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## Decision Making in the New Millennium: Influence of Technological Development

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### INTRODUCTION

1. Decision-making is the prime responsibility of the commander. Correct decisions taken well in time and followed up with vigour and determination is the hallmark of a good leader. In the military profession, commanders at every level are doing this at all times. Their decisions have a bearing on their task, their command, on themselves and often on their superiors. These decisions are not taken at random or in an arbitrary manner. They are the products of deliberation, adequate preparation and some meditation.

2. We are frequently reminded that behind every successful commander stands an able staff –intuitive, energetic, gifted with foresight and tact; but above all, devoted to his commander. The main purpose of a staff is to assist the commander. This is accomplished by staff contributions to the timely making and executing of decisions. According to the broad direction of the commander, the staff collects all necessary information or data, appreciates the situation and recommends the best course of action. Then it is the responsibility of the commander to choose the correct decision, which is translated into suitable orders and instructions by the staffs and then disseminated to the subordinates for execution.

3. The present battlefield scenario is rapidly changing. As such the decision-making process need to be completed in a least possible time. The tremendous technological development and the invention of satellites, modern communication equipment, battlefield surveillance devices and computers have reduced the intelligence and other efforts of the staff to a considerable extent. However, the staff responsibilities, commander's involvement in the decision making process (DMP) and relationship between the commander and his staffs yet plays a very important role in the modern warfare. The future battlefield will be highly fluid and unpredictable. Thus, an intimate involvement of the commander and the staffs in the DMP is desirable.

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### DECISION MAKING

4. **Decision-Making.** It is a process of selecting a problem for decision that produces a number of alternatives amongst which, one alternative is selected for implementation and execution. Decision-making is the prime responsibility of the commander and the staffs help commanders to make and communicate those decisions to the subordinates and ensure that the decisions are executed.

5. **Types of Decisions Making.**

a. **Autocratic/Authoritarian.** The commander taking the output and data from his staffs and subordinates decides a particular course of action to be adopted. The staffs may express their views but the commander himself takes the final decision. The commander mainly seeks obedience from his group. He determines policy and considers decision making a one-man operation, he being the man.

b. **Democratic/Participatory.** The commander draws ideas and suggestions from the group by discussion and consultation. Staffs and subordinates are encouraged to express their views and take part in setting policy. The final decision is taken basing on the group solution.

c. **Mid Course** In this particular type, the commander encourages views and suggestions from his staffs and under commands. The commander then analyses those views and finally selects a course of action to be adopted. In fact, it is the mixture of autocratic and democratic type of decision.

6. **Leadership Style.** After giving the decisions, the commander must ensure that his decisions are carried out. In such circumstances the style of the leadership will be autocratic. However, there are advantages in the leader sharing decision-making with his subordinates when ever situation allows for the following reasons:

- a. Sounder decisions may be achieved when all knowledge and skill within the group is pooled.
- b. Group participation increases communication and makes a group more receptive to change.
- c. Participation satisfies and induces an individual to contribute more, to be creative and train individuals for greater responsibility.

7. **Involvement of the Commander, Staff and Subordinates in the Decision Making.** Decision-making is the responsibility of the commander where staff and subordinate helps their commander in doing so. It is a team work but involvement of staff and subordinate in decision-making in any Headquarters at any level depends upon the attitude and characteristics of the commander. Responsibilities of the commander, staff and subordinate in the decision-making are appended below:

- a. **Responsibilities of the Commander.** The prime responsibility of the commander is to create and maintain an efficient and contented unit, which can be relied upon to give its best in all circumstances, be they active service conditions or routine life in peacetime. The commander needs to involve himself directly in the DMP.
- b. **Responsibilities of the Staff.** A staff officer has two main responsibilities. The first to his commander, whom he must serve loyally and to whom he must give clear, accurate, truthful and forceful advice. The second is to the troops who fight the battles. They must be directed, positioned and supplied in such a way that they can carry out the orders of the commander with the least possible delay and with the minimum loss in men and material.

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## DECISION-MAKING IN THE PAST

8. **Battlefield Environment.** There was hardly any technological development before World War-I. Battles used to be fought by two opposing forces in a battlefield where the commanders used to remain present and all his subordinates used to execute the plan and orders given by him. The commander used to modify his plan and direct his troops according to the changing battle conditions.
9. **Techniques Applied by Various Military Commanders.**
  - a. **General George S. Patton** He was always known to be decisive and once he made a decision or gave orders, he left it to his subordinates to complete the task without further interference. Patton's philosophy was "the days of running your unit by telephone or from a comfortable dugout are over. From now on, you have to run it from the tank, motorcycle or jeep, you have to stay up with your men, and never ask them to do anything you would not do yourself".
  - b. **Field Marshal Montgomery.** Montgomery proved to be a successful leader at all levels of command from a platoon in the First World War to an Army Group in the Second World War. Montgomery's style of leadership was undoubtedly autocratic. Though he was not averse to accept suggestions, but he hated acknowledging that he had received it from a subordinate or staff officer. Montgomery created the atmosphere required for him to function as an autocratic leader by eliminating all those commanders who defied his decisions and surrounded himself with those who were loyal to him
  - c. **Field Marshal Viscount Slim.** Slim had a very clear mind and a logical way of solving problems. He imbued his colleagues and subordinates with confidence. The staff and units admired him for the confidence he inspired, making it very clear as to what he wanted. He had foresight and imagination. When writing about the 'Battle of Gallabat', where he was considered extremely unlucky and the battle ended in a tactical failure, Slim characteristically accepted the entire blame for the failure. He says, "Like so many generals when plans have gone wrong, I could find plenty of excuses, but only one reason - Myself". He visited the units regularly talking to troops informally in the lines and encouraging his subordinates to do the same.
10. **Analysis of the Techniques Applied.** In the past, most of the military commanders were autocratic type. The staffs provided relevant information to the commander basing on which the commander took decision. Field marshal Slim and few other commanders were democratic type who encouraged views and suggestions from their staffs and subordinates. In some cases, the staffs were given enough flexibility and authority to take decision for sundry details.

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## DECISION MAKING IN THE PRESENT DAYS

11. **Modern DMP.** Decisions relate always to the future and involve a choice between alternative courses of action. Since uncertainty is

associated with all decisions, so the decision-maker faces great problem to choose a course of action from two or more alternatives that are available. However, the decision situations fall under one or more of the following categories:

- a. **Certainty.** For a set of given initial conditions, future events can be predicted with a fair amount of certainty. In other words, the decision-maker is almost sure of the probable future outcome in conjunction with a particular course of action.
- b. **Risk.** Although the future cannot be predicted, it is possible to assess the likelihood of future events. More than one possibility may exist in conjunction with a specific course of action. If one is selected then the commander is accepting a risk.
- c. **Uncertainty.** A particular course of action may lead to different possible futures but the probability of any one of these occurring cannot be estimated objectively. This type of situation is generally due to unstable environment, information uncertainty and even performance uncertainty.

## 12. **DMP of the Advanced Countries.**

- a. **Tac Decision-Making in the US Army.** In the US Army the process used for decision of tac problems are commonly called "commanders estimation of the solution". This estimation is carried out in five different stages. These are:

- (1) **Mission Analysis.** The first step of DMP is the mission analysis which helps a commander to determine who, what, when, where and why elements of a course of action. In this step, following are considered:
  - (a) Higher headquarters operational plan/ operational order.
  - (b) Identifies tasks.
  - (c) Continue to assess mission requirement.
- (2) **Situation and Course of Action.** In the second step, the staff after getting the planning guidance, examines the characteristics of the area of operation, enemy and own situation, and develop the courses of action following the Intelligence Preparation of Battlefield (IPB) and DMP.
- (3) **Analysis of Courses of Action.** After developing the courses of actions, thorough analysis is carried out basing on the possible disposition of both the forces, a visualization of the battle and expected results in terms of duration, loss and risk involved. Contingency threats are also taken in to account.
- (4) **Comparison of Courses of Action.** After analyzing the different courses of action, advantage, disadvantage and risks are considered, the staff plays war gaming to identify the suitability and weaknesses of the courses and finally determines the best course of action. Necessary modifications are also made in the selected course of action in order to over come the weaknesses identified.
- (5) **Decision.** The decision making of a particular problem terminates through the commander's decision on the basis of the selection of the best course. Involvement of the commander and staff in each stage of the US decision cycle is further explained in the flow chart attached as annex 'B'.

- b. **Evaluation of DMP of Advanced Countries.**

- (1) **Advantages.**
  - (a) **Speedy System.** All data are computerized, so speedy evaluation is possible.
  - (b) **Accurate.** Process is done by decision support template basing on the reliable information, so it is more accurate.
  - (c) **Easy Comprehension.** The factors are discussed one by one in a related chronological fashion, so it is easy to comprehend.
  - (d) **More Visible.** Due to the graphical representation the system displays the exact output at the end.

(e) **Systematic.** The system is supported by modern facilities and wipes out impracticable courses and unnecessary details.

(f) **Staff's Involvement.** The system functions as a team where all staffs of a head quarter participate. Hence a coordinated and well-evaluated solution can be selected.

(2) **Disadvantages.**

(a) **Lack of Flexibility.** Analysis is generally done by the staffs. So the commander depends on staff's recommendation for selecting the best course.

(b) **Less Suitable at Lower Level.** Due to minimum number of staffs, the system is not very suitable at battalion level.

13. **Problems of Decision-Making in the Present Days.**

a. **Fluid Situation.** Modern battlefield is highly fluid and rapidly changing and therefore the commanders must not only be abreast of the situation but also be able to anticipate the events well ahead. Otherwise he will be trailing behind with a problem where as new problem or situation will come up superceding the old one.

b. **Inadequate Information.** Due to rapidly changing situation in the battlefield and different deceptive measures adopted by the enemy, it will be quite difficult to collect adequate and accurate information about the enemy. As such accurate decision can not be taken with inadequate information.

c. **Inadequate Time.** Military problems are intensely dynamic and subjected to serious fluctuation in their nature and scope. Due to enemy action, reaction, mobilization of resources of men and material, weather and terrain condition, time will be always inadequate. The staffs have to complete their job and commander has to take the decision within that limited time. Correct decision after the appropriate time will be useless.

d. **Lack of Decisiveness.** In the present battlefield condition, threat will be multidimensional. The commander must be decisive and be able to identify the most dangerous threat from other existing threats. Lack of decisiveness will confuse the commander and that will put the troops under his command at a great risk.

e. **Poor Professionalism.** For correct decision it is imperative that the commander and his staffs are professionally sound. They must understand the mechanism of different operations of war and assess the situation correctly so that appropriate decision can be taken. Poor professionalism will lead the commander and his staffs to wrong solution.

14. **Qualities of a Good Decision-Maker.** Essentially speaking, each decision-maker is likely to run into the traps identified earlier. Situation constraints and varied perspectives can also create hurdles if the decision-maker does not possess some of the following qualities:

- a. Faith in the purpose.
- b. Motivation and emotional involvement in the decision.
- c. Courage to take calculated risks where required.
- d. Flexibility to adjust and alter through quick mental reactions.
- e. Abundant self-confidence, self-control and self-restraint.

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## **DECISION-MAKING IN THE FUTURE WAR**

15. **Future Battlefield Scenario.** A battle is an organized-armed encounter of formations, units and sub-units of the belligerent powers with a view to destroying, defeating or capturing the enemy and holding important areas. The forms and methods of battle will continue changing with the development of weaponry, combat equipment and qualitative composition of forces

16. **Likely Trends of Future Wars.** *The future wars can be of various forms. They may also blend two or more forms at a time. Some of them are described as follows:*

- a. **Niche Wars.** Special forces and special operations will occupy a major portion in any type of future conflict, be it nuclear war or low intensity conflict. As example, during Gulf War army attack helicopters went and destroyed Iraqi early warning radar sites and created a safe passage for thousands of aircraft to follow.
- b. **Space War.** Space added a fourth dimension to warfare and influenced a general direction to the conflict. Satellites were utilized in the gulf war and will continue to be used in the future wars.
- c. **Robot War.** 'Like Robocop' or "Terminator-2" the future war is likely to experience massive robotisation. The most important factor favouring robotisation may be the change in public attitude toward acceptable casualty level.
- d. **Unconventional War.** Terrorism and guerrilla warfare have also become the leading form of warfare since World War II. Technology has been widely applied to covert operations and terrorism. The development of special light equipment, both lethal and non-lethal, for light infantry in the advanced countries will increase the available means for guerrilla operations.

17. **Future Battlefield in Bangladesh Perspective.** We have to visualize today that the war we have to fight tomorrow will be quite different from what we experienced in the past or even fought during 1971. Our potential adversary has made massive development of her armed forces and is becoming increasingly capable of fighting the next war equipped with all the deadly weapons. Bangladesh is likely to fight against a numerically and qualitatively much superior enemy. Therefore, Bangladesh should endeavour to acquire reasonable quantity of weapons and technological system despite her financial constraints.

18. **Characteristics of Decision-Making in the Future War.**

- a. **Accuracy.** The future war is likely to be highly lethal and destructive. Most of the advanced countries have deadly weapons. Any wrong decision in the employment of those deadly weapons by any country will cause serious destruction to the life and property of opposing country as well to the neighbouring countries.
- b. **Time.** Due to the technological advancement, the future war is likely to be of a very short duration. Even in the developing and under developed countries, the escalation of war will be very rapid due to different modern armaments and tac.
- c. **Intelligence.** Accurate collection of information about hostile activities and intention is paramount important in the future warfare. The staff must continuously collect and update information about enemy keeping a constant watch on them.

19. **Involvement of the Commander, Staff and Subordinates in the DMP.**

- a. **Staff.** The staffs will play the most important role in the DMP in the future warfare. The strength, armament and capability of a particular country are no more secret in the present days. The only secret is the intention or plan of the hostile country. The staffs should take every effort to reveal enemy's intention or plan.
- b. **Commander.** The commander must keep a harmonious relationship with his staffs and subordinates. Taking all the output from them the commander must be able identify the correct course of action to be adopted.
- c. **The Subordinates.** The subordinate commanders are responsible for ensuring training, morale and battle readiness of their units so that the orders of the commander can be executed with minimum time and with maximum efficiency.

20. **Influence of Technological Development in the Decision-Making.**

- a. **Command, Control and Communication.** Due to technological development, communication between the commanders has become easier. The highest commander can easily monitor a vast battlefield, communicate and direct his subordinates according to the battle progress. In the future battlefield scenario, command, control and communication will be further easier.
- b. **Intelligence.** Collection of information is essential for accurate assessment of the enemy situation and formulation of operational plan. Due to satellite, radar and other modern electronic equipment, this particular functioning has become easier and has reduced the job of the staff.
- c. **Detection.** The staff officers at different headquarters can easily detect, locate and identify the enemy by various electronic equipment,

like- satellite, surveillance device, radar and other electronic equipment. Correct identification of enemy and their intention enables a commander to take most effective decision.

d. **Speed.** The commander and his staffs can communicate any instruction to the subordinate commanders very rapidly and efficiently. Facsimile, e-mail, telephone and wireless sets are few of those equipment which may be used for rapid communication.

e. **Vulnerability.** The modern and future war will be highly destructive and risky. Any temptation on the part of the commander and the staffs and use of nuclear bomb by any country may bring unpredictable disaster for the whole world. Thus the commander and his staffs must understand the consequence of such vulnerability.

f. **Survivability.** The possession of nuclear weapon by different countries has created a sense of tension and panic among all nuclear powered as well as non-nuclear powered countries.

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## CONCLUSION

21. DMP is a process of selecting a problem for decision, which offers a number of options amongst which, one option is selected for execution. In the military profession, commanders at different level need to take prompt and accurate decisions. Correct decision taken well in time and followed up with vigour and determination is the hallmark of a good leader. Though, decision-making is the responsibility of the commander but the staff plays a very important role in assisting the commander for taking the correct decision.

22. As far as the decision-making is concerned, there are mainly three types of military leaders. These are - autocratic or authoritarian, democratic or participatory and mid course. The commander has to create an environment in his headquarter, where staffs can function smoothly and can contribute best of their ability to help the commander. The staff must be loyal to his commander and give clear, accurate, truthful and forceful advice. He should save the commander from worry of dealing with minor details. The staff must collect all relevant information and data required by the commander for planning. He is also responsible to disseminate commander's orders and instructions to put the commander's plan in to effective.

23. In the past, the battle used to be fought by two opposing forces in a particular battlefield. The commander either used to plan before in order to lure his enemy in to the selected area or he used to take the decision in the battle field according to the changing situation. In the past, the involvement of staff in decision-making was less and the commander used to observe and supervise the battle remaining at a vantage point. After World War-I, there was rapid technological development and deadly weapons were invented. Thus fighting between two opposing forces/ nations spread out in to a wide area at different places simultaneously. As such the DMP had taken a new shape due to fast changing battle scenario. During Second World War, it is experienced that the DMP varied from commander to commander. In most cases, the staffs collected relevant information and helped the commander in taking correct decision.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

24. **Involvement of the Commander and the Staff.** Presently the interaction between the commander and the staff is negligible in the DMP in Bangladesh. No formal aprc is done before planning any major exercises.

25. **Removal of Dual System.** Presently Bangladesh is teaching both aprc and IPB and DMP system. To avoid confusion and to introduce a new dynamic system, IPB and DMP system should be taught, practiced and thoroughly rehearsed in Bangladesh Army.

26. **Use of Modern Equipment.** The modern battlefield is highly fluid and therefore, the commander needs to take decision very quickly. To do so the commander and the staffs have to assess the situation considering all the relevant factors and available information.

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