



SILHOUETTE

GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY 2007 - 2008

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE PROFESSION OF ARMS

Our Armed Forces are reportedly well on the way to overcoming the LTTE insurgent forces. They are obviously well led by the officers in the field and professional standards have been maintained to achieve their success.

The General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University the successor to the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence Academy (1980-2007) will be completing its first year of existence on 11th October 2008 and the public should be made aware of its achievements and its potential where future officers of the Armed Forces have been trained and will continue to be educated.

Social Sciences

The social sciences offer the military man a way to enlarge his mental capacities and broaden his horizons. They open up fresh avenues of communication with his counter parts in civil life and provide him, first, with fresh insights and principles with which he can develop new ways of discharging traditional functions and, second, with the kinds of knowledge and analytical skill needed to meet the new responsibilities being thrust upon him.

Military leaders are often required to exercise command and control of complex and destructive forces which must be kept at a state of instantaneous readiness during indefinite periods of tension and infrequent interludes of relaxation. Other military leaders must develop individuals and units which can operate effectively with minimum resources and under the primitive conditions of guerrilla warfare. In either case, these forces must be controlled by centralized arrangements capable of decentralized execution and be manned by highly skilled and intelligent individuals.

This combination of requirements necessitates the development of military leaders with a keen insight into the motivation of men and the dynamics of small group leadership. Under today's circumstances, neither the traditional methods of leadership nor the familiar dependence of the soldier on his comrades to the left and right may, in themselves, suffice.

What guidance can the behavioral scientists offer to today's model of a modern Major General? These specialists in individual and group behavior, of social interaction, sometimes seem to be "talking about things which everybody knows in language which nobody understands." Yet, study of their writings on how individuals or groups react and adapt to continual stress and change can be invaluable to a profession as characterized by stress and change as in the military.

The trait approach

The psychologists' investigation into personality can help us identify desirable leadership traits. The "traits" or personality approach to leadership, which recognizes the central importance of the leader's ability to galvanize others, seeks to identify those qualities which make men follow him. Of course any examination of leadership characteristics will



be inconclusive, for there are so many traits that may apply and so few consistent trait patterns.

Despite its inconclusiveness, this approach has found certain characteristics that are generally correlated with leadership. These core traits provide us with a list for self-improvement or for guiding and counseling others in developing their leadership capabilities. While these traits, such as an interest in people, or decisiveness, are not easily developed, they can be cultivated and nourished. In short, leaders can be made as well as born.

Attitudes

It is not uncommon to find men, both in and out of the military profession, who will – under certain conditions – undergo arduous tasks for considerations other than material reward. Learning how to create and maintain such conditions over extended periods and in the face of situations which vary from indifference to hostility is the challenge.

Motivation does not occur in a void: it is linked with attitudes, which are the comparatively stable feelings, or tendencies, which predispose individuals to act in certain ways. The serviceman approaches his military career, either voluntarily or involuntarily, with certain attitudes that have evolved through his educational development, home influence and spiritual guidance. It is upon these positive attitudes that the leader builds. He develops the soldier both as an individual and as a member of a team oriented toward unit goals. The leader must be capable of motivating his men to action which may be far removed from their personal desires.

No officer, regardless how brilliant, can hope to master all of the material in the social sciences which is relevant to his profession. Certainly, there is insufficient time in the formal education process for the military man fully to explore these fields. Yet the nature of the crisis in which we find ourselves and the consequent burgeoning of our responsibilities, requires us at least to be aware of the kinds of assistance – in information, concepts and analytical tools – which the social scientist can offer.

National security lies in the leadership and counsel that officers provide in unified, joint and combined headquarters, in allied embassies in the Joint Chiefs of Staff Organization, in the office of the Ministry of Defence and in other agencies of the Government.

General Deshamanya JED Perera

VSV D Litt (Honoris Causa) FCMI (UK) F Inst Mgt (SL) ndc psc
Chancellor - General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University