

Military's Merit-based Promotion Policy

By Lt Gen N B Singh

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With the impending creation of integrated theatre commands, the Government of India is considering a more progressive and merit-based policy for the promotion of officers to **senior ranks**. Various shades of opinion have been expressed in the media some questioning as to why an established system should be tinkered as only a minuscule number of officers reach 3-star rank after assessment of merit at each stage. This approach to deep selection could lead to the politicisation of the military. Others have contended that in the emerging geo-strategic environment, where jointness and theaterisation are being sought, the selection of top commanders must be based on criteria that go well beyond merit. While the apprehensions of those wanting to maintain the status quo may be relevant, what it assumes is that while the Executive may place politics before national interests, the military's selection process is and will remain ultra sound and unquestionable. This could be tantamount to giving un-canalised or absolute powers to the selection boards. In any case, the large number of senior officers approaching the Armed Forces Tribunal on promotional matters is indicative of the fact that all may not be well in the established practices and a few well-meaning changes could repose the trust and credibility of all in the promotion process.

While it is maybe a general belief that there is little to choose from 3 stars who have come up after a stringent selection process based on a quantified promotion policy, where the differential could run into decimals, a deeper analysis of the overall persona of candidates may reveal certain competencies that are unique and differentiating when it comes to higher defence management. The existing quantified merit-based selection process is Annual Confidential Report (ACR) centric with some weights for courses and value judgement. It is as objective as the assessments in the ACRs can be, where more than performance and abilities, the social capital aspect has started playing a significant role. Social capital is signified by the amount of goodwill and support to which an individual has access through his or her network of available social relationships. In addition, certain ethnocentric practices have also taken root since the last two decades assuming that seniority and date of birth will forever play a significant role in the selection process. **ACRs have become akin to earning good grades** in a class and do not reflect any critical ability of significance for higher ranks.

One of the inadequacies in higher defence leadership in recent years has been the absence of a strategic vision, shallow institutional memory and a penchant to focus on short term issues. As a result, the larger areas of developing comprehensive capability responses and integrated capability readiness have found less traction. One of the prime reasons for the discord on Theatre Commands is this differential in the bandwidth and the inability to influence and effect action on a large scale. In addition to knowing what to do in a specific situation, one must know "how to do it in a genuine, harmonious and engaging manner." This implies that the leader's persona and skills like mental agility and influencing capability could play a significant role.

It is time for the military to make a shift towards human capital or intellectual firepower i.e. competencies. The copybook definition of competency revolves around the three words of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA). Competency is a set of demonstrable characteristics and skills that enable the efficient performance of a job. Competencies are not skills, although they are similar. Skills are learned, while competencies are inherent qualities an individual possesses. They fall generally under three categories – Behavioural, Technical and Leadership. Skills are acquired e.g. weapon handling, speaking, IT; competencies are individual characteristics that come through mental meandering, self-learning and experimentation like problem-solving, strategic planning, conceptual thinking, negotiations and are laced with motivation and willingness to excel.

Courtesy of the cultural engineering done at the academies and units, young officers will continue to lead in battle by adopting shared values, beliefs and norms as prevalent in their regiments. They will continue to accomplish missions for sake of comrades to their left or right and the honour, ethics, code of the regiment. It is only as leaders climb the highly competitive space in senior ranks that they begin to manage their inner lives such that emotional and behavioural chain reactions occur. Some get on to believing in an inspirational and inclusive outlook that incubates an organizational work culture where any challenge is surmountable. A Yogic style. On the other hand, some get cognitively entrenched and adopt a few rigid rules – unreasonable and uncaring, creating an organizational culture that resonates negatively and creates a climate rife with fear and anxiety. A Commissary style. A tense and apprehensive command can produce good results in the short term, but these never last. On the other hand, inspirational leaders develop an environment in which trust, knowledge sharing and healthy risk-taking flourish. An emotionally inept leader focuses more on optics than substance.

Selection to higher ranks in the evolving security landscape certainly needs a rethink as the emerging challenges are multifarious and long term. The current practice of allowing officers to equip themselves with limited or siloed exposure to certain regions or domains of soldiering and then placing them in high impact appointments, where they spend their tenure doing on the job training and adumbrating, needs to be jettisoned as it has led to enough dilution in strategic outcomes. Take the case of acquisitions, soldier and equipment readiness, digital transformation, material availability, veteran affairs, etc. The pre-emption and capability surprise witnessed both during Kargil and **last year at the LAC** were a cultural carbon copy of each other. A consequence of the frog's eye view and tenure oriented activities that clutter the radar screen. Both events led to panic responses on the ground and panic procurements of even elementary materials like assault rifles, ammunition and special clothing.

Abilities should become the cornerstone for selection to senior appointments like the Chief, C-in-Cs, PSOs and Director Generals. Is the senior leader adept at travelling down an eight-lane highway or a single one-way lane? Can he successfully extract tacit knowledge from one field and apply it creatively in others? Is he future-minded or harps on a flawed process repeatedly? Senior military leaders must maintain impressions of competence and effectiveness to influence others and need to be able to know how to apply knowledge and wisdom to constantly changing, asymmetrical contexts. In essence, they need to possess Range. It is the prerogative of the Government to select senior military leaders with a sense of mission wedded to national purpose. Making the criteria for selection to higher ranks less predictive or prophetic with added credits for range and diversity could make the process more soldier proof i.e. Mil-Grade.

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Damaging Influence – Chinese Infiltration In Academic Institutions and Media Outlet

By Dhananjay Shinde

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It won't be a surprise if 25 years from now, some expert says the **Tiananmen Square Massacre was not a massacre**, but a large buffet for homeless people. The Chinese government is funding institutions and media outlets in the US, India, Australia and various other democratic countries to further its agenda and to alter history. Universities in the US are receiving millions from China to fund programs, and to propagate a political narrative that suits the Chinese Communist Party.

China is trying to pierce into a student's brain and brainwash their worldview. The Confucius Institutes in the US are advised to refrain from discussing Taiwan, Tibet, Tiananmen, Hong Kong, Uighurs. China protests any slightest mention of these aforementioned topics.

What are **Confucius institutes**? Confucius Institute is a Chinese cultural promotion and education program funded by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Confucius institutes are present in the US, India and several other countries, the institutes were under scrutiny as they were believed to have a "negative influence" on students. Taking the 'academic infringement' and 'damaging influence' into account, universities in the US have started to shut Confucius institutes on their campuses. The erstwhile Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had said "We need administrators to close Confucius Institutes, and investigate what so-called 'student' groups backed by CCP money are really doing."

Whereas Confucius institutes in India are still operational, despite the potential risk that they possess. There are accusations of alleged funding from China to a media outlet, so you don't want to keep anything that possesses a threat to your national security. With the kind of disdain China has for India's sovereignty, the Indian Government should keep them under watch.

Enforcement Directorate(ED) in India has investigated indirect Chinese funding to a media outlet. Certainly, for running Chinese propaganda in India, the money was received through proxies, when investigated it was found that the man was associated with the Chinese Communist Party(CCP). The reason funding from anyone associated with the Chinese Communist Party(CCP) is a bad precedent is because everything from CCP comes at a cost and with strings attached to it. Entities like media outlets and universities tend to influence students and by funding these entities, China is trying to fill the void which a student has when he/she enters the college, same with media outlets. Another reason why it's worrying is that let's assume for a moment that China gets offensive on the border and simultaneously it buys some section of the media and captures the whole narrative surrounding the war. India will have to fight military warfare as well as information warfare.

Therefore the Government of India must keep a close eye on Chinese fundings in India or any kind of unreported funding because China is doing it in various countries. Despite the growing animosity and contempt towards China in the general masses of India, media outlet in India published a page celebrating the Chinese communist party's 100th anniversary with CCP's achievements. Glorifying the CCP in every way possible, this is when India and China's bilateral relations were already soured, our soldiers had attained *Veergati* in galwan clashes.

The irony of the matter is this media outlet is recommended for the people who aspire to be India's administrative servants. If this is the bull crap an administrative services person reads and then goes on to take important administrative decisions for your country with a prejudiced mind, it's worrying, to say the least. This is the reason why you have to keep China's damaging influence under watch. I am not accusing this media outlet of being sold out to China, it may have its ulterior motives to do so, but I'm not ruling out the possibility either.

Similarly in the US, a media outlet glamorised and romanticized the CCP on its anniversary so much so that netizens started calling the media agency **Xi-N-N**. Guess which media outlet it was.

The other negative effect of these influences is that it will create apologists and advocates, considering hostility in the relations. We will have to draw some lessons from history. In the 1962 Indo-China war, CPI had supported China keeping ideology above everything.

Indian tech startups receive millions in funding from investors based in China, several of which are in the **news aggregation** business. They ought to be kept under watch as well.

Coming to universities plays an important role in shaping one's future. No one wants their future to be made a playground; therefore universities need to keep sober and squeaky clean from external destructive ideologies as well as from damaging influences. Unfortunately, universities in the US are in a bind with the People's Republic Of China (PRC). **Harvard University** is said to have received 1 billion dollars as a gift from China. A Harvard chemistry professor was accused of his connection to a Chinese university and concealing payment from the same. Former Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo had said** US colleges are bought by Beijing.

Humanities and social sciences being sold out to an ideology are detrimental to a society's future, they can alter history, your cultural values and so on. Fortunately, lawmakers in the US are aware of the exploitation of American universities, and they had discussed this issue in the Senate China Bill.

UK's Oxford University has stopped accepting research fundings or philanthropy from Huawei over the concerns of China's damaging influence and intelligence.

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India Accelerates Talks With Taiwan On Chip Plant And Trade Deal

Courtesy - The Japan Times

India and Taiwan are in talks on an agreement that could bring chip manufacturing to South Asia along with tariff reductions on components for producing semiconductors by the end of the year, people familiar with the matter said. The move may also spark fresh tensions with China.

Officials in New Delhi and Taipei have met in recent weeks to discuss a deal that would bring a chip plant worth an estimated \$7.5 billion to India to supply everything from 5G devices to electric cars, the people said. India is currently studying possible locations with adequate land, water and manpower, while saying it would provide financial support of 50% of capital expenditure from 2023 as well as tax breaks and other incentives, the people said.

Officials in Taipei wanted quick progress on a bilateral investment agreement that would include tariff reductions on dozens of products used to make semiconductors — a precursor to a broader trade deal also under consideration, the people said.

The people asked not to be identified to discuss negotiations that were currently ongoing. The Office of Trade Negotiations under Taiwan's cabinet declined to comment, while a spokesperson for India's trade ministry didn't immediately respond to a text message.

The trade talks come at a time when democracies across the world are boosting economic and military links to stand up against an increasingly assertive China. While Taiwan has long sought a trade deal with India, officials in New Delhi had been hesitant to anger Beijing, which claims the island democracy as its territory.

The discussions have accelerated in recent weeks as U.S. President Joe Biden seeks to shore up supplies of chips, strengthen supply chains among democracies and improve military capabilities in the region. On Friday, Biden hosted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with the leaders of Australia and Japan as part of the "Quad" meeting, a group that is countering China's influence.

India has also taken a bolder stance against China since a protracted border standoff following violent clashes in 2020 in which at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed.

While India and Taiwan are laying the groundwork to discuss a comprehensive trade deal covering goods, services and investments, officials in Taipei are seeking to revise the investment deal to show some early progress.

India has sought to lure high-technology investments as it seeks to become more self-reliant on chips, while Taiwan wants to strengthen its diplomatic presence around the globe as it pushes back against the pressure from China. Beijing has vowed to work toward unifying the island democracy with the mainland, even by force if necessary.

Chip shortages have delayed the much-anticipated launch of a smartphone by billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. that has been co-engineered with Google. Currently India imports almost all semiconductors to meet demand estimated to reach around \$100 billion by 2025 from about \$24 billion now.

Taiwan has welcomed cooperation between the two sides on semiconductors although it is still evaluating the proposal given a lack of ecosystem for setting up a chip fabrication plant in India, people familiar with the matter said. The Taiwan side has flagged concerns on the supply of water and electricity, and suggested that it may be more feasible for India to start creating a chip design sector first before proceeding to building fabrication plants, according to one of the people.

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Quad, AUKUS, Submarines and the Changing Principles of Guerre de course | Paleri's musings

By Dr Prabhakaran Paleri

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The title holds four keywords. This deliberation takes a peek into them and their parallels in the geostrategic context.

The first is Quad, also expressed as QUAD. The term has been heckling the geostrategic world for more than a decade now, like a hard shell turtle in a predator's mouth during the seasonal arribada¹ on the Odisha coast. It is not an acronym, but a derivative of an informal security initiative (quadrilateral security dialogue) between four nations with converging geostrategic security interests—Australia, Japan, India and the United States (AJIUS). It is not similar to NATO, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation**, as the critics observe. NATO is a political and military international organisation comprising 28 countries in Europe and two in North America established subsequent to the Second World War with allocated or exclusive resources sufficient to flux² the opposite polarity if needed to maintain security balance. Therefore, any comparison of Quad with NATO that may arise from the opposing critical sides is only impulsive at the moment. In comparison with NATO's age and continuum stasis, Quad is an initiative, with a brief moment of history since 2007. The initiative was soon **interrupted when Kevin Rudd**, the Australian prime minister withdrew from the block under inherent confusion. The Quad of the day is a kind of riposte after Rudd's tenure was over. It also shows that the life span of strategic dialogues could flutter on individual decisions of people in authority and hence need not be continuous. Therefore it is the cause that matters, which an individual authority cannot blind-eye under any inducement. The revamping of Quad in 2017, when Australia changed its mind also meant the cause that drew the four together in 2007 was prolonging and almost acquired the polar stasis in the balancing game of geostrategy. The polar stasis means appreciation of critical geostrategic activities in advance for power balance. Quad may acquire the paradigm context for power balance based on terrain specificity, primarily maritime, in appreciated domains for the present. It needs to be defined, though. The next step is to premise on what the Quad ultimately wants to do and, then, defining the roles of participants.

Another geostrategic format that has originated as a **trilateral security initiative** is AUKUS. It is different from Quad, ab initio. As the letters suggest, it is considered a security pact of sorts between Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). Under the pact, announced on 15 September 2021, the US and the UK will help Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. In this context, it should be seen more as a trade pact³ that too limited to nuclear submarine deals. But **China** denounced the pact as irresponsible⁴. Originally Australia had shown interest in French nuclear submarines. It is obvious that France was negated by Australia subsequently in nuclear sub shopping. It looked like a buyer's choice under sellers' power of persuasion; something odd compared to normal business marketing. It is a different matter that France too has substantial holdings in the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific Ocean enough to qualify for multi-ocean rim status. National governance is different from management and, therefore, the terms and principles of management may not be sufficient to explain national and global security governance. It is a different matter for study. France for the moment is neither in Quad nor (obviously) in AUKUS, though it is a key player in the chosen domain in all dimensions—land, air, surface and under. It is more so, when combined with New Zealand in the newly argued continent, Zealandia, where France holds the only other landmass—New Caledonia.

There were some media rumblings that why India and Japan were not included in AUKUS. The White House press secretary clarified that AUKUS did not indicate others will be kept out of domain security combines. Under AUKUS, Australia received a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for the first time. It is a military deal, not a military coalition or a security partnership dialogue.

For the common person, the submarine is a kind of mystery. The submarines evolved in military operations from the German U-Boats (undersea boats)⁵ to the present day nuclear-powered hunter-killer and ballistic missile submarines predominantly in the last century, though the idea was present much earlier. They still mystify the military scenario and look beyond the rules of war at sea under changing tactical doctrines. A nuclear submarine is powered using a nuclear reactor that need not be refuelled, normally during the life span of the vessel. It is not necessarily nuclear-armed. The advantage is the extent of stealth it can achieve submerged. It is important for the fight for the survival of humans when the world is under constant threat of Armageddon as perceived, though chances are remote in the advancing human system.

The US navy pioneered in nuclear submarines (1939). It was followed by the Royal Navy (1946). The erstwhile Soviet Union commenced research on nuclear-powered submarines in 1950. Six countries deploy some form of strategic nuclear submarines though their capabilities vary: China, France, India, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. More countries are expected to follow. They include Argentina, Australia and Brazil.

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Nation is Indebted to:

Keepu Tsering Lepcha

“Nikun” Grandmother of orphaned Lepcha children in Sikkim



Lepcha is a tribe of Himalayan range who live at the North-East corner of India. Lepcha community was a major tribe in Sikkim till about 100 years back. Today, only about 45000 of them are left.

Keepu Tsering was born in 1942 in a Lepcha family to a government official in a rural area of Sikkim. She did her primary and secondary education in Gangtok Schools. Then, she joined Kolkata University for her bachelor's degree, and subsequently, she secured her master's degree in the same institute. She speaks six languages such as English, Hindi, Nepali, Bengali, Lepcha and Bhutia and accumulated a profound knowledge about Himalayan culture.

Keepu Tsering did not marry and worked for the upliftment of Lepcha community from the very early days of her career.

In 1967, she became the principal of the Enchey Senior Secondary School, Gangtok, but she stayed there only for a short period to move to the Government High School, Gangtok where the majority of students were the children of Tibetan refugees. She later decided to join government service and became the assistant director of education with the additional responsibility of managing the primary teachers' training institutes. During this time, she initiated to bring out the textbooks for primary classes and training of teachers in the local languages.

Keepu Tsering joined Sikkim Civil Service in 1994 and rose in ranks to the position of a joint secretary. She was in charge of the Rural Development Agency, as a project director, and was involved with the development activities in the rural areas for 28 years. She was the secretary of the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, at the time of her superannuation in 2000. During her years at the civil service, she also continued her social activities for which she founded the Human Development Foundation of Sikkim.

Keepu Tsering says in one of the video recordings, "Today Lepcha community is left with about 45000 people. One of the major reasons for their dwindling population was Alcoholism due to which unfortunately many died early". Due to this many children were orphaned where both parents died early.

One of the significant contributions in her life is to revive Lepcha culture and Lepcha language. She also hosted a few Lepcha children in her house, The Lepcha Cottage, and has been taking care of them since 1989. Started with 22 children, today it takes full care of more than 80 children. The Lepcha Cottage is run with the help from society as well as Keepu Tsering's pension money. She has been holding the chair of the organisation since its inception and the organisation which won the National Award for Children's Welfare in 2003, runs a school for the underprivileged children, numbering 400.

She is affectionately called "Nikun" by children. Grandmother in Lepcha language is called Nikun.

Keepu Tsering was the one among the 1000 Peace Women from the year 2010-2018. With the effort of the Global Organisation, Keepu Tsering was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. The same year, Sikkim Intellectuals Conference on Humanism, Nationalism and Peace awarded her the title, Jewel of Sikkim.

Two years later, she received the Best Social Service Award of the Government of Sikkim, the investiture ceremony taking place on 16 May 2007. The Government of India awarded her the civilian honour of the Padma Shri in 2009, and she received the Real Heroes Award of the Reliance Foundation in 2012. In 2013, CNN-IBN awarded her the Senior Citizen Award for her services to the Lepcha community.

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