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End of Year Personal Review

What an incredible year! The Israel National Defense College (INDC aka MABAL) certainly captured our full attention and in tandem with my family experiences across the Land of Israel, it was the most rewarding learning enterprise of my 23-year military career. That said, perhaps the best way to tackle this final review of my INDC experience is to separate my reflections into three distinct categories. Firstly, I will cover the more administrative aspects of the course including the interface with the International Students' Management Office (ISMO) and the organization of the course curriculum on the MABAL campus as well as in Haifa. Second, I will address more specifically the content of the main courses of study, that is my personal evaluation of each semester's objectives. Lastly, I will provide some insights from the international perspective on the overall educational journey. The paper will be constructed in an easy to follow outline format using bullets rather than paragraph form, in the widely accepted [Issue; Discussion (providing examples when possible); Recommendation] scheme to best convey and connect my main points.

Administrative evaluation including ISMO interface:

I will start by complimenting the entire MABAL staff, including the senior leadership, seasoned officers, new instructors and team leaders as well as all the young soldiers for everything they did for the 43rd Class. We were extremely fortunate and honored to have the opportunity to study in their midst. I will particularly

acknowledge Dr. Josh Krasna for his work during the summer course and throughout the year to ensure the international fellows were properly introduced and routinely familiarized with Israel and its national security affairs. My team leader, Mr. Haim Waxman, was also an all-star performer and a key reason for my enjoyable and successful year here at MABAL. I will complete this section by recognizing those in the ISMO who were absolutely pivotal to the collective success of the international fellows but not before outlining three major observations in the administrative domain.

1. Overall arrangement of the course curriculum

- a. Issue: I'm aware of the logic behind the organization of the seasons (Infrastructure, Core and Advanced) but I don't see why this prescription can't be modified to allow for exposure to select aspects of all pillars of the Israeli national security model earlier in the year.
- b. Discussion including example(s): The majority of the time spent in the beginning of the year on topics such as the Zionist enterprise and other courses related to the social pillar are too heavily emphasized. This emphasis has a tendency to dilute or distract the students from the more traditional military aspects of national security. This is not necessarily a bad thing since the students need to reconcile certain societal issues first but if not properly put into context of current national security interests, the meaning can be lost. Moreover, Public Law dominated the intellectual landscape early on and continued to linger in the background, along with the economic classes, for too long. I will also

add that the second semester spent in Haifa detracted from, rather than bolstered, the INDC objectives and I'm not sure the student's time was well spent traveling, particularly given the selection of courses offered.

- c. Recommendation: It is imperative that students are properly introduced to the essential and more traditional aspects of national security simultaneously with these 'softer' and less pronounced elements.

However, if time must be spent as such then there should be more team discussions to draw out the real meaning of these pillars. Additionally, if the connection with Haifa will continue to be a mandatory one, then a greater effort must be made to tie the Political Science degree to the INDC goals. Professor Ben Dor and Ben Zvi both have a lot to offer but I'm not sure the 'juice was worth the squeeze'. Recommend keeping the master's degree but a shift in focus to international relations or a pure national security course of study would be more beneficial to the MABAL students, both Israeli and international.

2. Time spent in the Plenum

- a. Issue: There is an absolute need, especially in the infrastructure season to keep the students together in a common forum but this methodology should not carry on throughout the year.
- b. Discussion including example(s): The network meetings bring the students together and the National Security course is absolutely necessary. Beyond that, our time would be better spent in seminar or team formats to generate for frequent and meaningful discussions.

Moreover, it is clear the student body represents many different government agencies and those voices need to be heard early on. The plenum facilitates the most vocal students' participation but isn't conducive to a true shared learning experience. Also on this topic, segregating students that were previously educated on a particular topic and allowing them to be excused from certain lectures/courses detracts from the overall learning of the other students.

- c. Recommendation: The off-site seminars and other out-of-plenum formats are the most effective way to engage the students. Notetaking and frontal lectures have a place but once the class is familiarized with the topic, break-out sessions will bear more fruit in an adult learning model. The society seminar, which was only taken by a small cross-section of the students was a great way to galvanize the pillar and could replace many hours in the plenum. Additionally, if an economy or law class is in session (for example), then I would expect students representing those fields to be present in the plenum. Afterall, this is why we have such a diverse group in each MABAL class.

3. International involvement

- a. Issue: Internationals are without a doubt handicapped and the overall responsibility is on them to overcome obstacles. However, due to the language constraint it is not possible to completely rectify the situation, which I would call the inadvertent isolation of the international fellows. An earnest effort needs to be made, particularly by the staff to create the conditions for a sense of integration early on and throughout the year.
- b. Discussion including example(s): There are many examples of not properly integrating the internationals, some of which are admittedly due to inevitable culture clash. But it is obvious the internationals are less likely to involve themselves due to translation constraints. Essentially, the international presence/voice cannot be made known without a little helping hand. The disregard for proper microphone usage by Israelis did not get any better as the year went on during Q+A periods or back-and-forth student discussions.
- c. Recommendation: Don't delay the international fellows' country/service briefs until the second half of the year. The US students had early opportunities to present material related to their countries, i.e. 9/11 brief but the same opportunities need to be offered to the other internationals. Also, team leaders should encourage their involvement in the team rooms as well as on the student-led regional trips. Because of the language barrier it is easier for the Israeli students to sideline the internationals but this should not be permitted.

I will close this section on a positive note as I will try and do throughout this review. The ISMO team is the most dedicated group of individuals the internationals have the pleasure of working with this year. Without their day-to-day involvement, our learning experience would not be the same. On many occasions Bianca, Guy, Einav and Shauna went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure we were well taken care of with translations – classroom material and every important student or staff WhatsApp discussion in Hebrew, scheduling notifications and other special considerations. The ISMO team, so skillfully and professionally led by Matan, should be commended for their ability to smooth over most of the bumps in the road including those issues which I covered above. They are an irreplaceable asset and with next year's international crew expanding it should be recognized that ISMO resources should be enhanced to the maximum degree.

Content of the main courses of study

1. Goals and objectives

- a. Issue: If I'm not mistaken, senior training, research and networking were the three MABAL goals. These goals were indeed achieved but as stated in the previous section the arrangement of the course and the planning/execution of the objectives did at times challenge the student's focus on what counts the most. In the discussion below I will insert a (+) where the planned method was effective, and a (-) where it was not present at all or not effective. I will also use the same symbols to evaluate whether or not certain objectives were met.

- b. Discussion: The goals were supposed to be attained through research and studies on the components of National Security (+); the analysis of relationships between the various dimensions (-); development of the analytical skills needed to deal with complex challenges in the areas of National Security (+); and applied knowledge development through research on National Security issues in order to further future Israeli security systems (-). The objectives were to: 1) Teach the fundamentals of national security and the elements/factors that affect the strength of the Nation (+); 2) Study topics that contribute to the understanding of the background of the defense, political, economic, social and technological challenges of the country (+); 3) Explore the various national security challenges that affect the various systems (-); and 4) Develop an applied knowledge in all areas of National Security (+).
- c. Recommendation: From my "marks (+/-)" above it can be inferred that more attention needs to be given to the manner in which the class analyzes relationships between the various dimensions of national security. All too many times the pillars were taught or presented in isolation by guest lecturers rather than actually discussing the inter-relationship of two or more. The strategy course did link some of the dimensions together but not in a coherent manner. I also don't believe there was enough focus early on regarding the future and potential solutions to the main national security issues, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict to be exact. This made it difficult to achieve the objective of

fully exploring the various national security challenges that affect the various systems. There either has to be more time set aside in the infrastructure or core semesters to accomplish these tasks or the latter half of the year needs to be re-calibrated to tie what was learned in the beginning of the year to the advanced understanding we gain at the end of the year.

International perspective

1. Overview

- a. Issue: Key principles were employed to convey the course material.

Those principles that were indeed adhered to were: 1) Create an interdisciplinary program; 2) Attract leading experts in fields of study; 3) Require annual research study; 4) Focus on practical application, i.e. Political Simulation; 5) Use diverse learning methods, i.e. think tanks, roundtables and study guides; 6) Encourage active participation; and 7) Rely on the expertise of senior scholars.

- b. Discussion: Strict adherence to each and every one of the outlined principles is absolutely essential and anything that does not contribute to the success of the foundation can lead the program off track. The political simulation and the final paper experiences were the most rewarding and challenging events of the year from the international perspective. This can be said because these are the times when the internationals were left to their own devices and were therefore required to individually invest a lot of leadership and/or intellectual capital.

- c. Recommendation: Don't allow the tendency for schedule changes and add-on items to distract from the above principles and ensure the students keep their eye on the ball by highlighting this foundation throughout the curriculum. Also, any ideas of splitting up the internationals for the simulation should not be entertained. Additionally, the internationals should be better leveraged to introduce any suggestions they may have for speakers, i.e. Attaches or visiting national leaders.

2. Trips abroad

- a. Issue: There are very few opportunities for the internationals to contribute to the learning environment using the tools, knowledge and experience they bring from their countries. Any opportunity to tap into these first-hand accounts should be exercised.
- b. Discussion: Although this may also apply to future trips abroad in Russia, India or maybe even Brazil, I will only speak of what I experienced this year. There was and will always be a great wealth of knowledge in the room from NATO/EU countries, including the USA and Germany (and Canada next year). It follows that those representatives will have connections or even good ideas that should be leveraged in the planning as well as execution phases. This happened in my case this year but only because I was poking and prodding around. The German student was not properly utilized and the USA students were not properly confided in for the development of the US agenda.

Bringing them in too late or not fully confiding in them to ensure their contributions are indeed useful is a mistake.

- c. Recommendation: The default should be to invite international students to provide basic pre-trip country briefs, including governmental (political) systems and a glimpse into their nation's society. They should also be asked to introduce or lead certain aspects of the actual trip, and as long as they know the MABAL objectives beforehand, they will surely add to the overall experience. Moreover, there will be less chance of mistakenly misrepresenting an area they may know more about or marginalizing their sense of involvement in the process.

3. Other key aspects

- a. Issue: All of the seminars, workshops and conferences that were actually executed absolutely did enrich the learning experience, even if it was just an opportunity to get off the MABAL campus.
- b. Discussion: In addition to the visits and tours, most of which are a must do, special days such as the one spent at the Rabin Center or studying about Israeli independence and focused workshops such as the ones done for rhetoric and negotiations provide a good break from the traditional settings. However, if these are to be continued a major effort needs to be made, as was done in on-site team discussions, to tie them to the broader course of study. Student-led expeditions were the best way to keep everyone interested.

- c. Recommendation: Continue to put students in the lead as much as possible. I appreciated Professor Ben Artzi as a wealth of historical knowledge but he is but the regional tours shouldn't be micro-managed by him just because he is the one grading the papers. More team members need to be involved in the planning and execution of those tours. Moreover, the visits to the institutions best known by the students, i.e. Army, Navy, Economy, Political must be kept in place and allowed to flourish using the breadth over depth logic. If possible, arrangements should be made to attend more conferences, i.e. Herzliya Conference.

In closing, the last order of business I want to cover is the matter of including defined 'extracurricular' activities in the curriculum. Without such events as sports, Commander's evenings and other social events, i.e. student initiated parties, birthday events and organized breakfasts, the course would not be the same. The internationals should arrive with an open mind and open arms. Therefore, every effort should be made to foster the bond between Israeli security institutions and other friendly nation's militaries. These such activities are the only way students properly relate to each other and MABAL should continue to encourage such opportunities to the max extent.

As I said at the beginning, it was an outstanding year and a once-in-a-lifetime experience is about to end and I truly look forward to continuing my national security studies having learned from the best of breed. My compliments to MajGen Tamir Hayman for leading an absolutely world class institution and to Col Itzik Cohen as well as the rest of the instructor and support staff for orchestrating an absolutely amazing program! TODA RABA and SEMPER FIDELIS!