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**NDA: The Road Ahead**

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## President's Message



It all began sometime in July this year when our members Whatsapped links to articles in *The Wire* and other media outlets on the falling standards in NDA. The posts elicited a host of responses. While some agreed that there was cause for concern, others vehemently disagreed. It was clear that the members cared passionately about the issues raised in the articles. We therefore decided to publish a Special Issue of the *Aussie Trishakti* on 'NDA: The Road Ahead.'

We issued a call to all our members and alumni across the globe to submit original write-ups on the topic by 31 August. We received 20 responses and decided to publish them all as each author had something useful to say. You will find a brief biographical note on the author at the end of each article. It is striking how well ex-NDA's have done in their second innings in varied fields across geographies. I hope that the powers that be read with an open mind what the highly accomplished old boys have written.

My sincere thanks to all the authors for finding the time to write for us and my compliments to our editorial team for liaising with the authors and meeting a tight deadline. Many thanks to Maj Samir Shrivastava, L/65 (Editor-in-Chief); Maj Rajiv Seth, D/59 (VIC Desk); Lt Col Ashok Chaudhury, F/53 (NSW Desk); Cdr Amit Pratap, B/84 (ACT Desk) and our Editor-at-large in the UK, Col Sanjay K Chibber, F/46 for their exemplary work on this inaugural Special Issue.

Savour the result of the editorial team's efforts.

Goodbye until the next issue of our Newsletter!

**Lt Col (Dr) Arvind K Sinha (Retd)**

Echo/46

President, NDA Alumni Association (Australia Chapter)



## Editorial



### Key takeaways

The editorial team is pleased to release this inaugural special issue on 'NDA: The Road Ahead.' The 20 submissions that we received are an eclectic take on our alma mater.

The first two articles in the newsletter pertain to NDA's unique tri-services character. The article by Maj Gen Harkirat Singh (Retd) makes a case for preserving the NDA's tri-service nature and strengthening jointmanship training with particular regard to the role of technology in facilitating inter-services co-operation in future operations. Col Sudhir Sakhuja (Retd) points out that despite its avowed aims, the NDA has been guilty of paying lip service to the notion of inter-services training. He goes on to offer concrete suggestions to address the problem.

The next set of six articles insist that there is no cause for alarm. Gp Capt Anant Bewoor (Retd) asserts that the NDA continues to do what it is supposed to do -- produce battle ready young officers -- and it continues to hold great appeal to our youth. Col Prakash T Joshi (Retd) too finds nothing wrong with the NDA *per se* and in fact, recommends that formal steps be taken to privilege the "elite" ex-NDA entry. Col Rajesh Kaswan (Retd) notes that old boys have a tendency to deride anything and everything that is different from "during my time." He asks us to accept that when things change, they usually do so for the better. Col Sanjay K Chibber (Retd) credits mainly the informal training at the NDA for inculcating the "I don't know how to give up" spirit in all of us. He implies that informal training ought to continue. Col Vinay Sharma also credits informal training for ensuring that the ex-NDA cadets at the IMA continue to be physically fitter than cadets from other entry schemes. In the same vein, Wg Cdr Unni Kartha (Retd), in his own inimitable humourous style, makes a case for increasing the emphasis on formal and informal physical training component at the expense of academics if need be.

The remaining articles identify different areas for improvement. Col Ali Ahmed recommends that we in the Services take active measures to ensure that the intake at NDA reflects India's social composition. Mr Nixon Fernando, who served as a lecturer at the NDA for over a decade, identifies the ingredients that go into making a great training institution and reports that *prima facie* NDA could be lacking in some ingredients. He makes an impassioned plea to commission a study to ascertain facts. Brig Mahendra K Kushwaha (Retd) offers training-related suggestions by establishing a clear line-of-sight between OLQ and NDA's holistic curricula. Gp Capt Vaidun K Vidyadhar (Retd) bemoans ragging/bullying at the NDA and the apparent lack of intake quality. He believes that poor pay and allowances are largely to blame. Reflecting on his time as a Battalion Commander at the NDA, Col Sneh Sharma (Retd) describes the process that was followed to develop an honour code for the



cadets. The honour code, in his considered opinion, has made the cadets more ethical. The contribution by Flt Lt Saleem Zaheer (Retd) also emphasises ethics, morality and mindfulness. In addition, the contribution recommends giving overseas exposure to NDA cadets. Col Parmesh KR Mehrishi (Retd) prescribes a series of measures to enhance the training outcomes at the NDA.

Academic outcomes concern Col Pankaj Kumaria (Retd) the most. He is of the firm opinion that informal physical training ought to be done away with as it severely affects academic training at the NDA. With respect to academic training, in what is a radical suggestion, Lt Col(Dr) Arvind K Sinha (Retd) recommends introducing a four year double degree -- BTech and BMgmt --for all the cadets. He argues that such a degree would help prepare cadets for the technologically intensive network centric battlefields that await them in the 21st century. Deconstructing the various elements of NDA's vision, Maj Samir Shrivastava (Retd) identifies options before the NDA that if exercised can help the NDA enact its vision.

The only article by a naval officer adopts a different approach. Cdr Amit Pratap (Retd), drawing from the management literature, suggests a specific change management process for deciding on what needs to change and how the agreed upon changes ought to be implemented. Finally, one of our former VCOAS, Lt Gen Arvinder S Lamba (Retd) reminds us that the NDA has consistently lived up to its mandate. He frames the young officers as 'first responders' and makes a case for making training at the NDA as realistic as possible. Further, he prompts us to think through the implications of training an officer cadre that is increasingly coming from our rural areas.

The above summary, as you will realise once you read the articles, does not really do justice to the suggestions made by the authors. A deeper analysis of their papers reveals that the authors have collectively zeroed in on three main tensions that confront the NDA. The tension between: (i) Academic and physical training; (ii) formal training through official channels and informal training delivered by senior cadets; and (iii) the need for exposure to liberal arts/international relations/management-related subjects and science/technology-related subjects.

The work of the authors implies that the road ahead will take the NDA to greater heights provided the hallowed institution can strike the right balance between these competing, but not necessarily mutually exclusive, elements.

We hope you enjoy reading this special edition.

**Maj (Dr) Samir Shrivastava (Retd)**  
L/65, Editor-in-Chief

#### **The Editorial Team**

Lt Col Ashok Chaudhury (Retd), F/53 (NSW Desk)

Maj Rajiv Seth (Retd), D/59 (VIC Desk)

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## **NDA: Cradle of Military Discipline and Synergy**

Maj Gen Harkirat Singh (Retd)  
Hunter/38

Armed forces, de-facto the last resort of a state, are deployed when other national institutions, such as police and bureaucracy, have proved inadequate. Their operational methodologies and battle procedures take years to be universally adopted. It therefore stands to reason that the basic characteristics of the forces must not be tinkered with merely for the sake of change. The NDA, a founding block of the Indian defence forces, is one such aspect that is too important to be changed merely because a few officers opine so. A decision sans sustained deeper deliberations will run counter to national interests.

Professional analyses of past operations reveal surmountable gaps between the Indian armed forces' capability and performance due to lack of timely financing and synergy. Whilst the war chest paradigm offers a solution to adequate financials in times of changing priorities, it is the aspect of synergy that is receiving foremost attention.

This need for synergy was again highlighted when, on 15 August 2019, the Prime Minister proclaimed the appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). Though a repeat of earlier intentions, there is greater hope of its implementation this time; notwithstanding organisational inability to overcome bureaucratic resistance during the past four decades. Hopefully, the avoidable human casualties suffered in the wars of 1962 (India-China) and 1999 (Kargil) will be things of the past.

The synergistic benefits of the CDS are widely perceived to be attained at the strategic levels and intermediary headquarters. Need it be emphasised that the grassroots level will have to be similarly addressed as the nurturing ground! This is a lengthy training process which can be optimised by utilising the opportunities provided by the NDA, our inter-services training institution that is providing yeoman service in this regard.

In all military operations post-independence, the day has very often been saved by the synergy displayed at the tactical and operational-art levels between the forces. Such synergy is never spontaneous; it has to be carefully nurtured -- and at great cost too. Indubitably, the sporadic joint-services training at advanced military training institutions has been of significance, but the bedrock of this effort is the bondage created between the leaders at different levels during their formative years at the NDA. The high percentage of ex-NDA officers in the middle and higher echelons of each service further facilitates this. Hence, the tri-service character of NDA should not be meddled with.

This is not to say that training should remain unchanged. Warfare is a dynamic entity and each generation of officers has witnessed phenomenal changes during service. While joint operations in conventional warfare remain paramount, the recent decades have seen exponential growth in importance of hybrid warfare, including network warfare and counter-terrorism operations. The latter, once considered solely a police duty, has drawn the Army, Navy and Air Force into its realm. Technology in warfare has acquired greater import. NDA training must address these aspects of joint importance so that inter-services cooperation is made easier. Finer aspects of the service-specific roles should continue to be addressed at their respective pre-commission institutions. In NDA, these aspects must be appropriately addressed so that the three years here are not relegated to merely acquiring educational degrees; other officers entry schemes adequately cater to that.



A pivotal aspect of joint warfare is its lying in the realm of unfamiliarity; thereby requiring greater physical and mental fitness. While standards of the former can be visibly monitored, mental robustness is an abstract entity that invites greater emphasis. It is unacceptable for a leader in war to break down into incoherence. One method of attaining it is by removing fear of the unknown by appropriate exposure and training.

Entrants into NDA are fresh from schools, making them very amenable to training and personality orientation. A small proportion would have attended Sainik Schools, but the balance would be with little exposure to development of physical and mental robustness; two significant facets of officer like qualities (OLQ). NDA, the cradle of Indian military leadership, must address this prerequisite more vociferously.

Significance of NDA has been further emphasised by the recent endeavours to promote operational efficiency by jointmanship. Meeting these stringent requirements, coupled with demands of sub-conventional warfare, will require great managerial, administrative and technical skill in remodeling training. Expediency by overlooking this requirement, or giving it a short shrift, must be avoided. National security demands so.

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**Major General Harkirat Singh (Retd)** is an alumni of Sherwood College, Nainital; National Defence Academy; Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, India. He has participated in India's strategic forces operations within the country and overseas. He has been a resource person for geopolitics and strategic management at various national universities and is currently working as an independent consultant in strategic and technical management.

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## **NDA: Sowing the Seeds of Jointmanship**

Col Sudhir Sakhuja (Retd), VSM  
Hunter/47

It has been a while since I retired from the Army and 48 years since I joined the NDA as a cadet. Surely since then a lot of water has flown down the Mula-Mutha rivers of Pune. I am also aware that in relation to the future direction for NDA, several studies and reviews have been carried out concerning recruitment standards, selection processes, different aspects of training, physical and psychological toughening of cadets, academic curriculum, criteria for posting of officers from the three Services including the top leadership, suitable civilian staff for academics, clothing and equipment, infrastructure, etc. Indeed, well-meaning and knowledgeable officers from all the three Services have written several articles on the above mentioned topics in different forums. Some of the authors have served at the NDA in recent years and, unlike me, are quite current in their understanding of the issues concerning our alma mater. I therefore prefer not to comment upon or add to what has already been said. Instead, given the unique tri-services composition of the NDA, I will restrict my observation to jointmanship at the NDA.



There are several pathways available for a young person to be commissioned as an officer in the Indian Armed Forces. However, with the exception of the NDA, there is no other training establishment where cadets from all three Services are trained together and that too for an extensive period of three years. Cadets who are trained in institutions other than the NDA obviously do not have the advantage of having their course mates and friends in the Services other than their own.

The importance of jointmanship in modern warfare needs no elaboration. But does NDA adequately train its cadets in this facet? I am afraid, it does not.

The NDA is not just the ideal institution, but also the only institution where the cadets of one Service can and should be trained in at least the basic tactics and administrative aspects of the other two Services. One way of achieving this is by exposing the Army cadets to a term each exclusively focused on Naval and Air aspects of warfare. This training should be carried out on naval ships, at air force bases or their training establishments and not just at the NTT or AFTT at the NDA. Similarly, the Army-specific training for the Naval and Air Force cadets could be spread across say the Infantry, Mechanized and Artillery establishments and also with units deployed in LC/CT operations. During this period of training, it is also imperative that the role of the other Services in different battles be studied and analysed in some detail. A simple wargame/exercise on jointmanship could also be conducted in the sixth term. Thus in the three years of training at the NDA, a cadet would have spent one year in understanding the basics of two Services other than his own. These would be the first baby steps in jointmanship in his future service career. Effective cross-attachments for training NDA cadets of all the three Services are essential because post-commissioning, few officers get such inter-services exposure.

Arguably, the proposed training will eat-into the hours mandated for the undergraduate qualifications. However, there is no reason why jointmanship studies cannot be a part of the undergraduate curriculum. Even if the JNU raises objection, a workaround can be found by getting cadets to complete their mandatory and foundational courses/subjects through the blended and/or intense modes of delivery.

Yes, the NDA enables its cadets from the three services to develop friendship and camaraderie. But this is a perfunctory achievement. It needs to look deeper into the essence of jointmanship and initiate cadets into this essential facet of warfare.

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**Col Sudhir Sakhuja (Retd)** was a five-star ‘torchie’ at the NDA. He was commissioned into the Madras Regiment and went on to command 10 Madras. A graduate through a competitive vacancy from the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, he also holds a doctorate in management. He held operational staff appointments in the Military Operations Directorate (China Desk); served as a Directing Staff at Army War College, Mhow. He also had a long stint in the South Block as the Army Spokesperson with three successive Army Chiefs. Post retirement, Sudhir touched the lives of hundreds of young post-graduate students from the fields of media, communication and management as a senior academic for over eight years. He is presently in an administrative role with RMIT

University, Melbourne. He loves to cook and read non-fiction, especially memoirs. Married to Shobha, a chemist with a paint multinational, they both have the travel bug. Theirs is a happy-big family.





## Our Alma Mater: The Cradle of Indian Military Leadership

Gp Capt Anant G Bewoor (Retd), VM  
Golf/26

The motto, Seva Parmo Dharam, is not a true translation of Service Before Self. This motto means “Service is Supreme Duty”. The correct Sanskrit for Service Before Self would be *Seva Purogamana Aham*. I suppose it was too long to fit into the crest, formation signs, letter heads, etc. But even Seva Parmo Dharam is just as good. In the change of the motto nothing has been devalued at NDA. The aim of the Academy remains to train young men to become leaders of men and women in battle, in peace, and in execution of normal duties. Sceptics often claim that the Armed Forces are no longer an attractive profession for young men. That the best and the better goes into the Civil Services/Corporate arena. Those values have fallen in the Fauj, “it is not what it used to be in my time.” This last recurring comment is just like fake news. Look at the numbers, about five lakh candidates appear for the written exam, about 7,000 pass, and finally only 350 get selected. Like good statisticians let's convert into percentages because it makes the desired impact. Only 1.4% passes the written exam, out of that 1.4%, just 5% get into NDA. Or only 0.07% of those who write the exam get into NDA. This reveals two important aspects about our Alma Mater, first that, twice a year lakhs wish to join the Armed Forces, it is incorrect to believe that boys dislike joining the Fauj. Second that there is no dilution of standards in the selection process, UPSC/SSBs are doing it right, the percentages say it clearly.

The academic content has become very much more technical than it was in our time, something that the NDA/Joint Trg Committee/COSC/JNU/-keep reviewing and improving at regular intervals. Cadets pass out from the NDA within three years, and do so without compromising on Service subjects, or physical achievements, intellectual inquisitiveness, the arts and leisure. The academic staff, which now includes Education Branch officers, both men and women, led by the Principal under the Dy Commandant, ensure that all these elements find the correct balance during 132 weeks of training that a cadet gets during the 3 years stay at NDA. Many accept cynical deductions that all parts of India are not represented at NDA. It appears to be an unsubstantiated remark. The population of each State reflects the numbers who appear for NDA, and yet many times the intake from a small State exceeds due to merit than what is expected based purely on population. Such aberrations will happen in any sphere, including in the IT world, civil services, automotive sector, and hospitality business and so on. The Armed Forces is no different.

Physical and mental toughening is inescapable at NDA. Most certainly there will be miscarriage in the garb of training and that must get severe swift exemplary punishment. We demand OLQ, of which tolerance to high stress/pressure is one attribute. The extra-curricular non-timetable activities build that ability to tolerate the seemingly unfair and unexpected conditions. Cadets giving up, seeking withdrawal, feigning illness, intentionally performing below par are not common occurrences and are rare, and happened in our time too. Academics and modern technologies have to be presented to cadets for absorption as future wars will be intricately dependent on technology. But looking at the Indian canvas against our two adversaries, the man who exploits his machine/weapon best in direct contact with enemy will always matter and win the day. We cannot be frightened of Body Bags, committing troops to battle is the very basis of being a CO/Bde Cdr/Div Cdr/AOC/C-in-C/FOC-in-C and so on. That ability to commit your very own boys into battle is what NDA teaches 18 year olds, tolerance and acceptance of the unexpected is taught and drilled into



him. That is why, ex-cadets has been performing exceptionally since NDA came into being in 1949.

We need to be very cautious that fauji Indians do not blindly copy the Manuals/Trg Doctrines/Battle Philosophies of NATO and its allies. Their doctrines have been made for wars in Europe, not for battles the Indo-Gangetic plains or Himalayas. Because many officers, including ex-NDA officers, get impressed by the NATO jargon and superlatives, there is a tendency to create those battle scenarios in India, and then write doctrines for Indian Armed Forces. Without going into this issue further, one fact is certain, those battles that were envisaged for NATO versus Warsaw Pact countries cannot happen in India. We have to guard against the trickle-down effect of those never to be fought battles being the bedrock of war games and sand model exercises. Otherwise the training syllabus at NDA could get impacted to create officers for the battles which will never be fought by the Indian armed forces. You would be inculcating thought processes into young minds for events that cannot happen, and the Staff at NDA is forced to modify the training programme to create type cast leaders who will finally be fighting a very different battle, surely then they will face defeat. Severe criticism has been heaped upon NDA, its Service Staff, Commandants/Dy Commandants for imparting unrealistic training, and these accusations have been going on for more than a couple of decades. That the accusations are wrong is abundantly manifest by the leadership demonstrated by officers in the Armed Forces during the last 20-odd years since the turn of the century. If the training schedule was so badly skewed, there would have been defeats heaped upon frustrations, with the media having a field day followed by uproar in parliament. Just the contrary and reverse has been happening and continues to materialise. We have trained our boys at the NDA not just to Conquer but also to Run an Empire. NATO doctrines facilitated conquest, but failed to run the conquered empire; examples are contemporary to observe and take lessons from.

The NDA trains cadets for their first decade or so in the Armed Forces. The Academy cannot prepare Generals when they step off the Quarter Deck, it is not the brief of NDA to make AOC-in-Cs or Corps Commanders or Fleet Commanders. If a Divisional Officer can assure himself that his cadet will become a fine Commanding Officer, the aim of training at NDA has been achieved. Training has to be a fascination, an allurements, captivating, enchanting, challenging, innovating, and yet routine and quotidian because so much has to be repetitive. Finally, we veterans who are children and products of NDA, must accept, it is not intellect that makes great leaders, it is character. It is this character building that NDA ensures and certainly has done for me.

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**Gp Capt Anant G Bewoor, (Retd)** was BCC of No II Battalion. He served in IAF for 28 years and was a cat A QFI and Senior Instructor at DSSC. One of the 12 pilots selected for training on IL-76 in June 1984, he commanded 44 Sqn for two years and led the airborne assault into Maldives in Nov 1988. Post pre-mature retirement in 1994, he joined Onward Technologies, an Indian multinational which provides software and services in the field of Mechanical Engineering. He served with Onward for 22 years and now lives at Koregaon Park in Pune.



## Enhancing Armed Forces' Attractiveness and Making NDA a Prime Entry Point

Lt. Col. Prakash T Joshi (Retd)  
Hunter/42

Entry into the NDA should be offered as a lifelong elite career option straight after tenth standard board examinations. All other officer entries must be made secondary to the NDA entry. Within the three services also, other branches need to be made secondary to the basic core entry from the NDA. Requirement of junior level officers must be met only by short service officers who should not be made permanent. Instead, as suggested below, they can take up positions in the police and paramilitary forces. Arms or services should be allotted to cadets based on their aptitude and vacancies. Promotions to higher ranks should be from within a particular arm and service and from NDA entry only. Senior level top positions should be from Infantry for the Army, Fighter Pilots for the Air Force and the Executive Branch for the Navy.

Sainik Schools and alike are feeder institutions to the NDA and must be run on a uniform policy of merit based selection, financial support based on parents' income and signing a bond to join the NDA if selected. Moral is to material as three is to one goes the saying. Desire to serve the nation and motivation to sacrifice one's life if necessary must be cultivated in the feeder schools. Reservations based on castes for entry into Sainik Schools should be discontinued. In fact, along similar lines, the infantry regiments in the Indian army should cease being caste-based.

Integration of political will with military thinking is a must to build a strong nation and needs to be achieved. The size of police and paramilitary forces must be rationalised. Ex-servicemen should be directly inducted laterally at all levels in these forces. Such a step will ensure employment to early retiring services personnel until they are at least sixty years of age. As regards the other issues I have this to say:

- A system of periodic reviews covering all issues.
- Entry to the NDA to continue being based on the UPSC exam and SSB testing, but after tenth standard.
- Posting only ex-NDA officers as directing staff to the NDA to ensure continuity and stability as regards physical conditioning beyond scheduled training.

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**Lt Col Prakash T Joshi (Retd)** served over 24 years as an Infantry officer. He has an MBA from the unique and prestigious Institute of Rural Management, Anand, (IRMA), in Finance and HRD. Subsequent to his army life, Prakash had a successful second career in logistics management, consulting and jewellery retail for over twenty years. Prakash has recently migrated to the USA to be closer to his children and grand children. Having achieved his own financial freedom in 2013, he now has a desire to share his methods and experiences to enrich other peoples' lives and thus make a socially useful contribution. His website: <http://www.moneymonk.me/>



## Let's Keep Pace

Col Rajesh Kaswan (Retd)  
Delta/77

Having passed out in 1989 and being away from NDA since then, I am writing in an information vacuum. I presume that some, if not all, contributors to this special edition on our alma mater are in the same boat. But we should not have undue concerns. The concerned authorities at the service HQ and NDA being in the know would have already implemented the required changes over the years as needed. The question before us is whether there is anything actually wrong with the NDA. Well, at least I do not think so.

The training routine, curriculum, non-structured training, etc. are all ever changing and should continue to remain so. Just because something went on “during my time,” does not necessarily mean that it should carry on in perpetuity. More importantly, it may not have been the best thing to begin with. It is just as well that it's been discontinued. Let's be realistic, keep pace with the ever-changing societal norms, and accept that the NDA too is part of the same society.

### Intake

Historically, professions have attracted talent as per “what does it have for me.” If the service conditions in the armed forces aren't lucrative enough (NDA entry being just one means of intake into the officer cadre), how can the NDA be expected to attract the best talent? Factors which make the armed forces unattractive include, to a large extent, tough service conditions and the diminishing stature of the armed forces combined with growing reduction in pay and perks vis-à-vis their counterparts in the government/private sector jobs in general and the other uniformed forces in particular. Pumping up motivation levels of our youth by sheer pep talks will take us only so far. We need to substantially improve the service conditions of our armed forces if we want the cream of our country to join the NDA.

### Academic Faculty at the NDA

The academic faculty creates a lasting impression on young minds, more with their personality traits than with the knowledge they impart. Hence, the academic faculty should be among the best and the brightest with impressive personalities, irrespective of the University imparting the degrees at NDA. The academic faculty too should have better service conditions with avenues of research and growth. The lecturers should not stagnate. They should focus on more than just day-to-day teaching. Ad-hoc hiring of academic staff is not the solution and should cease.

### Curriculum

Have we ever wondered what percentage of officers apply what percentage of their technical knowledge gained during their B Tech or M Tech studies later during their service career? An officer's job is primarily man-management (or call it leadership) related. Therefore, there is a need to rethink if conferring B Tech/B Sc degrees at the NDA serves any purpose. Instead, with the growing involvement of the armed forces with the public (e.g., while offering aid to civil authorities) and for overall grooming of the officer cadre, new



subjects should be introduced. Topics such as IPC, military law, fundamental rights and duties, constitution, scope and ambit of various government departments and ministries, budgeting, military and civil works procedures and so forth could be included. The list is open ended.

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**Col Rajesh Kaswan (Retd)** was commissioned into 6<sup>th</sup> Bn The Sikh Light Infantry. He is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation infantry officer who served in Assam, Delhi, Poonch, Belgaum, Pathankot, Akhnoor, Wellington, Doda, DR Congo, Mhow, Mt Abu and Arunachal Pradesh. He commanded 1<sup>st</sup> Bn The Sikh Light Infantry between 2007-2009. After serving in various appointments for 20 years and 7 months, he took pre-mature retirement and migrated to Australia in 2011. He is presently working with Halliburton Aust Pty Ltd in Supply Chain.

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## My Key Takeaway from NDA

Col SK Chibber (Retd)

Foxtrot/46

The NDA Alumni would unanimously agree that the four plus years we spent in training to become good leaders of men have left an indelible mark on the soul. So, what is it that separates us from the rest? That is a question I have often reflected on, especially when introducing myself. I get the same reaction every time -- raised eyebrows, slight widening of the eyes, a firmer handshake and a muttered, "Oh..." not to forget the inevitable question, "So have you been in war? Have you killed anyone?"

One person, an Englishman, got me thinking when he asked me quite pointedly, what in my opinion, was the one quality I have developed as a result of the years spent in uniform. My instant response was, "I don't know how to give up!" I was surprised that I did not have to think very much. But now when I reflect upon my teenage years spent in NDA Khadakwasla, doing all the front-rolling, haunching, push-ups, patti-parades, multiple outdoors, cross country and Pashan and Singharh runs – the list goes on, I know that all the nonstop ragra broke down my mental barriers and left me a fully adaptable, flexible, quick-thinking-never-get-caught sort of a guy, who is a jack of all trades and one who can take any amount of physical or mental abuse and come out cracking a joke at the end of it, and keep carrying on forever like the energizer-bunny. I feel equally at home with a spanner, screw driver, pliers, hammer, saw and chisel, a lathe, pulling apart and putting together the whole host of electrical and mechanical appliances around the house, as I do with building and leading a happy and highly motivated diverse team, working in multiple time-zones and infusing them with the spirit of can-do. I would have to be born a genius to have all these traits. But I was never gifted and now looking back, I can say that it all came about in the few years spent in my late teens in NDA. Do I feel they could have done anything different or better? I don't think so. I am okay as I am, even if I say so myself. NDA shaped us and laid a strong foundation to allow us to function effectively under the most adverse circumstances, with equanimity.



But the world has changed and the soldier must adapt to the changing environment. Software and technological advances drive most of these changes. Integrated Battlefield management systems now provide tools to handle huge amounts of data from real-time information. Drones, robotics, precision guided munitions have been in use for a while now. Computers, internet and social media have become key influencers shaping public opinion and have been used to good effect by countries in furthering national interest far beyond their borders without firing a single shot in anger. Rock solid, robust Cyber security is an absolute must. As technology evolves, weapon systems become ever more sophisticated, requiring skilled handling by techno-warriors. So, how does the modern-day warrior be made ready to manage all these new innovations and developments? The answer is obvious. Training institutions like the NDA need to adapt and change their curriculum to keep pace with the defence technologies in service and those under development or acquisition. What cannot change is the spirit of, "I don't know how to give up!" NDA got that right a long time ago, which is why you and I do not know how to give up. Whatever we learnt in NDA holds us in good stead even today. That is the reason we will never grow old, we will merely fade away.

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**Col Sanjay K Chibber (Retd)** passed out of NDA, as SCC. He was commissioned into 8 Gorkha Rifles and went on to Command a Mechanised Infantry Battalion. He has held various Staff and Instructional appointments in the Army including BM of a Mountain Brigade, Col GS of an Infantry Division, instructor at Infantry School, Mhow, IMA Dehra Dun and Directing Staff at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. Post retirement from the Army he joined a multinational corporation and has held senior management positions. He is currently a Director in his own management consultancy. He lives in the U.K. with his family.

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### **NDA Cadets at IMA**

Col Vinay K Sharma (Retd)  
Delta/50

I am writing this article with a perspective of an Instructor Class C at the Indian Military Academy (IMA) from 1983-86. Following my tenure as a platoon commander with six years of active service mostly on the borders, I was posted to IMA as Directing Staff where I witnessed the gentlemen cadets from all entry streams -- ex-NDA, ex-Army Cadet College (ACC), Direct Entry (DE) and Technical Entry (TE) -- up close in all facets of their training. Seeing them during their morning muster, PT, drill and other outdoor activities to taking indoor classes on all military subjects and as a DS in their camps, route marches navigating through ravines of the Shivalik Ranges in the outer Himalayas was a very full filling experience.

The difference in endurance level of various entries was very obvious. GCs from NDA and ACC came to IMA with three years training and higher level of physical fitness and mental robustness. This was evident in all outdoor activities which are quite a few keeping the need of our Army operating in mountains, high altitude, Siachen Glacier (highest battle field of the world) or energy sapping deserts. Since most physical activities tended to be team activities, individual capabilities generally went unnoticed.



We have to understand that officers mostly will be alone at junior level of operations with men. It is at these times that they are tested. It's all about conditioning the cadets to face the challenges in our Army, which has been fighting insurgency, terrorism and active border skirmishes over decades. The true test of training is not in cadets merely meeting the laid down standards meant for the average but instead it is in cadets comfortably exceeding laid down standards. This level of excellence can only be achieved with intense training provided for long periods both with formal and informal components. Most of the standards of physical fitness are for average boys and there is a need to supplement this aspect by informal physical fitness to prepare the boys for what lies ahead in the army, mainly infantry. At these times, it's the informal training received during the academy days that comes to your rescue and allows you to use your ingenuity to be at par with men and steps ahead of the enemy. Having served in insurgency and terrorist infested areas I can say with confidence that what you learn informally is more enriching and does come to your aid.

Different standards can't be set for different cadets because arms and services are allotted later; besides the need of all arms and services is to be ready to undertake any role, mostly augmenting infantry in today's trying times. Most of the outdoor and physical training in the IMA is a cake walk for ex-NDA's and really doesn't enhance their capabilities. The IMA is in a dilemma here; if they increase the standards, DE and TE can't qualify and the present standards are too low for ex-NDA's. One and half years training in the IMA for DE and one year for TE doesn't prepare them for what lies in store ahead and they take to training differently. I would go on to say that cadets should be directly commissioned from the NDA rather than going to the IMA for another year, but that is a point of discussion for another day.

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## **NDA: The Road Ahead and Behind**

Wg Cdr Unni Kartha (Retd)  
Foxtrot/37

Though I marched out through the portals of NDA (37/F) in 1969, been a Divisional Officer (Divo) too from 1979 to 81 (B/57-62), and am a paid member of NDA Alumni Association, I have not visited NDA since my Divo days. This year, in Dec, when 137 course marches through the Quarter Deck, my course will be there to cheer them and also go back to the cabins for three days for its own Golden Jubilee Celebrations!! I get frequent feedback from my course mate Brig Ajit Agte, currently the President of NDA AA. In his opinion, except for the Sudan Block, on top of which we had once put a pith hat, the NDA has undergone much make over and still looks pretty like Rekha, the ever green highly talented screen seductress of our times.



I know of only two roads in NDA; for honourable entry and exit through Pashan gate, and for the sneaky/mischievous nocturnal adventures through Khondwa gate. About the road ahead of NDA to Poona (which is now Pune), I presume there must be many more urban challenges. I have seen only three battalions of cadets, whose starched smelly KD shorts stood out like outrigger sails on the 'India Men' ships of Dutch East India Company. I am now aware that though they still ride or lift cycles, the cadets are smarter than 'jokers' like me. We were the made in NDA soldiers who ran to fight the 71 war as the now extinct species: 2nd Lieut, Midshipman and Pilot Officer. I am aware that these days the NDA offers academic degrees for fusing brawn and the brain!! And those 4,500 calories are still ingested daily and drilled out immediately in the regimen of training and 'ragada' just like the old times which make the cadets seek solace in R. No 99 & 100. None still want to run X-country, just like us in old days. If we reported sick, Capt Sharma the doctor used 2" dia GI pipes to inspect for piles. Now the cadets are more inventive, they have a brilliant excuse, 'stress fracture' confusing medical science. I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

I wear spectacles now which degrade distant vision. The 'Cons' are around in my cornea, but the mighty 'Rods' have disappeared, no night vision or action. For a flying instructor who taught aerobatics, and an Experimental Test Pilot, who flew the boundary, I sadly lament that I now have vertigo. So, all I can indulge in is myopic wishful thinking:

- a) Don't enlarge the NDA any more. Whatever there is now, it is 'Yanough' and more.
- b) Reduce the duration of training to 4 or 5 terms, increase ragada and reduce the academic load. Don't make NDA into a 'college'. Brain is important, but brawn is more important to withstand the rigours of service life without getting PTSD after two yrs in J&K or the North East as a young officer. Currently, the aim of training in NDA, in my humble opinion, has been turned upside down. High intellect as a young Lieutenant? My unmentionables! What we need are tough officers, who can physically outperform their troops, win their respect and affection.
- c) Post only youthful, medically fit and inspirational officers as Divos (4 to 5 yrs service) and Sqn Cdrs (8 yrs service, Majors, who have commanded a Company and have combat experience, those who can recognise soldierly traits in NDA boys), to lead the cadets from the front. No compassionate or passionate ground posting to NDA, each Divo/Sqn Cdr must be a battle inoculated hardened soldier.
- d) Increase the number of 'camps', one per term, to teach army field craft, led by senior Cadet Appointments, play red/blue land war games with drill/WT ustaads pitted against them, Divos as umpires/observers. Expose the cadets to search and cordon exercises, live firing and other realistic scenarios.

The NDA continues to be the cradle of military leadership. Its credo, 'sēvā paramō dharma', Service Before Self is non-negotiable.

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## National Defence Academy and Societal Representativeness

Col Ali Ahmed (Retd)

Juliet/69-70

The figures are unavailable, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the intake at National Defence Academy (NDA) lacks societal representativeness. Not all of India's multiple sub-nationalities, ethnic groups and communities have a foot in the door at the cradle of India's military officer corps. This is neither good for NDA nor good for the nation.

An example is that of India's largest minority, its Muslims. No monolith itself, given its pan-Indian geographical spread and diverse ethnic composition, the Muslim community sent merely two of its sons for the latest NDA course. This is much below its usual average of about six per course. This implies that less than two per cent of ex NDAs are Muslim, of a segment pegged at some 15 per cent of India's population. Not only are major ethnic groups from India's south and north east underrepresented, but also underrepresented – as may be surmised in absence of data – are India's lowest castes.

One could plausibly argue that the NDA takes the best of those who volunteer. So it would be unfair to blame the military if some, or indeed, several, ethnic groups do not sign up for a life in uniform. After all, there is no shortage of good officer material from amongst those groups wishing to contribute to India's military. There is thus no case for meddling against the current system and doing so may have adverse security-related consequences.

The argument against the status quo and in favour of broadening the representativeness at the point of entry is that this measure would enable the officer corps to reflect India's diversity. This has democratic dividend in that inclusivity would prevent usurpation of the military by a narrow – geographically and socially – set of communities. Moves are reportedly afoot to set up in Bulandshahr a feeder school by right of centre ideologues. A deliberate effort to widen the intake will ensure that all social streams debouch the cream of their youth into the Khadakvasla reservoir, diluting the potential impact of any niche social engineering that may be underway in any part of our democracy.

This case for social representativeness does not imply making the military a site of affirmative action activism. Instead, the case calls for introspection by the military and self-initiation of steps towards making our armed forces truly representative. Simple steps could go a long way. For example, the UPSC entrance exam dates could be advertised extensively in the vernacular press popular among underrepresented communities. Not only will such steps enable the armed forces to retain control of the situation, but it will also preempt any political interference on this score. The NDA does not figure on any of the annual 'best colleges' lists. One reason could be that it looms large as an opportunity in the imagination of fewer groups. One way to expand the NDA's footprint is to make a genuine and all-out effort to attract the best talent from all sections and areas of our society. Status quo thinking needs casting aside in the here and now.

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## Analysis of NDA: Honest, Truthful and Forthright

Mr. Nixon Fernando  
(ex-lecturer)

A great institution chiefly has the following: (i) a great set of students; (ii) a great set of faculty and trainers; (iii) a wonderful process that enables positive transformation; (iv) a great goal to work towards; and (v) good supervision by external agencies.

Then we also have the question of adequate funds and infrastructure of which we have no deficit in NDA at all. How does NDA fare in the above five criteria? The study by Victory India Campaign<sup>1</sup> indicates the following points (which are not exhaustive though) as they pertain to each criterion:

1. *Set of students:* The cadets are some of the best the nation has to offer. But this input can still be improved by an even better selection process. Further if the selection process accommodates for the constraints of training the overall effect can be better.

2. *Set of faculty and trainers:* As far as academicians go, the best of them have no clear motivation anymore to come to NDA in preference to going to other institutions. The induction process of academic instructors (in which NDA has a huge say) is not driven by a clear vision. At the moment the academicians are only expected to fill the role of academic information givers -- not teachers or inspirers or groomers. The Army Directing Staff (DS) are happy to come to the NDA because it is treated as an Instructor posting and that distinguishes them. Besides most of them come out of the valley, the desert, Siachen or the north east and a period of calm in the NDA is most welcome. And it is a good stepping stone to train for better opportunities. As for the Navy and the Air Force DS, tenure at the NDA is not the best they would like because it eats into their professional hours or tenures and the NDA is therefore not considered a great place to be for them. Commandants have brief tenures and it takes them long to grasp the complexities. Many flip flops in policy are the result. And worst of all, sometimes it gets treated as a sunset posting and so not all have the drive to do something great with the tenure at the NDA.

3. *Process that enables positive transformation:* As for the third factor, this is where it looks like we have it all wrong. It is folklore in NDA that the ego of an individual is broken down and he is re built into a soldier. The idea sounds great but would a psychologist please explain what that means? And the ego of an eighteen year old is sought to be broken and re-built by an eighteen-and-a half year old. This is an exaggeration of course, but there is at least some absurdity in the idea. It does not make it any better if the person trying to re-set egos of an 18 year old is a 21 year old sixth term or a 25 year old seventh term/Division Officer. Somewhere in a mess of tradition s--that tends to get downgraded year by year-- stupidity passes for both officer like behaviour and gentlemanliness. If in the IMA he is to become a Gentleman Cadet, one wonders whether the word Gentleman is supposed to mean anything at all.

In the first steps into the armed forces the cadet learns that 'officially on paper' it will be something but 'on ground' it needs to be something else -- Open fraud (the best example is 70% Academics and 30% Training). The Chetwode code is what is stated in the book and the cadets know that the reverse is the reality on ground. A cadet has to choose between 'Never

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<sup>1</sup> *Editorial note:* The Victory India campaign refers to three volumes edited by Col Vinay B Dalvi (Retd) containing the views of veterans on various aspects of selection, training and grooming of Indian military officers.



Lie' that he learnt at his home and 'Lie, Beg, Borrow or Steal but don't get caught' that he learns in the academy. And he has to indulge in it if he wants to survive the training and serve the nation as a soldier. This is what he actually learns in his Squadron.

Sometimes his very well informed cross country captain in his squadron calls for a fall in at 9.00PM just after dinner for Practice run, 10Kms. That makes a total mockery of the future leaders of the Armed forces being trained by experts in their respective fields--here in this cross country case the expertise is in PT and the ability for training is supposedly contained in the senior cadet, who incidentally has not been given any formal instruction for being a PT instructor/ Cross Country Coach.

The PTO gets a cadet for may be six or eight hours a week. The Cadet Captain has him for fourteen hours a day and around 14X7 hours a week, who then is really responsible for training the cadet in PT?

It is not all bad surely. The good in the cadets comes out when they 'protect' their pals from the insensitive system; when the individual cadet sees someone else on the receiving end and gives him a leg up. The better leaders, struggle 'against the system' to provide space for rest. But as they take such action to survive, tribe loyalties are reinforced and the Reverse Chetwoode code works. So in their entire stay at the academy, somewhere along with learning the basics of the service of arms they also learn dubious ways and methods of handling situations, duties and relationships. And importantly, a leader must learn to have self initiative, does he ever really get a chance to grow into that; or then does he learn to do bare minimum to survive? Psychologists say that much of the personality gets set in the first five years of life. Knowing this, one wonders what if any transformation is achieved in the three years at the NDA? Is the goal of breaking and re-building the ego a valid criterion at all?

4. *Goal to work towards:* This factor is very positive for sure. The vision is clear almost. Cadets know that they have chosen the service of arms and know that their lives are on the line. This surely helps them look forward to guts and glory but in their little decisions the corruption sets in. And one wonders if the statement in the bible holds good in this case: "Those who are dishonest in small things will be dishonest in big things as well". But be that as it may, the cadet body does know to honor the brave and that bodes well for the inspiration that is needed to rise up to military challenges. This is one of the best things about the NDA.

5. *Supervision by external agencies:* The next factor, external control and guidance is all but missing. The users have little to say. The Training Command formations / DCIDS Trg are led by Lt Generals/equivalent and the NDA too by a Lt General equivalent so the senior knows best. The man on top at the NDA does not spend more than two years maximum at the academy. In case he is ex NDA three years cadet experience be added. The Commandant has total control and there is no board, university or any other body effectively monitoring the developments. The COSC & CISC/IDS is a nominal boss but they surely have far more important things to take care of. The Administrative supervision by Southern Command is merely a formality. So NDA is truly autonomous and has little direction and control by external agencies.

Instructors are said to be counted among the alumni of an institution. With countless years of collective experience and expertise of NDA to boast of, our analysis and judgement of the institution is honest, truthful and forthright. Why should NDA shy away from a thorough study? Why is the NDA not ready for an honest and thorough review? Let it get established where the truth is. If the critics have it right it is already having a huge impact on the future of the nation. A clearer understanding will only help in making things better-- if



things need to be made better. If Victory India Campaign findings are right then there surely exists scope to improve. A cradle of military leadership cannot remain that if it refuses to keep pace with the times.

That brings us to the comparison of the TES and the NDA entry schemes. Again, here too, is the top brass ready to make a clear study--honest, transparent, and neutral? The world of statistics is way advanced. And with the availability of computers amazing insights can be extracted with a click of a button. In fact, big data provides enough tools to make a comprehensive study on tonnes of data without bothering too much about statistics. The research methodology is way advanced at this time and age. Why shy away from an objective analysis? Indians are making a mark in the world of AI and analytics. All it takes is a team at the very top of the military hierarchy in India to know the truth and with the right research team in place tremendous intelligence can be generated. We will then know whether the TES or the NDA is delivering better. Let us know the truth --it may just turn out that TES may want to learn something from the NDA or vice versa.

The business world is clearly resolved on the issue 'innovate or die'. Of course it is talking about companies and businesses. This is because of technology and the rapid rate at which it is changing. Just imagine how many Internal Combustion engines there must be in the world today. In the next ten years they are likely to become history. One can wonder what it is going to do to the motor vehicle industry. Most mechanics will be looking for a different job. And there are military examples of such failure to innovate. History has evidence of how technology can turn the tables on invincible armies. Try the movie 'The Last Sammurai' if stories can drive lessons home more forcefully. The leader of the Sammurai had it in him to keep his enemy by his side to learn from his as much as he could. But even that was not enough. Swords stood no chance against a machine gun. The ability to keep pace with the times (or even better, walk ahead of the times) begins with the courage to take that first step of an honest look at oneself. If the cradle of military leadership cannot do that to itself, what can we expect from the Indian military then?

Notwithstanding anything that is said here, the ex NDA will remain what he is; none of this makes him one inch taller or shorter than he actually is. In fact, having passed through tough times one must appreciate him even more for being what he already is. We can say he has sacrificed for the nation even before he formally became a soldier. So blanket judgments can be avoided. And that is not the purpose of the study. Let us give better to the next set of cadets if it is possible.

It is high time someone takes charge on top and stops NDA from becoming obsolete. Or as Air Marshal Rajkumar ex-NDA and former Dy Commandant of NDA says. "Let's shut NDA down!"

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## Training at the NDA

Brig Mahendra Kumar Kushwaha (Retd)  
Charlie/46

The aim of training at the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla is "to develop leadership qualities in the cadets and in doing so, impart foundation military education and training, and make them graduates with a BSc/BA degree".

What are the 'leadership qualities' that the Academy must strive to develop in the cadets? But before this, let us take a look at the fifteen Officer Like Qualities (OLQs) that the Services Selection Boards (SSBs) look for in the candidates whom they recommend for training at the Academy. These OLQs are: Effective Intelligence, Reasoning Ability, Organising Ability, Power of Expression, Social Adaptability, Cooperation, Sense of Responsibility, Initiative, Self Confidence, Speed of Decision Making, Liveliness, and Ability to Influence the Group, Courage, Determination and Stamina. Hence, the curriculum and routine at the Academy must result in developing these fifteen OLQs in the cadets at the culmination of their three years of training.

One has to also keep in mind that the NDA produces graduates fit for service specific training in the respective academies of the Army, Navy and the Air Force. This implies that the Academy should not aim to make every cadet fit for becoming a military leader in all phases of his service career. It has to focus on making every cadet a good junior leader in his service because every cadet that passes out of the Academy will definitely be required to lead small operational teams but everyone will not rise to middle or senior levels of military leadership.

So what does developing the required OLQs in the cadets involve so as to make them effective junior leaders involve?

Whereas it is not possible to enhance someone's basic intelligence, effective intelligence (that is intelligence applied innovatively to solve day to day practical problems) can be acquired through repeated exposure to practical situations individually and in groups. How does the Academy achieve this? Following activities are required:

- a. Squadron level: Course level activities such as planning and executing events with minimal resources and under pressure of time. These can be done under the supervision of Division seniors. For example, playing a six-a-side hockey match in the squadron parade ground or playing a volleyball match in the uneven surface of battalion quadrangle.
- b. Battalion level: Inter-Squadron fun games organised on the spot on Sundays and holidays by cadets. These can be done once in a month under the supervision of Divisional Officers.
- c. Academy Level: Trekking, Treasure Hunts and Unorthodox or even ridiculous tasks such as a moonlight cricket match, dinner night where cadets cook and ladies are guests, etc.

Reasoning Ability is again an inbuilt quality which has to be present in the individual and cannot be trained. Only regular sharpening of the mind is needed that can be achieved by including reasoning ability tests in the academic curriculum. Of late, an increased emphasis is being laid on including Information Technology in the academic curriculum of the cadets. Writing computer programmes or at least the flow charts for Academy and Squadron events



by the cadets who opt for Science and IT streams should definitely help in enhancing reasoning ability. Regular competitions in IQ Tests for the cadets will also help.

Organising Ability and Power of Expression are generally found weak in the cadets. Hence the Academy must continue to place a lot of emphasis on developing them through debates, declamation and essay writing contests. In addition, the teaching of English language needs greater emphasis on developing better writing ability which is found missing in middle level officers who find themselves at the Staff College. As for Organising Ability, the Academy has adequate activities in its chest such as the three camps in the second, fourth and sixth terms and various activity/hobby clubs which are mandatory. In fact the organisation of squadrons into divisions and participating in inter squadron competitions and squadron socials itself teaches a lot about organising events. Besides, all the cadets' witness well organised Academy level events including the Passing Out Parade at the end of each term which sets high standards of achievement at young age.

The three qualities of the heart viz., Social Adaptability, Cooperation and Sense of Responsibility though innate in every individual, can be enhanced by compelling the subjects into living and functioning as part of a team. It is here that the so-called ragging in the Academy comes in. There is a famous BBC series called 'Soldiers - A History of Men in Battle' based on a book by John Keegan. In the episode on 'Commander', there is a scene from the West Point Military Academy in the USA in which cadets are seen walking along the edges of the walls of a corridor following every ninety degree turn rather than going straight. Explaining this bizarre act the narrator says that such seemingly bizarre acts are aimed at "making fighting men out of raw civilians through a programme of comprehensive indoctrination so that the personality of each individual is gradually destroyed and as new one is built instead, that of a soldier."<sup>2</sup> The seniors, with whom junior cadets are forced to co-exist, work, play, entertain and compete for the glory of their respective squadrons, guide their juniors, at times with a little extra coercion which includes physical stress and strain. Such guidance, slowly but definitely, destroys the individual personality of each raw civilian and converts him into a physically and mentally robust fighting soldier capable of leading men into battle.

This is where the plethora of sports and other competitions conducted at the squadron level also come in. They slowly but certainly help transform an individual into a team player who is adaptable, cooperative and responsible. Inter-squadron cross country, by far the toughest competitive event in the Academy is full of examples where cadets have physically carried injured cadets so as to avoid penalties to the squadron for someone not completing the race. Novices boxing where even the most reluctant cadet is forced to box in the ring in public also fosters a sense of responsibility that if and when required, the cadet will do whatever he is asked to do despite not having an intrinsic liking towards it.

The qualities of initiative, self confidence, speed of decision making, liveliness and ability to influence the group are required at all levels of military leadership. The routine and mandatory nature of activities in the academy make sure that bulk of the cadets become self confident, take quick decisions and are lively in their demeanour. The three camps where cadets are given appointments at section and platoon levels so as to conduct military style operations further enhance these qualities.

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<sup>2</sup> "Soldiers - A History of Men in Battle - Episode 10" BBC Series - 1985. Can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yS-Xb2xJo>



The qualities of courage, determination and stamina (both physical and mental) are inculcated by repeatedly exposing the cadets to physical danger and giving them seemingly impossible targets in physical endurance. Mandatory jumping from the 7-meter board in the swimming pool, horse riding including the lane-jump test in which the cadets ride a horse without saddle and stirrups and are required to make the horse jump over ten obstacles, gymnastic activities, lake swimming competition and the 'josh' run at the end of Camp Torna in the final term, etc have been designed with this aim.

The next part of the aim of training at NDA is "imparting foundation military education and training." This should ideally consist of drill, map reading and navigation, basic personal weapon training and firing, sub-unit level military organisation and elementary field and battle craft. Military Weapons Technology can form part of the graduation curriculum - for both humanities and science streams. Aid to Civil Authorities and Counter Terrorist operations are not required to form part of military education at this stage as the Air Force and Navy cadets don't need to learn them. At present, service specific education and training is carried out in the last two terms which is quite adequate.

Is the NDA carrying out its training in an ideal manner? In the absence of authentic information about the curriculum in the public domain, it would be foolish to pass comments on it. I am sure that the powers that be have adequate experience and expertise at their disposal to do so. The junior leadership of the armed forces of India has never failed the country till now. If the Academy was not carrying out its training properly, this would not have been the case. However, if the senior leadership appears to fail once in a while, then the fault does not lie with the Academy. One has to search for the reasons for this somewhere else.

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**Brig Mahendra Kumar Kushwaha (Retd)** won the President's Silver Medal in the 46th Course. Besides having done the Command and Staff Course at Fort Queenscliff in Australia, he attended the Army's Higher Command Course at the Army War College, Mhow. He also holds a doctorate in Disaster Management from Lucknow University. He has been an instructor at MCTE, Infantry School and Army War College, Mhow besides being SI at DSSC, Wellington. After retirement, he was the Director of Army Institute of Management Technology at Greater Noida (NCR). He is a frequent traveller to Australia; he last visited the country in Feb-Mar 2019.

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## **The NDA: All is not Well**

Gp Capt Vaidun K Vidyadhar (Retd)  
India/22

### **Quality of New Entrants**

In the 50s, 60s and even as late as the 70s, a career in the armed forces was one of the most sought after. Some of the best youth of the country aspired to become officers in the services. We used to have a civilian Chemistry lecturer at NDA by the name of GD Bhavnani who used to refer to us as "the cream of the nation". Subsequently, over the decades, most of the "cream of the nation" sought careers other than the armed forces.



The reason for this sharp decline is mainly attributable to the 'Babus' who have gone out of their way to ensure that in every Pay Commission the pay, perks and allowances of officers in the armed forces are brought down while their own emoluments are progressively increased. At the national level, having a sub-standard armed forces is not in the best interests of the country. But do the Babus care? The term, "cut off your nose to spite the face" comes to mind. Were our senior officers not aware of what was going on? They most certainly were. But the problem is, there is an unwritten rule to "never discuss money matters". It was considered 'un-officer-like' to talk about money, one's salary. The Babus took full advantage of this and continued to screw us in every Pay Commission.

We've reached a stage now where only those who are unable to get into more attractive career options seek to become officers in the armed forces. There are exceptions to this, but the exceptions are very few. This may be a bit harsh to accept, but the sad part is, 'left overs' are now joining NDA. This is the naked truth, bitter to swallow. This brings us to the question: do officers for the armed forces need to be drawn from some of the best youngsters in the country, or will just 'average' candidates suffice?

### **Brain vs Brawn**

In the lower ranks, at the level of the Jawan, 'Brawn' is very desirable, with a little bit of 'Brain'. At the Officer level, more of Brain and less of Brawn would be highly advisable. Remember the young Lieutenant or Pilot Officer of today is going to be the future General, Admiral or Air Chief Marshal. Do we want just 'average' input material to become tomorrow's Chief of Army, Navy or Air Force? The answer is quite obvious.

### **Ragging**

Ragging in our training institutions, plus all other educational organisations, is a complete waste of time. Ragging is just another form of 'bullying'. Over the years, new and more imaginative forms of ragging seem to have crept in. Ragging has now reached a stage where a significant percentage of cadets choose to leave NDA rather than continue to be subjected to this stupidity. The same senior cadets who were the perpetrators return to NDA some years later as Div Officers and Squadron Commanders. They allow and encourage the same form of ragging to continue. It's a vicious circle, difficult to break.

Will I send my son to join NDA? I suggested the NDA to him in 1988 when he had just finished school. He turned this down without batting an eyelid. Today he is a senior Captain in Singapore Airlines. I am very happy for him. We need to ask why the NDA was not attractive to youngsters like my son back then and whether things have improved since the 1980s.

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**Gp Capt Vaidun Vidyadhar (Retd)** was a Fighter Pilot. During his flying career spanning 51 years he has flown 27 different types of aircraft. He has a grand total of more than 14,000, accident-free flying hours. After serving for 24 years in the IAF he opted to join Vayudoot Airlines as a Captain. After 4 years of airline flying he took up employment with the Singapore Air Force as a Flying Instructor and served there for 7 years. On retiring from there at age 55 he took up employment with BAE Systems, Tamworth, NSW, Australia, as a Flying Instructor. He is now fully retired and settled in Sydney and lives with his wife, daughter and grandson.





## Training NDA Cadets in Morals and Ethics

Col (Dr) Sneh V Sharma (Retd)

Lima/46

We all have been taught that leadership stands majestically on the foundation of one's character. To be morally upright and ethically straight is the start point of any good and effective leadership. Truth always prevails; the morally right and ethically strong always win. These are the universally accepted and mythologically supported statements.

Do NDA cadets need to be trained in morals and ethics? This is the question I encountered on joining NDA as a Battalion Commander in December 1997. If truth, character of leader and noble cause are important for winning wars, then should these issues not be included in the training curricula of the NDA, 'the Cradle of Leadership,' in some form?

The NDA at that time had four battalions, two commanded by army officers and one each by a naval and air force officer. The Senior Army battalion commander, in addition to his duties was also the SI Army and I was given the assignment of SI CSS (Common Service Subjects).

One day in an officers' conference, the Commandant, one of the brightest, finest, fittest and most upright three-star ex-NDA officers I ever served under, posed this question, "Don't you think we need to introduce Morals and Ethics training?" I was taken aback but tried to recollect my thoughts, took some time and replied in the negative.

My opinion was that all the cadets at NDA know what is right and what is wrong. We all are taught to speak the truth, not to steal, honesty is the best policy etc, etc at our homes and in our schools. Stories of Raja Harish Chandra, Mahatma Gandhi and the likes of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar are part of text books. All the cadets after clearing the UPSC are interviewed at the SSBs where they are screened for integrity and other moral attributes. So I felt that there was no need to add Moral and Ethics training to the already packed schedule of the cadets.

The Commandant asked, "Aren't there any wrong practices followed by the cadets?" He further added that in services we have refreshers' training which is to refresh periodically what we already know.

Well the subject was later discussed in greater detail. The Commandant explained that most of the non-ex NDA officers consider their NDA colleagues as 'shammers' and crooks who work only when under observation.

We all knew it. If the bicycle of a so-called smarter cadet got punctured in the morning, he stole the bicycle of a less smart (called 'Dope' in NDA) course mate and reached the drill square on time. But the decent course mate got punished for being late. This further added to his reputation of being a 'Dope'. The Commandant felt that the most prevalent terms at NDA like 'I will manage' or 'beg, borrow or steal' themselves connote unethical intentions.

The other point of view was that the misadventures of cadets should not be counted as immoral acts. These at the most could be adjudged as 'smart acts' or 'street smartness' that was needed to survive in today's political environment and to also outsmart the unethical enemy.

Most of the officers involved in training felt that there was a greater need for making cadets physically tougher and mentally more robust through structured activities in place of



unstructured ‘punishments’ by senior cadets. In fact, unstructured, whimsical and degrading punishments by senior cadets were considered to be the main reason why even sincere junior cadets had to resort to ‘shamming’.

Reflecting on the Commandant's question about wrong doing by cadets, I went into ‘flash back’ mode and saw myself reporting to a sergeant from Alfa sqn in his cabin. The sergeant had caught me cycling alone and had taken my name tab. I went to collect the name tab at night. The sergeant told me to do 1,000 push-ups and went in his cabin. Since no body was watching me, I did not do even a single push up. After five minutes or so, I could make out that the sergeant was about to come out and hence, started doing pushups. The sergeants asked how many push-ups have you completed? I replied, "800 Sir." He without even thinking said, “OK, I will stand here, you do 200 more”. We had both found my outright lie acceptable. I wondered whether this acceptance of my lie was mere pragmatism on our part or if it amounted to lack of integrity in any way.

In response to the Commandant's exhortations, a consensus emerged to introduce a *Morals and Ethics* capsule and to identify an ‘honour code’ as the starting point for the capsule . The first draft of the proposed honour code was inspired by West Point's honour code and read something like, “ I shall not lie, cheat, steal and report those who do it’.

A majority of the officers had no problems with the first part -- ‘I shall not lie, cheat or steal’ but almost all found the second part -- ‘and report those who do it,’ unacceptable. How could an NDA cadet report against his fellow course mate doing something wrong was the sentiment. Not reporting against a course mate was considered a key ingredient of the famous NDA course spirit. If reporting course mates were to become the norm then the NDA spirit would be just like the spirit prevalent among college mates of any other institute.

I went into another flash back mode to my fourth term drill period when one of our course mates from Golf sqn imitated a drill Ustaad and loudly shouted ‘Thum Phttak’ resulting in noisy laughter by all others. This was taken as an insult by the drill instructors’ community. As the culprit did not own up and could not be found by the instructors, the Adjutant ordered mass punishments of the entire course which continued for four days/ nights including on a Sunday. Everyone knew who the culprit was, but no one reported.

What about moral courage? Is it not all about conviction to say what is wrong and have the courage to own up of any wrong-doing by self? Were the course mates not morally obliged to persuade the wrong doer to exhibit moral courage and own up?

Well, traditional notions about the NDA course spirit won and the second part of the honour code read something like, ‘I will encourage those who do it to own up’. Consequently, a forty hours capsule on ‘Morals and Ethics’ was added to the CSS training. The honour code having evolved over the last two decades, currently reads as under:

**HONOUR CODE**

*I believe that a cadet must be  
loyal, truthful, trustworthy,  
honest and forthright  
under all circumstances.  
I will not lie, cheat or steal  
nor will I mislead or deceive anyone.  
I undertake to faithfully live up to this code  
and to continuously encourage  
my comrades to do so.*



I would venture to say that that the cadets passing out in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are ethically stronger and morally more upright than was the case during my time at the NDA. Quite clearly, the NDA honour code appears to be working.

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**Col (Dr) Sneh V Sharma (Retd)** joined the Sikh Regt on commissioning and is a graduate of DSSC Wellington. He served in important command, staff and instructional appointments. He commanded his battalion at the highest battle field of the world under the Siachen Brigade. He is PhD in international Relations from the University of Pune and PGDPM from Symbiosis. On superannuation, he headed the MIT School of Government, Pune and was Professor and Associate Director of their school of management under Pune University. He is currently serving as the Director General of the Amity Business School. His interests include reading, golf, bridge and shayari.

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## Morality, Mindfulness and Overseas Exposure

Flt Lt Saleem Zaheer (Retd)  
Juliet/46

I left the IAF in 1984 after eight and a half years of service. I was then a pilot in the US for 20 years, served as Chief Pilot and Postholder Flight Operations in the UAE for 3 years, operated an airline in Nepal for a few months, and then was Vice President Flight Operations in one of India's largest airline companies for seven years. I'm currently back in the US as VP Global Business Development developing the world's first hybrid-electric, long-range VTOL aircraft.

I may be a bit off target if I attempt to specifically address training cadets for war as I have not been part of the defence eco-system for a few decades. Numerous assessments already exist about what type of war India is likely to fight in the decades ahead. I will leave it to other experts to suggest relevant training methodologies. The generic suggestions/observations made below about NDA training come from my international experience:

1. We are seeing a degradation of the secular spirit of India. This is a basic building block of the essence of India. NDA training must uphold this secular spirit without ambiguity, and the defence services must be a beacon for all of India – both in word and deed. Any degradation has grave consequences, both in terms of internal strife within defence ranks, and in the wider national and international context.
2. Honing the inner moral compass of the cadet. I speak here of life in the civilian world, but once again this is central to the fundamental ethos of India's defence services. Cadets must always be guided, in everything they do, to live by a higher moral code wherein integrity, honour, empathetic leadership, and dedication to fundamental human tenets remain paramount. Again, I find this is a quality that is slipping in the world, and there is an acute need for ethical and morally upright leaders playing a mentoring role to young soldiers and civilians alike. Once again, the defence services officers must be a beacon, both internally, and for India and the world at large.



3. I have discovered that meditation and mindfulness greatly expand the ability to assess situations clearly and calmly, with awareness and presence at a much higher level, thus leading to appropriate action more finely tuned to the situation at hand, whether in battle or otherwise. The NDA should consider incorporating meditation and mindfulness training in its curriculum.
4. Bring in foreign external experts to teach in specific subjects. I have personally benefitted greatly by exposure to different viewpoints and agile minds and cultures, not coming from the same national background as me.
5. The NDA could also consider sending cadets abroad for one term or one year. This exposure will prove absolutely invaluable in expanding their thinking and developing their minds. This is different from sending them on a 7-14 day “visit” to a foreign country. Such visits have limited benefits.
6. Points 4 and 5 above will specifically help develop agile minds that can more easily find “out-of-the-box” solutions without being sub-consciously constrained by the Indian hierarchical structure and rote learning which is the prevailing norm in most Indian schools.

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**Flt Lt Saleem Zaheer (Retd)** is a pilot with over 40 years and 15,000 flight hours on 28 different aircraft ranging from tail-draggers to supersonic fighters and wide-body airliners. He was an Indian Air Force fighter, transport, instructor and VIP pilot before moving to the US where he flew corporate jets and then served as a pilot and captain for United Airlines for 13 years. He was then Chief Pilot and Postholder Flight Operations for Air Arabia in the UAE before joining IndiGo, India's largest airline. He served in Indigo as Vice President Flight Operations and Vice President Special Projects before returning to the US in 2016 to set up an aviation operations consultancy. Saleem is currently VP Global Business Development for XTI Aircraft, a US company developing Trifan600, the world's first hybrid-electric, long-range VTOL aircraft.

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## Some Quick Fixes for the NDA

Col Parmesh KR Mehrishi (Retd)  
Charlie/59

The NDA is the best Institution in India for leadership training and one of the best in the World. Periodic review (once every three years) for upgrade, innovation in training and longitudinal study of the passed out product is required to improve the Leadership Quotient of our defence forces. This should be done by multiple stakeholders, Instructors, Alumni, Service HQ, Independent Auditors, etc. Here are some suggestions that will take the NDA to greater heights:

- Post Commandants who deserve to be there, for full tenures and not as a parking place.
- No Commandant should be allowed to tinker with the training programme, which should be approved by at least 11 members (Academic & DS staff).



- Post Instructors (Civilian) vetted by a tri service screening committee (stake holders ) recommended by the UPSC.
- Pre-Induction basic Physical Fitness of cadets needs to be tested in SSB (1 mile run,20 push ups,20 sit ups,06 chin ups).
- Psychometric Tests (battery) can be held on line prior to coming to SSB centre.
- Hand holding and induction of Cadets in First Term at Khadakvasla should be done in a mature and dignified way (no abusive language, etc).
- Cross country should be progressive (I & II Term = 6 Km; III & IV Term = 10 Km; V & VI Term = 14 Km).
- Sports Medicine to be introduced in NDA ( this will include diet, nutrition, injury avoidance, etc.).
- All authorized training to be conducted under expert supervision ( i.e., by qualified instructors only, not by senior cadets).
- No unauthorized training, ragging, punishments in Squadrons.
- Cadets to be toughened by scientific methods only (treks, route marches, camping, judo, taekwondo, cycling expeditions, rock climbing, bungee jumping, etc.)
- Encourage alertness & academic excellence with a relevant curriculum.
- Initiative, brightness, talent, out of box thinking to be appreciated and encouraged.
- No mass punishments, identify mischief makers and deal accordingly.
- Honour code to be strictly followed and headed by a Cadets Juror Committee (with one DS as Coordinator with no voting rights).
- Inculcate the habit of team work/team excellence ( not, I -Me - Myself or personal glory or constant personal excellence).
- Increase frequency of social interactions with the opposite gender by way of organising social get-togethers, Jam Sessions, Visits to other institutions, Outings, meetings with staff families and so forth.

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**Col P K "Royal" Mehrishi (Retd)** donned the military uniform aged 10 years as a cadet in a Military School. He served as an active Infantry combat leader for 28 years. He is a qualified Clinical Psychologist and has conducted a solo research project on 'Suicides and Fratricides' for the Indian Army. A prolific writer, debater on TV and author of books on Leadership, he is also a motivational speaker. In addition, he has a Harvard Business School certification in "Expert Negotiations."



## Fostering Academic Excellence through a Balanced Curricula

Col Pankaj K Kumaria (Retd.)

Golf/64

The NDA was conceived to be a cradle of military leadership. The concept was to produce scholar soldiers for all the three services in order to integrate the future leadership of the three Services at the grassroots so as to provide synergy, so very important in the modern battlefield. In order to establish such an institution, the military academies of the world were studied and a hybrid model based on the US Military Academy, West Point and RMA Sandhurst was adopted. Our country decided that the NDA would impart undergraduate education to cadets along with imparting rudimentary military training bundled with a regimen for ensuring physical fitness, military discipline, teamwork and leadership qualities. The specific military training aspect of the Services was left out. It was to be completed at the respective training academies of the three services. With this as my understanding of the concept of our alma mater, I share my views on our alma mater's curricula.

**Academic Education:** In my view academic proficiency is the most important aspect of preparing a cadet at NDA for his life as an officer. Unfortunately, this is the most neglected aspect of a cadet's life. The Directing Staff (DS) posted at the NDA only focus on the physical and military aspects of the curricula. None of them take even a cursory interest in the academic progress of cadets. The cadets are left floundering on their own with no informal assistance or guidance provided by the civilian professors with whom the cadets have minimal interaction. This is in contrast to good educational colleges and universities where students get an opportunity to intellectually engage with quality academic staff. Moreover, the informal physical and so called toughening curricula formulated by each Squadron under the garb of 'tradition' leaves the cadets so fatigued that they use academic classes as opportunities to catch up on their sleep. The cadets know that they will pass anyway with 'helpful preparation questions' and tips provided by the professors who do not want the cadets to fail en masse lest they be held responsible for the poor results. This state of affairs leaves the academic development of cadets woefully inadequate. There are innumerable examples in each course of cadets being brilliant academically, but not up to the mark physically. In almost every case, by the time such cadets pass out they become physically proficient and go on to become exemplary officers. But the same cannot be said of academically weak cadets who were otherwise physically very fit. Such cadets seldom improve academically at the NDA. My sense is that when academically weak cadets go on to become officers they tend to struggle in their promotion and competitive exams and remain at best average officers. The primary focus of the NDA should be to make a cadet academically proficient so that he can confidently cope with the demands of hi-tech warfare that awaits him. The remaining aspects of his development are secondary, but this does not mean that physical and leadership training should be neglected. It need not be a case of either academics or physical fitness. Currently, the focus on physical fitness impinges upon NDA's primary academic aims. The Cadet Training Wings for the 10+2 Technical Entry Scheme (TES) seem to have the balance right. My personal experience suggests that the TES scheme is producing officers who are as good as, if not better, than ex-NDA officers.

The whole issue of ensuring academic excellence is critical and requires extensive analysis. It may not be appropriate to make important decisions on the basis of anecdotal evidence and the opinions of certain individuals. Nonetheless, given my experience, I suggest the following:



- a) The academic curricula be science oriented and only one undergraduate degree, that of BSc/BTech be awarded by the NDA.
- b) The curricula be designed based on the approved UPSC BSc/BTech syllabus by choosing Core and Elective subjects suited for future requirements of the three Services.
- c) Subjects pertaining to Military Science such as Military history, Weapon craft, field craft, navigation, etc be kept to the minimum (not more than 5 to 7 percent of the syllabus) and be treated as Audit subjects. These subjects, in any case, are covered extensively at different pre-commission service academies.
- d) The system of Subject Credits linked to CGPA be adopted with the academic core subjects getting higher credits than elective subjects.
- e) Greater interaction between the cadets and the academic staff beyond what takes place in the customary extra classes and study periods. Periodic supervision of a cadet's academic progress by the DS and academic staff.

**Physical Training:** Formal syllabus for Physical Training at the NDA is adequate to develop the physical aspects of the human body. The syllabus more than meets the standards of Battle Proficiency Efficiency Test and Physical Proficiency Tests designed for the officers of our Armed Forces. The informal training imparted by senior cadets should be abolished as it is unscientific as shown by various studies conducted by approved agencies such as AFMC, ASPT and Army Sports Institute, Pune. It not only is the major reason for lack of sleep and inadequate rest, but it also unnecessarily fatigues the cadets and leads to serious injuries -- both physical and mental. There are numerous examples in each course. The hierarchy at the NDA must take serious steps to eliminate unauthorized activities carried out in the name of 'tradition.'

**OLQ:** I have never understood the fixation with a host of OLQs that everyone talks about. For me, the Chetwode motto completely defines what an officer must possess. He should be a gentleman and lead by example. By example I mean undertaking positive and constructive actions and not negative and destructive means to get a task done. The formal curricula promulgated at NDA is designed to inculcate all the qualities required by an officer as the cadets gain entry to the NDA through a very stringent and well considered selection process. It is the informal curricula which are to blame for engendering unofficer like behaviours. Dictums like 'Beg Borrow steal,' 'Do it by any means, I don't care,' 'Don't get Caught' and many more leave behind an indelible mark on some cadets inculcating in them life-long habits of taking short cuts, pulling fast ones, and generally not following proper procedures. The quickest and best way to address this issue is to completely eradicate the "other than authorized formal activities" meant for so called mental, emotional and physical toughness.

These then are my thoughts. The NDA must strike the right balance in all the aspects of its curricula without compromising on the need for academic excellence.

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**Col Pankaj Kumaria (Retd)** is an alumni of RIMC. He is an Armoured Corps officer who besides commanding his Regiment and Army Software Development Centre was also the Commandant, RIMC. He is B Tech (Mech), M Tech (Industrial Engg) , Diploma in Adv Computing , Diploma in Project Management , Certified Software Quality Professional and Test Manager.



## **Towards a Dual Degree in 'Technology and Management'**

Lt Col (Dr) Arvind Kumar Sinha (Retd)

Echo/46

It has been over six decades since the establishment of our alma mater and certainly much has changed since then. This invited write-up provides ideas on NDA's academic curricula. The suggestions that follow emanate from a knowledge and experience base gained from my: a) service as a para engineer officer which included a stint as an instructor at the NDA; b) work as executive faculty at a world renowned university's industrial technology (civil and defence) design and development centre; c) specialisation at national and international levels in academia; d) role as an engineering executive advisor supporting defence technology acquisition and sustainment; and e) readings of articles and news items about the subject on hand.

Warfare has evolved to become “technology intensive,” and in future the role of technology will continue to gain momentum. What follows will resonate with the readers only if they accept technology's central role as a point of departure. Also, it is worth noting at the outset that while the terms science and technology tend to be used interchangeably, they mean different things. The aim of science is pursuit of knowledge, whereas technology is the end product developed by engineering the sciences. The modern weapon systems that the armed forces use are essentially complex technological platforms. The NDA should aim to produce officers who are equipped to cope with complex technologies that will be deployed in modern warfare. To this effect, I propose an entirely new undergraduate degree programme.

### **A new undergraduate programme**

Currently, the NDA confers four undergraduate degrees: BA, BSc, BSc (Computer Science), and BTech (Applied Electronics & Communication). The latter has been recently introduced for naval and air force cadets. The curricula across the four degrees does not prepare the officers on a common platform, for the 21st century tri-service network centric battlefield. Throughout their careers, officers are involved in at least one, if not many, stages of the “technology life-cycle” of a weapon system commencing from acquisition to sustainment to disposal. They participate in some capacity or the other in a weapon system's development, operation, maintenance or support. It is thus imperative that our officers be adept at managing technology. I propose that the NDA offer just one common four year dual degree programme -- with the final year to be completed at the specialist service academies -- to all the cadets, irrespective of their arm or service: BTech & BMgmt

The NDA's unique dual degree covering military technologies and management should be multi-disciplinary and include the basic science subjects and languages as is the case with current degrees. Some essential arts subjects such as International Relations, Military Geography, Political Science and Economics could also be retained. The newly introduced subjects in the proposed degree would pertain to Engineering know how of technology development, deployment and support; and the newly introduced Management subjects could pertain to topics such as leadership, decision making, and organisation studies. With the NDA being a tri-service academy, technology related aspects of Jointmanship could also be formally included in its curriculum. In the fourth year, the cadets would study current technologies as relevant to their respective specialities in their respective officer training academies.





The degree programme would focus on imparting skills and knowledge that facilitate life-long self learning. Once the cadets get commissioned, the onus would shift to the young officers themselves and their chosen arm/service to ensure that they remain at the cutting edge of technology and keep re-skilling. Otherwise, the pace of technological development is such that one could get outdated overnight.

### **Quality assurance**

The NDA should continually (not periodically) re-visit the academic/technical section of the curriculum for: a) ensuring alignment currency with military technologies in operation and under acquisition by the services; b) examining the credentials of academics who develop and deliver the curriculum; and c) scrutinising university arrangements on the value added, if any, other than the university in question lending its name to a degree.

Without any disrespect to JNU, it does appear that the NDA needs to re-assess whether its JNU affiliation has outlived its utility. In any case, it does not appear that the JNU is actively involved in developing NDA curricula. The proposed dual degree could prove to be a catalyst for establishing a Defence University (DU) and co-locating it with the NDA. Indeed, time is ripe for such an initiative. Given that the dual degree program will cover classified defence technologies (especially in the fourth year of the programme), the DU may be ideally suited to technically administer the programme. The DU could also become the nodal agency for accrediting all in-service training programmes which are currently accredited by various universities in the country. The DU could also operate as a tri-service think tank to support higher level defence planning. Qualified service officers could be posted and/or permanently seconded to the DU's think tank.

With the introduction of the dual degree, the NDA may have to consider instituting a faculty exchange program with IITs and IIMs. It could also introduce cross institution quality audits to ensure that its BTech & BMgmt degree is at par with IIT and IIM degrees. Visiting faculty and secondments could be used to enhance the quality of delivery of the programme. Such arrangements would encourage sharing of best practices among academics and may also inspire IIT and IIM students to join the armed forces. There would be other beneficial spin-offs as well.

### **Benefits of the new programme**

Delivering just one dual degree will improve efficiencies and ensure a common knowledge base, something much needed in a network centric battle field. An ex-NDA officer while in service will be better placed when interacting on technology development and quality audit programs with scientists and managers at DRDO Labs and DGQA set-ups. Additionally, whilst dealing with the industry and suppliers of military hardware, which is now a common place, ex-NDAs will have the knowhow to assess technology analysis and recommendations made by specialist advisors. They will be in a position to make better informed judgments/decisions on acquisition of technology platforms or systems for our armed forces.

The unique degree and its association with IIT and IIM will also enhance NDA's attractiveness to the youth. Furthermore, the dual BTech & BMgmt degree will ensure that ex-NDA officers are in much greater demand once they retire.

### **Concluding thoughts**

My exclusive focus on the academic curriculum does not imply that the NDA can afford to ignore other aspects. The academic curriculum should neither impact nor dilute the current emphasis on soldiering (routine and non-routine) that addresses physical, mental and



emotional fitness. Unlike in the civil world, the complex military technologies will be operated and supported in a battle field environment that will continue to put a premium on sound decision making under extreme conditions. Additionally, in the synthetic war zone/battle field (e.g., unmanned and network centric battle management systems) the human fitness challenges of software driven systems are of a different dimension. This is one area which the NDA could study further and accordingly augment its physical and emotional training modules. It would be a fallacy to assume that modern military technologies lower the need for physical and mental toughness.

When I reflect on my professional experience, as an ex NDA, irrespective of the scientific and technological knowledge, experience and credentials achieved at an international platform post-military service, it was the physical, mental and emotional toughening that I received as a cadet that gave me the edge over my peers, world-wide. The NDA should continue to deliver a balanced education and military training program that keeps pace with developing tri-service defence technologies that the cadets will operate/support when in service. The NDA has a stellar track record. It must do whatever it takes to maintain its record.

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**Lt Col (Dr) Arvind K Sinha (Retd)** is also an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He has two undergraduate degrees (Science and Engineering), three post-graduate degrees (Electronics Engineering, Aerospace Technology and Business Administration) and a PhD in Aerospace Engineering – Multi-mission aircraft design. Included amongst the array of awards received in aerospace and aviation is the highest international award for contribution in helicopter design and development. Whilst in Indian Army, he served in specialist units -- Electronic Warfare, Aviation and Airborne Forces -- and also commanded a unit in Op Meghdoot. He is still an active Paratrooper and Skydiver.

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## Reimagining NDA

Maj (Dr) Samir Shrivastava (Retd)  
Lima/65

Why try to fix something that isn't broken? This is a perfectly legitimate question. Equally legitimate though is the desire to embrace a proactive mindset that does not wait for things to break. The purpose of our alma mater hasn't changed since its inception. To quote from the NDA's official website, our alma mater's vision is to "...continue to be the premier *joint training institution* and centre for excellence in the world for producing *junior leaders*... equipped with the *mental, moral, and physical attributes* required to cope with the challenges of the future battlefield..." (emphasis added). While NDA's vision remains valid, the broader context in which the NDA must realise its vision is, and will always remain, in a state of flux. Things can break if the NDA does not continuously introspect and change when needed. In the current context, how might the NDA realise its vision? What are the choices before it? These are the questions that I attempt to address below by deconstructing the more important elements of NDA's vision.



## A Premier Joint Training Institution

Unlike the other elements in the NDA vision statement, the "premier" element does not seem to have been vigorously operationalised. What does it mean to be "premier?" The choice seems to be around:

*The Current Option:* Training the cadets for a longer duration as compared to other training establishments (with may be some additional resources thrown in) and consider NDA to be a premier institute.

or

*The Genuinely Premier Option:* Truly generous resourcing when compared to other establishments plus stipends to NDA cadets, seniority from joining date, and most importantly allocating talent on a pro-rated basis. That is to say, if the infantry accounts for 60% of our officers; then 60% of the ex-NDA officers to go to infantry.

The larger point is that we need to recognise that "premier" talent, by definition, is scarce and also that developing such talent can be expensive. It is not possible to convert every infantry soldier into a *ghatak*. Much like the IAS is "premier" among other public services whose officers otherwise qualify the same entrance exam, we need to consider whether we wish to officially make the NDA-entry the first among equals. The NDA also needs to reflect on whether it has truly embraced the "joint training" element. The choice in this regard is around:

*The Current Option:* Relying on bonding and friendships forged mainly among course mates to surface during operations by way of happenstance.

or

*The Truly Triservice Option:* A rigorous training programme which not only familiarises the cadets with basic tenets of the other two services, but also sensitises them to the cultural reasons that underpin inter-services rivalry.

## Selecting Potential Junior leaders

It is incumbent upon the NDA to select candidates who can be trained to become effective junior leaders. We know that *general mental ability* (GMA) is a good predictor of performance in most jobs, including a military officer's job. It makes sense to have some test for GMA as the first hurdle. In the NDA's context, GMA is necessary, but not sufficient. We need to also determine whether candidates with the necessary GMA can withstand the rigours of NDA training and have the potential to go on to become effective junior leaders. To be able to predict this we have the SSB. We definitely have one of the most elaborate and, at least on paper, one of the more scientific selection systems anywhere in the world. But is it really effective? The answer is that we do not really know because for some strange reason our Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) does not believe in either sharing its data or publishing its research in peer reviewed journals. One does not even know what research, if any, the DIPR conducts. This is the biggest elephant in the room.

If pure numbers are anything to go by, attracting candidates who wish to join the NDA is not an issue. The NDA remains one of the toughest institutions to get into. However, as we



know, "statistics are like a bikini. What they reveal is suggestive, but what they conceal is vital." The mere fact that massive numbers apply to join the NDA is not necessarily a good thing. We are in the dark about the quality of candidates who wish to join. Large numbers put a lot of strain on our resources. We do have some choices around making our selection system more efficient and effective.

Choice with respect to testing GMA is around:

*The Current Option:* Subjects tested by the UPSC are Maths (Grade 12 level); English; General Knowledge (bi-lingual Sciences, humanities, current affairs) . Exam paper is bi-lingual. Weightage for English: 200 out of 900 marks.

or

*A more scientific & cost effective GMA testing Option:* Just two tests (Grade 12 level) of equal weightage: Language skills and Numeracy skills. Since the idiom of our officers is English throughout their career, the entrance exam to not be bilingual.

Choice with respect to SSB is around:

*The Current Option:* A three to four day testing regime for Intelligence tests; Group test tasks; Psych tests and Interview. These tests collectively measure Officer Like Qualities (OLQ), a multi-dimensional construct.

or

*A more scientific & cost effective SSB Option:* Intelligence tests to be discontinued; validity is very poor. OLQ to be tested only for three dimensions after validation: Mental Resilience; Personal Integrity and Social Adaptability. In this instance, less is more. Interviewing officer to only test for verbal communication skills and visually ascertain physical/military bearing. The SSB processes to get over in one day.

With respect to candidate selection, the second biggest elephant in the room is rampant cheating in the UPSC exam in some exam centres. Anti-cheating measures such as mixing the order in which questions and the multiple choices appear should help. Video cameras and flying squads (of local army units) will also be a deterrent. Finally, there is no reason why in the 21st century, the military in a democracy like ours should "discriminate" against women. It is time for the NDA to open its doors to girl cadets.

### **Mental Training**

Camps, cross county training, a physically demanding routine that puts a premium on punctuality all combine to make cadets mentally resilient. The mental training aspect that needs attention is primarily the academic component (i.e., the nature of the degree/curricula). The decision by NDA's founders to impart liberal arts education to science graduates and vice versa was truly visionary. Irrespective of the degree programme the NDA decides to offer, it should retain its emphasis on a well-rounded education at all costs. For credentialing purposes, higher studies, and re-employment prospects, the NDA should continue offering a formal degree/diploma. The choice seems to be not so much around the nature of the



undergraduate programme, it is more around whether the NDA should offer an undergraduate degree or a postgraduate diploma as identified below:

*Current BA/BSc/BSc (Computer Sc)/BTech degrees:* In terms of content, except for the cross disciplinary nature of the NDA degree, there is nothing unique about the current three year degree programmes.

or

*Postgraduate Diploma in Defence Studies with a Research Component:* The entry age bracket to be 19 -23 years. Duration of the programme to be two years to include a four-month internship with other services (e.g., an army cadet to spend two months each in a naval and an AF unit). Balance 20 months for a comprehensive research project and 15 academic subjects, including at least eight subjects of relevance to the armed forces. Cadets to get directly commissioned as officers upon graduation.

The postgraduate diploma will entail a different entry system. Rather than insist on the CDS exam, the NDA should consider all those who qualify in GMAT/IAS (Mains)/JEE-IIT with stipulated marks (e.g., 80 percentile or above in GMAT) to also be eligible for SSB testing. Scores could remain valid for three years. Such a flexible system would ensure access to a much larger and more accomplished talent pool that is likely to exercise greater self-selection. It is not as if feeder schools to the NDA will become irrelevant under such a system. A truly motivated alumnus from feeder institutions will still want to join the NDA after completing his or her undergraduate programme.

### **Physical Training**

Given enough time, a medically fit and mentally resilient candidate should be able to achieve the physical fitness standards required by officers. The challenge seems to be around gently breaking-in the cadets and also around adopting scientific physical conditioning regimes and diets. The defunct *Ghorpuri* campus did have the advantage of breaking in cadets gradually. Perhaps there is a case for instituting two holding squadrons for the first termers in Khadakwasla. Apart from this issue, the choice is around the:

*Current reliance on informal mechanisms:* Senior cadets permitted to conduct informal drill, PT and strengthening sessions.

or

*Reliance on formal mechanisms:* Only qualified PT and Drill instructors to impart training.

The problem of over enthusiastic senior cadets causing damage could be partially addressed by discontinuing inter-sqn drill and PT competitions. Otherwise, seniors cadets should continue to motivate and coach their juniors. Such arrangements are central to leadership training. It would be a mistake to completely "disempower" senior cadets. What is needed however is a culture that takes swift cognisance of physical abuse. Also, while it is true that cadets somehow manage to cope with both their physical training and academic workload, the truth is that most cadets don't get a lot out of their degree programme. Some counter factual reasoning is needed here. Think of how much better educated the cadets would be if they got more time to meaningfully engage with the academic syllabi.



## Moral Training

Moral training in NDA's context is about helping cadets hone their leadership skills and develop their QLQ. If the SSB does what it is meant to then the NDA cadets ought to be 'officer' material. But what about the age old question: Can leaders be trained? Or are they born? This 'nature versus nurture' debate has finally been settled. The consensus is that it is nature and nurture both that play a role. This is good news for leadership training institutes like the NDA. All they need to do is create enough opportunities for cadets to practice/display their leadership skills. The choices again are around:

*Reliance on formal mechanisms:* OLQ training through a system of cadet appointments; mentoring programmes where senior cadets are formally assigned mentees; exposure to case studies and role modelling.

or

*Reliance on informal mechanisms:* Senior cadets given latitude to prepare cadets for inter-sqn competitions and organise functions; cadets to voluntarily subscribe to the NDA honour code.

or

*Reliance on hybrid mechanisms:* Both formal and informal mechanisms to be used in tandem. More active involvement of Divisional Officers and scrupulous implementation of Do's and Dont's (e.g., zero tolerance for manhandling, no activity between 2130 and 0630h, etc).

## Measuring Success

The cadets who take the *antim pag* will have acceptable mental ability only if the NDA's entry system does not get compromised, and cadets get adequate time to focus on their academic studies. Cadets will get at least 30 years to hone their technical/professional skills after graduating from the NDA. Therefore, we should not overestimate the importance of the content covered in an undergraduate degree. The mindset and different perspectives that the cadets develop at the NDA are far more important. Every time our alma mater produces a physically fit, enthusiastic, morally upright, trainable officer it lives up to its vision.

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**Maj (Dr) Samir Shrivastava (Retd)** got commissioned in 6 BIHAR and served with his battalion in Sikkim, Jammu, Nurla, Siachen Glacier, Lucknow and Arunachal. In between he also did a stint at the RIMC. He took PMR after 11.5 years. Serendipity more than anything else got him to Australia for further studies. He did his MBA from Bond University on the Gold Coast and thereafter got a fellowship to do his PhD in Management. He moved to Melbourne in 2004 and has been an academic at Swinburne University's business faculty ever since. His research interests lie at the cusp of strategy, HR and organisational behaviour. Samir is married to Lalita Menon, an IT professional. They have two children: Shinjini and Aryan who turned 17 and 12 this year.



## Overcoming Organisational Inertia at the NDA

Cdr Amit Pratap (Retd)

Bravo/84

A recent article by Lt. Gen H S Panag about the shocking state of affairs at the NDA with outdated curriculum and rampant ragging jolted me. Tweets and posts from another NDA alumnus, Siddharth Chatterjee affirmed what I had read and I was transported back in time.

In 1990, a puzzled Bangalore SSB interviewing officer asked me, “Young man, Navy (NDA) is your first choice and Naval Academy last! Why?” “Sir, I’ve heard NDA is the cradle of leadership which produces the finest Officers for our Army, Navy and Air Force and I want to be one of them,” I replied. Such was the craze for NDA in those days! Fast forward to 2009, I had swallowed the anchor and within a few days found myself marooned in a rural Queensland town with a population of 900. “What will I do? How will I survive?” were the questions haunting me. The NDA instincts kicked in and within no time I was the most sought after IT technician, accounting trainer, Little Athletics coach and Vice President of Gin Gin Girls Guide. The unrelenting, disciplined, tenacious and “I can do it” confidence coupled with my ability to unlearn military ways and relearn civilian skills of accounting and customer service transformed my state from 'surviving' to 'thriving.' Fast forward to 2013 and yet again NDA life skills coupled with my ability to unlearn and relearn new skills catapulted me to become a public servant with a large federal agency.

Of late, I have been wondering whether the NDA, which had done so much for me, needed to unlearn and recreate itself. Without going into the realm of personal opinions on what may be the "best way" forward for the NDA, I will focus on the process that the NDA could follow to recreate itself.

The NDA is a complex system of both formal and informal systems and has tremendous stability and resilience built into it. But as stated, my recent readings lead me to believe that the NDA needs to do some introspection and change with the times. By all accounts, just like most organisations with strong cultures, the NDA seems to be resisting change. Given this resistance and the natural aversion to heed to external criticism, I recommend a change process that will prove effective in NDA's current scenario. My recommendations are based on Kurt Lewin's time-tested three step model of change (unfreezing → changing → refreezing) and David Cooperrider's thinking on self-determined change which goes by the name, Appreciative Inquiry.

To determine what elements at the NDA need to *unfreeze*, a joint change management project team consisting of senior officers from the three services, current decision-makers at the NDA, academics of national and international repute, officers and psychologists from the SSBs, and others who may have a useful perspective should be formed. The emphasis should be on data-driven analysis.

With respect to identifying what needs to *change*, using the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), expert teams could closely observe and understand "what already works best" at the NDA. Learning from what works best could then be applied to other areas. For example, if high achieving senior cadets make the best role models then "torchies" could be formally tasked to mentor juniors struggling in academics. AI recognises an organisation's strength and builds on it rather than begin by looking at what an organisation is poor at. This, I believe, makes an organisation in need of change less defensive and more amenable to changing. The



downside is that AI can be insular. Thus extensive customer surveys of the tri-services to establish their current needs and requirements in terms of desired leadership behaviours, academic skills and physical cum mental fitness should also be undertaken. The NDA should benchmark against world best practice and be open to obtaining inputs from experts across the globe. The data will need to be critically analysed to sift what is feasible. This feasibility analysis, which will spell out the "desired end state" in terms of the finished product (i.e., the fully trained cadet), will also need to take into account the offerings by military academies from single services like the Naval Engineering College.

A comprehensive change management plan will need to be devised to reduce or close the delta (i.e., difference) between the desired end state and current state. Note that this change management plan in itself may not lead to the desired end state of NDA cadets. For example, engineering studies can take four or more years and hence it may not be possible to fully cover the syllabus during the NDA training. Therefore, the desired end-state may involve covering subjects which can be credited towards engineering and handing over of cadets to another academy at a pre-determined time. It is also possible that since the NDA will need to take tri-services requirements into consideration, the ideal implementable solution may entail training ex-NDA for specified roles and directly commissioning them into the Army, Navy and Air Force without any further training.

Most professional military organisations are good at implementing clearly articulated instructions. The NDA too can be expected to make the transition efficiently. Having changed, *refreezing* will entail reinforcing, stabilising and solidifying the introduced behaviours, processes, and goals. This step will ensure that the NDA as a system does not revert to its old undesirable ways before the introduced changes become the norm and get embedded into NDA's culture. The fact that Commandants and service officers have limited tenures at the NDA can undermine the change effort and things could relapse. Firm guidelines will need to be put into place for modifying formal aspects of the curricula.

Of course, overly prescriptive guidelines can impinge on autonomy and make it difficult for organisations to change. The recommended change management process will need to be implemented at agreed upon intervals to establish a rhythm which will maintain the NDA as India's cradle for leadership.

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## **Transformational Leadership Training at the NDA for the 21st century**

Lt Gen A S Lamba (Retd), PVSM, AVSM, PhD  
Former Vice Chief Of Army Staff  
Juliet/38

India's military officers and soldiers have exhibited extraordinarily high standards of gallantry in world wars and various campaigns in the past, and in tackling modern day threats of counter insurgency operations across the country. Their professionalism and performance stand in mute testimony to their dedication and nationalism. The Battles of Rezangla, Hell Hill, Longewala, Asal Uttar, Haji Pir, Saragarhi, Tiger Hill, liberation of Bangladesh and the innumerable acts of gallantry by NDA alumni such as Arun Khetarpal, Manoj Pandey, NJC Nair and several others show that the tradition of selfless officering is deeply entrenched in the Indian military.

Today, India's security environment presents the most diverse, multispectral and intense challenges the country has faced since its independence. The challenges emanate from our expansionist adversaries such as China and 'terrorism-driven' Pakistan and from their joint strategic threat postulations. Our armed forces are also tackling insurgencies in Kashmir, North East India and parts of central India. The situation on the border continues to be volatile, and Army deployments have consequently become extremely dynamic in consonance with threats and contingencies emerging at short notice in multiple theatres.

Given the changing spectrum of operational environment on various borders, the leadership training of officer cadets at the NDA needs to undergo a paradigm shift. The traditional curriculum-fixated training needs to shift to one that is transformational. The aim should be to transform the core values of cadets by exposing them to current and live challenges on our borders and enhancing their appreciation and capability to cope with current realities as they lead their men in these challenging times.

This paper only addresses the leadership aspect of training and is informed by this author's perspective as Army Commander, ARTRAC and by his own experiences as a trainee and by the close interactions that he later had with the higher echelons at the NDA, IMA, OTS and Services Selection Boards.

Beyond any doubt, effective leadership has been proven to be the greatest battle winning factor. In the current environment, the conventional hierarchy of responding to battle situations is unlikely to be workable as junior officers are the ones more likely to be ones who respond first. The need therefore is for young officers to be in sync with the challenges. They need to be trained for their first response and armed with appropriate skills. The institution needs to transform young cadets during their training at the NDA itself so that the young officers immediately inspire and prove effective when undertaking various types of operations and responding to contingencies in their respective units.

### **Training within and outside the NDA**

Four training-related issues need careful consideration. Firstly, the focus needs to be upon inculcating desired qualities in our junior leadership. This is presently done by small capsules on leadership, simulated situations, briefings and teachings from military history. Leadership traits such as decision making, inspirational initiatives, and aggressive spirit at the



tactical level come to the forefront. These qualities, however can normally evolve from practical experience. Two measures in this regard can help significantly:

(i) The training curriculum at the NDA must include periods/capsules that afford selective and extended exposures through specialist training schools or through interactions with units with requisite experience which are located in close proximity of the NDA or anywhere in the Southern Command.

(ii) Interactions with gallantry award winners, in particular with young officers posted anywhere in the country can be organized centrally by the Army HQ/IDS. The decorated officers should visit the NDA as part of the leadership capsule or over an appropriate period of the course to inspire cadets with their spirit and commitment first hand.

Secondly, mastering technology as an effective supplement to instinctive leadership will be a significant challenge for military leaders of developing countries in the current century. Cadets must be exposed and trained in the basics of diverse technologies for operations and Network Centric Warfare (NCW) that have altered the nature of combat. The training should focus on facilitating a cadet's comprehension of synergistic applications of air, space and cyber systems of the future.

Thirdly, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have redefined 'terrorism' and 'insurgency warfare.' Terrorist actions seek to overthrow constitutional mechanisms and have compelled governments to employ unconventional means like never before. Terror strategies these days encompass establishing territories and *khilafats*, and the possibility of seizing control of weapons of mass destruction for use against both terrorists' own state as also states they consider adversarial to their country. In some of our neighbouring countries, terrorist organisations have attained a formal status and full integration with war machinery to bleed targeted institutions as part of state military machinations, giving them significant asymmetric advantage. Training at the NDA must therefore include knowledge of complexities of irrationality impelled in sub conventional warfare which calls for immense caution and restraint on military operations, and impacts leaders who engage on first contact.

Finally, with the base of recruitment for officer cadets shifting from urban to suburban and rural area, the gap between the military environment and the native environment of the cadets has become larger. The training regime at the NDA should recognise that the cadets may take longer than normal to adjust to their new environment. This aspect needs to be thoughtfully addressed.

Organisationally, the NDA should consider exposing the cadets, as first responders, to realistic operational environments because in most instances the young officers would be expected to lead troops in operational areas from day one. Given this expectation, the training at the NDA should move away from the present inbound training mode. The cadets ought to be exposed to the ground realities of diverse operations in various terrains. For example, indoor training for Counter Insurgency operations must be followed by exposures to live operational environment on our borders (Line Of Control and Line of Actual Control) through forward area tours as done for higher command and staff college courses.

Exposure to the basics of international relations and essentials of security related perspectives and policies will lead to a fuller comprehension of the larger perspectives that drive security strategies and doctrines. The cadets could also learn about our adversary's organisation, equipment, modernization status and conduct of tactical level operations. There is also a case to expose cadets to languages such as Mandarin, Urdu, Nepali, Bengali and Sinhalese to facilitate leadership in our border areas and immediate neighbourhood.



The time- tested credo "Be, Know, and Do" as amplified by General Norman Schwarzkopf on return from the first Gulf War, in his address to the cadets at West Point, is relevant for the NDA too. The BE component of our leadership doctrine is who you are, your values, your worldview, and your "character". Knowledge (KNOW) and skills (DO) are highly perishable. If you don't use them today, they're gone tomorrow. And with the world changing at breakneck speed, we will do well to note that the knowledge and skills we learn today may be irrelevant tomorrow.

An officer, trained comprehensively at the NDA will not only uphold the high traditions of the Indian Army, but he will also ensure the safety of the men he commands and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of his country to which he is sworn to serve until death.

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