

GENERAL WILLIAM SLIM AND THE POWER OF EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL
INTELLIGENCE IN MULTINATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL OPERATIONS

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2015

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 12-06-2015		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2014 – JUN 2015	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE General William Slim and the Power of Emotional and Cultural Intelligence in Multinational and Multicultural Operations				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Major David G. Fearon				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT British General William Joseph Slim's accomplishments in the Burma theatre of World War II are well known. However, Slim's greatness stems not only from his accomplishments on the battlefield, as impressive as they were, but more so for his accomplishments as a leader. Slim faced two unique challenges. The first was the diverse and multicultural makeup of his army. The second was the establishment and maintenance of special personal relationships with a remarkable set of personalities, each of whom could destroy the unity of effort and purpose required in such a theatre. The challenges Slim faced, were daunting yet he was wildly successful. How did he achieve this? What edge did Slim have that many others seemed to lack? This paper will argue that Slim's success was the result of a highly developed sense of emotional and cultural intelligence. Future multinational force commanders will face the same challenges as Slim in establishing unity of effort and purpose given diverse nationalities, cultures, and personalities. As such, Bill Slim is an excellent case study in the power of emotional and cultural intelligence in surmounting these challenges.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS General William Slim, Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence, XIV Army, Burma, Leadership					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	97	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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ABSTRACT

GENERAL WILLIAM SLIM AND THE POWER OF EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN MULTINATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL OPERATIONS, by Major David G. Fearon, Canadian Army, 97 pages.

British General William Joseph Slim's accomplishments in the Burma theatre of World War II are well known. However, Slim's greatness stems not only from his accomplishments on the battlefield, as impressive as they were, but more so for his accomplishments as a leader. Slim faced two unique challenges. The first was the diverse and multicultural makeup of his army. The second was the establishment and maintenance of special personal relationships with a remarkable set of personalities, each of whom could destroy the unity of effort and purpose required in such a theatre. The challenges Slim faced, were daunting yet he was wildly successful. How did he achieve this? What edge did Slim have that many others seemed to lack? This paper will argue that Slim's success was the result of a highly developed sense of emotional and cultural intelligence. Future multinational force commanders will face the same challenges as Slim in establishing unity of effort and purpose given diverse nationalities, cultures, and personalities. As such, Bill Slim is an excellent case study in the power of emotional and cultural intelligence in surmounting these challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper would not have been possible without the superb advice, encouragement and patience of committee members; Dr. Mark Hull, Dr. Richard Olsen and Mr. Gerald Sewell. Their expertise was critical to its successful conclusion. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Ms. Venita Krueger in the formatting and organization of this paper. Last, but most significantly, if it were not for the continuing support of my wonderful wife Lauralee and our amazing children, Norah and Isaac, this paper would remain unwritten. Thank you

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INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Britain's National Army Museum undertook the mammoth task of determining Britain's greatest general. Judges considered twenty Field Marshals and Generals spanning over 450 years of empire and conquest and including such stalwarts as Cromwell, Marlborough, Wellington, Haig and Montgomery. The end state was a draw between the aristocratic Duke of Wellington, the victor of Waterloo, the vanquisher of Napoleon and future Prime Minister and a humble man from lower middle class Birmingham named Bill Slim.¹

As the National Army Museum demonstrated, William Joseph Slim was one of the finest British generals of the 20th century and in the eyes of many, the most outstanding general to emerge from World War II. Slim, as commander of the British XIV Army, led his shattered and defeated forces through the longest retreat in British history, across the length and breadth of Burma, one of the most challenging environments on earth, while pursued by a vicious and seemingly invincible Japanese Army. He then systematically reorganized, retrained and reinvigorated his army in time to smash the Japanese invasion of India at the battles of Imphal and Kohima. In these battles, XIV Army endured some of the most brutal and prolonged combat experienced in any theatre throughout the war. Slim then pursued his enemy through the monsoons and jungles of Burma until XIV Army emerged onto the Central Burma plain where he unleashed a brilliant mechanized counterstroke that destroyed the Japanese Army, inflicting upon it one of its greatest defeats. Slim's accomplishments are all the more

¹ National Army Museum, "Britain's Greatest General," accessed October 4, 2014, <http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/britains-greatest-general>.

remarkable when one considers that XIV Army was chronically undermanned and equipped with discarded material considered obsolete and inappropriate for use in the European theater of operations.

However, Slim's greatness stems not only from his accomplishments on the battlefield, as impressive as they were, but more so for his accomplishments as a leader. All commanders must deal with the challenges imposed by the enemy, terrain and logistics, and in these respects alone, Slim was perhaps simply a good general who applied the skills taught to him throughout his military career. However, Slim faced two unique challenges.

The first was the diverse and multicultural makeup of his army. XIV Army was not a typical British formation. It was a multinational and multicultural army consisting of British, Indian, Gurkha, and African troops with a variety of religions including Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, and speaking a multitude of languages. Yet Slim forged these disparate elements into a coherent whole, united in one purpose – to defeat the Japanese. The men of Slim's army did not see themselves through any racial or religious perspective, but only through the perspective of XIV Army. To the rest of the world they were a mere sideshow compared to the more prominent European and Pacific theatres, hence the nickname "The Forgotten Army." To be part of XIV Army was something special; it had an *esprit de corps* unlike any large force in the 20th century and although he would never claim it, its cohesion and spirit were the result of Bill Slim's quiet, hands-on and humane leadership.

The second challenge Slim faced was the establishment and maintenance of special personal relationships with a remarkable set of personalities, each of whom

supplied their own complications. Dominating personalities such Lord Louis Mountbatten, “Vinegar” Joe Stilwell, and Orde Wingate could knock XIV Army off course. Each was too important to ignore yet Slim quietly won their confidence and trust, and convinced them of the importance of unity of effort and purpose in a theatre where resources were scarce. Mountbatten was the “Supremo”, the Supreme Allied Commander in South-East Asia. Connected to the Royal Family, he was self-centered and craved attention. “Vinegar” Joe Stilwell was the American advisor to Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek. He filled a number of roles, often conflicting, including Chiang’s Chief of Staff, Mountbatten’s deputy, and commander of all U.S. forces in the theatre, and nominally of Chinese forces as well. He was rabidly xenophobic and trusted none of his allies including the British or the Chinese. However, Slim needed Stilwell, mainly because the American transport aircraft that supplied the Chinese also supplied his own troops. Orde Wingate was a personal favorite of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and created the Long Range Penetration Group or Chindits, attacking the Japanese in Burma in 1943 and 1944. He thought himself a genius, as did Churchill; others thought he was insane. Slim felt that Wingate’s methods were reckless and wasted good men and material for little gain yet, Slim could not afford to alienate Wingate and risk interference by Churchill.

Thus, the challenges Slim faced, including molding a diverse army and managing so many dominating personalities, to say nothing of the terrain, weather, logistical constraints and of course the enemy were daunting yet he was wildly successful. How did he achieve this? What edge did Slim have that many others seemed to lack? This paper will argue that Slim’s success was the result of a highly developed sense of emotional

and cultural intelligence. Emotional intelligence is “the ability to monitor one’s own and other people’s emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior.”² Thus, a high degree of emotional intelligence allows one to select and apply appropriate influencing techniques in order to achieve a purpose, goal or end state. Cultural intelligence is “the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of a group of people and, most importantly, to effectively apply this knowledge toward a specific goal or range of activities.”³

Future multinational force commanders will continue to face the same challenges Slim experienced in the Burma campaign: achieving unity of effort amongst multinational forces and leveraging key personal relationships. As such, Slim is an excellent case study into the power of emotional and cultural intelligence in surmounting these challenges.

Chapter 1 will provide a biographical overview of Slim’s early life including his service as a junior officer in World War I and as an Indian Army officer in the interwar period. Chapter 2 continues the biographical account with greater focus on Slim’s challenges and accomplishments in the Burma campaign. Chapter 3 reviews both the theoretical foundations of leadership theory as well as the theory of emotional. Specifically it discusses how emotional intelligence assists the leader in the selection of appropriate leadership tactics and techniques and demonstrates how Slim used these

² Andrew Coleman, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, 241.

³ Karen Davis, *Cultural Intelligence and Leadership. An Introduction for Canadian Forces Leaders* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), ix.

skills to manage key personnel within the Burma theatre. Chapter 4 will discuss how Slim's highly developed sense of cultural intelligence enabled him to instill a high degree of commitment from his army and foster cooperation and unity of effort within XIV Army. Chapter 5 summarizes Slim's accomplishments highlighting the direct link between emotional and cultural intelligence and success in the Burma campaign, thereby providing an excellent leadership model for future multinational force commanders.

CHAPTER 1

1891–1939

Bill Slim's career path was atypical of most British World War II generals. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not attend a well-respected English public school or university and did not attend the British Army's Royal Military College at Sandhurst. His primary education was decidedly middle class. Slim was born in Bristol in 1891 to lower middle class parents and moved to Birmingham in his early teens. As a young boy, Slim wanted to pursue an Army career, despite no tradition of military service within his family. His earliest military experiences came in the form of illustrated books and magazines such as "*British Battles on Land and Sea*" to which his father subscribed.⁴ Books such as these were inexpensive and readily available at the end of the 19th century when *Pax Britannica* was at its peak. Recounting British heroes and great victories throughout history with colorful pictures and maps it would have been easy for a young boy to become spellbound. However, a military career was simply out of the question for young Bill Slim. As part of a middle class family, Slim lacked the financial means to support a career as an officer. Still organized upon Victorian lines, British officers were to bridge the gap between their meager pay and the expected lifestyle of a British officer. In even the most modest of regiments, this was simply not feasible. Similarly, joining the ranks would result in a noticeable drop in social status not just for Bill but for his family as well.

⁴ Russell Miller, *Uncle Bill: the Authorized Biography of Field Marshall Sir William Slim* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2013), 32, iBooks.

Slim was by no means an exceptional student; however, he seems to have been good enough to win a scholarship to Birmingham's King Edward's School at the age of 16. Considered one of the best schools in the country,⁵ it would serve as a good preparation for a career as a schoolteacher, a more appropriate choice for someone of Slim's social standing. Slim left King Edward's at age 18 and took a job as a pupil-teacher at Steward Street School, situated in a poor working class neighborhood of Birmingham. Although there are some disputes among Slim's biographers concerning his motivations for taking this position, all agree that this decision had a monumental influence on his development as a future leader. "He discovered very quickly the need to keep control of his class, but he learned too, that sympathy and understanding also brought results."⁶ Slim's students were desperately poor, undernourished and maltreated. Many came from homes where alcohol abuse was rampant and their prospects for the future were dim. Nevertheless, Slim had a deep respect for his students who despite their miserable conditions struggled to be good and make the most of their situation. He sympathized with their plight and gained an understanding of where his students came from.

Young Slim, still in his teens, quickly empathized with his pupils and the low quality of their lives; this was to give him an insight into the British soldier enjoyed by very few other officers in high command in either World War. These boys came from appalling homes, where drunkenness and violence were commonplace; many had what today's psychologists would describe as severe behavioral problems, and discipline,

⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶ Ibid., 44.

unknown at home save through savage beatings, was hard to impose in the classroom, though Slim found that firmness and kindness worked wonders.⁷

This experience did much to prepare him for the challenges of future years. Many of Slim's soldiers came from backgrounds similar to his Birmingham students and he gained an appreciation of the average soldier that many of his peers simply could not.

It was an experience and education, which was instrumental in contributing, later in his life, to the famous rapport he had with his soldiers. Bill understood ordinary people, their problems in a way that conventionally educated officers could not—the rarefied environment of public school, and Sandhurst provided few insights into the lives and mores of the working class.⁸

Slim was well aware that a career as a teacher offered limited opportunity. Therefore, after two years, he took a job as a junior clerk at a steel tube manufacturer. His position seemed to offer little challenge but it did provide a steady, if not excessive salary and the slim chance of advancement. He never lost his enthusiasm for all things military, in 1912; he somehow joined the Birmingham University Officer Training Corps despite not being a student. This allowed him, to a certain degree, the chance to experience some aspects of military life even if it was only for a few hours a week. His education in leadership continued as he was soon in close contact with the rough men who worked the factory floor. “Although his responsibilities as a junior clerk were dreary, Bill enjoyed it when he had to visit the steelworks and he developed a similar affinity with the workers

⁷ Micheal Hickey, *Unforgettable Army. Slim's XIVth Army in Burma* (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Spellmount, 1992), 8.

⁸ Miller, 45.

that he had with the boys at Steward Street School.”⁹ Again, the close daily contact with the common man gave Slim a unique perspective on their inner workings.

Slim appeared set to follow a path in business and had secured a more adventurous position with the Asiatic Petroleum Company, which operated in China. However, circumstances intervened and Slim would finally get the chance to be a soldier. The start of the Great War removed all the social barriers that had stood before him and Slim soon found himself an officer in the British Army. “For Bill Slim, and hundreds like him, what was to be known as the Great War provided an opportunity to obtain what was formerly unattainable – a commission in the British Army. . . . On 22 August 1914, William Slim was gazetted as a temporary second lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.”¹⁰

The Great War

Slim was assigned to the Regiment’s 9th Battalion and spent the next nine months training with his new platoon and by June 1915 the battalion finally received orders to deploy. Rather than join the attritional slaughter of the Western front, the 9th Warwicks reinforced the Allied effort at Gallipoli. The Gallipoli campaign was an ill-fated attempt by the French and British to gain control of the Dardanelles in order to attack Constantinople and perhaps force the Ottoman Empire out of the war. The amphibious landing was disaster and the Allies soon found themselves contained by the Turks after having made only marginal gains. The deployment of Slim’s battalion was part of an

⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰ Ibid., 57.

Allied effort to reinforce the initial landing and subsequently breakout. The battalion landed on 13 July 1915 and on 8 August, it participated in a large-scale attack, which quickly bogged down. By nightfall, Slim found himself in command of what remained of his company, approximately 50 men. To his flank was the remnant of a Gurkha battalion and Slim was greatly impressed by their courage and tenacity; this was his first experience with Gurkha troops. Slim linked up with the Gurkha commander and together they planned a coordinated assault the next morning, however within minutes Slim was severely wounded and evacuated from the field. This attack, like many before it, cost the Allies dearly and accomplished little. Within two days, the Allies lost 3500 men killed in action.¹¹

Slim came perilously close to dying on the transport ship that carried him to Lemnos where he transferred to a hospital ship for the long journey back to England. The fact that Slim's wound was serious was clear to all however, the treatment was not. The senior doctor recommended that he undergo a certain medical procedure but another, younger doctor talked Slim out of it, and thus saved his career. The young doctor recommended a different procedure; if it failed, Slim would be no worse off. However, if successful, he could make a full recovery; he chose the alternate procedure. The operation was a success and Slim retained the use of his arm and shoulder. He now faced a long period of recuperation in England and when he recovered sufficiently he joined the Regiment's holding battalion, the 12th. This was where new recruits trained and sly officers avoided the front. Slim hated it, but it did provide him the opportunity make two

¹¹ Commonwealth War Graves Commission Homepage, "Find War Dead," accessed November 8, 2015, <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx?cpage=1>.

decisions that had long-term impacts, one seemingly trivial and the other a wise career move. Both of these decisions were influenced by a factor that would follow him for life, the question of money.

He first decided to write and publish short stories as a means of supplementing his income. Writing fiction may seem irrelevant to a military officer but in creating different characters and placing them in contact with each other, the writer gains an understanding of human nature. This had also “given Slim the ability to reduce complex issues to their basic essentials”¹² The second decision, the wise career move, was to act upon a rumor passed on by a fellow convalescing officer that the British Army was accepting applications for permanent officer commissions. Slim’s commission was, like thousands of others only temporary, effective only as long as the war lasted. For many of his peers that was well enough, but despite nearly dying on the battlefield, the thought of being anything other than a military officer did not interest him. Thus, Slim seized the chance for a regular commission but issue of money remained, however, he had discovered an anomaly within the Army that he did not know existed before, the presence of a regiment where private means were not necessary. This was the West Indian Regiment, which recruited from British Colonies in the Caribbean and had served in Africa. His application was accepted and he commissioned into the Regiment on 1 June 1916¹³ although he would never serve with it.

¹² Duncan Anderson, “The Very Model of a Modern Manoeuvrist General: William Slim and the Exercise of High Command in Burma,” in *The Challenges of High Command*, eds., Gary Sheffield and Geoffrey Till (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2003), 76.

¹³ Ronald Lewin, *Slim, The Standardbearer: A Biography of Field Marshal the Viscount Slim* (London: Cooper, 1976), 30.

Still not cleared to return to active duty Slim continued to perform duties with the 12th Battalion, including escorting a draft of recruits to France. This was the closest he ever came to the Western front. In August 1916, Slim volunteered to bring a company of replacements to his old 9th battalion then serving in Mesopotamia. The 9th Warwicks, with the remainder of the Allied force, evacuated Gallipoli after it became clear that the campaign there was hopeless. Upon arriving in Mesopotamia with the new recruits, Slim simply stayed with the battalion as it prepared for another campaign against the Turks.

The British has suffered a second humiliating defeat in June 1916 at the hands of the Turks at the siege of Kut. The 9th Warwicks were part of General Stanley Maude's plan to seize Baghdad, defeat the Turks and avenge the loss of Kut. Slim was often at the front of the battalion advance and was awarded the Military Cross for seizing, on his own initiative, a piece of key terrain which rendered the opposing Turkish defensive position untenable and forcing their withdrawal. The British occupied Baghdad in March 1917 but despite their success British tactics in Mesopotamia did not impress Slim. He felt that the frequent frontal attacks against prepared defensive positions were wasteful and resulted in unnecessary casualties. Slim himself was wounded a second time in the course of one of these attacks. His nomination for the Military Cross and subsequent wound caused some bureaucratic confusion in London since clearly a recovering casualty could not be wounded in battle if he had never been cleared to return to active service by a proper medical board.

Indian Army Officer

Evacuated once again, Slim convalesced in India; a decision that greatly facilitated the second stage in his career. Cleared to conduct administrative duties, Slim

joined Indian Army Headquarters in Delhi and it was at this time that he applied for a transfer to the Indian Army. It is important to note that there were two armies stationed in India. The British Army in India comprised those regular British battalions assigned to India as part of the normal rotation of units throughout the Empire. These battalions could serve in Egypt, Hong Kong or at home in the British Isles. The other army was the British Indian Army or simply the Indian Army. This was comprised of Indian soldiers and NCOs and mostly British officers, however the slow intake of Indian officers had already begun. In peacetime, it served almost exclusively in India where it was responsible for internal security duties and defending against Pashtun raids on the Afghan frontier. The successor of the East India Company's private army it was recruited on ethnic lines, specifically from the so called "martial races" of India including Sikhs, Punjabis, Rajputs, Gurkhas, and Jats to name only a few. Due to its multi-ethnic nature, British officers were required to adapt to the particular culture of their regiments and the relationship between the officers and their men was very close, each battalion like a family.

One must remember that each race needed different handling, whether they were Pathans, Sikhs, Rajputs or Gurkhas, although perhaps the last had more in common with the British soldier than the others. It was very much a family show from the point of the British officer and the Indian soldier, particularly the latter for, in a regiment, a son followed his father who, in turn, had followed his father—nephews followed uncles—and the relationship was much more continuous than in the British Army.¹⁴

A career in the Indian Army offered Slim everything he could have hoped for: a viable career as an officer, financial stability due to the much lower cost of living in

¹⁴ Sir Claude Auchinleck, quoted in Geoffrey Evans, *Slim as Military Commander* (London: Batsford, 1969), 24.

India, advancement and due to its frequent operations on the frontier the chance of continued action. Slim applied for and was accepted into the 1st Battalion of the 6th Gurkha Rifles, the same unit that he had fought beside at Gallipoli and whose professionalism he admired so deeply. Slim loved the Gurkhas and his respect for them as soldiers was immense, to Slim, there was no better soldier in the world than a Gurkha.

The Almighty created in the Gurkha an ideal infantryman, indeed an ideal Rifleman, brave, tough, patient, adaptable, skilled in field-craft, intensely proud of his military record and unswervingly loyal. Add to this his honesty in word and deed, his parade perfection, and his unquenchable cheerfulness, service with the Gurkhas is for any soldier an immense satisfaction.¹⁵

Slim's performance as an Indian Army officer during the interwar period was solid yet promotion and advancement were painfully slow. His career path for the first 10 years of his Indian army career was typical of most and consisted of a mix of regimental, staff and educational postings. Given his experience and maturity, he was appointed the battalion adjutant in 1921, a key position for a junior officer, directly responsible to the commanding officer for the smooth daily operation of the unit. He attended Staff College at Quetta in 1926 followed by a series of appointments at Army Headquarters in Delhi. He returned to 1/6 Gurkha as second in command for a short period in 1933 before becoming the Indian Army's representative on the teaching staff at the British Army's staff college at Camberley. The incumbent Major Jackie Smyth nominated him. Smyth was a shining star in the Indian Army and earned a Victoria Cross in the Great War but would see his career destroyed in the early stages of the Burma campaign. "The directing staff at Camberley only included one officer from the Indian Army and to be chosen was

¹⁵ Sir William Slim, quoted in Miller, 114.

both a great honour and a tacit recognition of an officer with enormous potential.”¹⁶

Again, his performance was strong and the commandant recommended that he attend the Imperial Defence College. This was a joint course, and Slim studied with RAF and Royal Navy officers for the first time. Nevertheless, Slim was eager to return to India and felt he was forgotten and too old for promotion. Indeed, when finally promoted Lieutenant Colonel in 1938 at the age of 47, it was on the tie-breaking vote of the promotion board chair that finally put him over the top. Slim was given command of 2/7 Gurkha but served there for less than a year before being appointed Commandant of the Senior Officer School in April 1939.

Slim’s life and career path prior to World War Two were clearly unique. Both his education and career development were vastly different from most senior officers. Slim did not receive the believed advantages of a public school education, or indoctrinated in the ways of the British Army at Sandhurst. Slim’s education came from the streets and factories of Birmingham, the horrors of Gallipoli and in the daily life of an Indian Army regiment. This provided a unique perspective on the common British and Indian soldier and contributed directly to his future success.

¹⁶ Miller, 166.

CHAPTER 2

1939-1945

With the commencement of the Second World War Slim took command of 10 Indian Brigade. Had the war not occurred it is unlikely that Slim would have climbed much higher. “By 1939 he had acquired all the main qualifications available to a middle-grade officer in peacetime; old for his rank, he might nevertheless have been carried by his record and reputation a rung or two further up the promotion ladder, but the highest places were inaccessible. A war was needed to open a new career for his talents.”¹⁷ 10 Indian Brigade consisted of three Indian infantry battalions and Slim embarked upon a rigorous training regime before being dispatched in late 1940 to East Africa, as part of the Allied campaign to liberate Ethiopia from the Italians. His career nearly ended there. Slim was to seize the Italian held forts of Gallabat and Metemma on the Sudanese-Ethiopian border. This was “the first British offensive of the Second World War”¹⁸ and Slim was to command it. It was a disaster. Upon arriving in Sudan, Slim was to exchange one of his Indian battalions for a British one. This was an old practice based upon the premise that the presence of a British battalion within each brigade would stiffen the resolve of the Indian battalions. Slim considered the practice outdated and insulting to his Indian troops. He lost the argument and inherited a battalion of the Essex Regiment that he did not know and did not want.¹⁹

¹⁷ Evans, 63.

¹⁸ Sir William Slim, *Unofficial History* (New York: David McKay, 1959), 127.

¹⁹ Ibid.

To accomplish the seizure of Gallabat/Metemma Slim had at his disposal some tanks and artillery to support his brigade. Gallabat lay on the Sudanese side of the border and the initial attack was successful however, the subsequent move on Metemma was a disaster. Accurate Italian bombing and the mishandling of the tanks threw the attack into disarray. The British battalion broke and Slim withdrew, giving up Gallabat in the process.

Slim's first operation had been a failure and he reflected deeply on his performance. There were plenty of targets to choose from if Slim wished to place blame: the British battalion certainly did not stiffen the brigade (he sacked the CO), the Italians quickly eliminated his air cover leaving him vulnerable and his tanks performed poorly, but placing blame elsewhere was not Slim's nature. He felt that rather than withdrawing he should have continued the attack reasoning that the Italians were likely just as much in disarray as the British, but his subordinate commanders advised against it. "When two courses of action were open to me I had not chosen, as a good commander should, the bolder."²⁰ He resolved that if given another chance he would take the bolder course of action.

Deir-ez-Zor

Slim was wounded a third time in January 1941 as the British advanced into Eritrea when his vehicle was strafed by Italian aircraft. Although not life threatening, it was enough to have him evacuated once again to India. Slim no longer had his brigade and it was not certain he would ever receive another command. He once again served at

²⁰ Ibid., 148.

Army Headquarters in Delhi and in May 1941 joined the staff of a newly formed British force destined for Iraq. Iraqforce, was to secure the port of Basra and protect both critical oil infrastructure and key RAF bases. Shortly after arriving in Iraq, he became a temporary Major General and given command of 10 Indian Division, Iraqforce's largest element.

Slim's new division moved north to support Allied operations against the Vichy French in Syria. Its immediate task was to secure a key bridge over the Euphrates in the border town of Deir-ez-Zor. It was a daunting task and given the limited logistical support, available Slim could only use one brigade for the operation. He had decided on a flanking attack by a motorized force combined with a more conventional infantry assault. However, poor weather and French bombing had severely delayed the flanking column and it soon became apparent that it would not have the fuel required. Slim's dilemma was to either attempt the conventional assault, which he was sure the French were expecting, or stick with his original plan, but he needed the fuel. Remembering Gallabat, he chose the latter, and placed his trust in his chief logistical officer to find the fuel.

Slim was influenced by two main factors: first, the memories of Gallabat, when he had been deterred by the seemingly cast-iron reasons of his advisers from taking what he considered the right course of action—the bold course and one which his enemy would least have preferred; second, the principle he was to follow on so many later occasions, that once he was satisfied in his own mind that the main idea was the correct one, everything must be subordinated to it.²¹

By draining every unnecessary vehicle, the force gathered enough fuel to enable the flanking maneuver and the town quickly fell, capturing the bridge intact along with considerable fuel stocks. Deir-ez-Zor was a resounding, if minor success. Slim had

²¹ Evans, 51.

outmaneuvered the Vichy French and captured his objective with minimal losses, but more importantly he regained the confidence lost at Gallabat. After participating in the quick Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran to prevent it from falling under Nazi influence, Slim was soon back in Iraq training his division to a high standard. In March 1942, Slim returned to India, his days as a division commander were over and he received the unenviable task of commanding British Forces in Burma who were already reeling from a vicious Japanese assault.

Burcorps and the Longest Retreat

The Japanese had invaded Burma from neighboring Thailand in January 1942. From the start, things had gone poorly for the British. They were unprepared to meet the well-trained Japanese Army in such an inhospitable environment as Burma where the terrain and climate was as much a threat as the enemy.

Never has an army had to fight and win a war against such a tough, tenacious, vicious and courageous foe as the Japanese. The fighting was mainly in tortuous, steep and rugged mountainous jungle terrain, bedeviled by some of the world's longest and widest rivers flowing across the axis of advance. The campaign demanded more than average hand-to and fighting.²²

Strategically the British never envisioned an invasion in Burma despite its wealth of natural resources, including oil, which made it such an enviable objective for the Japanese. As such, there was no viable defense plan. "Once the Japanese decided to move aggressively into Burma no commander, living or dead, could have sustained by his

²² John Slim in Hickey, 1.

genius the indefensible British position. It was a house of cards, erected on the quicksands of false hopes.”²³

At the tactical and operational level, once the British realized the vulnerability of Burma and the potential for a Japanese assault there was little hope. The British units available were disorganized, poorly equipped and understrength. Burma Army consisted of only two weak infantry divisions. The first, 17 Indian Division would develop into one of the finest in the British Army by 1945 but in early 1942, it could barely function. One of its three brigades had been sent to Singapore as reinforcements only to arrive in time to surrender, the remaining brigades had been trained for desert warfare against the Germans and Italians in North Africa not the Japanese in Burma. The other, 1 Burma Division, consisted of Burmese levies whose reliability was questionable at best. Reinforcements consisted of a weak armored brigade, the 7th, and few scattered battalions of infantry rushed from India. The Royal Air Force was just as poorly equipped and organized and the Royal Navy was non-existent.

To sum up, the Burma Army was unready for war. The command structure was; the efficiency of the Army, at no time high, had been further reduced by expansion; vital items of equipment were lacking; there were no reserves of manpower or equipment; the shortage of transport was acute; there were insufficient aircraft for air defence.²⁴

The reasoning behind Slim’s appointment as commander Burcorps is as confusing as the situation on the ground in Burma and reflects the complicated command structure in place. On 13 February 1942, Lieutenant General Thomas Hutton, the overall British commander in Burma at the time of the Japanese attack, requested a corps commander to

²³ Lewin, 79.

²⁴ Evans, 58.

take operational command on the ground in Burma.²⁵ At the time, the British were considering sending another division to reinforce their defense. Hutton believed that the presence of another division would stretch his span of control beyond his capabilities. Hutton's superior, General Archibald Wavell recommended to Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London that Lieutenant General Corbett, then commanding IV Corps in Iraq, and Slim's immediate superior, fill the role. Lieutenant General Alan Hartley, who was serving as Commander in Chief India, and hence the commander of the Indian Army, instead recommended Slim. However, it appears that the key influence came from Lieutenant General Archibald Nye, then Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London. Nye had served with Slim as an instructor at Camberley and spoke very highly of his abilities to Brooke, who had never met Slim. Brooke agreed to dispatch Slim to Burma but it was unclear in exactly what capacity. By this point, General Harold Alexander replaced Hutton as Commander Burma Army. It appears that Brooke made it clear that Slim was available in any capacity desired by Alexander, either as a corps commander or as his chief of staff. In Alexander's mind, the most pressing need was for a corps commander, thus Slim became a corps commander.²⁶ It was the need for a competent officer, who was available, and equally adept as a field commander or as a staff officer drove Slim's selection. While Nye spoke highly of Slim, it was clear that Slim's reputation was still limited to the Indian Army and it is highly likely that without Nye's recommendation he would have remained in Iraq.

²⁵ Robert Lyman, *Slim, Master of War. Burma and the Birth of Modern Warfare* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2005), 265.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

By the time Slim took command of the newly organized Burma Corps (Burcorps) on 19 March 1942, the British were already in full retreat. 17 Indian Division was nearly destroyed in February at the Battle of the Sittang Bridge, its commander, Slim's predecessor on the directing staff at Camberley, Jackie Smyth fired. Rangoon, and with it the only seaport, was abandoned in early March and Alexander, nearly captured in the process. The British were falling back to the central plains of Burma with the Japanese applying constant pressure. Nationalist Chinese forces now joined the fight attempting to keep the Burma Road open, their only line of communication with the outside world but with the loss of Rangoon, the road was useless. Furthermore, there was still no coherent strategy. Alexander wished to hold a line somewhere in Burma, preferably with the oil fields intact, but there were simply too few troops to accomplish the task. Slim found himself in this environment. "Surely few commanders, on taking over a new command, have been faced with such an unfavourable situation or such seemingly insoluble difficulties."²⁷

Slim's effect on upon taking command was immediate. While he could not bring additional units, personnel, tanks or aircraft, he brought something more valuable: confidence. "He immediately imposed his personality to the extent that we felt that someone behind had taken charge of us. Up to then we had been left to our own devices."²⁸ Slim quickly took stock of the situation and despite its severity and the

²⁷ Evans, 66.

²⁸ Major-General Bruce Scott in Robert Lyman, "The Art of Manoeuvre at the Operational Level of War: Lieutenant-General W.J. Slim and Fourteenth Army, 1944-1945," in *The Challenges of High Command*, eds. Gary Sheffield and Till Geoffrey (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 98.

immediate pressures placed upon him; his positive and pro-active nature became apparent. For the next two months, Slim conducted a harrowing withdrawal of British forces. Constantly outflanked by the more mobile Japanese and burdened by casualties and refugees Slim retreated farther north.

It was during the retreat that he first met American general Joseph Stilwell. Stilwell's role was the chief American advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese nationalist leader who had been fighting the Japanese since 1933. As such, Stilwell acted as Chiang's chief of staff and was nominally in command of all Chinese forces in Burma. "Almost 60 years of age, Stilwell combined the two appointments of Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo and Commanding General of the United States Army Forces in the Chinese-Burma-India theatre. He knew the Chinese well, could speak the language, was unconventional and had the physical toughness of a much younger man."²⁹ His vitriolic personality earned the nickname "Vinegar Joe" and he deeply mistrusted his British Allies, yet Slim earned his trust during the retreat and solidified a connection that paid dividends in the years to come.

Despite a few local successes, Slim was unable to stop the Japanese advance. For Slim, there was no other option but to save what remnants of Burcorps he could by withdrawing into India. The Corps barely crossed the imposing Chindwin River ahead of the Japanese, leaving most of its equipment and transport behind, and began the long trek on foot along jungle paths over the mountains of western Burma, carrying their casualties with them. The British were soundly beaten but Slim's remarkable leadership was evident. A battalion commander commented: "I cannot say what General Slim meant to

²⁹ Evans, 63.

his subordinate commanders during that arduous retreat. He habitually visited the formations, scattered all over the front, by jeep or air. He was always accessible and when he was in the offing and I was able to talk to him, I invariably returned full of confidence and pep.”³⁰ Despite being outclassed in every manner Burcorps continued to fight as a coherent force, the command structure remained intact, orders were issued, followed and discipline maintained. Much of the credit belongs to Slim. “The army never degenerated into an undisciplined rabble, owing largely to the example set by Slim from the top.”³¹ Slim could see this himself and the fact that his corps retained its fighting spirit despite its recent challenges was a clear indication of his abilities as a leader.

On the last day of that nine-hundred-mile retreat, I stood on a bank beside the road and watched the rearguard march into India. All of them, British, Indian, and Gurkha, were gaunt and ragged as scarecrows. Yet, as they trudged behind their surviving officers in groups pitifully small, they still carried their arms and kept their ranks, they were still recognizable as fighting units. They might look like scarecrows, but they looked like soldiers too.³²

XV Corps and First Arakan

Slim was angry and disappointed by the lack of preparations made by Delhi for Burcorps arrival. The monsoon had begun yet there were no facilities available for the returning troops. Medical care was sparse and Slim’s troops, racked by malaria and dysentery, forced to bivouac on open hillsides and left to their own devices. The few British and Indian troops on the border provided what little they had but ultimately it was

³⁰ Ibid., 67.

³¹ Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign. Disaster into Triumph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 38.

³² Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Cassell and Company, 1956), 109.

not their responsibility to do so. Slim clashed with Lieutenant General Noel Irwin, Commander IV Corps and responsible for the Indian border. It became clear that Irwin held Burcorps in low esteem and this personally offended Slim. Irwin and Slim were never on good terms after this, perhaps because in firing the Commander Officer of the Essex Regiment following the Gallabat disaster he destroyed the career of one of Irwin's close friends.

Burcorps ceased to exist on 20 May 1942 and Slim handed his troops over to IV Corps. He felt that he was abandoning them after having only led them to defeat.

I had a horrible feeling I was deserting them, and the friendship and loyalty that officers and men showed me when I bade them farewell only made it worse. To be cheered by troops whom you have led to victory is grand and exhilarating. To be cheered by the gaunt remnants of those whom you have led only in defeat, withdrawal, and disaster, is infinitely moving—and humbling.³³

Slim was temporarily without a job. It would have been easy to place Burma behind him secure in the knowledge that he had done what he could but Slim could not. Instead, he began an assessment not only of the British performance but his own as well. He was unsure if he would get another opportunity against the Japanese but he desperately wanted it.

Thirteen thousand killed, wounded and missing plus the loss of the tanks, most of the guns and transport, was a heavy price to pay, and this could have undermined the confidence and morale of the commander responsible. But not so with Slim. Instead, he set himself to analyze the causes of defeat, to conduct a self-examination of how, when and why he had made errors, and to study closely Japanese tactics and psychology so that should the time come when he was again called upon to fight them, he would be better prepared.³⁴

³³ Ibid., 114.

³⁴ Evans, 84.

Slim's analysis revealed a number of faults, some of which were no longer repairable such as the general lack of defensive preparations in Burma itself. This was most evident in the failure to connect Burma and India by road, the consequences of which were clearly apparent after the loss of Rangoon. However many factors could be remedied if given the time. This included better-organized and trained troops capable of fighting in the jungle, at night, and without access to roads. Slim did not believe in the myth of the Japanese jungle superman. Air superiority was critical and Slim recognized early the potential of aerial resupply in the jungle. Lastly, the British lacked a functioning intelligence network; the requirement for reconnaissance capable of operating in the jungle was evident. However, in Slim's mind the greatest fault lay in leadership. The British, Slim acknowledged, were simply out-generaled. Japanese objectives were always clear, the British less so. "Their object, clear and definite, was the destruction of our forces; ours a rather nebulous idea of retaining territory."³⁵ However, as much as he could fault Alexander and his predecessors, Slim also saw opportunity.

I had not realized how the Japanese, formidable as long as they are allowed to follow undisturbed their daring projects, are thrown into confusion by the unexpected. I should have subordinated all else to the vital need to strike at them and thus to disrupt their plans, but I ought, in spite of everything and at all risks, to have collected the whole strength of my corps before I attempted any counter-offensive. Thus, I might have risked disaster, but I was more likely to have achieved success. When in doubt as to two courses of action, a general should choose the bolder. I reproached myself now that I had not.³⁶

After a short period, mostly spent visiting his wounded in hospital, Slim took command of XV Corps, a new formation consisting of two weak and untrained divisions.

³⁵ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 118.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 121

The Corps area of responsibility was enormous including the southern portion of the Burma–Indian border and a 700-mile stretch of coastline along the Bay of Bengal. It was also responsible for internal security duties in Western Bengal, a considerable task given the breakdown of civil order in August 1942. The threat from Burma was minimal, the monsoon prevented any large-scale Japanese operations, but an amphibious assault was a real possibility given the Royal Navy's absence from the Indian Ocean. Irwin, now the Commander of the Eastern Army, the main force sitting astride the border, began planning for a British counter-offensive in late 1942. He undertook the unusual decision to take direct command of Slim's divisions, essentially bypassing XV Corps headquarters. Again, Irwin's animosity towards Slim was evident. Slim was now a corps commander with no troops and assigned to raise two new divisions from scratch.

In December 1942, the British began their first offensive action since the retreat. Irwin launched an offensive in the Arakan, a narrow strip of land running from north to south along the Burma coast. The objective was to seize the island of Aykab and its airfield, which lay at the southern tip of the Arakan and from which Allied aircraft could threaten Rangoon. The offensive was a disaster. The Arakan was a terrible location to fight, with little room to manoeuvre, poor lines of communication and terrain that favored the defense. Irwin attacked with 14 Indian Division, a new and inexperienced formation. Immediately, the British lost an opportunity to instill confidence in their troops since the initial Japanese defending force was only two battalions, and a relatively easy victory seemed to be in order. The advance however was far too slow, the result of both British caution and the terrain. The Japanese seized the opportunity to reinforce their positions significantly increasing their strength. Irwin insisted on strong frontal assaults with plenty

of infantry and for months he attempted a number of offensives but the strong Japanese defenses easily handled these poorly organized assaults. Irwin continued to insert brigades and battalions into the fight and the command structure was soon overwhelmed.

Irwin meanwhile continued to ostracize Slim who remained at his headquarters far from the fighting. However, in early March 1943, Irwin dispatched him to the front with an odd and unclear task; Slim was clearly uncomfortable with it. “Was he to take his headquarters staff with him, i.e. was he to assume control? No, Irwin replied, a corps headquarters was not necessary, he was not being asked to take operational control, just to see and report.”³⁷ Slim’s assessment was that 14 Indian Division was completely overwhelmed; it had nine brigades under command, far more than a division headquarters could manage.³⁸

The Japanese launched a counter-attack on 25 March 1943 and the British rapidly collapsed. Irwin fired the division commander and took direct command himself for two days until he could superimpose another division HQ, this time from 26 Indian Division commanded by Major-General Lomax. Lomax commanded a rapidly disintegrating division and two days after taking command, the Japanese broke through the British lines, Lomax began a slow and confusing withdraw north attempting to break contact. Slim meanwhile had been ordered by Irwin prepare to take operational control of the battle but this was not granted until 14 April and he ordered 14 Indian Division to withdraw to their original starting positions from which the campaign began in

³⁷ Louis Allen, Burma. *The Longest War, 1941-1945* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1984), 106.

³⁸ Hickey, 78.

December. In doing so, Slim forced the Japanese to stretch their lines of communications and their offensive soon sputtered out. The Arakan campaign had devastating effect on British forces. In terms of casualties, the cost was not exorbitant, just over 5,000 including 900 dead,³⁹ but once again, British morale and confidence had been shattered, their leadership proven second-rate and the myth of the Japanese superman strengthened. Irwin was highly critical of Slim's conduct despite allowing him command for only final weeks of the campaign when it had already been lost.

Whereas the botched Arakan offensive once again proved British forces incapable of defeating the Japanese, there was one bright spot in the Burma theatre. This was the marginally successful Operation Longcloth led by one of the most peculiar officers in British history, General Orde Wingate. Wingate was a professional British officer who led guerilla campaigns in Palestine and East Africa including a wildly successful campaign in Ethiopia that succeeded in driving the Italians out of the country. Although a graduate of the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, Wingate was anything but the standard British officer. Deeply religious, his eccentricities were legendary. He developed a taste for raw onions and preferred nudity. Many thought him to be insane and in July 1941, Wingate had attempted to kill himself, in Cairo.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, his success in Ethiopia brought him to the attention of General Wavell who had become Commander-in-Chief India on 5 July 1941. Wavell requested Wingate to examine the prospect of guerrilla operations in Burma. Wingate saw the vastness of Burma as an opportunity to cut Japanese lines of communication. Given

³⁹ Allen, 638.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 119.

command of a British and a Gurkha battalion Wingate crossed into Burma on 13 February 1943 tasked with destroying Japanese railway lines. Operationally this expedition accomplished little and British losses were disproportional to the long-term effect on the Japanese. Wingate's British battalion suffered over 50 percent casualties and many who returned simply could not fight again.⁴¹ The British played Operation Longcloth as a success, the first British offensive action against the Japanese, a decision that was to have dire consequences in future operations.

On 26 May 1943, Slim received a number of telegrams. The first was from Irwin sacking him as XV Corps commander, the second seemed to support the first and ordered him to report to Eastern Army HQ, however just as Slim was preparing to depart a third telegram arrived, again from Irwin and simply stated, "You are not sacked. I am."⁴² This flurry of telegrams and Irwin's removal was the result of the Trident Conference between Roosevelt and Churchill that same month. The conference resulted in a number of fundamental changes to the command structure in South-East Asia beginning with Irwin's replacement by Lieutenant-General George Giffard. At the subsequent Quebec Conference, Churchill convinced Roosevelt to appoint Lord Louis Mountbatten to the new position of Supreme Commander South-East Asia, with Vinegar Joe Stilwell as his deputy.

Mountbatten became one of the dominant personalities in South-East Asia. He was very young, at only 43 years of age but closely linked to the Royal Family. Many viewed him as inexperienced for such a post but Churchill thought otherwise.

⁴¹ Ibid., 148.

⁴² Miller, 327.

Mountbatten had the talents of a politician and an enormous ego to match. “He was almost impossibly charming, ferociously energetic, a power-seeker with a talent for intrigue, and he was intelligent—though not nearly as intelligent as he imagined himself to be. Against this he was egocentric, vain, reckless, eccentric and unreliable, and with a marked talent for blame shifting.”⁴³ Yet Mountbatten’s appointment and connection with Churchill provided a greater degree of attention to the theatre than ever before. Mountbatten became the 1943 equivalent of a Geographic Combatant Commander with Giffard as his Land Component Commander.

Giffard had ordered Slim, still in his role as Commander XV Corps, to prepare another Arakan offensive. Allocated three divisions he embarked on a rigorous training regime of physical fitness, jungle and night operations including frequent and increasingly aggressive patrolling against the Japanese. Having observed the lessons of the preceding months he also began an intensive period of staff training. Slim was convinced that given the proper training and tactics the British could defeat the Japanese. He observed both in Burma and in the Arakan, the favorite Japanese tactic of fixing British formations while infiltrating a second force through jungle to cut the lines of communication of the still road-bound British. Once trapped the only recourse was to attempt to breakout resulting in large casualties and giving the Japanese a sense of invincibility. Slim trained his formations to remain where they were, to not attempt to breakout. The Royal Air Force had nearly achieved air superiority and could resupply the surrounded forces while strong reserve forces counter-attacked and smashed the

⁴³ McLynn, 183.

Japanese. The formerly surrounded British troops acted as the anvil for the attacking force's hammer, a tactic that Slim improved upon and used on an ever-increasingly scale.

Commander XIV Army

On 14 October 1943, Slim was making the final preparations for XV Corps offensive when Giffard ordered him to assume temporary command of Eastern Army. Giffard assumed the role of commander of the newly formed 11th Army Group and immediately relieved Eastern Army of all rear-area responsibilities allowing it to focus on one task, the defeat of the Japanese in Burma. The question of who was to command Eastern Army is as complicated as Slim's selection as Commander Burcorps was in 1942.

On 18 October 1943, Sir Claude Auchinleck in his capacity as Commander in Chief India recommended to Brooke that Slim assume the role of his Chief of Staff but Brooke was not convinced. Mountbatten, for his part, first met Slim at Barrackpore, Eastern Army's headquarters, on 22 October 1943 as he was returning from a meeting with Stilwell. Apart from a synopsis of Slim's career prepared by Giffard, Mountbatten knew little of Slim. "Slim had, to that date, won no victories, was relatively unknown outside the relatively insular circles of the Indian Army, had been dismissed as second-rate by some of his military superiors and had in fact been party to successive British defeats in the field since the retreat from Burma in early 1942."⁴⁴ Mountbatten makes the case that upon meeting Slim for the first time he immediately felt at ease and appointed him commander of what was to become XIV Army. "Something happened at that first

⁴⁴ Lyman, "The Art of Manoeuvre," 90.

meeting somehow we clicked”.⁴⁵ In reality, Slim’s appointment was due more to Brooke’s influence than Mountbatten’s. In fact, after meeting Slim on 22 October 1943, Mountbatten discussed Auchinleck’s plan to appoint Slim as Chief of Staff and cautioned Brooke against any further changes to the command structure. However, in the end Mountbatten defers the final decision to Brooke who on 30 October 1943 made his decision final. “I consider in the view of current operations it would be best for the present to leave Slim to command the 14th Army.”⁴⁶ Thus, as Chief of the Imperial General Staff the final decision was Brooke’s not Mountbatten’s to make.

It does however appear that Mountbatten and Slim’s first meeting was highly productive. Upon arrival, Slim asked whether the new Supreme Commander would like to address the gathered mass of army staff officers. The impromptu speech was a dud and Mountbatten failed to inspire his audience, something he rarely did afterwards. In a private meeting after the speech, Slim was as honest and forthcoming as always and agreed that the speech failed. Mountbatten had proposed some radical new concepts such as fighting through the monsoon and using aerial resupply, however Slim, too, shared these ideas, and despite the flawed delivery, Slim whole-heartedly agreed with the message. In this initial meeting Slim and Mountbatten connected, they both felt at ease with each other. “Mountbatten, who was often uncomfortable with men older than himself, immediately warmed to Bill”⁴⁷ This set the conditions for a fruitful relationship and paid dividends in the months ahead.

⁴⁵ Lord Louis Mountbatten, in Miller, 336.

⁴⁶ Sir Alan Brooke, in Lyman, *Master of War*, 270.

⁴⁷ Miller, 336.

Rebuilding an Army

One of Slim's immediate recommendations was to change the name of Eastern Army, to Slim, it was only associated with defeat.⁴⁸ The installation of Mountbatten, Giffard, and now Slim signaled a new beginning for the British and the creation of XIV Army symbolized this new sense of hope and confidence. In addition to XV Corps, XIV Army also had IV Corps sitting astride the India – Burma border. Slim was fully cognizant of the challenges facing his new army. He knew that if XIV Army was to beat the Japanese, and he was convinced it could, key improvements were necessary. Slim focused his efforts on the issues of supply, health and morale and this reveals as much of his understanding of human nature as it does tactics or logistics.

In most classes of supply, XIV Army was dependent upon the poorly developed Indian economy and it was not suited to support modern operations on the scale required in 1943. Even the material that was available in India, had to be shipped via a long, tenuous and inefficient line of communication. Improving the lines of communication were a challenge since there was little heavy machinery to build roads or railways on the scale and speed needed, thus most improvements were done using human labor, the one commodity India had in abundance. Added to the problem of infrastructure were the unique requirements of the Army itself. XIV Army's multicultural makeup with its various religious constraints resulted in over 30 different ration scales⁴⁹, increasing the complexity of the resupply effort. When Slim took command, the Army was critically

⁴⁸ Evans, 105.

⁴⁹ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 173.

short most types of ammunition, especially artillery.⁵⁰ Slim's response was to instill a sense of self-sufficiency in the Army; improvements were not to be expected and units expected to do more with less. This sense of self-sufficiency became a point of pride for XIV Army.

Whereas Slim could accept being last in terms of supply he refused to accept anything less than the best medical treatment possible for his troops. He understood the importance of good medical care in maintaining an army's fighting spirit.

I knew we had to beat Germany first. I was even ready to accept the fact that the XIV Army was the Cinderella of all British armies, and would get only what her richer sisters in Africa and Europe could spare. I would not grumble too much if we came last for men, tanks, guns, and the rest, but I would protest, and never cease from protesting, that we should be at the bottom of the list for medical aid. That was not fair, nor, I believe, wise.⁵¹

Slim's first step was to reduce the sick rate, for XIV Army's health state was abysmal. The malaria rate stood at 84 percent and for every 1 casualty incurred by enemy action, there were 120 non-battle injuries, mostly sick, and in Slim's view, mostly preventable.⁵² He ordered forward treatment facilities constructed close to the front, reducing the soldier's time away from his unit; the prescribed daily anti-malaria regime was strictly enforced and Slim sacked unit commanders who failed to enforce his policies; lastly he instituted an air evacuation system for Slim was keenly aware of the value of such a system.

The problem of the treatment and evacuation of the wounded also needed attention, for conditions were not dissimilar to those in Gallipoli where Slim

⁵⁰ Ibid., 176.

⁵¹ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 177.

⁵² Ibid.

himself, when wounded, had experienced the excruciating pain when jolting down the hillside, the discomfort of the interminable waiting in the heat and the long and hardly less painful journey to hospital.⁵³

Slim's greatest challenge lay in the field of morale. Morale was paramount to any success and he knew from experience that a force with strong morale was greater than the sum of its parts. "Morale is a state of mind. It is that intangible force which will move a whole group of men to give their last ounce to achieve something, without counting the cost to themselves; that makes them feel they are part of something greater than themselves."⁵⁴ Slim determined that morale rests on three pillars: material, spiritual and intellectual. The material referred to equipping soldiers with the best equipment and living conditions possible and while the supply situation made this difficult, real improvements were made, albeit slowly. The spiritual pillar encompassed a belief that all members of XIV Army were part of a great cause, a cause worthy of their efforts and sacrifice. Slim knew that if soldiers felt that if their lives were wasted it would act as a cancer, destroying the Army's effectiveness and continuing the pattern of defeat. The intellectual aspect relied upon convincing every soldier that the Army's goal was achievable and that every action, big or small, was in pursuit of that goal, and that leaders at all levels would not needlessly sacrifice the lives of their men.

No matter what the religion or race of any man in the XIV Army, he must feel this, feel that he had indeed a worthy cause, and that if he did not defend it life would not be worth living for him or for his children. Nor was it enough to have a worthy cause. It must be positive, aggressive, not a mere passive, defensive, anti-something feeling. So our object became not to defend India, to stop the Japanese

⁵³ Evans, 113.

⁵⁴ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 182.

advance, or even to occupy Burma, but to destroy the Japanese Army, to smash it as an evil thing.⁵⁵

Imphal and Kohima

As Slim slowly improved the quality of XIV Army, the Japanese were making preparations of their own. In mid-1943, the Japanese, under Lieutenant-General Kawabe Masakazu, began preparations to invade India itself. The invasion had two objectives. The first was to seize the airfields from which Allied aircraft continued to support Chiang Kai-Shek's forces in China, and the second was to unleash the Indian National Army. The Indian National Army was formed from the thousands Indian soldiers captured in Malaya and Singapore. It was not so much a pro-Japanese force as it was an anti-British one. The Japanese felt that India was ripe for rebellion against the British and viewed the Indian National Army as the means by which to do so. For their part, the British were generally aware of the Japanese plan, for the INA could only have one purpose. They were also aware that the town of Imphal, India's eastern gateway, was the likely place of attack, however, they did not know the timing or the method of the attack. What is also clear is that Slim too wanted a battle. He knew that if the Allies were to regain Burma, he had to first deal a blow to the Japanese Army. Slim had two choices. He could attack Burma now or wait for the Japanese to attack him. Slim chose the latter. "I wanted a battle *before* we went into Burma and I was as eager as Kawabe to make it decisive."⁵⁶

Engaging the Japanese in India offered Slim many advantages. It forced the Japanese to extend their lines of communications while Slim shortened his. Further, by

⁵⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 286.

fighting on the Imphal plain, Slim could take full advantage of his air and armor in which he had a distinct advantage. Such a strategy was risky in that it depended upon an orderly withdraw of his forward divisions without being cut off and destroyed piecemeal in the process. This campaign marked the turning point in Burma. Yet despite the British victory, Slim admitted that he almost lost it.

The Japanese offensive consisted of two distinct yet supporting operations. Operation HA-GO was a diversionary attack in the Arakan designed to fix the British XV Corps and force Slim to commit his operational reserves. HA-GO was to set the conditions for the decisive effort, Operation U-GO. U-GO's objective was to seize Imphal with its numerous airfields and supply dumps without which the British could not sustain their future operations in Burma. The key line of communication ran from Imphal, north through the town of Kohima then west to Dimapur, the British Army's largest administration center in Eastern India. At Kohima, approximately halfway between Imphal and Dimapur, the road is especially vulnerable; hence, U-GO included a supporting attack on Kohima.

Operation HA-GO began on 4 February 1944 and true to form, the Japanese quickly penetrated the British lines, overrunning the headquarters of 7 Indian Division. Once again, the Japanese achieved a tactical surprise however; the British were ready and did not panic. It was now time to implement Slim's strategy of re-supplying his surrounded forces by air while destroying the Japanese with his reserves. The British made their stand in 7 Division's administrative area. Initially defended only by logistical and administrative troops, the British rushed in an infantry battalion and two squadrons of tanks before the Japanese surrounded it. Brigadier Geoffrey Evans, who after the war

became one of Slim's biographers, took command. The Battle of the Admin Box was a brutal and vicious affair. The Japanese penetrated the British lines on a number of occasions, capturing the hospital and massacred its patients before the British drove them back. Much of the fighting was hand-to-hand yet the British had the advantage in material and firepower. The aerial resupply effort was working and the Japanese continued throw themselves onto the Admin Box while 5 Indian Division pushed forward and relieved 7 Indian Division. By early March, XV Corps switched to the offensive and began to push the Japanese back beyond their start positions. More importantly, Slim's operational reserves were not committed to the battle. HA-GO was a failure.

Operation HA-GO or Second Arakan was by no means a resounding British victory, but its effect on morale was significant. For the first time, the British had defeated the Japanese in battle; destroyed the myth of the Japanese superman and proved themselves equal.

This Arakan battle, judged by the size of the forces engaged. Was not of great magnitude, but it was, nevertheless, one of the historic successes of British arms. It was the turning-point of the Burma campaign. For the first time, a British force had met, held and decisively defeated a major Japanese attack, and followed this up by driving the enemy out of the strongest possible natural positions that they had been preparing for months and were determined to hold at all costs. British and Indian soldiers had proved themselves, man for man the masters of the best the Japanese could bring against them.⁵⁷

HA-GO was to set the conditions for the decisive operation, the attack on Imphal and Kohima. Slim's plan to withdraw his forward divisions defending Imphal - the Indian 17, 20 and 23 Divisions - depended on timing. Too soon and he would risk making his intentions known to the Japanese, too late and his divisions would be hacked to pieces

⁵⁷ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 246.

before they could consolidate at Imphal. Once again, the Japanese achieved a tactical surprise, highlighting the difficulty of gaining intelligence in the jungle. Slim was late in ordering his divisions to withdraw and 17 Indian Division nearly cut off. After heavy fighting and the judicious use of local reserves the British made it back to Imphal in relatively good order, but they only just avoided disaster. As bad as the situation was at Imphal, it was worse at Kohima. Slim anticipated that the Japanese would attempt to isolate Imphal, likely at Kohima, but he miscalculated both the speed at which they attacked and the strength of their forces. Slim felt that at most the imposing terrain would facilitate only a Japanese regiment, equivalent to a British brigade. Instead, the Japanese sent a complete division.⁵⁸ Slim was surprised, but he had learned not to dwell on his mistakes.

As I contemplated the chain of disasters that I had invited, my heart sank. However, I have always believed that a motto for generals must be ‘No regrets’, no crying over spilt milk. The vital need now was to bring in reinforcements, not only to replace the vanished reserve in Imphal but above all, to ensure that Dimapur was held. To this I bent all my energies.⁵⁹

Slim worked closely with both Mountbatten and Giffard to rectify the situation, for as desperate as it was, Slim still saw an opportunity to deal the Japanese Army a major defeat. “Slim succeeded in a military leader’s greatest challenge: to take charge of a battle in which the enemy has seized the initiative and by a wise disposition of existing forces and reserves turn the crisis decisively to his own side’s advantage.”⁶⁰ He ordered 5

⁵⁸ Allen, 228

⁵⁹ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 305.

⁶⁰ Brian Bond, “The Army Level of Command: General Sir William Slim and Fourteenth Army in Burma,” in *British and Japanese Military Leadership in the Far*

Indian Division, fresh off its Arakan victory, to fly to Dimapur from where it could occupy Kohima before the Japanese. The British however did not have the numbers of aircraft necessary to complete such a large lift of men and equipment. Mountbatten ordered American aircraft from their mission of supplying Chiang Kai-Shek's forces to conduct the movement. This was a risky and courageous decision by Mountbatten since he was acting in direct defiance of the Combined Chiefs of Staff who had allocated these aircraft for the sole purpose of keeping Chiang in the war. Mountbatten realized the gravity of the situation, its strategic implications and did not hesitate to act. For Giffard's part, he immediately released the newly arrived 2 Division, his only operational reserve, to XIV Army. Nevertheless, the British were too late and managed to get only one battalion into Kohima before the Japanese closed the ring. The siege of Kohima lasted two excruciating weeks and saw some of the bitterest fighting of the war.

By 19 April, the tide began to turn. "By then, the Japanese offensives had come to a halt, the Kohima garrison had been relieved, 17 Indian Division had been withdrawn safely into the Plain, and the Japanese from the east and south-east had been blocked."⁶¹ The Japanese lines of communication were now so stretched they could no longer support the battle. In addition to the battle casualties, disease and hunger took their toll. The Japanese were growing weaker day by day while the British were getting stronger. Still, it took another two months of bitter fighting to eject the Japanese from the hills surrounding Imphal and Kohima. The fighting was close and personal with the Japanese tenaciously

Eastern War 1941-1945, eds., Brian Bond and Kyoichi Tachikawa (New York: Routledge, 2004), 48.

⁶¹ Allen, 260.

holding each position. The monsoon had begun in early May and conditions worsened. Despite the heavy casualties, the British kept up the pressure and Japanese resistance finally collapsed in early July 1944 when they finally called an end to Operation U-GO. The Japanese now assumed the place of the British in 1942, a defeated army forced to retreat in appalling conditions. U-GO was a devastating defeat for the Japanese; suffering over 66,000 casualties compared to the British figure of 28,000.⁶²

At Imphal, Slim wanted to deal the Japanese Army a major blow before entering Burma, and despite its early setbacks, he achieved his objective. With characteristic modesty, Slim took full responsibility for the campaigns early miscues, and gave full credit to his army for its successes. "I was, like other generals before me, to be saved from the consequences of my mistakes by the resourcefulness of my subordinate commanders and the stubborn valour of my troops."⁶³ Slim's foresight in choosing the place of battle combined with shrewd use of reserves won the battle. What is more remarkable though is how far the British Army had come since the retreat of 1942 or even after the Arakan disaster of 1943. Slim had molded XIV Army into a professional force whose high morale was the foundation upon which it sustained the rigors of one of the most brutal battles in British history. "Nothing had cracked. It was an achievement which would have been unimaginable two years or perhaps even one year previously – the achievement of an army whose commander had inspired it to feel at home with the impossible."⁶⁴ As the Japanese retreated, Slim maintained the pressure with the newly

⁶² Ibid., 643.

⁶³ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 208.

⁶⁴ Lewin, 199.

arrived 11th East African Division and 5th Indian Division while his other divisions refitted. The two divisions closed the distance between Imphal and the Chindwin River and by November 1944 had established a bridgehead on the far side despite the dreadful conditions of the monsoon and stubborn Japanese rear guards.

Operations Capital and Extended Capital

As Slim pursued the Japanese to the Chindwin there were a number of changes in key leadership appointments throughout the theater. Chiang Kai-Shek finally lost patience with Stillwell and had him replaced. General Oliver Leese, who recently commanded VIII Army in Italy, replaced Giffard as Slim's direct boss. Many believed that Giffard was tired and in need of a rest but in truth he simply could not work with Mountbatten.⁶⁵ 11 Army Group ceased to exist and was replaced by Allied Land Forces South-East Asia (ALFSEA).

For Mountbatten, Leese, and Slim the question was how to follow up the victory at Imphal as British strategic goals in South-East Asia were not the same as the Americans. For the United States, the aim was to maintain the supply line to Chiang Kai-Shek, who was tying down thousands of Japanese troops China. For the British however, the goal was the ultimate liberation of Malaya and Singapore. In order to reach Singapore, the British needed Rangoon with its seaport and airfields as a stepping off point. Mountbatten ordered a two-prong approach. XIV Army, was to push into central Burma and destroy the main Japanese field army, in Operation Capital, while a combined airborne/seaborne assault was to take Rangoon in Operation Dracula. Slim did not put

⁶⁵ McLynn, 381.

much faith in Dracula, since the necessary landing craft were in high demand in other theaters and not available in the numbers required.⁶⁶ Slim felt the only viable means of taking Rangoon was through central Burma, for he knew that once he defeated the main Japanese Army, the road to Rangoon would be open. Operation Capital was to become Slim's masterpiece as an operational commander.

Operation Capital was a formidable challenge to XIV Army but this was nothing new. Two issues posed the greatest problems to the operation; the first was the question of supply. With no roads, connecting India and Burma the majority of Slim's resupply would be by air. His staff estimated that it could sustain no more than four infantry divisions with an additional two infantry brigades and two tank brigades against a projected Japanese force of five divisions and one brigade plus elements of the Indian National Army.⁶⁷ The second issue was determining where the Japanese would fight. The key to Operation Capital was the city of Mandalay, which acted as the chokepoint through which any drive on Rangoon must pass. Slim was confident that the Japanese would fight on the Shwebo plain, a piece of terrain in central Burma's dry belt north-west of Mandalay. This would put the Japanese on the west side of the Irrawaddy. Slim's reasoning was as follows: "In spite of the Imphal lesson, he (the Japanese Commander) would, I thought, be confident that he could beat me on his own ground and, even if he were not, he would never dare to lose face by giving up territory without a struggle. He would see the Chindwin behind us; not the Irrawaddy behind him."⁶⁸ Slim's battle plan

⁶⁶ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 374.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 381.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 380.

saw two corps, each with two infantry divisions and one tank brigade, advancing into Burma. In the north, IV Corps acted as the anvil and was to fix the Japanese on the Shwebo plain. XXXIII Corps was to advance to the south of IV Corps and act as the hammer, destroying the Japanese army.

It was a simple plan and depended on Slim's assessment of the enemy, however he soon realized that his assessment was wrong. Operation Capital began on 3 December 1944 as the lead divisions broke out of their bridgeheads on the Chindwin River and drove east to the Irrawaddy. IV Corps' lead division, 19 Indian, encountered almost no opposition and by 16 December, Slim realized his mistake. The Japanese would not fight forward of the Irrawaddy but behind it instead. Slim was humble enough to know when he was wrong, he did not fall into the trap like so many commanders who become enamored with their plan and ignore all evidence that question its underlying assumptions. Instead, he saw another opportunity to inflict the crushing blow upon the Japanese that he always wanted. Christened Operation Extended Capital, Slim's new plan was bold and audacious.

Slim transferred 19 Indian Division from IV Corps to XXXIII Corps and ordered it to cross the Irrawaddy north of Mandalay, thus giving the impression that this was his main effort. The remainder of IV Corps embarked on a grueling march *behind* XXXIII Corps to cross the Irrawaddy south of Mandalay and sever the Japanese lines of communication at the town of Meiktila. It took nearly two months to accomplish this movement, with Slim's army hacking its way through the jungle dragging its tanks and artillery, while XXXIII Corps kept the pressure on the Japanese. What XIV Army lacked, it simply built on the way, including roads, airfields and boats. On 21 February 1945, 17

Indian division and 255 Tank Brigade crossed the Irrawaddy and struck immediately for Meiktila. The trap was now set and between XXXIII Corps in the north and IV Corps in the south Slim annihilated the Japanese Army.

Still, what Slim had done was to initiate at short notice the most subtle, audacious and complex operation of his whole career. Its execution revealed...that Slim was a complete general, since every element of the military art was requisite if EXTENDED CAPITAL were not to fail. Deception and surprise, flexibility, concentration on the objective, calculated risks, the solution of grave administrative problems, imagination, *sang-froid* invigorating leadership - all the clichés of the military textbooks were simultaneously and harmoniously brought to life as Slim, with an absolute assurance, conceived and accomplished his masterpiece.⁶⁹

Extended Capital was a resounding success and a clear demonstration that Slim had perfected his skills as an operational artist.

The Pursuit to Rangoon

XIV Army now raced south to Rangoon burdened more by its extended lines of communication than by Japanese resistance. Although Slim desperately wanted to liberate Rangoon, he realized that the impending monsoon would wreak havoc on his supply lines, thus he asked Mountbatten to launch a scaled-down version of Operation Dracula, to ensure that Rangoon was in Allied hands before the monsoon struck. On 2 May, 26 Indian Division landed near Rangoon and occupied the city, the Japanese having already abandoned it.

Three years and four months after it began, the Burma campaign was effectively over. This awe-inspiring and grand campaign witnessed the longest retreat in British history, appalling fighting conditions, the greatest defeat in the history of the Japanese

⁶⁹ Lewin, 210.

Army and the resurrection of a defeated army into a victorious one. XIV Army now stood once again on the banks of the Sittang River, where it suffered its first defeat in 1942 only now the tables had turned. Through it all, the one constant was Bill Slim.

The Burma campaign had the shape and pattern of epic drama. The first scene of the first act had shown the defeat of Slim and the 17th Indian Infantry Division at this very place, on the banks of the Sittang, early in 1942; the second scene, their long, disastrous retreat to India, eight hundred miles away. The second act had covered a year and a half of close, grim fighting in the jungle-covered mountains along the Burma-India border. The third act - the Chindits, Imphal, Meiktila, and the rushing advance back south over those same eight hundred miles. And now, almost as an envoi, this calm, efficient slaughter in the paddy fields, Slim still leading.⁷⁰

Slim's accomplishments on the battlefield were truly remarkable yet it was his achievement as leader that set him apart. XIV Army's victories would have been impossible without Slim's unique leadership ability. It was a polyglot formation of nationalities, languages, cultures and religions yet; Slim instilled a unity of purpose that bound these disparate elements together into an effective fighting force. Slim negotiated the obstacles posed by the terrain, logistics, the environment and a set of imposing personalities to emerge victorious in the longest and most challenging Allied campaign of the war.

⁷⁰ John Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 315.

CHAPTER 3

BILL SLIM AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This chapter will introduce the theory of emotional intelligence and its relationship to effective leadership. It examines how Bill Slim's highly developed sense of emotional intelligence contributed to his effective leadership of XIV Army and specifically how it supported Slim's ability to manage key personalities within the Burma Theater. This chapter will first introduce leadership theory and discuss how emotional intelligence can contribute to effective leadership.

Leadership Theory

In *Leadership in Organizations*, prominent scholar Gary Yukl, defines leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.”⁷¹ In his research, Yukl found that most definitions of leadership include the concept of influence.⁷² Indeed, the United States Army's definition of leadership also includes this central tenant. ADRP 6-22 Mission Command defines leadership as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”⁷³ Thus, the crux of leadership is influence.

⁷¹ Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2005), 8.

⁷² Ibid., 3.

⁷³ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-1.

Yukl develops this concept further and states that in order to influence, one must possess power, which he defines as “the absolute capacity of an individual agent to influence the behavior or attitudes of one or more designated target persons at a given point in time.”⁷⁴ Again, the concept of influence is clearly apparent. Yet, as Yukl, points out there are multiple sources of power⁷⁵ and consequently multiple means of using that power. Yukl refers to these means as influence techniques. Thus, at its most basic level, leadership is about choosing the proper tactic by which to exercise power in order to influence the target in the manner desired and emotional intelligence provides the leader the insight to choose wisely.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is “the ability to monitor one’s own and other people’s emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior.”⁷⁶ The impact of emotional intelligence on leadership is significant as it provides the leader with the ability to select the correct influence technique for a given situation.

American psychologist Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of emotional intelligence with the 1995 publication of his book: *Emotional Intelligence-Why it can*

⁷⁴ Yukl, 146.

⁷⁵ Yukl states that power derives from two sources, position and personal. Positional power stems from “the opportunities inherent in a person’s position in the organization.” (149) Personal power however, comes from the “potential influence derived from task expertise, and potential influence based on friendship and loyalty.” (149) The leader who possesses both positional and personal power is well armed to influence subordinates and achieve their mission or objective.

⁷⁶ Coleman, 241.

matter more than IQ. With this highly influential book the concept of emotional intelligence” entered the lexicon of management and leadership studies. Goleman acknowledges the influence of two previous works in setting the groundwork of for emotional intelligence. In 1983 psychologist Howard Gardner published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*.⁷⁷ Gardner challenged the idea there was “just one, monolithic kind of intelligence that was crucial for life success, but rather a wide spectrum of intelligences”.⁷⁸ He proposed a more nuanced approach to understanding one’s success in any given field. For Gardner success, stems from a blend of different intelligences each of whom contribute in varying degrees to success. Gardner’s model identified eight types of intelligence of which two, interpersonal and intrapersonal, directly relate to leadership success.⁷⁹ Gardner defined interpersonal intelligence as “the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them,”⁸⁰ whereas intrapersonal intelligence “is a correlative ability, turned inward. It is a capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model effectively in life.”⁸¹ Thus for Gardner a high degree of intelligence alone, as measured in the traditional academic sense (IQ), is insufficient to explain success.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 38

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ The other six intelligences identified by Gardner were musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic and naturalistic. Gardner later suggested adding two others to include existential and moral intelligence.

⁸⁰ Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences*, 9.

⁸¹ Ibid.

As ground breaking as Gardner's theory was it largely ignored the role played by emotions in our understanding of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Emotions are what make us human and directly influence our interaction with others, as well as, our understanding of ourselves. By ignoring the effect of emotions, Gardner implies that interpersonal or intrapersonal intelligence develops through the rational and cognitive evaluation of inputs. Yet humans are not a computers or mathematical models that rationally evaluate data and produce a solution. Our emotions and our understanding of the emotions of others directly affect the interpretation of those inputs. In 1993, Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer took up the challenge of exploring the role that emotions play in interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Goleman acknowledges Salovey and Mayer's contributions to what would become emotional intelligence and it is upon their research that Goleman produced *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995.⁸²

Despite having popularized the concept of emotional intelligence, Goleman only briefly discusses its influence on leadership. Consequently, in conjunction with Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, Goleman explores the link between emotional intelligence and leadership in their 2002 book: *Primal Leadership. Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. The writers draw a strong link between leadership ability and high levels of emotional intelligence. "Great leaders move us. They ignite our passions and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: great leadership works through

⁸² Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 43.

the emotions.”⁸³ Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee believe that the cornerstone of good leadership is emotional rather than intellectual.

Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee’s model describes emotional intelligence in terms of two competencies, personal and social. Personal competence includes the capabilities that “determine how we manage ourselves,”⁸⁴ whereas social competence includes the capabilities that “determine how we manage relationships.”⁸⁵ They break these competencies down further into the four domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.⁸⁶ Slim was highly adept in each of these four domains and thus possessed a high degree of emotional intelligence, a key factor in influencing others.

Slim and Self-Awareness

The first domain of Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee’s model is self-awareness, the foundation upon which emotional intelligence forms. Self-awareness is a “deep understanding of ones emotions”⁸⁷ and allows one to comprehend their own strengths and weaknesses. “People with self-awareness are . . . honest with themselves about

⁸³ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership. Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

⁸⁴ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 39.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ See appendix 1.

⁸⁷ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 40.

themselves”.⁸⁸ Thorough self-reflection and honest self-appraisal are key characteristics associated with this domain. Hence, self-awareness provides the bedrock for emotional intelligence.

It is rare to find a senior leader as honest and as self-critical as Bill Slim. Slim was fully aware of his shortcomings as a leader; he was clearly “honest with himself about himself.” Throughout the war, Slim experienced the roller coaster of emotions associated with crushing defeats and soaring victories. Each defeat inevitably brought a degree of disappointment, a blow to his self-confidence, and potentially depression. Slim’s memoirs capture multiple examples of critical self-awareness. For instance, Slim summarized his performance at Gallabat, where he failed to carry the first British offensive of the war, as inadequate to say the least. “Like so many generals whose plans have gone wrong, I could find plenty of excuses for failure, but only one *reason* – myself.”⁸⁹

Slim’s self-criticism in the wake of Gallabat was just one of many occasions where he “openly took the blame on himself when plans went wrong, a trait not always to be found among commanders.”⁹⁰ In this instance, Slim felt he should continue the attack on Metemma but plagued by anxiety and apprehension, he wrestled with the decision to retreat or attack, “was I justified in taking other men’s lives on what I had to admit was a hunch? I was wobbling.”⁹¹ He later admitted that the mental debate had a lasting effect

⁸⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁹ Slim, *Unofficial History*, 148.

⁹⁰ Evans, 43.

⁹¹ Slim, *Unofficial History*, 148.

on him and it was here that he resolved to take the bolder course of action in the future. “When two courses of action were open to me I had not chosen, as a good commander should, the bolder. I had taken counsel of my fears.”⁹² The emotional effect of Gallabat resonated with Slim. He resolved to avoid the emotions of self-doubt, hesitation, and insecurity associated with following a course of action that driven more by fear of failing than rational thought.

Slim’s emotional self-awareness was clearly evident in the terrible opening stages of the Burma campaign as Burcorps conducted what would become the longest retreat in British history. Given the dire circumstances and the horrendous conditions, the strain was enormous. Slim describes the feelings of desperation, hopelessness and despair that characterized the situation.

This was not the first, nor was it to be the last, time that I had taken over a situation that was not going too well. I knew the feeling of unease that comes first at such times, a sinking of the heart as the gloomy facts crowd in; then the glow of exhilaration as the brain grapples with problem after problem; lastly the tingling of the nerves and the lightening of the spirit, as the urge to get out and tackle the job takes hold.⁹³

In the aftermath of the retreat, Slim reflected on his performance and as at Gallabat he was characteristically critical of his conduct demonstrating once more the trait of being honest with himself, about himself.

For myself, I had little to be proud of; I could not rate my generalship high. The only test of generalship is success, and I had succeeded in nothing I had attempted. Time and again, I had tried to pass to the offensive and to regain the

⁹² Ibid., 148.

⁹³ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 27.

initiative and every time I had seen my house of cards fall down as I tried to add to its crowning story.⁹⁴

Slim clearly possessed a high degree of self-awareness. He was cognizant of his strengths and more importantly his weaknesses. He looked inward and searched himself for answers before looking outward for excuses. “He also had the gift of honest self-appraisal and, when things did go wrong, always examined his own performance first, before looking for fault in others.”⁹⁵

Slim and Self-Management

The second domain of Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee’s theory is self-management, the trait that allows leaders to focus their energy and efforts on leading rather than allowing emotions to disrupt their objectives. Self-management is reflected through emotional self-control especially in period of high pressure. “A hallmark of self-control is the leader who stays calm and clear-headed under high stress or during a crisis – or who remains unflappable even when confronted by a trying situation.”⁹⁶

That Slim experienced periods of high stress is evident. Slim’s memoirs contain very little on how he managed his emotions; it was not in Slim’s nature to state how well he accomplished anything. Slim’s modesty and humility may have prevented him from speaking of his own accomplishments yet many of contemporaries remarked on his extraordinary capacity to manage his emotions, especially in periods of great stress and when all seemed lost. “Of his many attributes I never ceased to admire his calmness and

⁹⁴ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁵ Hickey, 186.

⁹⁶ Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 254.

courtesy when the strain of a ‘touch and go’ situation for long periods on end must have been well-nigh unbearable. His imperturbability did not stem from insensitivity, but from a superhuman self-discipline.”⁹⁷ Slim and XIV Army experienced multiple episodes of stress and disappointment from continued defeats in an appalling environment yet, Slim always maintained his composure and his cheerful nature had a direct effect upon his troops.

Slim knew the importance of appearing calm under pressure, in his mind confidence was contagious and it contributed directly to his leadership abilities. “His calmness in crisis acted to highlight Slim’s own extraordinary powers of leadership. He was a natural leader who possessed an ability to inspire men to do their utmost for the common cause.”⁹⁸ Despite the perceived hopelessness of the retreat from Burma, Slim’s ability to manage his emotions cleared his mind and allowed him to make command decisions and assess situations in a clear, logical and rational manner. “Rock-like and imperturbable, he never lost his temper, and when looking into the jungle of possibilities, he could disentangle the irrelevancies and select the vital one.”⁹⁹ Slim’s seemingly superhuman ability to manage his emotions was apparent to both his subordinates and superiors. Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief India, summarized Slim’s capabilities as follows: “One of Slim’s chief characteristics was his quite outstanding determination and inability to admit defeat or the possibility of it: also his exceptional

⁹⁷ Lewin, 194.

⁹⁸ Lyman, “The Art of Manoeuvre,” 98.

⁹⁹ Unidentified staff officer, in Evans, 84.

ability to gain and retain the confidence of those under him and with him, without any resort to panache. Success did not inflate him nor misfortune depress him.”¹⁰⁰

Goleman stresses the point that self-management, controlling ones emotions, is the greatest challenge for a leader. Emotions can enslave leaders who lack self-management skills. Thus, the personal competencies of self-awareness and self-management allow the leader to understand not only their own emotional state, with its inherent strengths and weaknesses, but also more importantly to manage and harness their emotions.

Slim and Social Awareness

Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee’s third domain is social awareness, the skill that allows the leader to read and understand the emotions of those around them. Social awareness is often synonymous with the concept of empathy, “the capacity to understand and enter into another person’s feelings and emotions or to experience something from the other person’s point of view.”¹⁰¹ The U.S. Army acknowledges the importance and role of empathy in leadership by including it in its leadership doctrine. “Empathy allows the leader to anticipate what others are experiencing and to try to envision how decisions or actions affect them.”¹⁰² It further emphasis its importance to the strategic leader.

¹⁰⁰ Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, in Evans, 152.

¹⁰¹ Coleman, 241.

¹⁰² US Department of the Army, ADRP 6-22, 3-17.

“Strategic leaders adeptly read other people while disciplining their own actions and reactions.”¹⁰³

Slim’s ability to relate to his men was legendary. He seemed to understand them on a special level. He understood what motivated them, what they expected from their superiors and how they would react in any given situation. He considered his men intelligent and capable of understanding the reasoning behind the Army’s actions and who if treated with respect could accomplish great things.

He did not subscribe to the idea that the average soldier’s thoughts dwelt merely on the discomfort and unpleasantness of the country to which he had been sent to fight. He believed that, be they British, Indian, Gurkha or African, if they were told the reasons for fighting, the justice of the cause and the importance of beating the enemy, and were kept in the picture, within the bounds of security, they would respond with enthusiasm.¹⁰⁴

However, Goleman’s model includes a broader sense of social awareness that takes it beyond simple empathy towards individuals. For Goleman, social awareness includes the understanding of the emotional state of an organization as well. For organizational leaders, this is just as important as understanding their subordinates.

Slim was highly proficient in the emotional intelligence domains of self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. That he was honest with himself is clear, his two memoirs, *Unofficial History* and *Defeat into Victory*, encompass many examples of self-awareness. The accounts of many of his contemporaries highlight his capacity to remain calm under the worse conditions, indicating a strong ability to manage his emotions. Lastly, his unique ability to understand his subordinates, peers and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 11-9.

¹⁰⁴ Lieutenant-General F. W. Messervy, in Evans, 114.

superiors, the domain of social awareness was clear. Thus, Slim clearly possessed a strong foundation of emotional intelligence.

Relationship Management

In Goleman's model, the final domain of relationship management is where self-awareness, self-management and social awareness come together to influence leadership. As Yukl points out, leadership is about influencing others to accomplish tasks in the manner desired by the leader. Relationship management is the art of choosing amongst various techniques to influence the target in the manner desired by the leader. Based upon a firm understanding of the other three elements of emotional intelligence, the leader who recognizes his own emotional state, can manage it appropriately, and understand the emotional state of others can choose the appropriate influence technique.

One of Slim's greatest attributes was his ability to build strong and lasting relationships with men whom others seemed to loath. In a theatre with scarce resources, Slim tacitly recognized the value of personal relationships in establishing unity of purpose and effort. In the Burma theatre, Slim dealt with three highly influential and challenging individuals - Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, Orde Wingate and Lord Louis Mountbatten. This diverse group represented an ally, a nominal subordinate, and a superior, each of whom provided their own complications for Slim. With his strong base in self-awareness, self-management and social awareness Slim built a strong and unique relationship with each thereby establishing unity of effort. Each was influential enough to cause dissension and inefficiency yet Slim, leveraging his emotional intelligence, overcame this threat.

Stilwell

General Joseph “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell was the American advisor to Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang-Kai-Shek, whose forces were tying down tens of thousands of Japanese troops in mainland China. It is hard to imagine a worse selection for such a critical post. It seems that Stilwell’s only qualification for such a position was the fact that he spoke Chinese; however, this is the extent of his positive attributes. Stilwell hated both the Chinese and the British.

In retrospect the appointment of Stilwell created the classic situation of an accident waiting to happen. The person sent out should have been someone with deep sympathies for both Chiang and the British, someone prepared to use the dual sympathy to build bridges between these uncertain allies. But Stilwell detested both the people he was supposed to work with.¹⁰⁵

Slim’s first contact with Stilwell came during the retreat and it was there that Slim won Stilwell’s confidence. Stilwell held a deep prejudice towards the British based upon a misguided perception that the typical British officer was more concerned with pomp and ceremony than fighting. The first terrible weeks of the Burma campaign seemed to support this bias, since from Stilwell’s perspective the British simply could not or would not fight. Slim did not fit this mould. “Slim was certainly not the stereotypical British officer and Stilwell appreciated his qualities, not the least the fact that he had come up the hard way.”¹⁰⁶ Slim’s heightened sense of social awareness indicated that Stilwell was a man of deeds not words thus he worked tirelessly to coordinate Burcorps actions with Stilwell’s Chinese and gain not only economy of effort and unity of purpose but trust as well. Slim seems to have made an early and good impression on Stilwell. “In Stilwell’s

¹⁰⁵ McLynn, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 58.

notes made during the Retreat one remark shines like a good deed in a naughty world. 29 March 1942: Good old Slim. Maybe he's all right after all.' General Fuller, in his introduction to the Stilwell Papers, observes that 'the only Englishman he seems to have got on with was General Slim.'¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, it took time to break Stilwell's prejudice and earn his trust. There were a number of occasions where Stilwell and Slim clashed, but these diminished over time. One such incident occurred on 25 April, 1942; as Slim was coordinating, the slow and confusing withdraw of British and Chinese forces. At this point in the retreat, the British were acting as the rearguard, while the Chinese withdrew. On the advice of a Chinese commander, Slim dispatched a handful of British troops to secure a key railway station from which the Chinese were to continue their movement north. When the Chinese arrived, they believed that the British troops were the last remaining elements of the rearguard. Panic ensued, as Stilwell thought the British had shirked their duty and his reaction was visceral.

Stilwell, infuriated, sent me a message accusing me in emotional terms of having failed to carry out my duty as rearguard. I dare say my nerves were nearly as stretched as his – we were neither of us having a very good time – and I was furious at this injustice to my troops who were at that moment fighting briskly far to the south of his Chinese. I replied with a very astringent refutation of the charge. This was the only time Stilwell and I fell out, but a few days later, he sent me a message withdrawing the accusation and coming as near to an apology as I should think I ever got.¹⁰⁸

Slim and Stilwell forged a degree of trust during the retreat and yet it was later in the campaign that it truly paid dividends. Despite Stilwell's newfound respect for Slim, it

¹⁰⁷ Lewin, 140.

¹⁰⁸ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 82.

did not carry over to other British officers. Stilwell's continued distaste for the British became apparent once again at a key conference in November 1943. The conference was to plan upcoming operations in 1944, including a renewed British offensive in the Arakan, a limited offensive east into Burma as far as the Chindwin River, an advance south from Ledo to Myitkyina, and supported by Wingate's long-range penetration groups. In attendance were Mountbatten, Giffard, Stilwell and Slim. Stilwell's obstinacy surfaced once again during discussions over the theater command structure.

Mountbatten proposed that Stilwell's Chinese forces based in India come under the operational control of Giffard's 11th Army Group. This seemed a logical structure as it kept all land-based forces under one command, and allowed greater cooperation between Stilwell and Slim's XIV Army. Stilwell refused to acquiesce to such a structure.

The logical solution would have been for Generals Slim and Stilwell to become General Giffard's two subordinate commanders, but Stilwell and Giffard, their characters and make-up being so utterly opposed, had not got on well since they first met, and the former had refused to serve under the latter on the grounds that Giffard was only a British and not an Allied Commander-in-Chief.¹⁰⁹

Giffard was just the stereotypical British officer that Stilwell loved to hate. In an attempt to find a compromise, Mountbatten proposed that Stilwell become his deputy thus solving the problem of Stilwell operating under a solely British commander. However, Stilwell's operations still required close coordination with XIV Army. Stilwell suddenly proposed that he should come under Slim's command until his forces approached Myitkyina and Mountbatten immediately agreed. Stilwell's willingness to place his forces under Slim is a clear indication of the trust he felt towards Slim, a level of trust not

¹⁰⁹ Evans, 107.

shared with other British commanders. Thus, Stilwell occupied positions both above and below Slim in the command structure.

In the fierce battles that followed in 1944 including Kohima, Imphal, Operation Thursday and Stilwell's Myitkyina offensive, this convoluted command structure worked well since it was based on the cornerstone of trust between Stilwell and Slim. That Stilwell could ever work with Giffard was a fantasy, "he loathed Giffard; and Stilwell was a man in whom distaste became obsessive,"¹¹⁰ Stilwell however, trusted Slim. Slim clearly possessed a high degree of social awareness, the ability to read others feelings and understand them. "Because he liked Stilwell, respected him and summed up his characteristics accurately, General Slim knew the best way to handle him when he came under command of 14 Army during the operations of 1943-44."¹¹¹ Neither Stilwell nor Giffard possessed these skills and hence could not understand each other's positions.

Stillwell again challenged Slim's relationship management skills during the Myitkyina campaign. This was the planned advance from Ledo to Myitkyina and Wingate's Operation Thursday was to cut Japanese supply lines confronting Stilwell. The Japanese offensive at Imphal threw these plans into disarray. The Japanese presented stiff opposition to Stilwell and he complained bitterly that the Chindits were not pulling their weight. He demanded that Chindits assist with the capture of Myitkyina and on May 17th the Chindits came under Stilwell's direct command. This was a disaster for inter-Allied relations. The Chindits had been behind enemy lines for three months, their casualties

¹¹⁰ Lewin, 140.

¹¹¹ Evans, 63.

had been heavy and the survivors stricken with disease. Stilwell expressed no sympathy and continued to accuse them of cowardice, and the Chindits were furious.

This rift in Allied relations threatened the entire campaign, as the US aircraft critical to XIV Army's supply effort were under Stilwell's command. Mountbatten sent Slim, the only man who could talk to Stilwell.

Slim's friendly liaison was therefore invaluable—to himself, to Mountbatten, and to the Allied cause. He was probably the only man in SEAC, including the Supreme Commander, who could 'talk turkey' with Vinegar Joe—and this was perhaps because Stilwell believed that Slim was the only Englishman in the Far East who wanted to fight!¹¹²

Slim now juggled his own battle at Imphal while shuttling between his own headquarters and Stilwell's trying to rectify the situation. In the end, Slim brokered a compromise where some Chindits flew out while others remained with Stilwell. "As in the past, he succeeded in healing the breach between Stilwell and Lenthaigne."¹¹³ However, by 30 June the last of the exhausted and disease-ridden Chindits returned to India. Myitkyina would not fall until August 3rd, 1944. This incident once again proved Slim's interpersonal skills to be crucial to the Allied cause.

Wingate

Orde Wingate provided another challenge to Slim's relation management skills and once again demonstrates how Slim's emotional intelligence was critical to the campaign. In Wingate, Churchill felt that he had finally found someone who could defeat the Japanese; consequently, he gave Wingate his complete support.

¹¹² Lewin, 141.

¹¹³ Evans, 174.

Here, at long last, was someone who had hit back at the previously all-victorious enemy. His appeal to Churchill was that of a man who answered a desperate need for a national hero and who could deliver success in battle at that stage of the war; a very scarce commodity needed urgently by Churchill as a bargaining counter with his increasingly powerful American Allies.¹¹⁴

Wingate's powers of persuasion were renowned and to those who believed in him and his methods he was simply infallible. Upon meeting him for the first time after Operation Longcloth, Churchill himself quickly came under his spell. "We had not talked for half an hour before I felt myself in the presence of a man of the highest quality."¹¹⁵ That Churchill was smitten by Wingate was clear and he even considered giving him command of the army in Burma, a proposition which, given his lack of interpersonal skills and experience at the higher levels of war, could only be disastrous. "I consider Wingate should command the army against Burma. He is a man of genius and audacity, and has rightly been discerned by all eyes as a figure quite above the ordinary level."¹¹⁶ Yet, for the few captured by Wingate's zeal, there were far more who remained unimpressed. The general opinion of Wingate was that he was "rude, pushy, opinionated, bad-tempered, egotistical and self-promoting, an 'all or nothing' personality whose motto was 'either you are for me or against me.'"¹¹⁷ Slim, always one to give the benefit of the doubt, was initially open minded to Wingate but it became clear as the second Chindit operation drew near that he had lost confidence and patience with Wingate.

¹¹⁴ Hickey, 262.

¹¹⁵ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War. Vol V. Closing the Ring* (London: The Reprint Society, 1952), 69.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 507.

¹¹⁷ McLynn, 75.

Wingate, in accordance the directives of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, was allocated 3 Indian Division to undertake his 1944 operations in Burma. A substantial force when combined with a dedicated air force of transports, fighters and bombers. However, in a conversation with Slim in December 1943, Wingate demanded even more troops, specifically Slim's 26 Indian Division. Slim flatly refused this demand as this was his only operational reserve and Wingate could not possibly resupply another division. It was at this point that Wingate threatened to go beyond Slim and even Mountbatten by taking his demand straight to the Prime Minister. Slim, was not impressed by this threat.

Such had been his romantic success with the Prime Minister that he claimed the right to send him messages direct. . . I had been told this extraordinary arrangement existed, so . . . I knew what was coming. . . . With the greatest regret he felt that this was such an occasion, and he must, whatever the consequences to me, so report to the Prime Minister. I pushed a signal pad across my desk to him and told him to go and write his message. He did not take the pad but he left the room. Whether he ever sent the message I do not know, nor did I inquire. Anyhow that was the last I heard of his demand for the 26th Division.¹¹⁸

Wingate once more challenged Slim in the lead up to Operation Thursday and as before Slim called his bluff. Although Wingate had been dedicated a portion of the overall airlift capacity in the theatre he demanded more. Given the continued effort of supporting Chiang Kai-Shek and operations in the Arakan, there were no more aircraft available but Wingate could only see the importance of his own mission. Slim's operational order to Wingate for Operation Thursday did not contain additional aircraft and once more, the threat of Churchill's involvement arose. Such posturing on Wingate's part did not intimidate Slim.

He made one last attempt to make me change by saying he could not accept the order I had drafted. I gave him an unsigned copy of the draft, told him to take it

¹¹⁸ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 219.

away, sleep on it that night, and come back at ten o'clock the next morning, when I would give him the same order signed. I told him I had never had a subordinate officer refuse an order, but if one did, I knew what to do.¹¹⁹

Thus on two occasions, Wingate directly challenged the unity of purpose and effort Slim had worked so hard to establish and each time Slim refused to back down. "Twice Wingate tried to bluster Slim into changing an order, and twice climbed down when he found that Slim was not in the least afraid of him or of the specter of the Prime Minister which he conjured up in the way an angry small boy threatens to call his big brother. He had a persecution complex that was almost paranoid in its intensity."¹²⁰

In his relations with a challenging subordinate such as Wingate, Slim ably displayed the power of emotional intelligence. He was cognizant of his anger and frustration with Wingate yet he nevertheless controlled his emotions, refusing to lash out in anger. His social awareness indicated that if confronted with an emotional response, Wingate would likely invoke the power of the Prime Minister, a decision Slim could ill afford. Instead, Slim managed the relationship with Wingate in a calm and rational manner and maintained the unity of effort so critical in the Burma theatre.

Mountbatten

In Lord Louis Mountbatten, Slim faced an altogether different challenge. In comparison to Stilwell and Wingate, Mountbatten was the least of Slim's worries yet he still required careful handling and Slim could ill-afford the establishment of a poor relationship. As Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia, Mountbatten was clearly a

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 220.

¹²⁰ Masters, *Road Past Mandalay*, 150.

critical figure in the Allied efforts in the Burma theatre. He was young, only forty-three years of age, and well connected to both Churchill and the Royal Family. However, to many, Mountbatten was inexperienced and ill suited for such a position. When Churchill informed Sir Alan Brooke, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and key military advisor, of his decision to appoint Mountbatten, Brooke, remarked that “he will require a very efficient Chief of Staff to pull him through”¹²¹ and that Mountbatten clearly “lacked balance for such a job.”¹²²

In addition to his relative inexperience at such a high level of command was Mountbatten’s constant craving of attention. He actively sought the limelight and preferred a rich social life. In April 1944 during the height of the Battle of Imphal, Mountbatten moved his headquarters from Delhi to Kandy on the island of Ceylon. This placed him farther from the Burma front but supported a flamboyant lifestyle that was more to his taste. Slim’s challenge concerning Mountbatten was keeping the seemingly immature and easily distracted Supreme Commander interested in the campaign. He correctly assessed that Mountbatten’s desire for attention was a key motivator. Mountbatten wished to be the face of Burma, and Slim was happy to let him have it, although it did little for his own reputation. Slim’s social awareness skills quickly identified Mountbatten’s mannerisms and his need to remain the center of attention. With Mountbatten successfully placated, Slim could focus on his the goal he established so early in the campaign—the defeat of the Japanese Army in Burma.

¹²¹ Field Marshal The Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries, 1939-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 437.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 441.

Slim's high level of emotional intelligence was a critical factor in achieving Allied unity of effort and purpose in the Burma theatre. Slim was highly competent in the four domains of emotional intelligence as articulated by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee. He was an emotionally self-aware leader who was consistently honest with himself, about himself. Cognizant of his emotions he self-managed those emotions, consistently remaining calm and confident under enormous psychological strain. Slim's social awareness skills and empathy provided a unique viewpoint into other men, he could understand their emotions and distinguish that which was important to each of them and thereby choose the appropriate influence technique for each. Finally, Slim brought all these skills together to manage relationships with powerful and influential personnel in the theatre and thereby choose the appropriate influence technique for each.

CHAPTER 4

BILL SLIM AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Whereas emotional intelligence is critical to effective leadership, it does have limitations. Effective use of emotional intelligence relies upon synthesizing the personal and the social domains. Understanding the emotional state of others, encapsulated in the emotional intelligence domain of social awareness, and therefore effectively manage relationships, is how emotionally intelligent leaders influence others. Individuals with a high degree of emotional intelligence can understand the emotional state of others by reading their cues. Understanding subtle changes in body language and voice, as well as reading how they register happiness, anger, satisfaction or disappointment is key. The agent can often predict how the target could respond by mirror imaging or through empathy, which is seeing the situation from the target's point of view. However, expressions of emotions differ greatly across cultures and high levels of emotional intelligence in one culture may not be transferrable to another. "Individuals who demonstrate a high level of social and emotional intelligence within a familiar culture may still find it difficult to understand and adjust to unfamiliar milieus."¹²³ Simply understanding the emotional state of others, practicing social awareness, within one's own culture is challenging but it is even more difficult outside of one's cultural comfort zone. Effective leaders can transfer their emotional intelligence skills to other cultures by supplementing those skills with cultural intelligence.

¹²³ Davis, 41.

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence is the means by which leaders understand different cultures. It encompasses “a person’s capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts.”¹²⁴ A leader with a high degree of cultural intelligence possesses “the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors of a group of people and, most importantly, to effectively apply this knowledge toward a specific goal or range of activities.”¹²⁵ Cultural intelligence facilitates one’s adaptability to different cultural environments. For leaders, cultural intelligence complements emotional intelligence and facilitates the understanding of emotions that are so critical to effective leadership. “Acknowledging that emotional expression varies across cultures, this implies that one needs CQ¹²⁶ skills to understand the meaning behind such expressions and behaviors associated with it.”¹²⁷ Goleman for instance, notes that emotional and cultural intelligence share “the propensity to suspend judgement – to think before acting,”¹²⁸ thus he acknowledges the complementary relationship between emotional and cultural intelligence.

¹²⁴ P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang, *Cultural Intelligence. Individual Interactions across Cultures* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 59.

¹²⁵ Davis, ix.

¹²⁶ Cultural Intelligence.

¹²⁷ Naresh Kumar, Raduan Che Rose, and Subramaniam, “The Bond Between Intelligences: Cultural, Emotional and Social,” *Performance Development* 47, no. 10 (1988): 45.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Within a military context, cultural intelligence is vitally important for commanders of a multinational force. The challenges posed by complex organizations are vast and directly affect the operational efficiency of the force.

There is evidence to suggest that subtle differences in the organizational and national cultures of the countries that contribute personnel to missions can have an impact on the overall operational effectiveness of the multinational force. There exists, therefore, a requirement to consider and integrate the intercultural issues and factors that surround and influence multinational military collaboration, particularly at the operational level of command.¹²⁹

A lack of cultural intelligence will generate unnecessary friction for the commander, sapping energy and resources from other objectives.

The commander of a multinational and multicultural force such as Slim's XIV Army face two distinct challenges related to culture. The first is differences in organizational culture, often referred to as the "hard dimensions of interoperability"¹³⁰ including variances in policies, logistics, and doctrine. The second is differences in language, customs and cultural practices, the "soft dimensions of interoperability". While both of these challenges are formidable, for a leader seeking to establish trust with their subordinates and the means to influence them, the soft dimension presents the greatest hurdle. Agreements and staff procedures such as NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAGS) can mitigate hard dimension issues but only through a deep understanding of the other culture are soft dimension issues effectively resolved.

¹²⁹ NATO Research and Technical Organization, *Multicultural Military Operations and Intercultural Factors*, edited by Dr. Angela R. Febbraro, Brian McKee and Dr. Sharon L. Riedel (Neuilly-sur-Seine Cedex, France: 2008), 1-1.

¹³⁰ NATO Research and Technical Organization, 1-3.

Cultural intelligence, especially the soft areas of language and customs, is a vital skill for the commander in determining the proper technique to influence subordinates from different cultures. A subtle difference in body language or misunderstanding the implied meaning of a phrase in a second language can have severe unintended consequences. The commander's best intentions may be completely lost on subordinates and could in fact prove detrimental to his goal. Cultural intelligence mitigates these risks. Cultural intelligence consists of three components, the cognitive, the physical and the emotional.¹³¹ As with the four domains of emotional intelligence, Slim was highly proficient in each of them.

The Cognitive Component of Cultural Intelligence

The cognitive component refers to the intellectual awareness of different cultures. Simply understanding that differences exist between cultures and a general understanding of how they differ is a simple, necessary and yet, often forgotten element. Slim's cultural intelligence developed over a twenty-year career in the Indian Army. While largely officered by the British, the overwhelming majority of the army was Indian and even that title did not do justice to its vast cultural diversity. For instance, Slim was a Gurkha officer, whose troops came from the fierce hill tribes of Nepal and hence technically not even Indian. Largely recruited on ethnic lines, entire regiments of the Indian Army drew upon a single socio-ethnic group including Jats, Dogras, Sikhs, Pathans, Rajputs and Punjabi Mussalmen, although a large number of mixed regiments did exist. The British regimental system worked well in this environment with its emphasis on tradition and

¹³¹ P. Christopher Early and Elaine Mosakowski, "Cultural Intelligence," *Harvard Business Review* (October 2004): 3.

long service within the same unit. Slim, like most officers, spent much of his service alternating between staff postings and regimental duty, in his case with the 6th Gurkha Rifles where he developed a detailed understanding of the cultural nuances of his Gurkha soldiers. “Slim’s appointment to the 6th Gurkha’s was the longest period of regimental soldiering in his career. It served to integrate him into the Indian Army – he learned its languages and customs.”¹³² Other prominent Indian officers served in regiments as unique as the Gurkha’s. Sir Claude Auchinleck¹³³ for instance, served his career in a Punjabi regiment, while Sir John Smyth¹³⁴ earned his Victoria Cross leading Sikh troops.

The crucial fact is Slim, like all Indian Army officers, was raised and developed in his Regiment, as were his men. It was very rare for a soldier to transfer to a different regiment and whereas it was more common for officers, it was still the exception rather than the rule. Slim understood the traditions, rituals, values and practices of his men and the Indian Army took great pains to support those traditions by officially sanctioning cultural festivals and respecting the religious diversity of the Indian subcontinent. Of course, Indian battalions with their British officers did not serve in isolation; it was common that three different ethnic battalions served within the same brigade, a practice that provided an Indian Army officer such as Slim an understanding of the army as a

¹³² Duncan Anderson, “Slim. Field-Marshal William Slim,” in *Churchill’s Generals*, ed., John Keegan (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 303.

¹³³ Sir Claude Auchinleck was a legend in the Indian Army beginning his career in 1903 and serving with distinction throughout the First World War. He became the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in 1941 and again in 1943. Sir Geoffrey Evans, one of Slim’s division commanders and subsequently a Slim biographer referred to Auchinleck as “the greatest living authority on the command of Indian troops”.

¹³⁴ Smyth commanded 17 Indian Division during the initial Japanese attack in 1942. He was relieved after the Battle of the Sittang Bridge in February 1942.

whole in all its colorful and disparate parts. Each ethnic group was different but Slim developed an understanding of each, for instance, he recounts an incident during the retreat that demonstrated his superb knowledge of his men and their cultural idiosyncrasies. Caught in the open during a mortar barrage, Slim summarized how the various elements of his army would react to seeing their commander frantically seeking cover.

It is a funny thing how differently the various races react to such a situation. A British soldier would have called out to me to take shelter and would have made room for me beside him. The average Indian sepoy would have watched anxiously, but said nothing unless I was hit, when he would have leapt forward and risked his life to get me under cover. A Sikh would have sprung up, and with the utmost gallantry dramatically covered me with his own body, thrilled at the chance of an audience. Only a Gurkha would stand up and laugh.¹³⁵

Slim's cognitive knowledge of cultural intelligence was also evident in his relations with African troops. XIV Army had significant numbers of West and East African troops under command at various times within the Burma Campaign, yet unlike his Indian, Gurkha and British troops, Slim had practically no real experience with African troops save some limited interaction during the East African campaign of 1941.

Upon inspecting the newly arrived 81 West African Division in 1943, Slim was stunned by the high number of white officers and non-commissioned officers. Slim was used to Indian battalions with perhaps eight white officers, not the fifty he saw in each African battalion. To Slim, this number of white personnel was excessive however; experienced African officers told him "far from being too many, with the rapidly expanding African forces, more British officers and N.C.O.s were needed."¹³⁶ The idea

¹³⁵ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 103.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

put forth was that African troops would simply not fight without their white officers; with them, they would endure any hardship and surmount any challenge. Slim remained unconvinced yet he did not order any changes. He yielded to the advice of his African officers and resisted the urge to impose his Indian Army perspective on the Africans. Slim therefore demonstrated the cognitive component of cultural intelligence that is awareness of different cultures with their subsequent different viewpoints and expectations. He realized that African troops were not like Indian troops and that a different approach was needed, a clear example of the cognitive component of cultural intelligence.

The Physical Component of Cultural Intelligence

The second component of cultural intelligence is the physical, and comprises the exhibiting of practices consistent with that culture, an important step in gaining trust.

Evidence of an ability to mirror the customs and gestures of the people around you will prove that you esteem them well enough to want to be like them. By adopting people's habits and mannerisms, you eventually come to understand in the most elemental way what it is like to be them. They in turn, become more trusting and open.¹³⁷

The Indian Army, of which Slim was a product, was highly adept at this it and made great efforts to support the various cultural traditions within the army. John Masters, a Gurkha officer and a Chindit commander, describes how British officers were often guests of the battalion during the important Hindu festival of Dussehra.¹³⁸ Not only did British officers support such rituals, they participated in them as well, for instance,

¹³⁷ Early and Masokowski, *Cultural Intelligence*, 3.

¹³⁸ John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (New York: Viking, 1956), 164.

Masters describes how each company in the battalion was to sacrifice a buffalo in a specific manner and important part of this important festival. If the executioner was successful, good luck would befall the company and the commander, as an honored guest, would wrap a white turban around the executioner's head as a sign of expertise.

The herdsman led on my company's buffalo, and I found that my hands were sweating. They had to do it right. We would be disgraced if anything went wrong. I shut my eyes . . . I could not bear to see failure—and I could do nothing to ensure success. Shouts rang in my ears . . . I opened my eyes. The buffalo lay dead, and the executioner was running toward me, his face split by a tremendous, proud smile. With shaking hands, and most inexpertly, I wound the white cloth round his head, and he ran back to the sidelines.¹³⁹

Master's account ably describes how much he had assimilated the cultural values represented in this particular ritual, one that was previously unknown to him.

Even during the rapid wartime expansion of the Indian Army, when a large influx of rapidly commissioned officers arrived, understanding the culture of one's regiment was as important as learning tactics or weaponry. One young officer upon arriving to his battalion was encouraged by his Indian NCOs to "mix socially with their soldiers in a way unknown in the British Army. . . . The young jawans responded gathering round to sing songs and perform their folk dances at camp fires as the battalion trained in the Himalayan foothills."¹⁴⁰ Thus participation in such rituals played an important role in the British Indian Army and is a clear example of British officers practicing the physical component of cultural intelligence, that is "mirroring the customs and gestures" of other cultures. This solidified the bonds of trust between officer and soldier and gave Indian Army Officers such as Slim a unique perspective on their men.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 172.

¹⁴⁰ Hickey, 184.

In addition to participating in the cultural festivals and rituals of the various ethnic groups, the Indian Army placed great emphasis in another area—language. Urdu was *lingua franca* of the Indian Army. Many British born Indian officers such as Slim were fluent in the language of their men and the Indian Army provided the training necessary to acquire such skills. General Phillip Christison, who commanded XV Corps in the Arakan, was one such officer. “He had been told by a wise old friend, many years before, that if he took the trouble to learn his soldier’s languages he would hold the key to their hearts. . . . Wherever he went around his corps area he was able to converse fluently with his jawans, something they warmly respected.”¹⁴¹

Slim too was adept in the language of both his regiment and the wider Indian Army, a skill quickly acquired upon first joining his new regiment in 1919. “He was quick to master both Gurkhali and Urdu, at least well enough to command his company, and his evident affection for his men was soon reciprocated.”¹⁴² However, the multitude of languages within XIV Army could still trip a seasoned Indian veteran like Slim.

I remember one day I spoke to a Gurkha battalion, drove a mile or so, and addressed an Indian one. My talk in substance was the same to both of them. When I had finished what I thought was a particularly eloquent Urdu harangue to the Indians, I turned to my A.D.C.¹⁴³ and said with some pride, ‘That was a pretty good effort, wasn’t it?’ ‘Quite, sir’ he replied crushingly, ‘but I suppose you know that after the first two sentences you relapsed entirely into Gurkhali!’¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Hickey, 96.

¹⁴² Miller, 120.

¹⁴³ Aide-de-Camp.

¹⁴⁴ Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 185.

Whether Slim spoke to his men in flawless Gurkhali or Urdu was irrelevant. What was important was the sincere and honest attempt to communicate to his soldiers in their native language and this went further than any soaring speech in impeccable language ever could.

The Motivational Component of Cultural Intelligence

The final component is emotional or motivational. This refers to the perseverance needed to understand a new culture and captures the willingness and the determination to continue, despite setbacks. Slim's twenty-year career in the Indian Army is ample proof of this perseverance. Slim, like many Indian Army Officers, volunteered for service in India. He wanted to serve in the subcontinent where living conditions were by no means as comfortable as in England. Service in India during the inter-war years required dedication, professionalism and perseverance. Life for Indian Army officers and their families could be a lonely and dangerous one, especially when assigned to an isolated hill station along the Afghan frontier.

It is clear that Bill Slim possessed a high degree of cultural intelligence, "the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors of a group of people and, most importantly, to effectively apply this knowledge toward a specific goal or range of activities."¹⁴⁵ Slim's ability in this area gave him the skills to inspire and motivate Gurkha, African and Indian alike to not only work together, but to persevere against a vicious foe and in an inhospitable environment.

¹⁴⁵ Davis, 41.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Bill Slim was one of the finest British generals of the 20th century. His accomplishments throughout the Burma campaign are truly remarkable. Having led his shattered and defeated forces through the jungles and mountains of Burma, Slim rebuilt his army and destroyed the Japanese invasion of India at the bloody and ferocious battles of Imphal and Kohima. He then relentlessly pursued his enemy, inflicting upon the Japanese army its greatest defeat before concluding the campaign at the very place where it began. Slim's accomplishments are even more remarkable when seen in the light of the logistical constraints and a brutal and unforgiving environment. However, his greatest accomplishment, that which places him amongst the great generals of history, was the establishment of unity of purpose and effort in the face of divisive senior leadership and amongst a disparate mix of humanity, a skill still in high demand today.

But if you as the Operational Commander have not got the necessary unity of command, you must go for unity of effort and that is a matter of leadership and personal relationships. It may sound banal, but I have come to understand just how important such relationships are in the multi-national environment.¹⁴⁶

This makes Bill Slim an excellent model for future multinational force commanders.

Slim achieved this unity of purpose due to his high degree of both emotional and cultural intelligence. Emotional intelligence gave him the skills to manage the likes of Stilwell, Wingate and Mountbatten, clearly a divisive and caustic group of highly influential men, each of whom could destroy the unity that Slim sought and needed for

¹⁴⁶ Sir Michael Jackson, "The Realities of Multi-national Command: An Informal Commentary," in *The Challenges of High Command*, eds. Gary Sheffield and Geoffrey Till (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 142.

victory. Emotional intelligence, when combined with cultural intelligence enabled Slim to shape XIV Army into the highly proficient organization that it was. The cumulative effect was an organization like no other in the Second World War.

They were part of what their great commander ‘Uncle Bill’ Slim saw as one team: Britons, Africans, Indians, Burmese, and Gurkhas. The like of which will never be seen again. War may be an evil thing, but is well to pause and think how men from the far corners of the earth came together to do an unnatural but totally necessary job.¹⁴⁷

Slim took this multicultural and multinational collection of humanity and molded it into XIV Army. There were few bonds linking these men prior to their arrival in Burma upon which Slim could build upon.

Most of the British were homesick conscripts, unwilling to risk their necks for an empire in which they had long since lost faith. Few Indians felt any residual loyalty to the Raj, and were scarcely keen to help the British reimpose their rule over Burma. The East and West Africans can have had even less motivation to fight.¹⁴⁸

Yet in was in Burma and with Slim that these men found the unity and trust necessary to accomplish one task—the defeat of the Japanese Army. A goal consistently and clearly articulated in simple language and in a manner understood by all members of XIV Army regardless of where they were from. Slim’s ability to communicate with his men was legendary and no matter what their background Slim knew the means to connect with each of them. He knew how to motivate, inspire, and unite them in one of the most challenging environments and so far from home. George MacDonald Fraser, then a private in the 9th Battalion, the Border Regiment summarized the effect that a simple talk from Slim could have on worn, tired and bitter men.

¹⁴⁷ Hickey, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, *Slim*, 313.

But the biggest boost to morale was the burly man who came to talk to the assembled battalion by the lake shore – I’m not sure when, but it was unforgettable. Slim was like that: the only man I’ve ever seen who had a force that came out of him, a strength of personality that I have puzzled over since, for there was no apparent reason for it, unless it was the time and the place and my own state of mind. Yet others felt it too, and they were not impressionable men.¹⁴⁹

Slim developed into an emotionally intelligent and culturally savvy leader gradually, almost imperceptibly over the course of his lifetime. The development of Slim’s emotional intelligence began early, the result of his lower-middle class origins and practical education on the streets, schools and factories of industrial Birmingham. His world was not the sheltered one of the English public school system with its homogenous student body representing only a fraction of British society. Slim’s education was a practical one, in which he studied not only the required academic subjects, but humanity as well. As a schoolteacher, he related to his students, understood their challenges, and empathized with their plight. As a lower-level factory manager, Slim, interacted with the rough men who worked the factory floor for minimum wage and little hope of progress.

Yukl states that leadership is about influencing others to accomplish a task in the manner desired by the leader. Emotional intelligence provides the leader with the knowledge to apply the proper means to influence. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee stress that competency in the four domains of self-awareness; self-management, social awareness and relationship management are the hallmarks of an emotionally intelligent leader. That Slim was emotionally self-aware is clear from his memoirs. He acknowledged his emotions and was consistently honest with himself, about himself. His emotional self-management and his calm demeanor, in even the direst of circumstances,

¹⁴⁹ George Macdonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here: A Recollection of War in Burma* (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 47.

was evident to all. Slim's ability to empathize and understand other men, whether Stilwell, Wingate, Mountbatten or the common British soldier, provided the foundation upon which to fulfill the fourth domain-relationship management. Slim's emotional intelligence gave him the means to influence key leaders and to inspire men.

Yet Slim's emotional intelligence could only go so far in the multicultural melange that was XIV Army. Emotional intelligence is not easily transferrable to other cultures and achieving social awareness is difficult. Slim's cultural intelligence provided the means with which to transfer his emotional intelligence to all of XIV Army. As with emotional intelligence, Slim developed his cultural intelligence over an extended period, in his case a twenty-year career in the Indian Army. Slim was adept at all three components of cultural intelligence, the cognitive, the physical and the motivational. In the cognitive sense, he was keenly aware of the cultural nuances not only in the Indian Army but with his African soldiers as well. Slim knew that each group was different and different methods needed. The physical sense includes exhibiting practices consistent with another culture and Slim as an Indian Army officer fully participated in the cultural practices of his troops. Finally, Slim's long service on the sub-continent is evidence of the motivational element or the perseverance to understand a new culture.

Bill Slim's accomplishments on the battlefield were a direct result of his personal leadership. By combining emotional and cultural intelligence, he established a unity of effort and purpose that destroyed the Japanese Army in Burma, one of the most inhospitable countries on earth. XIV Army was a truly remarkable organization

consisting of men from a wide variety of cultures, religions and languages,¹⁵⁰ yet Slim brought them together and made them greater than the sum of their parts. “No one who saw the 14th Army in action, above all, no one who saw its dead on the field of battle, the black and the white and the brown and the yellow lying together on the rich soil of Burma, can ever doubt that there is a brotherhood of man.”¹⁵¹ Bill Slim and XIV Army clearly demonstrate the value of emotional and cultural intelligence to multinational force commanders. Slim’s ability to accomplish so much, with so little and with such diversity make him unique, even amongst history’s greatest generals.

¹⁵⁰ See appendix 2.

¹⁵¹ Masters, *Road Past Mandalay*, 307.

APPENDIX A

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT DOMAINS AND ASSOCIATED COMPETENCIES

PERSONAL COMPETENCE: These capabilities determine how we manage ourselves

SELF-AWARENESS

- Emotional self-awareness: Reading one's own emotions and recognizing their impact; using "gut sense" to guide decisions
- Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses
- Self-confidence: A sound sense of one's self-worth and capabilities

SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Emotional self-control: Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control
- Transparency: Displaying honesty and integrity; trustworthiness
- Adaptability: Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overcoming obstacles
- Achievement: The drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence
- Initiative: Readiness to act and seize opportunities.

SOCIAL COMPETENCE: These capabilities determine how we manage relationships.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Empathy: Sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective and taking active interest in their concerns
- Organizational awareness: Reading the currents, decision networks, and politics at the organizational level
- Service: Recognizing and meeting follower, client or customer needs.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- Inspirational leadership: Guiding and motivating with compelling vision
- Influence: Wielding a range of tactics for persuasion
- Developing others: Bolstering others' abilities through feedback and guidance
- Change catalyst: Initiating, managing and leading in a new direction
- Conflict management: Resolving disagreements
- Building bonds: Cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships
- Teamwork and collaboration: Cooperation and team building.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 39.

APPENDIX B

XIV ARMY

John Masters, a Gurkha officer and Chindit commander provides this outstanding description of Slim's XIV Army in his memoir *The Road Past Mandalay*. He ably captures the multicultural flavor of Slim's army.

There were English, Irish, Welsh and Scots, and in the RAF, New Zealanders, Australians, Newfoundlanders, Canadians and South Africans. There were Chinese; there were tall slender Negroes from East Africa, and darker, more heavily build Negroes from West Africa, with tribal slits slashed deep into their cheeks – an infantry division of each. There were Chins, Kachins, Karens and Burmans, mostly light brown, small-boned men in worn jungle green, doubly heroic because the Japanese held possession of their homes, often of their families too.

Lastly, and in by far the greatest numbers, there were the men of the Indian Army, the largest volunteer army the world has ever known. There were men from every caste and race—Sikhs, Dogras, Pathans, Madrassis, Mahrattas, Rajputs, Assamese, Kumaonis, Punjabis, Garhwalis, Naga head-hunters—and from Nepal, the Gurkhas in all their tribes and subtribes, of Limbu and Rai, Thakur and Chhetri, Magar and Gurung. These men wore turbans, and steel helmets, and slouch hats, and berets, and tank helmets, and khaki shakos inherited from the eighteenth century. There were companies that averaged five feet one inch in height and companies that averaged six feet three inches. There were men as purple black as the West Africans, and men as pale and wheat-gold of skin as a lightly sun-tanned blonde. They worshiped God according to the rites of the Mahayana and Hinayana, of Sunni and of Shiah, of Rome and Canterbury and Geneva, of the Vedas and the sages and the Mahabharatas, of the ten Gurus, of the secret shrines of the jungle. There were vegetarians and meat-eaters and fish-eaters, and men who ate only rice, and men who ate only wheat; and men who had four wives, men who shared one wife with four brothers, and men who openly practiced sodomy. There were men who had never seen snow and men who seldom saw anything else. And Brahmins and Untouchables, both with rifle and Tommy gun.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Masters, *Road Past Mandalay*, 154.

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