

# A universal appraisal system for the promotion of officers in the military

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**Abstract—** Violence is a common phenomenon in any country especially in developing countries with multi ethnic and multi religious societies. However, it is essential for a country to do away with violence and establish peace and security, which is vital for development and economic progress which will ultimately eradicate poverty, improve living standards and usher prosperity to the nation. Peace and security could be brought about by a highly efficient and professional military force whilst safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

Combat effectiveness is the ability to fight and win. This centers on the capabilities of officers and soldiers, their professional knowledge, managerial skills, leadership qualities, morale and equipment etc. Military needs to have a very sound professional development programme and a promotion system to produce professional leaders of high character, integrity and calibre.

Promotion is an elevation to a higher rank. With promotion come increased authority, responsibility, status, financial remuneration and recognition. Therefore, promotions are very critical for the military and its promotion system has a direct bearing on the its combat effectiveness. A promotion System based on seniority and which does not consider capabilities of officers is highly counterproductive. Accordingly, this paper discusses a suitable appraisal system for the promotion of officers of the military in order to have efficient military officers for the betterment of the country.

**Keywords—** Appraisal System, Promotion, Military

## I. SHORTCOMINGS IN THE PROMOTION SYSTEM

A promotion System based on seniority and which does not consider capabilities of officers is highly counter productive. A seniority based promotion system would contribute towards the ineffectiveness in the military. It would result in propagating a large number of deadwood and incompetent officers at various levels and ranks.

This type of system is good for a ceremonial military where it is maintained purely for ceremonial duties. What the military needs is a system where the best and the most suitable officers are selected for promotions whilst eliminating the failures

## II. THE SELECTED MAJOR LIST

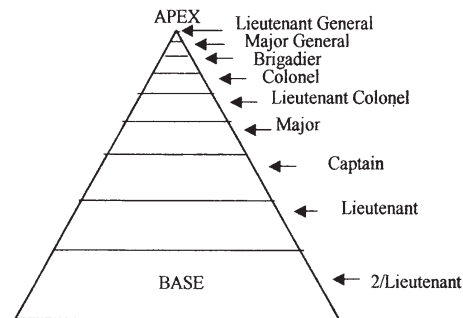
In this process the officers who are capable and outstanding are selected to this list. These officers are groomed to take over higher responsibilities and appointments. Unfortunately, this is not a very practicable method due to many factors. There is bound to be favoritism in selection. Going by the Annual Confidential Reports alone is not justifiable. It does not give the correct picture of an officer. Furthermore political influencing is bound to occur in selection.

## III. PROMOTION SYSTEM FOR THE ARMY

This paper will focus on a promotion system for the Army. This system suggested could be used in the Navy and Air force as well.

## IV. THE CONCEPT OF PROMOTIONS

The officer career structure resembles a pyramid as shown below.



As depicted very clearly, all officers from the bottom layers cannot proceed to the top. As shown at every layer there is a reduction in the numbers of officers. As such there is a requirement to eliminate or push out officers whilst selecting the best officers to proceed rank by rank towards the Apex.

The pushing up and pushing out is carried out by a Selection Board where the officers are evaluated on their performance, qualifications, experience, conduct and so on. The selection criteria must be clearly laid down so that officers have the opportunity to compete with one another in order to be selected for promotion to the next higher rank.

This is a continuous process and it ensures that the top bracket of the pyramid consisting of Major Generals, Brigadiers, Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels are highly professional. The weak are weeded out in the process by denying them promotions to the next higher rank. They could opt to leave on maximum in rank or retire as per regulations. The number of years of service in the Army would make an officer eligible to be considered for promotions. The selection should not be based on seniority but on the performance of the individual officer. This is a time tested process, adopted strictly by all professional armies throughout the world. As a result of this process, capable officers are continuously being pushed up to replace officers retiring from the top bracket and knowledge. The stipulated time period for officers to be eligible for promotions is given below.

#### V. TIME PERIOD AND ROTATION

The period of service is vital to accumulate experience and maturity that is required by officers in different ranks. Balancing of appointments and rotation of jobs is vital in career Management. There is a school of thought that by far the largest proportion of knowledge is gained through experience. Furthermore, knowledge gained through experience is more likely to be retained than that given through classroom education. Thus, there is a need for officers to spend certain periods in each rank in order to gain necessary experience, exposure.

#### VI. OFFICERS PROMOTIONS - TIME PERIOD FOR ELIGIBILITY

a. 2/Lieutenant to Lieutenant (Cadet entry)	03 ½ years from t date of enlistment as an Officer Cadet or 1 ½ years from the date of commission
b. Captain to Temporary Major	04 years as Captain and passing promotion examination
c. Captain to Major (confirmation)	On confirmation of 08 years in the rank of Captain. Passing the promotion examination
d. Lieutenant Colonel and above	By selection. No time limit

#### VII. MAXIMUM IN THE RANK

There are also stipulated time periods and age limits governing the service in the Army. This is necessary to generate an outflow in order to populate the Army with officers of correct rank and calibre and also to maintain operational effectiveness. Furthermore, this clause ensures failures and those officers who cannot progress beyond certain grades are retired from the service. Given below is the current period an officer could serve in any particular rank.

#### VIII. ENLISTMENT OF OFFICERS

It is important that the Army is able to attract the right persons from the society. Army needs youth who are physically and mentally strong, motivated individuals who would place service before self, persons of high character, integrity, intelligence and who posses leadership qualities. Good Career prospects, proper incentive, good pay, promotions, travel, qualifications and other benefits would attract the required high calibre persons to the Army. Thus

it is essential that measures are taken at National level to rectify present shortcomings in pay, allowances, incentives and benefits given to service personnel.

SRL	RANK	PERIOD	AGE
	Lieutenant (Lt)	Maximum 6 years	45 years
	Captain (Capt)	Maximum 11 years	45 years
	Major (Maj)	Maximum 10 years	50 years
	Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col)	Maximum 08 years	55 years
	Colonel (Col)	Maximum 06 years	55 years
	Brigadier (Brig)	Maximum 04 years	55 years
	Temporary Major General (Maj Gen)	Maximum 01 year	55 years
	Major General	Maximum 03 years	55 years
	Quarter Master (QM) Any Ranks	No time duration	55 years

#### IX. STRENGTHS AND PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Presently the Army has over 6742 officers of which are 4752 in the Regular Force. The chart gives the breakdown of the officers in the Army as per their ranks. The graphical representation of the officers in different ranks and the vacancies available in the Army as approved by the Ministry of Defence is also depicted in the chart. When one compares the number of officers with the vacancies available, the most striking factor is the number of Majors present and the vacancies available for Lieutenant Colonels. This means that not more than of the Majors will make the grade of Lieutenant Colonel. The others will get stuck in the rank of Major for years. Furthermore, the situation will be more aggravated with officers down the line getting their promotions and becoming Majors. Added to this, there are about cadets undergoing training in SLMA and KDA. These cadets will also be passing out annually whilst additional cadets are enlisted.

	Approved	Available
General		
Lieutenant General	1	1
Major General	36	36
Brigadier	117	110
Colonel	152	115
Lieutenant Colonel	420	300
Major		1500
Captain		1200
Lieutenant	5000	430
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant		460
Cadets – KDU/SLMA		660
	5726	4752

Breakdown of officer cadre positions in the army\*

\*Details provided are not accurate

#### X. STAGNATION IN RANK

This bottleneck at Major level is going to cause a serious problem to the Army and the country. There is bound to be dissatisfaction due to stagnation and as a result, indiscipline and other problems are bound to crop up due to frustration, as there is no room for upward mobility. This complex problem has to be addressed immediately at the highest level of the Army and the Ministry. Remedial measures which are fair and justifiable need to be implemented. It may be possible to increase the vacancies allocated for Lieutenant Colonel ranks, so that about 40% of officers would be able to make the grade to the next higher rank provided the establishments are re-structured and the Ministry green light is given, but this alone would not solve the problem.

#### XI. SELECTION OF OFFICERS

There is an urgent necessity to find a method of selecting the most suitable officers whilst weeding out the balance, as everybody cannot reach the next grade. Whatever procedure adopted has to be very fair and justifiable. Procedures of selections need to be laid down and published in Army Orders. The proposal highlighted in this paper is fair and straight forward in which the best officers are selected for higher appointments and promotions.

#### XII. SELECTION PROCEDURE

The proposed selection procedure is a performance appraisal of officers based on a point system. The selection procedure must reflect on the capabilities and performances of the officers. Points would be given to officers for the following.

- a. Annual Confidential Reports
- b. Course report grading

- c. Overall Promotion test grading
- d. Gallantry Medals
- e. Commendations
- f. Operational service
- g. Discipline
- h. Medical
- i. Academic achievements
- j. Sports
- k. Exceptional achievements

#### A. Computer Selection Based on Points

It is planned to convert and represent the performance of officers to a point form, which would permit computerization of the selection. The points could be awarded to the first decimal. Following grading could be adhered to.

- a. Excellent 9.0 — 10.0
- b. Outstanding 8.0 — 8.9
- c. Above average 7.0 — 7.9
- d. Average 5.0 — 6.9
- e. Adequate 3.0 — 4.9
- f. Below average 2.9 and below

The selection of officers for promotions would depend on the order of merit worked out based on the points obtained by an individual officer. This would invariably improve officer performance whilst bringing about a very high level of competitiveness. Favouritism, manipulation and political influencing could be reduced to a great extent. The aim is to select the best and the most suitable.

#### B. Prerequisites for the Selection

The officer to be eligible for promotion should fulfill the following.

- a. Should be medically fit.
- b. Should have passed the physical efficiency test.
- c. Should have completed the mandatory service period.
- d. Should be recommended by his higher HQ.
- e. Should not have any disciplinary cases pending.
- f. Should have passed the promotion examinations.

#### C. Performance Appraisal System

The specific details of the performance appraisal system are given below.

1) *Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) Gradings:* Points to be worked out as per the gradings given from ACRs for the period under review. The total value should be divided by the number of years and taken for the calculation.

2) *Course Gradings*: Points to be allocated for the gradings obtained by officers in mandatory courses. The total must be divided by the number of courses and taken for the calculation.

3) *Promotion Examinations*: Officers would have to pass the promotion exam to be eligible for promotions. Points would be given on the overall grading obtained in the promotion examination. The result of the examination papers/practicals must be added and divided to find the average.

4) *Gallantry Medals*: The following points would be awarded for gallantry medals.

- i. Parama Weera Vibushanaya. 15
- ii. Weerodara Vibushanaya. 08
- iii. Weerawickrama Vibushanaya. 07
- iv. Ranawicicrama Padakkcma. 05
- v. Rana Sura Padaklcama. 04

*Note*: The points are calculated only for the medals awarded to an officer for the period under consideration. It has to be decided whether these points are to be carried forward for the next promotion.

5) *Commendations*:

- i. President's Commendation. 03
- ii. Army Commander's Commendation. 02

6) *Operational Service*: Points to be given for service in operational areas.

*Note*:

1. The points should be calculated only for the period under consideration for the promotion.

2. If points are to be considered for high intensity and low intensity areas. The following measures could be adopted.

a. AHQ has to declare high and low intensity area as per operational districts.

The total points could be taken as it is for low intensity areas and for high intensity areas, the points could be multiplied by 02 and the total taken into account.

3. This would compensate the officers in operational areas for the lack of study time, risk and other hazards.

4. During peace time the marking scheme for officer promotion system is given at annex A1 and A2 to this document. The points suggested could be discussed and adjusted if required.

7) *Discipline*: It is recommended that points be deducted for disciplinary matters, which have occurred during the period under consideration

- i. Court Martial (convicted)
- ii. Summary trial (convicted)
- iii. Adverse report (pertaining to behaviour)
- iv. Letter of warning (pertaining to behaviour)

8) *Medical*: Officers have to be medically fit to be eligible for selection. It is observed that certain officers under category for a prolonged period, obtain fit when due for promotions in order to get their promotions to the next higher rank. Some are also in the habit of reporting sick and obtaining medical leave frequently. Others get categorized for their convenience. Considering the above, a minus point system has been proposed for these officers who fall into these categories. This is not applicable to war disabled officers and others who have sustained injuries due to Military Service. Points to be deducted for the following.

1. Categorization periods over one month would not be counted for the period required for the eligibility in officers promotion. An officers categorization period would be

	1 year service and above	2 years service and above	3 years service and above	4 years service and above	5 years service and above
Divisional HQ and Staff	1	2	3	4	5
Brigade HQ and Staff	2	3	4	5	6
Battalion/Regiment	3	4	5	6	7
Logistic Unit	1	2	3	4	5
Commando/Special Force Units	4	5	6	7	8

counted only if he continues to work and performs his normal duties in spite of his category.

2. Malingering: 10 points minus

9) *Academic and Professional Achievements:* Points to be given for academic and professional achievements provided opportunity is given for all officers to follow courses leading to Diplomas, Degrees and Doctorates.

Passed Staff College	05
Doctorate	08
Masters Degree	05
Bachelor's Degree	04
Diploma (Postgraduate)	03
Diploma (Over 9 months)	02

*Note:*

This suggestion needs to be discussed further. Decision has to be made regarding points given to the basic degree awarded at the academics. The points given for academic qualification would encourage officer to embark on academic development.

10) *Sports:* Points should be given to those who compete in the following.

1. Representing the Country 06
2. Representing the Army 03

*Note:*

If an officer represents the country, he will be given only 06 points. If he represents in two sports he will be given 12 points. But he will not be given points for representing the Army in the same sport.

11) *Exceptional achievement:* The Selection Board would be vested with 10 points that would be given to officers who have performed exceptionally well in operational areas. The Selection Board must justify the awarding of these points to any officer.

#### *D. Order of Merit*

The order of merit would be worked out by the Selection Board after totaling all the points the individual officers receive.

#### *E. Promotions and Elimination Process.*

According to the order of merit, the officers would be promoted as per the availability of vacancies in the organization. The officers who fail to obtain their promotions in the first Selection Board, would automatically come to the next Selection Board when it is assembled again. The point to note is that these officers would have to compete

with the new officers who have been called to the Selection Board. Their points would be compared and slotted in with the points of the new officers and a new order of merit would be worked out. Promotions would be given to officers as per this order of merit to fill the available vacancies as per the establishment. Officers who fail to obtain their next rank in two consecutive Selection Boards, would be eliminated from the service. They would have to retire or leave on maximum in rank. An officer would be given two opportunities to appear before the Selection Board. No officer would be promoted under any circumstances without an approved vacancy in the establishment.

#### *F) Professional Standards*

This system of selection and promotion would invariably push up the capable and the best qualified officers to higher appointments and ranks whilst weeding out the failures. The Army should be a very competitive organization where officers will have to work very hard to move up the ladder. Ultimately the country and the people are bound to benefit, because this system will pave the way for a highly effective, professional Army to evolve to meet the challenges of the new millennium.

#### *G) Implementation of the Appraisal System*

The proposal presented in this chapter needs to be discussed at different forums and if necessary awarding of points could be adjusted. It has to be decided at what level this system is going to be implemented. It could be implemented from Lieutenant to Captain promotions and upwards or from Captain to Major promotions and above. Definitely an appraisals system of this nature, which is logical, practical and fair, must come into force to raise the standards of the officers and make the SL Army a highly professional organization, which the country can be proud of. Lieutenant to Captain specimen Appraisal Form is given at Annex 3.

#### BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR



The author, Major General (retd.) Gamini Hettiarachchi is the founder of the Special Forces of the Sri Lanka Army and currently he is the Director General, Disaster Management Centre, Sri Lanka. Major General Hettiarachchi has been involved in disaster management in Sri Lanka since the 2004 Tsunami and he has done a great deal of work towards enhancing facilities for disaster management in the country. He has a wide range of experience in military management and disaster management and he has actively participated in seminars, conferences and training programmes in Disaster Management both at national and international levels. He has earned a Masters Degree in English and Administration from the University of Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka.

A Suggested Marking System for the Promotion of Officers

Rank	PI Comd (3 Mks)	Instr Rec Trg (Regt or Army) (4 Mks)	Staff Appts- Grade 3 (4 Mks)	Coy Comd (5 Mks)	Offr Instr SLMA / Other Trg Estb (5 Mks)	Staff Appts Grade 2 (5 Mks)	Co (7 Mks)	Instr Appt Grade 1 (6 Mks)	Staff Appts Grade 1 (6 Mks)	Total
Lieutenant Colonel										
Major										
Captain										
Lieutenant										
2/ lieutenant										

All appointments minimum 1 year or More

Marks given per year

A Suggested Marking System for the Promotion of Officers

Rank	Col GS Col AQ (7 Mks)	Regt Trg Centre Comdts Col (7 Mks)	Bde Comds (10 Mks)	Dy Comdts Brig (Mks 8)	Ay Trg Centre Comdts (Brig) (Mks 8)	SF HQS BGS DAQ (Mks 9)	Total
Brigadier							
Colonel							

Lieutenant To Captain  
Performance Appraisal Form

Year.....

1. Annual Confidential Report (ACR)

a. ACR Grading	.....	.....	.....
Year			
b. ACR Grading	.....	.....	.....
Year			
c. ACR Grading	.....	.....	.....
Year			
d. ACR Grading	.....	.....	.....
Year			
e. ACR Grading	.....	.....	.....
Year			
 Total average Points	.....	.....	

2. Mandatory Course Reports

a. Military Academy final Grading	.....	.....
b. Platoon Commanders Course Grading	.....	.....
c. Young Officers Course Grading	.....	.....
d. Junior Staff Course Grading	.....	.....
Total average Points	.....	.....

3. Promotion Examination

Grading      Points

a. Logistics paper one grading	.....	.....
b. Logistics paper two grading	.....	.....
c. Tactics theory paper grading	.....	.....
d. Tactics practical grading	.....	.....
Total average points	.....	.....

4. Gallantry Medals

Grading      Points

a. ....	.....	.....
b. ....	.....	.....
c. ....	.....	.....
d. ....	.....	.....
Total points	.....	.....

5. Commendations

Grading      Points

a. ....	.....	.....
b. ....	.....	.....
c. ....	.....	.....
Total points	.....	.....



6. Operational Service

Year	Location	Appointments	Marks

7. <u>Discipline (Minus)</u>	<u>Grading</u>	<u>Minus Points</u>
a. ....	.....	.....
b. ....	.....	.....
c. ....	.....	.....
Total minus points	.....	.....

8. <u>Academic and Professional Achievements</u>	<u>Grading</u>	<u>Points</u>
a. Degree *	.....	.....
b. Diploma	.....	.....
Total points	.....	.....

Note\*

(Marks given for SLMA and KDU Degrees)

9. <u>Sports</u>		
a. Representing the country	.....	
b. Representing the Army	.....	
Total points	.....	.....

10. <u>Exceptional Achievements</u>		
a. ....	.....	
b. ....	.....	
Total Points	.....	.....

11. Grand Total .....

12. Position in the Order of Merit .....

13. Recommendation of the Board .....

14. Signatures of the selection board

<u>Date</u>	<u>Signature</u>
a. ....	.....
b. ....	.....
c. ....	.....
d. ....	.....
e. ....	.....
f. ....	.....