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**The National Defense College**

**43rd Class 2015-2016**

**FINAL REVIEW**

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**FINAL REVIEW – 43RD INDC (2015 - 2016)**

1. The curriculum of the National Defence College is pitched at the ***National Strategic level***, as is evident from the objectives of the course – “national security” and “understanding the defence, political, economic, social and technological challenges of the country”. Based on this understanding, the review of the 43rd INDC Course is presented in the succeeding paragraphs.

**Comments on the Course Content**

1. **The Pillars of National Security**. The four pillars of national security are well thought out and defined, and within them, cover, most aspects of national security. Comments on each pillar are listed below: -
   1. **Military**. Since the course content is at the strategic level, many military aspects are not required to be covered at INDC, including operational and tactical issues. The students are expected to be senior enough to know these things and would usually have been given formal instructions on such issues at lower level training institutions. What remains is military strategy, which was covered to an extent during the year. However, most of the course dealt with “strategic thinking”, which is not the same as strategy. Discussions on the IDF Strategy paper were to a large extent relevant. Interactions with most senior IDF staff were also useful, especially the one with the Chief of General Staff, General Eizenkott.
   2. **Society**. Considering the unique nature and challenges of the Israeli society, this particular pillar is very important to understanding the national security of the state of Israel. In that perspective, the society course was designed excellently, with a very high degree of content and quality of instructions. The course was very self-critical, and brought out some hard facts which were difficult to accept by many of the students. In my perception, the pre-conceived notions carried by them was detrimental to the overall individual learning in this pillar.
   3. **Economic**. Economy is a very crucial aspect for every country and cannot be emphasized enough. The economy course in INDC was pitched at the correct level. The instructor introduced basic concepts first and then spoke about the implications on national issues. The course content was perfect and the quality of instructions were of a very high standard. The instructor had excellent knowledge and was successful in delivering it to the students.
   4. **Political/Diplomatic**. Perhaps the core of issues at the strategic level lie in the politico-diplomatic level and most other aspects tie into this pillar of national security. Therefore, a clear understanding of this element is crucial. The INDC course did focus on foreign policy issues, but was heavily tilted towards the relationship with the US. While the Israel-USA relations are the cornerstone of the state's foreign strategy, there was perhaps less exposure to the changing times and emergence of a new world order. That is, the course was not oriented towards what lies in the future. Such a tilt would allow the students to form their own opinions about policies and strategies required to tackle future opportunities and challenges. The Simulation was particularly useful in understanding this pillar. However, some of the learning is perhaps, distorted, because the players were given freedom to act as they chose, rather that within the boundaries of the national doctrines of the entities they were representing.
2. **International Tours**. All the international tours were very well conceptualized and were relevant to the national security of Israel. They were truly instrumental in broadening of horizons of the students, which is so important for the students in their future jobs in higher positions. However, the daily routine on many days was not really conducive to learning, as the students were too tired, either after a long flight, or at the end of a long day.
3. **Academic Content at Haifa**. The professors conducting classes at Haifa, Prof Ben Dor and Prof Ben Zvi are both extremely experienced and have a wealth of knowledge. They are perhaps the best in their respective fields in Israel. However, the course content was not really relevant to the aims of INDC. The Political Science course conducted by Prof Ben Dor was very academic and theoretical, perhaps suited to research students, but not for 40-50 year olds, who are being trained for higher strategic level positions in the Israeli government. Similarly, the National Security course conducted by Prof Ben Zvi was actually a historical discourse on Israel-US political and military relations. It could also be replaced by some more relevant topics. The Zionist Enterprise course was certainly more relevant for the Israeli students, although the depth was too much. Perhaps the course could be shortened and some other relevant subjects could be added in lieu.
4. **The Summer Course**. The summer course was very useful. It helped enhance my knowledge about basic issues which were relevant to the year at INDC. The learning during this phase brought my knowledge to such a level that I did not feel out of depth at any time during the main course.

**Personal Learning / ‘Take-Aways’**

1. On a personal level, the course content was very enriching and enlightening. The course content takes a critical look at various aspects of Israel's national security. Sometimes the self-criticism is both surprising and refreshing. It made me think about these aspects of my own country, and encouraged me to research these aspects of my nation which I had never thought about, such as the societal challenges, and issues about the economy. The model of teaching and learning at INDC also made me take an analytical view about my country and military, to be self-critical about our own mistakes and weaknesses. I believe that I have enhanced the knowledge about my own country by atleast 100%, if not more.
2. The year at INDC has also broadened my horizons, not only about the challenges of the Middle East, but about global issues. The international tours were an important part of this learning. My horizons have also been widened because of a wide exposure to non-military aspects.
3. The year has also allowed me to make many new friends, amongst the Israeli classmates as well as the internationals. This is a gain that I will carry for my lifetime.

**Summary**

1. The greatest strength of INDC is the environment of learning. The college encourages free thinking, permits counter views and analyses all issues, including unpleasant ones, in detail. As a result, students are able to carry out their own analyses, and come to conclusions based on their understanding. This is perhaps, the biggest contributing factor towards meeting the aim of the course. It helps to broaden the horizons of each participant which is so important towards execution of future jobs at higher positions. The course content can be improved by some adjustments, as has been discussed in earlier paragraphs.