. This frame offers the view that focusing on each individual unit is perhaps the key to instilling broader organizational change.

HOW DO WE CHANGE OUR CULTURE?

The central strategy proposed in this paper emphasizes a "culture-centric" approach and requires first a deep understanding of the subconscious assumptions that underpin the collective habits of the group. Second, with Schein's model of organizational culture, specific initiatives can be organized at the level of culture that is targeted for a clearer understanding of the mechanism by which it will change beliefs and thus behaviors. Finally, the strategy calls for intentionally creating latent capability to introduce new changes.

It has been suggested earlier that the SAF should commission a culture study, similar to the EDB effort, as a means of understanding itself better. Analogous to self-mastery as the basis for personal development, a deep understanding of the its own culture will form the basis of all of the SAF's organizational development efforts. At the same time, it should occur to Commanding Officers (CO) that an intimate understanding of their unit's culture is not as difficult as trying to dissect the SAF's culture. With a smaller group of people, it is quite possible for the CO and CWO to have deep conversations at the unit level to tease out the basic assumptions that govern how unit personnel work.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND A SENSE OF URGENCY

Besides the need to understand culture as a framework and identity, the role of leaders in the formulation and execution of this strategy is the key success factor. As part of his larger work on change management,[22] Professor John Kotter, Professor of Leadership, Emeritus at the Harvard Business School,

emphasizes in *A Sense of Urgency* that leaders will need to skillfully cultivate a sense of urgency in making changes.[23] This entails convincing the group about the impetus for change and managing the pace with "quick, easy successes" so as to generate and sustain the momentum. Kotter also makes clear that leaders should not take this to mean that crises should be manufactured or allowed to deliberately happen as it creates an angry backlash if people feel manipulated.[24]

SUSTAINING CHANGE

There can be no change if the organization is unable to free up capacity in people and resources to formulate and execute a transition plan. In *C2C*, the authors propose giving employees space, in terms of time, resources or intellectual bandwidth,[25] to build the spirit of "defense entrepreneurship."[26] There are also mechanisms within MINDEF and the SAF that generate institutional flux, such as imposed scarcity and temporary special project offices to allow for structural evolution.[27] Creating meshed networks that will cross-fertilize ideas and results in cognitive capacity far beyond the sum of the network's parts is also a strong strategy.[28]

The demographic trends need to build a full-spectrum force to deal with the wider range of threats and situations, and fulfill international expectation of participation in overseas missions all force the SAF to be more judicious in the allocation of capacity. The result is that leaders need to maintain a strategic reserve for unforeseen change.

CONCLUSION

The task of changing an organization's culture is arguably the hardest task of any leader. Previous essays written about culture have focused on what shape the SAF culture should take and specific initiatives. In laying out a framework for understanding organizational culture, it is hoped that this article has provoked thought into how these initiatives to bring about organizational change fit under a wider cultural strategy. If SAF leaders are better able to understand their own units, diagnose elements resistant to change, and design effective cultural transition plans, it is more likely that change will be sustained and the organization will be in a better place to continually handle change. ☯

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The Citizen-Soldier in Modern Democracies:
The Case for Conscription in Singapore

by **LTC Chan Ching Hao**

Abstract:

Since the peak of conscription during the First and Second World Wars, several countries have reduced the duration of compulsory military service or even ended conscription. In its early years, Singapore had no means to defend its nascent independence apart from a minimal British military presence. Conscription was the only means for Singapore to build up defense capabilities. This article outlines the main forms of military service and its history, the factors for the decline of conscription and why Singapore's defense needs are still best served by conscription.

Keywords: National Service; Total Defense; Conscription

INTRODUCTION

Every Singaporean male citizen is called up for National Service (NS) upon turning 18. NS is familiar to Singaporeans, as almost every family has a father, brother or son who has served or is serving NS. We have come to take NS as a given. However, trends suggest the international decline of military service by citizen-soldiers. Since the peak of conscription during the First and Second World Wars (WWI and WWII), several countries have allowed alternate service (e.g. civil administration), reduced the duration of compulsory military service, or even ended conscription altogether.

This is a four-part article. The first part outlines the main forms of military service. The second part briefly covers the history of the rise of conscription from the 18th century in revolutionary France to its widespread proliferation during the Second World War (WWII). The third part discusses the broad factors for the decline of conscription in the decades of relative peace since WWII. This includes a deeper look at Taiwan's decision in 2011 to end conscription. The final part examines why 45 years after the introduction of NS, Singapore's defense needs continue to be best served via conscription, and the key factors for the continued success of Singapore's NS system.

TYPES OF MILITARY SERVICE

Choosing the right military service for serving a country's interests deserves careful study. According to Cohen, nations devised military service through resolving two clusters of claims, those of foreign-cum-military policy on one hand, and those of justice and ideology.[1] Countries must consider geopolitical realities and raise an armed force that is able to handle the types of conflicts they are most likely to face. While conscription allows a country to build up large armed forces rapidly, it comes at significant economic cost. Employing the citizen-soldier also extends the potential reach of the military to all families. Thus, conscription has profound implications on civilian-military relations and the cultural and historical consciousness of a nation.
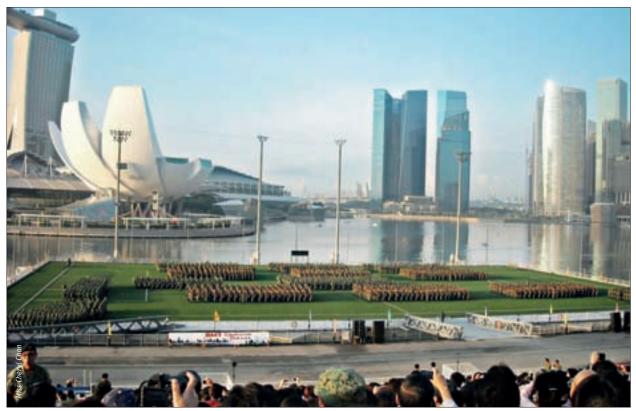
Unfortunately, as Cohen points out, the layman is likely to reduce the issue to choosing between an armed force comprised of regulars or conscripts. In reality, militaries usually include regulars augmented by citizen-soldiers in the form of conscripts, reserves, or even volunteers. Different types of military service employ a unique mix of regulars and citizen-soldiers. The main military service systems are listed below:

1. **Cadre/Conscript:** A cadre of professional officers and noncommissioned officers trains and leads conscripts who become part of the nation's standing forces.

2. **Expansible:** A cadre of professional soldiers prepares in peacetime to train large masses of conscripts or volunteers only in periods leading up to war.

3. **Militia:** Citizens are either selected or volunteer to train for a minimum period during the year (e.g. during weekends or weekday evenings) while pursuing civilian careers. Militias serve in their towns of residence and are traditionally activated either during emergencies or threat of invasion.

4. **All Volunteer Force (AVF):** Similar to the Cadre/Conscript system, but with the exclusive use of volunteers.[2]

Countries have adapted the systems above or a combination of them to meet their needs.

THE RISE OF MODERN CONSCRIPTION

Military Service up to WWI

In the 18th century, European armies were generally organized along class lines. Nobles became officers while volunteers and conscripts served long periods of duty. As 18th century warfare lacked political and ideological aims, European states did not require mass armies and only conscripted small numbers of men of lower social status.[3] The modern mass army only made its debut in the late 18th century French Revolutionary Wars. After the French monarchy was deposed, other European monarchist powers feared the spread of the revolution and waged war against the new French republic. In defense of the republic, the French national assembly declared the *Levee en Masse* in August 1793 and conscripted all unmarried men aged 18. The French army swiftly grew from 264,000 to 749,000 by September 1794.[4] The soldiers of the other European armies served long tours of duty and were believed to be superior to the French conscripts.

Passing out parade in the Central Business District

However, the French conscripts performed well and even decisively defeated the Prussian army, widely regarded as a highly disciplined and feared force, at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt in 1806.[5]

Some military historians postulated that the French army's successes in the initial revolutionary wars was due to conscription. Such historians often depict the French citizen-soldier as being motivated to fight for the rights of his countrymen rather than out of fear of his officers. Other European armies were rigidly drilled but spiritless, no match for the tactical superiority of a revolutionary army.[6] However, this does not explain why class-based European armies eventually overwhelmed Napoleon's conscript army in later battles. The Napoleonic empire was finally brought down by the British at Waterloo in 1815. It is more likely that the successes of armies on both sides of the French Revolutionary Wars were due to concrete measures such as improvements in tactics and purges to eliminate inept officers.[7]

The soldiers of the other European armies served long tours of duty and were believed to be superior to the French conscripts.

Despite ensuing debate on the effectiveness of conscripts, most European armies adopted conscription systems by the late 19th century. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 dismissed any perception that conscripts were inferior to regulars, and signaled the beginning of widespread conscription. During the war, Prussia invaded France with 370,000 men, mostly conscripts. The 240,000-strong French professional army was defeated within a few months.[8] The main advantage of conscription was the sheer number of soldiers it could generate. Prussia had large standing forces and could quickly mobilize reservists to replace attrition—something France could not do.

Conscription in WWI and WWII

Prior to the first World War (WWI), military and political strategists foresaw that mass warfare would be waged on the continent. But the public in the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) held strong liberal attitudes and continued to oppose compulsory military service. This opposition persisted even after WWI started. However, faced with massive attrition and insufficient volunteer replacements, UK finally adopted conscription in January 1916.[9] Due to its geographical isolation from Europe, US only entered the war in April 1917. US adopted conscription a month later as it recognized that its small regular army would hardly make a difference on the European battlefield.[10]

WWI provided important insight on the efficient deployment of military and civilian resources during wartime. For France, ideological rigidity in regard to conscription significantly hampered its war efforts. Frenchmen were mobilized *en masse* with little consideration for economic and industrial implications; the results were disastrous. Just 30 days into the war, the French were forced to demobilize tens of thousands of reservists to maintain artillery shell production after stockpiles were halved. By the end of the war, industry was crippled with more than half of workers and factories lost.[11] Similarly in the UK, prior to the adoption of conscription, critical industries supporting the war effort suffered as large numbers of workers volunteered for military service.[12] The US, which joined the war later, benefited from the French and British experience. As such, while the US Navy and Marine Corps fought on professional grounds to accept only volunteers, they were forced to accept mostly conscripts.[13] In order to balance fairness with harnessing military and civilian resources efficiently, the US implemented a unique Selective System. In particular, exempting workers in a critical industry would be logical but undemocratic. The Selective System bill thus avoided class and group deferments and delegated the task of drafting to local draft boards chaired by civilian leaders.[14]

In the late 1930s, with the threat of WWII looming, most countries again relied heavily on conscription. During WWII, the UK and US conscripted 4,653,000 and 16,354,000 soldiers respectively.[15] As large masses of new soldiers had to be trained from scratch, the

UK and US were effectively employing an expansible military system during WWI and WWII. Training numerous conscripts, however, took time. US took four years to prepare sufficient troops for war.[16]

The Decline of Modern Conscription

Conscription proved crucial to the survival of nations over both World Wars. After WWII, while workers were needed to rebuild the economy, nations continued to send conscripts to preserve the newly established peace through occupation and stabilization operations. Thereafter, conscription continued to remain relevant with the advent of the Cold War against the threat of communism. The strategic situation required countries to have armies capable of fending off a continental threat and fulfill North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) obligations. Moreover, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 stifled any debate on ending conscription.[17] However, calls on governments to end conscription quickly resumed with the Korean armistice in July 1953.

Several broad factors fomented the general decline of modern conscription. First, the development of nuclear arms and nuclear deterrence during the Cold War shifted the focus away from a clash of conventional forces between major powers. Second, the reduced likelihood of an all-out conventional war led to a mismatch between demographic trends and the defense requirements of several countries. UK was the first major power to end conscription largely due to this mismatch. Studies in 1956 and 1957 showed that continued universal conscription would generate a surplus of 71,500 soldiers by 1961.[18] The British government could ill afford wasted manpower and the political consequences of maintaining conscription. Alternatives such as selective service or balloting were unacceptable as they ran counter to the universal character of national service. Despite claims by the British military that scrapping conscription would reduce NATO's effectiveness and that UK would lose its global prominence,[19] an all professional force augmented by a militia system in the British Territorial Army (TA) prevailed.[20] Third, unpopular involvement in limited wars abroad turned the tide

of domestic opinion against conscription. The high casualty rates of young US GIs in the Vietnam War led to widespread opposition towards conscription. In March 1969, then-President Richard Nixon, who was elected on an anti-conscription ticket, appointed a commission to study the prospects for an AVF. By 1970, the US ended conscription and built up an AVF with the National Guard and the Reserves.[21] Fourth, political compromise to sustain conscription produces substandard soldiers, thereby undermining the national defense. To manage excess manpower, France progressively cut the length of military service from two years to one, then to 10 months in 1970 and 1992 respectively. In addition, faced with waning popular support for conscription in the 1960s, the government allowed French draftees to choose civilian service for a longer duration (16 to 24 months) instead of military service. Large scores of eligible men were also exempted from service based on profession (e.g., young farmers or business owners), marital status or physical and psychological health. By 1996, about half the potential draft manpower were exempted or in alternate forms of service.[22] Ironically, while these policies propped up support for conscription, they rendered the military service irrelevant, as exemplified by the difficulties France faced in the Gulf War and former Yugoslavia.[23] This incongruence ended in 1996 when then-President Jacques Chirac, who was elected on an anti-conscription platform, successfully abolished conscription.[24]

Scrapping Conscription in Taiwan

In 2011, Taiwan, a traditional stronghold of conscription, announced that it would be ceasing conscription in favor of an AVF. Taiwan retained conscript forces well after WWII due to the possibility of conflict with China. Yet in recent years, Taiwan and China have successfully established closer financial and trade links, including the landmark Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement. President Ma and his Kuomintang party support establishing better ties with China in recognition that economic isolation from the large Chinese economy could be fatal for Taiwan.[25] The recent reelection of Ma in January 2012

by a sizable 5% margin also suggests that majority of Taiwanese favor better ties with China.

Although Taiwan's 2011 National Report noted the gradual relaxing of cross-strait tensions, China is still regarded as an "invasion threat."[26] Against the backdrop of China's military development, the paper highlighted that "strengthening defense capabilities is the fundamental way to ensuring peace in the Taiwan strait."[27] Taiwan's decision to end conscription was driven by demographic trends. The report highlighted that Taiwan faces a steady declining pool of male draftees due to declining birth rates, an aging population and rapid talent outflow.[28] While the draft eligible pool numbered around 120,000 in 2011, it was expected to decrease to about 75,000 by 2025. In addition, the report stated that the current compulsory military service period (one year) was insufficient to train citizens to operate the sophisticated equipment of the future battlefield. As such, Taiwan was urged to establish an AVF to meet its defense requirements.[29] Although the military would be downsized from 275,000 to 215,000 (standing) personnel, the report outlined a plan to modernize the military, implement force restructuring and revamp its operating concepts. The AVF is Taiwan's means of reconciling geopolitical realities with manpower constraints.

THE CASE FOR CONSCRIPTION IN SINGAPORE
Brief History of NS

When Singapore gained independence in 1965, a pall of gloom loomed instead of celebration. Singapore was asked to leave the Malayan Federation in 1965 due to intractable ideological differences between Singapore's state government and the Malayan federal government. De-facto independence was thrust upon us. It was easy to see why Singaporeans feared for their future then. We had lost an economic hinterland in Malaysia. More critically, Singapore is a small island nation. Measuring about 43km from east to west and 23km from north to south, Singapore sorely lacks strategic depth. Apart from a minimal British military presence, Singapore had no means to defend its nascent independence. Furthermore, the painful memories of the Japanese Occupation during WWII and the regional uncertainty due to Indonesia's policy of *Konfrontasi* made defense a critical issue. Conscription was the only means for Singapore to build up defense capabilities quickly at minimal cost to the fragile economy. In 1967, Singapore called up all 18 year old able-bodied males for NS. Initially, only 10% of eligible males underwent military service due to limited facilities and trainers. The remaining 90% served part-time in any of three forces—the People's Defense Force, the Special Constabulary or the Vigilante Corps. After more camp facilities were built, Singapore transited to a compulsory universal military service system.[30]

Apart from a minimal British military presence, Singapore had no means to defend its nascent independence.

The Continued Relevance of NS in the Current Geopolitical Context

Today, the regional geopolitical situation is markedly improved. Growing economic interdependence in Asia and the presence of major powers in the region have helped maintain decades of relative peace since WWII and the Vietnam War. However, this stability cannot be taken for granted over the next five to six decades. While Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states have agreed to work towards an ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the security aims are limited to establishing guidelines for conflict resolution through nonviolent means, exploring avenues for confidence building, and strengthening cooperation in addressing nontraditional security issues, particularly in combating transnational crime and trans-boundary challenges.[31] The APSC currently envisioned does not go as far as to establish a security bloc such as NATO, in which an attack on one member is considered an attack on all.

Most importantly, Singapore's inherent vulnerability as a small island state remains unchanged. It is therefore indisputable that Singapore requires strong defense capabilities. However, are mass armies raised through conscription still relevant in the hi-tech modern battlefield? While this question deserves a full article of its own, this author's belief is unequivocally "yes." After all, while American and European military powers have trended towards "military demassification," Gray attributes this to an "extreme sensitivity to casualties." Gray cautions that regular warfare goes beyond combat and is in effect a contest of wills. In this regard, there is no better manifestation of national will than the collective spirit of a citizen army. Although modern warfare has shifted towards precision targeting and decisive maneuvers enabled by real-time battlefield awareness, when casualties mount, the ancient virtues of mass become very clear.[32] Moreover, despite their rejection of peacetime conscription, the US, the UK and France still retain constitutional rights to conscript their citizens for exigencies of war. Conscription comes at a price that these countries are unwilling to pay in peacetime, but not in war.

Cadre/Conscript System: A Natural Fit for Singapore

In recognition of these hard truths, Singapore's NS system has enabled Singapore to build up a sizable standing force and transfer well-trained conscripts into the reserve force. We have come a long way since the first batch of 900 draftees in 1967. At the turn of the new millennium, the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) had a standing force of 50,000, comprising regulars and Full-Time National Servicemen (NSFs), and a reserve force of 300,000 Operationally Ready NSmen.[33] Singapore's unique military system is modeled after the Cadre/Conscript system. Other forms of military systems are unsuitable for Singapore. While militia forces theoretically offer the quickest response against a military threat at the border, it is more useful for large countries with long borders. Given

Singapore's small size, it becomes very efficient to centrally manage the military training of conscripts. An expansible military system would be disastrous for Singapore. Given our lack of strategic depth, Singapore does not have the luxury of time that major powers have to raise sufficient divisions for total war. Moreover, the lack of training space in land-scarce Singapore makes it impossible to train large intakes of fresh draftees prior to war. An AVF is also not possible. Singapore's population of close to four million is too small to raise a sizable AVF without detrimental effects on our economy. In contrast, Taiwan, which will be scrapping conscription in favor of an AVF, has a population of about 23 million. Therefore, only the Cadre/Conscript model is viable in Singapore.

Singapore's NS Training System

Singapore's NSmen are well-trained and professionally competent. This is in no small part due to Singapore's long NS duration—two years of full-time NS, followed by a ten-year Operationally Ready National Service (ORNS) training cycle.[34] The ten-year NS unit training cycle is divided into three stages, each lasting three to four NS years. First is the *Strengthening Stage*, which focuses on individual and team proficiencies to maintain operational readiness. Second is the *Sharpening Stage* which focuses on unit proficiency, culminating in an evaluation of the unit's warfighting capabilities with the aid of a "Red" opposing force. The final *Sustain Stage* maintains operational readiness while increasing focus on integrated training. At the end of the training cycle, the NS Unit will transfer to the operational reserves.[35] Singapore's NS duration and NS training cycle training obligations were reviewed and reduced to current levels by the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF) in 2004 and 2005 respectively. The key driver for the reduction in NS duration is the SAF's transformation into the Third Generation SAF, a force that makes greater use of superior technology in areas such as comprehensive surveillance, battlefield awareness, precision strikes

and network-centric warfare. Our well-educated citizens are capable of maximizing these technology force multipliers. Moreover, the use of simulators, war gaming systems and computer aided instruction has enhanced training effectiveness while saving time.[36] It is also important to note that the NSmen serve in the same unit throughout their service. This allows NSmen to build strong trust and rapport in their NS unit over the years, as compared to pooling a bunch of strangers together just prior to engaging in military operations.

Singapore's Key Principles of NS

The success of Singapore's NS system can be attributed to our strict adherence to three key principles.[37] First, NS must be for *meeting a critical national need* as it comes at considerable cost both to the individual and nation. That critical need is *national security and our survival*. Second is *universality*. All young Singaporean males who are fit to serve are conscripted. If we have a system in which some are conscripted but others are not, there will be strong feelings of unfairness. Singapore has no civilian service option, which dilutes the impetus for conscription in the first place. The French and German experience with civilian service has contributed towards the demise of their conscription systems. Third is *equity*. All NSmen are treated the same way, regardless of background or status. Deployment in NS is determined by where each serviceman is most needed, according to the needs of national defense. Furthermore, MINDEF considers each deferment request on the basis of equity so that no male citizen will be disadvantaged in terms of career or further studies as a result of NS. The commitment of our NSmen might be undermined if any of these principles are flouted.

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Recognizing and Engaging our NSmen

MINDEF makes a concerted effort to recognize and enhance the contributions of NSFs and NSmen, their families and their employers to Total Defense. For example, recreational and sport facilities in Singapore Armed Forces Recreational Association (SAFRA) clubs and golf courses at the National Service Resort and Country Club have been built for NSmen and their families. Employers who have been supportive of NS, NS policies and their employees' NS activities are also given public recognition in the form of SAF awards. MINDEF has created several online portals catered to NSmen and their employers. Factual clarifications on NS and online administrative transactions are easily accessible on these web pages, making it convenient for NSmen and their employers to support NS. Fitness facilities have also been built in residential areas, making it easier for our NSmen to keep fit beyond their call-up periods. NSmen are also given monetary incentives. These include increases in NSF allowances, NSmen bonuses and the National Service Recognition Award (NSRA).[38] MINDEF also sources for feedback on improving engagement through the Committee to Recognize the Contribution of Operationally Ready NSmen to Total Defense (RECORD). Since 1990, five RECORD committees have convened. Many of RECORD's recommendations have been developed into incentives, privileges and awards that NS stakeholders now enjoy.

It is also important to engage the hearts of NSmen and not just their minds. This is important as the new generation of NSmen are more questioning, and are keen to know how their NS roles contribute to Singapore's continued prosperity. Commanders will play a key role in this effort and will be allowed to "experiment." A good example of

this is the shifting of the Basic Military Training (BMT) Graduation Parade to the Marina Bay Floating Platform. Recruits used to mark the end of BMT by ending a 24km route march on Pulau Tekong parade grounds. Now, recruits march into the heart of the Central Business District, overlooking the Marina Bay skyline, and will be welcomed by a crowd of supportive parents and girlfriends. The feedback has been positive. Recruits have indicated that they have a better sense of what they are protecting.[39]

CONCLUSION

Maintaining a compulsory military service comes at a high price, hence many modern democracies have done away with conscription. However, history has time and again validated the importance of conscription in a conventional war scenario. Given Singapore's inherent vulnerabilities, a universal conscription system is a natural fit for Singapore. Despite the cost, Singapore has the political will to follow through. The strongest indicator of this is the fact that Singapore's defense budget has consistently remained at 4-5% of Gross Domestic Product, one of the highest in the Asia-Pacific. Singapore's 2011 defense budget of $12.08 billion also represents about 25% of the overall government budget.[40] There is also broad support for NS. In a 2010 survey, more than 90% of Singaporeans said they will defend the country should it come under threat.[41] Some 45 years since its inception, NS is considered a rite of passage for all Singaporean males entering adulthood. However, this cannot be taken for granted. The decline of conscription in several countries which were strong proponents of military service reminds us that it is critical to adhere to the three key principles of NS—*meeting a critical national need*, *universality*, and *equity*. The contributions of NSmen, their families and employers must continue to be recognized. Commanders will also need to find meaningful ways to engage the hearts of our NSmen. These measures will constitute a multi-pronged approach to enhance the commitment of our NSmen and Singaporeans to NS and Total Defense. ☻

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Contested Revolutions: The Arab Spring and its Impact

by **CPT John Samuel**

Abstract:

In eighteen days of mass protests, an authoritarian ruler in the thirtieth year of his rule was unseated. The Arab Spring triggered similar events in Israel and Iran and also contributed to worldwide protest movements, including the 2011 Spanish "indignant" movement and the global "Occupy" movement. The international reaction to the Arab Spring typifies the "new world disorder," a world in which globalization sits uneasily without coordination or leadership. The domestic, regional and global implications of this event are likely to evolve rapidly over the short to medium term.

Keywords: Arab Spring; Middle East; Political Relations

INTRODUCTION

Egypt, 11 February 2011: In eighteen days of mass protests, an unarmed, sparsely organized but united citizenry had faced down the nation's security apparatus and unseated an authoritarian ruler in the thirtieth year of his rule. Sparked by a 26 year old Tunisian vegetable seller, as obscure as he was hapless, who set himself alight after an altercation with a local official, spontaneous uprisings across the Arab world claimed two "Pharaohs" and the thrones of many others suddenly looked very shaky indeed. It captured the popular imagination like no other event since perhaps the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the fall of the Berlin Wall. A casting off of the yoke of oppression. A new dawn. A spring.

BUT WAS IT?

One year on, what have been the outcomes of the Arab "insurrectionary wave" of 2011?[1] How has it shaped the domestic political arena in Arab states? How have regional power balances and key geostrategic concerns such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iranian question been affected? What are the general implications for international politics? These are some of the questions that I seek to explore in this article.

DEFINING THE ARAB SPRING

The term "Arab Spring" is a political construct. It portrays the events of 2011 as more than the political convulsions of individual countries—rather, they are suggested to be an "awakening" of an entire people group. It alludes to the hopeful and bold liberalizations of the 1968 "Prague Spring," and at the same time harkens back to the Pan-Arabic hopes that Nasser once kindled.

The reality of 2011 was less clear cut. For one, the scope and extent of the movements differed widely across the Arab world. Leaders were toppled in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. On the other hand, Bahrain has been profiled extensively in the international media for a (hitherto) successful campaign of violent suppression. The other Arab states are experiencing murmurings of various intensity, which were met with equally diverse responses. Some amended constitutions (Morocco) and others had government reshuffles (Jordan). Some seemed able to contain the uprising with the time-honored tactic of fiscal largesse (most notably Saudi Arabia, to the tune of USD$36 billion).[2] In the face of demonstrations, others such as the Iraqi Prime Minister "gave his ministers 100 days to provide better services or face dismissal."[3] When that period ended they were given another 100 days and "the issue has now drifted into obscurity."[4]

Even states with nominally similar outcomes exhibited very different trajectories and social bases of protest. For example, in Tunisia the protests began amongst the "neglected rural areas" and made their way to the capital city, while the protests started with "cosmopolitan young people in the major cities" in Egypt.[5] Libya experienced a civil war, but the military's seeming neutrality was crucial in Tunisia and Egypt.[6] What these examples indicate is that the Arab Spring was a non-uniform experience, highly refracted by the particular sociopolitical and historical circumstances of each country.[7] The "Arab Spring" is a convenient shorthand for the events of 2011, not an analytical category.

What can be said, however, is that the protests of 2011 shared some similarity in causes, methods employed, and demands. In most Arab countries billionaires presided over states with high income inequality (resulting from the phenomenally corrupt neo-liberalization processes of the 1990s) and young, unemployed, and "disaffected" populations.[8] The protests were constituted by cumulative small-scale organization enabled by technology: social media enabled alternative political elites to organize the masses outside the spaces traditionally controlled by the regime, and to break the efficacy of the *mukhabarat* (security apparatus).[9] The protestors' calls were centered on "pragmatic" demands for "jobs, justice, and dignity."[10] Crucially, the demands were focused on domestic concerns: in Egypt, for example, there was no burning of foreign flags or chants against the United States (US) or Israel.[11] The simultaneity of the protests was also significant. Episodes of social mobilization of varying intensity have been a regular fixture of the Arab World; this installment, with the benefit of hindsight, started in April 2008 with the social media enabled protests of the April 6 Youth

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Movement in Egypt, or with the June 2009 mass demonstrations following the Iranian presidential election.[12] While President Obama's June 2009 Cairo University speech did not cause the uprising, his declaration that America would support the pursuit of human rights everywhere at the very least "set expectations for how the US would react."[13]

DOMESTIC IMPACT: ISLAMISM AND POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION

In order to work out the regional and international implications of the Arab Spring, it is first necessary to understand its domestic impact. A few of the debates in this area surround the rise of political Islam and what it means, and the prospects for political liberalization or even democratization in the Arab World. These issues are relevant across the Middle East, but are particularly poignant for Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya where an incipient "new order" is starting to emerge. In Tunisia, out of 217 seats in the Constituent Assembly tasked with appointing a transitional government and writing a new constitution, the veteran Islamist party Ennahda won 90 seats—more than three times the number of its nearest rival, with five times the vote share.[14] In the Egyptian elections, 366 out of 503 MPs were members of Islamist parties, with the Freedom and Justice Party (affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood) winning the largest share of 235 seats.[15] The Islamist strand is an important one among the assortment of rebels in Libya—the military commander of Tripoli and his deputy, for example, are both Islamists.[16]

While Islamist factions are clearly doing well in the Arab Spring, it is not clear how much power they have *vis-à-vis* the "Deep State." Egypt's case illustrates this point. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), under the chairmanship of Field Marshal Tantawi, assumed guardianship of the Republic

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tunisia_Unrest_-_VOA_-_Tunis_14_Jan_2011_(2).jpg

Protests in Tunisia

upon the departure of President Hosni Mubarak. The military promised to hand over control to an elected President following polls in June 2012.[17] Alongside loud declamations of support for the "martyrs of the revolution," Tantawi has been angling to secure the interests of the military in the new constitution.[18] It was reported that these include dubious provisions such as granting the military "immunity from civilian supervision," and the power to strike down some legislation enacted by parliament.[19] Some observers go so far as to call the Egyptian Arab Spring a "virtual military coup."[20] While that may be an extreme (but by no means implausible) position, the military has certainly been treading a double line with the revolutionaries. One memorable incident was Air Force aircraft being used to drop gifts in various parts of the country in the hope of preventing people from gathering on the anniversary of the revolution.[21] Therefore, the argument is that while Islamist parties are gaining a foothold in political

institutions, the power of these institutions are significantly circumscribed.

The power that Islamist parties do have, however, cannot be underestimated. This is perhaps more so in Tunisia, where a well-educated population, a large middle class and a strong labor union tradition increase the likelihood of successful participatory politics.[22] Yet the Tunisian example also serves to caution that "Islamist" is not a deterministic category and can mean different things in different contexts. Ennahda in its early years did engage in violent acts, but its ideology shifted to a "more moderate path" during its leader Rachid Ghannouchi's years of exile in London.[23] Today the party officially supports "pluralism," is vocal for the defense of "human rights," and has vowed "not to change the country's progressive personal status laws."[24] Having said that, Ghannouchi was due to relinquish his position in early 2012, and more radical salafi views are well represented in Ennahda's power base if not in its leadership.[25] It is not immediately clear what

the attitude of Islamist parties in the Arab World will be regarding pluralism, tolerance, and the status of women, among other issues. The dynamic at this time, if only because of the multiplicity of parties and viewpoints in the Assemblies and Parliaments, is towards compromise.[26] More generally, it could be argued that the Islamist narratives are at a major point of inflexion—the Arab Spring and the death of Osama bin Laden have dealt major blows to the extremist doctrine of revolution through violence.[27] Although Al-Qaeda is looking for a base in the region (Yemen looks the most promising in this regard), the new "participatory" environment is by and large unfavorable for radicalism.[28] It remains unclear how moderate Islamism will evolve in the new political climate. Much still depends on the choices of the coming months—will political actors resolve their differences through debate or turn to extra-institutional means; will governments (of which Islamist parties will be a significant component) be able to resolve the underlying economic malaise or will these be found too intractable? The Arab Spring's ability to deliver on its promises will determine the future texture of Islamism and the nature of Arab politics more generally.

These examples indicate that the Arab Spring might accentuate the weakening of the state through deepening alienation and even wholesale withdrawal from the state.

In that context, a significant dimension of the Arab Spring is that those who started the revolution have not necessarily been the ones benefitting politically thus far. In Egypt, the coalitions of young people who started the demonstrations won a paltry 10 seats in the November elections.[29] This was due to their "strategic mistake" of depending too much on protests as a means of change and thus failing to organize for the elections.[30] The Islamist parties, on the other hand, joined in the demonstrations after a few days' wait and are now seeking to consolidate their position with a tacit power sharing agreement with SCAF.[31] In Tunisia, the "rural south and west [that] initiated the uprising [and] paid the most significant price ... today feels more aggrieved than ever" after their favored party won only 19 seats in the Assembly.[32] Another disturbing dynamic is exemplified in Libya: it was observed that Tripoli locals continued to man checkpoints to their neighborhoods long after the fighting subsided within these barricades. States in the Arab world have historically only penetrated their respective societies imperfectly—they have not established the kind of hegemonic narrative that Western states have. These examples indicate that the Arab Spring might accentuate the weakening of the state through deepening alienation and even wholesale withdrawal from the state. In the worst case, the situation could spiral out of control into violence. In Libya, some rebel groups left Tripoli soon after the city's liberation after helping themselves to generous quantities of looted weapons.[33] The signs of the times are more ominous in some countries than others.

REGIONAL IMPACT: IRAN, ISRAEL, AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

The relevance of Iran to the Arab Middle East has been traditionally seen in the light of the Sunni-Shi'a division, thrown into sharp relief by Iran's nuclear aspirations. Iran is also a major geostrategic player because of its oil and natural gas reserves and commanding position at the maritime entrance to the Gulf. The impact of the Arab Spring on the Iranian question can be examined in the light of these two strands of thought.

Iran has been a strategic competitor for regional influence with large Sunni Arab nations, especially Saudi Arabia. This competition is reinforced by and expressed in Sunni-Shi'a tensions. It was for this reason that Saudi Arabia reacted firmly by sending in troops "to guard infrastructure" when the Arab

Spring took hold in Bahrain, a country with Sunni rulers and majority Shi'a subjects.[34] The Bahraini authorities put down the uprising violently with the "strategic silence" of the US, which bases its powerful 5th Fleet on the island. For its part, Iran has sought to portray the Arab Spring as inspired by the 1979 Iranian Revolution. By most accounts it has not involved itself directly against the King of Bahrain.[35] While a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington was uncovered, one should be cautious about interpreting events as Iran does not have a monolithic government—its actions must be seen in the light of the tussle between Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmedinejad, the increasing clout of the Revolutionary Guard, and the 2012 Presidential Elections.[36]

The more subtle development with respect to Iran is the tentative thaw in Cairo-Tehran relations. One of the objectives of Egyptian foreign policy post-Arab Spring is to cultivate "good and balanced relations with all powers in the region."[37] This is, to some degree, in service of Egypt's ambitions to reclaim its place of leadership within the Arab world.[38] To this end, two Iranian warships were permitted to sail up the Suez Canal (something that has not been done since 1979), much to the chagrin of the Israeli government.[39] Iran appointed an ambassador to Egypt and high level delegations were exchanged.[40] It should be noted that Cairo is also pursuing closer relations with other states which it deems strategically important, such as the Nile Basin countries. Moreover, Egypt insists that it will not sacrifice relations with Israel or the US.[41] These are but tentative steps and it is not clear at this stage what it would mean for Egypt's relations with Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the US in the medium term, particularly with the sharpening rhetoric over Iran's nuclear program.

These developments must also be appreciated in the context of the increasing clout and activism of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The Arab

Spring provided an opportunity for the GCC states to gain diplomatic leverage within the region by providing monetary grants and troops or by acting as "intermediaries" between rival parties.[42] The GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have also provided leadership within the Arab League (most notably over Libya and Syria) in its fitful involvement with the crisis.

With respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the most direct impact of the Arab-Spring resulted from the "March 15 Youth Movement" in Palestinian territories. Under pressure from demonstrations in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the leaders of Hamas and Fatah signed a unity agreement in Cairo regarding the provision for presidential and parliamentary elections in a year's time.[43] This agreement was at best "stillborn" and foundered very quickly over Fatah's choice of Prime Minister.[44]

On the other hand, there is little doubt that the foreign policy of Arab states will be less in Israel's interest. This is particularly true as the only Arab states to have recognized Israel are Egypt and Jordan. Although Mubarak profited handsomely from sales of natural gas to Israel, SCAF reversed Mubarak's policy by opening the Rafah Crossing into the Gaza Strip, easing the Israeli blockade on the territory run by the Hamas. Yet it should be noted that the crossing was open for only a week before being shut again. This is either because of tensions or uncertainty within the Egyptian government (within SCAF, or between SCAF and some segment of the revolutionaries), or the unwillingness to provoke an outright confrontation with Israel.[45] Indeed, SCAF took pains to emphasize, in its initial days, that it would respect all treaty obligations (including the 1978 peace treaty with Israel) and parliamentary candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood who "vowed to maintain ties with Israel."[46] Jordan, on its part, is rumored to be exploring a potential offer to Hamas of a base in the country should Syria, where Hamas is currently

headquartered, descend further into civil war.[47] However, this might have more to do with the impact of the Arab Spring on Jordan's internal politics than Jordan-Israeli relations; King Abdullah, like his father before him, has had a tactic of offering "tentative overtures" to domestic Islamists as and when his power base required shoring up.[48]

What can be said is that a "recalibration" in Arab-Israeli relations is bound to come, but the scope and degree remains uncertain. While developments thus far have been modest, major uncertainties remain, including the future of the Assad regime and the new shape of domestic politics in Egypt.[49] The Arab-Israeli conflict will also be crucially shaped by developments in Israeli domestic politics. One of the interesting consequences of the Arab Spring was the "summer of discontent" in Israel. Motivated by surprisingly similar concerns of economic inequity, high prices, and a sense of political alienation, thousands of young people participated in sit-ins and marches in many Israeli cities from July 2011 onwards.[50] It was significant that in doing so, middle-class Israelis openly acknowledged drawing upon Tahrir Square for inspiration.[51] Israel's political choices in the coming months have the potential to significantly affect the domestic outcomes of the Arab Spring.

GLOBAL IMPACT: NEW WORLD DISORDER

The Arab Spring posed a stark choice for the US: it could either stand by its ideals and support the popular campaigns to oust authoritarian rulers or it could defend its strategic interests and stand by the authoritarians.[52] Whereas President Obama and Hillary Clinton suggested that American values and American interest were not necessarily opposed, the reality of US choices demonstrated otherwise. Thus after vacillating over Tunisia and even "abandoning" erstwhile ally Mubarak in Egypt, the US restricted itself to tentative reproaches over the violent clampdown in Bahrain.[53] In some sense US diplomacy was sure to fumble because it was caught between two undesirable positions. The US can either walk

away from friendships with "unshakeable" mutual interests or be in "association with discredited regimes," which will add to the widespread view of America as the "enabler of Israeli policies."[54] It is therefore inevitable that states in the Arab world will not align their foreign policies too closely with that of America.

The Arab Spring posed a stark choice for the US: it could either stand by its ideals and support the popular campaigns to oust authoritarian rulers or it could defend its strategic interests and stand by the authoritarians.

Having described the limits to US power in the Middle East, it is important to note that the preponderance of power is still with the US. Moreover, the US and Saudi Arabia continue to share strong and fundamental concerns over Iran, Yemen, Syria, and energy security.[55] Relations at the military level are very good. The generals of SCAF, for example, are of the generation who worked closely with America since 1978, as exemplified by the US seeking to assuage Saudi Arabia with a USD$60 billion arms sale in 2011.[56] Whatever the hue of the new government in Egypt, it will have to consider the annual grant of USD$2 billion that America provides Cairo.

What was perhaps more interesting was the way in which the emerging powers—China, Russia, Brazil, India, and South Africa—responded to the Arab Spring. With the Libyan and Syrian crises, these countries sought to resist any "erosion of the norm of sovereignty" and regarded with great suspicion the doctrine of the "responsibility to protect" that some Western nations were advocating at the UN.[57] With the exception of South Africa, they abstained from Resolution 1973, which formed the legal basis for the international military action in Libya. South

Africa registered its unease by delaying the recognition of the National Transitional Council as the government of Libya. Over Syria, the emerging powers also counseled against "interference" in the domestic affairs of another sovereign state. Imad Mansour plausibly suggests that this position is typical of "middle powers"—these nations are "constrained in their ability to affect global outcomes" but nonetheless "wish to be the dominant power in their respective neighborhoods."[58] They resist superpower interventions around the world, so as to better defend against superpower encroachments in their own areas of influence.[59]

The Arab Spring became a globalized event by spawning similar events in Israel and Iran. It also contributed to protest movements worldwide including the 2011 Spanish "indignant" movement and also the global "Occupy" movement. In this sense, the international reaction to the Arab Spring typifies what might be termed the "new world disorder," a world in which globalization sits uneasily with a lack of global coordination or leadership.[60]

CONCLUSION

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that on the first day of the new Egyptian parliament, members were required to swear an oath to "respect the constitution and law." A member of an Islamist party added the words "God's law," while other "pro-reform" members added the words "to complete the 25 January revolution" and to "respect the rights of the martyrs."[61]

This anecdote illustrates how the Arab Spring is an ongoing movement. It is a series of dissimilarly contested revolutions and while to some the "revolutionary" phase might be complete, the struggle to define what the revolution means is far from over. The domestic, regional and global implications of this event, therefore, are likely to evolve rapidly over the short to medium term. 🌐

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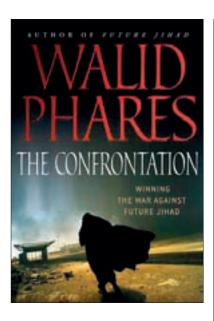
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CPT John Samuel is a UAV Pilot by vocation and is currently the Staff Assistant to the Chief of Air Force. He is a recipient of the SAF Overseas Scholarship and holds a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honors) in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from the University of Oxford, United Kingdom, and a Master of Science (with Distinction) in Middle East Politics from the School of Oriental and African Studies, United Kingdom.

Book Review

by **Wang Jia Xing**

INTRODUCTION

The world has seen the rise of a new phenomenon dubbed the Global Jihad, sponsored by fringe groups of Islamist radicals, and its conflict with the West. In *The Confrontation: Winning the War against Future Jihad,* Walid Phares shares his views and beliefs regarding the diverse impact of this conflict, dissects its origins and explores possible remedies. Astutely tracing Global Jihad's rise and the continual progression in its spread and battle strategies, he believes that the threat will continue to increase in scope and severity. Phares begins his book with a hopeful message, "Can we in the Free World gain this victory? Yes, if we adopt a new direction."[1]

REDEFINING THE WAR

In beginning, Phares clarifies that the Global War on Terror, which officially began immediately after the September 11 attacks (9/11), has in fact been ongoing for decades. The definition used by the United States (US) government, "War on Terror" is not entirely accurate for describing the conflict. The definition is misplaced as the jihadists do not simply commit random military acts of violence; these acts of terror have been carefully planned out to achieve a final aim—the breakdown of international law.

According to Phares, there "was a campaign to deny that the War on Terror or the campaigns by the jihadists are in fact a war."[2] Despite all the attacks to date, for example, the Madrid Train bombings and 9/11, some still claim that this war is simply a mirage. The terrorist groups gained a strategic intellectual victory in 2007 when "most Europeans governments, following the advice of the intelligentsia and Islamist [lobbyist] groups, dropped the term 'War on Terror,' not to replace it with a more efficient description, but to pull back linguistically, culturally, and ideologically."[3] Thus, the author suggests that the proper way to define the war is simply to address the enemy according to its aims and motives; without catering to publicity needs. It is not a "War

on Terror" but rather conflict with a radical group that employs terror as one means to spread their influence and further their agenda. The war is "targeted at civil societies and human rights around the world"; and "aimed at world domination" and that is how it should be defined.[4]

TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

After identifying the Global Jihad's final aims, the author explores its strategy of creating unrest in the Middle East and the world. According to Phares, "the different groups of jihadists, despite their inner crisis, tensions, and sub-conflicts, focus on one set of arguments against one particular target, be it Israel, France, Southern Sudan or Kurdistan."[5] This demonstrates that the jihadists are intelligent people that knows the importance of uniting their efforts against their main targets, the West. This is unlike their Western counterparts, who have yet to string together an united front against the radicals which have caused immense damage to their countries.[6]

Jihadists persistently broadcast propaganda to incite hate and anger in the Muslim community against the West, primarily the US, portraying themselves as victims of Western oppression to connect with fellow citizens that lost out economically and socially due to "colonialism, imperialism,

and Western plunder of the Middle East and North Africa."[7] According to the jihadists, terrorism is the only way for them to fight back against the materially superior West in what they coin as the poor man's war.

RETHINKING THE ESSENCE

Phares believes that in order to completely revamp the definition of the "War of Terror," the West needed to rethink the essence of the conflict. He emphasizes that "the major missing component in the Western War on Terror is undoubtedly: public action and knowledge."[8] They have failed to specify the enemy, treating the radicals as a monolithic global group instead of a small localized groups of insurgents. This miscalculation has greatly impeded Western countries in collecting intelligence on their enemies and establishing an effective and efficient response to the Global Jihad. Furthermore, "the marginalization of the masses in the West denies [the public] their basic rights to resist the jihadi onslaught."[9] By preventing public access to sensitive information regarding the global jihad, the public is rendered helpless; unable to defend themselves despite knowing that they are under threat.

Phares finds it unacceptable that given the time the insurgents have been in existence, the people are still confused about

their nature and abilities. This is the result of trying to conceal terrorist activities instead of discussing or educating the public about them and publicly seeking out solutions to prevent possible threats to society. As a result, Phares believes that the reconciliatory and preventive measures undertaken by the West remain basic and inadequate.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Despite the daunting situation, Phares assembles a holistic and comprehensive arsenal of ideas to "Win the War Against the Future Jihad." First and foremost, he feels that the West must realize that it is in a war against a highly organized and intelligent opposition which has its forces spread across the world but works together simultaneously to bring about disorder and violence in the Free World. Many people, however, remain unclear about the nature of the jihadism and its main weapon, terror.

Phares asserts that there is a lack of unity amongst international bodies in the fight to eradicate the danger posed by global jihadists. He ponders, "why did each country—especially those targeted by either the Salafists or the Khumenists and their allies—have its own policies on containment, and why did some governments actually grant recognition to a terror group even though it was at war with another

democracy?"[10] He cites the example of India and Pakistan, which face similar problems from terrorist groups but are prevented from forming a combined front against their common enemies due to their bilateral relations. He proposes that the Western countries need to work together to establish seamless offensive and defensive maneuvers to counter the global jihadists. Countries on the receiving end of insurgent attacks need to band together and counter global jihadism through a joint policy against this threat.

Phares continues by supporting the democratizing the Middle East to counter to jihadi propaganda and to monitor and curb their recruitment and activities. This encompasses regions from Western Sahara to Jammu and Kashmir. These areas are where religious and ethnic minorities suffer, where women lack freedoms and expression is limited. He notes: "The radical and totalitarian ideologies that spread after the Ottoman collapse and as countries were achieving independence, reinforced by Communist activism, turned the Middle East into an ocean of seething hatreds, irredentism, and extremism."[11] Jihadist alliances have led to what Phares feels is the elitist "Arab Islamic Order,"[12] which is very similar to the Ottoman Empire. Minorities who are not receiving proper treatment need to be empowered,

creating a pluralistic tradition in the Middle East. By having a complete paradigm shift in the cultural ethos of the Middle East, the Free World will regain an important foothold in this confrontation.

To Phares, victory can only be won when the Muslims reject the doctrines of Salafism, Khumeinism and jihadism. That has yet to occur in the Islamic world although Islamic tradition actually prescribes them to challenge radicalism. By adhering to democratic values and universal human and by cooperating and unifying with the Free World against the global jihadists, a comprehensive victory is possible in this long confrontation.

In the West, the conflict with global jihadists is difficult due to their fanaticism and ruthlessness. Many jihadist recruits are poorly educated and mainly come from families that are not doing well financially. Thus to fight jihadism, the education system must be revamped such that the youths of the next generation can escape the poverty trap and become less susceptible to insurgent propaganda.

CONCLUSION

This book gives a comprehensive analysis of the Global Jihad and its effect on the Free World and provides practical solutions and policy recommendations at the national and international

level to counter the threat. While it assumes a certain familiarity with the subject on the part of the reader, the information the book presents is easily absorbed and leads logically to the author's conclusions. ☯

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General Vo Nguyen Giap

by **Nicholas Han**

INTRODUCTION

General Vo Nguyen Giap, born 25 August 1911, is a Vietnamese military leader whose precise planning and execution of guerilla tactics as well as conventional strategies led to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's (Viet Minh) victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in the First Indochina War (1946-1954), followed by North Vietnam's over South Vietnam and the United States in the Vietnam War (1960-1975).[1] Promoted to General at the age of 37, he was the principal commander for both wars and was responsible for other significant operations such as the Tet Offensive in 1968, the Easter Offensive in 1972, and the final Ho Chin Minh Campaign in 1975.[2]

His prominent military leadership in the Viet Minh and Vietnam People's Army (PAVN) was complemented by consummate political leadership, as seen through his roles over the years as a journalist, interior minister in Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh government and Politburo member of the Workers' Party. He also held positions of Minister of National Defense and Deputy Prime Minister after the Vietnam War.

EARLY LIFE

Born in An Xa village, Giap was a member of the large Vo family. His father, Mr Vo Quang Nghiem, was a prestigious teacher and medical practitioner in the region, teaching Han scripts and the national language of Vietnam.[3] He was also a passionate anti-colonialist scholar.[4]

Giap attended the Hue national high school, similar to the late president Ho Chi Minh.[5] His classmates include famous revolutionists Nguyen Khoa Van, Nguyen Thuc Hao and Nguyen Chi Dieu.[6] Expelled as a suspected leader of a student strike, he later on joined the Tan Viet Party to campaign for it to join the Communist Party. During this period he also worked as a subeditor for Tieng Dan newspaper, in which he made public articles on Marxism-Leninism, making him a target of the colonial government.[7]

Giap and other revolutionaries were arrested and sent to jail, but did not serve the full sentence due to a campaign for political prisoners to be released.[8] He later obtained a degree in law and political economy in Hanoi

University and taught history in Hanoi for a few years.[9] In 1939, he married Nguyen Thi Quang Thai, a fellow socialist, who bore him a daughter. However, the French outlawed communism that same year and he had to flee to China, leaving Thai and their daughter behind. Thai and Giap's sister were arrested and died shortly after.[10] From then to 1945, Giap aided the opposition against the Japanese Army that invaded China and Vietnam.[11]

FIRST INDOCHINA WAR

After Japan's defeat in the Second World War (WWII), Vietnam's unpredictable future led to both Britain and China removing themselves from the country. The French renewed control of their old colony despite Ho Chi Minh setting up the Viet Minh, with Giap acting as the Minister of the Interior.[12] France did not acknowledge the new provisional government, and conflict soon followed.[13] Initially Giap faced many issues due to the French forces being better equipped, however the French army was spread out, giving Giap the chance to reconstruct his army. Also, the victory of Communist Mao Zedong in China provided the Viet Minh with a safe haven for training and recuperation.[14] Giap gained a reputation as a master of guerrilla warfare.[15]

As with most commanders, Giap made mistakes as well. In 1951, he made a tactical blunder when he launched a conventional counteroffensive on fortified French positions along the Chinese border, and lost 20,000 men in the Red River Delta.[16] This setback taught him many valuable lessons which he put into play later on.

The key victory of the Viet Minh came after seven years of war, when General Henri Navarre, the French commander in Vietnam, decided to create a base at Dien Bien Phu to provoke Giap into launching a traditional large scale attack.[17] Dien Bien Phu was a town in Northwest Vietnam and it had an isolated airbase that the Japanese used in WWII.[18] This was a key position because it was near the Vietnam/Laos border and would block the Viet Minh from going to neighboring camps in Laos.[19] Although the Laos government was under French control, their authority was attenuated as the Viet Minh had the support of the Laotian people.[20]

Unfortunately for the French, Giap was able to gain the higher ground and concentrate enough troops to outnumber his adversaries five-to-one.[21] He also blocked off French resupply with 105mm artillery and anti-aircraft guns from the Chinese.[22] A full-scale attack ensued on 13 March 1954 and lasted for 56 days. After heavy fighting, Giap eventually decided to encircle Dien Bien Phu with a outer trench, following which other trenches and tunnels

were dug towards the center, allowing Viet Minh troops to move closer to Dien Bien Phu while remaining under cover.[23] On 7 May 1954 the base fell, and the French announced their withdrawal from Vietnam the next day.[24]

The defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 marked the end of the influence of France in Vietnam.[25] It was a huge victory for Giap and he rose in fame as a military commander skilled both in guerrilla and conventional warfare.

THE VIETNAM WAR

Vo Nguyen Giap remain commander-in-chief of the Viet Minh for the entire duration of the Vietnam War.[26] He and Ho Chi Minh argued when a war erupted between South Vietnam and North Vietnam and United States (US) troops came to protect Saigon. Giap wanted to use the same guerrilla tactics against them but Ho Chi Minh wanted to use conventional methods.[27] Giap argued that the US and South Vietnamese were better prepared and conventional methods would not work well.[28]

The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF) was created in December 1960 when South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem did not hold elections for a united government as agreed in the Geneva meeting in 1954.[29] The NLF worked in small

groups of three to ten soldiers and used classic guerrilla tactics—attacking enemies from surprise then retreating back into the jungle.[30]

However, Giap also believed that "in a time of war, you have to take your lead from the enemy. You have to know your enemy well. When your enemy changes his strategy or tactics, you have to do the same."[31] The Tet Offensive was one such case where the North Vietnamese changed tactics and resorted to conventional warfare against South Vietnam and US.[32] On 31 January 1968, 70,000 NLF soldiers attacked more than 100 targets, one of which was the capital of South Vietnam, Saigon.[33] The results were mixed as the NLF lost 37,000 soldiers while the US lost 2,500.[34] However, as Giap mentioned in an interview, "the offensive was three things at the same time: military, political, and diplomatic."[35] With continued military, political and diplomatic victories, North Vietnam aimed to erode America's willingness to continue the war.[36]

In March 1972, with the aid of better weaponry from the Soviet Union including tanks and long ranged artillery, Giap approved a massive three pronged conventional assault in the South called the Easter Offensive.[37] While the attack was unsuccessful, the Communist position continued to improve due to Richard Nixon's

policy of Vietnamization, which was to slowly withdraw US troops while still supporting South Vietnam and Saigon.[38] North Vietnam finally overran South Vietnam and captured Saigon on 30 April 1975, leading to the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

After the formation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Giap assumed the positions of Minister of Defense and Deputy Premier.[39] He stayed in both positions until 1980 and 1982 respectively.[40] During his retirement wrote many military texts including *People's Army* and *The Military Art of a People's War*, providing insights of his military aptitude and strategies.[41] He is currently the longest living person in Vietnam's military history and is recognized as the most outstanding military leader after the late President Ho Chi Minh.[42]

CONCLUSION

Vo Nguyen Giap is an outstanding leader who faced difficulties with courage and determination, offering brilliant guerrilla warfare as well as conventional strategies. This led him to high leadership positions in the military and he became a key person in the struggle against France in 1954 and South Vietnam in 1975. Although there were costly miscalculations in 1968 and 1972, it did not deter him from continuing and winning the war. He firmly believes in Socialism, and

has said that "it's independence and unity for the country. It's the freedom and well-being of the people who live there. And, it's peace and friendship between all men."[43] ☺

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Quotable Quotes

We know that leadership is very much related to change. As the pace of change accelerates, there is naturally a greater need for effective leadership.
– John Kotter (b. 1947), former professor at the Harvard Business School, author and Chief Innovation Officer at Kotter International

He that cannot obey, cannot command.
– Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), one of the founding fathers of the United States

A great person attracts great people and knows how to hold them together.
– Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749-1832), German artist, writer and politician

Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.
– Lao Tzu (400 BC), founder of Taoism

Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power. If you realize that you have enough, you are truly rich.
– Lao Tzu (400 BC), founder of Taosim

Knowledge will give you power, but character respect.
– Bruce Lee (1940-1973), Chinese-American martial artist and actor

Every man builds his world in his own image. He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice.
– Ayn Rand (1905-1982), Russian-American novelist, philosopher, playwright and screenwriter

Power is given only to those who dare to lower themselves and pick it up. Only one thing matters, one thing; to be able to dare!
– Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Russian novelist, short story writer and essayist

Willpower is to the mind like a strong blind man who carries on his shoulders a lame man who can see.
– Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), German philosopher

When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everybody will respect you.
– Lao Tzu (400 BC), founder of Taoism

Respect your efforts, respect yourself. Self-respect leads to self-discipline. When you have both firmly under your belt, that's real power.
– Clint Eastwood (1930), American actor, director and producer

We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others.
– Will Rogers (1879-1935), American cowboy, vaudeville performer, humorist, social commentator and motion picture actor

Righteous is the one who was able to demonstrate compassion in the face of human suffering.
– Aleksander Kwasniewski (b. 1954), former president of Poland

Instructions for Authors

AIMS & SCOPE

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For example:

Tim Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore* (St Leonard, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 4.

Huxley, *Defending the Lion City,* 4.

Ibid., 4.

Edward Timperlake, William C. Triplett and William II Triplet, *Red Dragon Rising: Communist China's Military Threat to America* (Columbia: Regnery Publishing, 1999), 34.

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Chan Kim Yin and Psalm Lew, "The Challenge of Systematic Leadership Development in the SAF," *POINTER* 30, no. 4 (2005): 39-50.

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Mark J. Valencia, "Regional Maritime Regime Building: Prospects in Northeast and Southeast Asia," *Ocean Development and International Law* 31 (2000): 241.

Articles in Books or Compiled Works

Michael I. Handel, "Introduction," in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy,* ed. Michael I. Handel, (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 3.

H. Rothfels, "Clausewitz," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military thought from Machiavelli to Hitler,* eds. Edward Mead Earle and Brian Roy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 102.

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For example:

David Boey, "Old Soldiers Still Have Something to Teach," *The Straits Times,* 28 September 2004, 12.

Donald Urquhart, "US Leaves it to Littoral States; Admiral Fallon Says Region Can Do Adequate Job in Securing Straits," *The Business Times Singapore,* 2 April 2004, 10.

Online Sources

Citations should include the author, title of the article (quotation marks), name of website (italicised), date of publication, and URL. If no date is given, substitute date of last modification or date accessed instead.

For example:

Liaquat Ali Khan, "Defeating the IDF," *Counterpunch,* 29 July 2006, http://www.counterpunch.org/khan07292006.html.

If the article was written by the publishing organisation, the name of the publishing organisation should only be used once.

For example:

International Committee of the Red Cross, "Direct participation in hostilities," 31 December 2005, http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/participation-hostilities-ihl-311205.

If the identity of the author cannot be determined, the name of the website the article is hosted on should be used. For example:

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ERRATA

In our last journal issue, Vol. 38, No. 4, page 32, the reference to the artillery used by the New Zealand Defense Force should read "It has one artillery regiment and its best equipment is the L119 105mm howitzer."

In our last supplement, "The RSAF Journey – Voices from the Past, Present and Future," page 14, former CDF LG (Ret) Bey Soo Khiang's rank was incorrectly given as MG. We are sorry for the error.

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