

**Changes in the Focus of Education  
at the National Institute for Defense  
Studies, and Challenges**

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## **1. The Position of the NIDS in the Education of the SDF officers**

The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) is the highest educational institution for the Defense Agency and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) of Japan. Education of officers is provided not only by the NIDS, which is under the direct jurisdiction of the director general of the Defense Agency, but also by the Joint Staff College, which is attached to the Joint Staff Council, and the Staff Colleges of the three services of the SDF. Among others, the Regular Course at NIDS is designed to help students acquire comprehensively advanced knowledge of subjects relating to national security. Admission to NIDS Regular Course is open not only to officers of the SDF but to civilian personnel of the Defense Agency, officials of other ministries and agencies, employees of private firms, and military personnel of other countries as well.

## **2. Educational Objective of NIDS**

Before World War II, civilian control over the military was not fully institutionalized. The army and the navy each had their own educational institutions for officers, and they had few opportunities for exchange of personnel between them, not to speak of non-military organizations. At one time, the emphasis of officer's education provided by these educational institutions tilted somewhat toward a narrow-minded nationalism. Aware of such shortcomings of the prewar military education, NIDS has adopted a program that is designed to admit civilian personnel from government ministries and agencies and employees of private firms and to educate them as personnel who are capable of comprehensively thinking about security matters. We do this by providing them with education not only in military affairs but also in wide-ranging subjects that cover inter-

national and domestic situations, economy, science and technology, and military history.

To train SDF personnel as competent officers who are fully equipped with military professionalism and capable of fulfilling their duty, and to help them mature into SDF leading officers who have high moral standards and leadership quality as field commanders are the basic educational objectives of the SDF. NIDS shares these basic objectives. The main objective of NIDS is to train officers so that they can ultimately become high-ranking officers of the SDF, and more importantly, to help them acquire competence so that they can accurately analyze, judge and creatively deal with rapid and far-reaching changes in domestic, as well as in international situations in the post-Cold War era.

### **3. Changes in the Focus of Education at NIDS after the End of the Cold War**

When the years rolled on into the 1990s, NIDS changed the focus of its education program in keeping with the changes that have occurred in the international situation.

The first change is to free itself from the Cold War thinking. During the Cold War years, the education at NIDS was geared to meeting demands that might arise from the global bipolar confrontation between the United States and the former Soviet Union. For example, the discussions in the class were focused on the theory of deterrence and military confrontation in East Asia and on the European continent. Today, however, with the call for confidence-building efforts and preventive diplomacy growing increasingly vocal across the world, we have come to attach greater importance to discussions about international cooperation and peaceful solutions to regional problems. For example, we have launched lectures on confidence-building measures, multilateral security cooperation, and U.N. peacekeeping operations. We are thus devoting major efforts to streamlining the curricula with a view to adapting to the post-Cold War international situation.

The second change is the exchange of professors between some defense universities and our institute. We have exchanged professors with the National Defense University of the Republic of Korea, as part of our

effort to broaden our perspectives. Besides we have the same programs with the National Defense University of People's Republic of China and the General Staff Military Academy of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, which were not possible in the Cold War days. Students of our institute have heard lectures which these professors delivered on their home country defense policies. In addition, we have invited ambassadors stationed in Japan as special lecturers. Lectures delivered by them have helped our students heighten their willingness to seek common ground for cooperation while making them aware of differences that exist between Japan and these countries.

The third change relates to the method of education. In recent years, the international situation has become increasingly complex and uncertain. Under such circumstances, officers are required to make a correct judgment of the situation they are in and display effective leadership over the SDF establishments. To meet such a demand, we have been trying to develop a way to improve the method of education. We believe that in order to help students develop such ability and creativity, it is necessary to change the method of education from the conventional one-way lecture system to one that encourages their initiatives, such as seminars, debate, and writing theses.

The fourth change is to help students develop an internationally-minded outlook. Admission to the NIDS used to be restricted to service personnel and civilian officials of the Defense Agency and other ministries. We have changed this policy to admit more students from overseas and private enterprises. Students from overseas are admitted to expose students of various origins to different cultures so that they can develop an internationally-minded outlook. Initially, a majority of foreign students came from the United States and Western Europe. Since 1994 we have been admitting more students from Asian countries because their participation would help promoting confidence building among Asia-Pacific countries.

We have also been admitting students from mass media and leading private companies since 1993. This policy is highly significant in that their presence can lower the wall between the civil society and the defense establishment that is inclined to be exclusive, and in making the defense

establishment open to the general public.

Under the influence of changes that have occurred in domestic as well as international situations, the substance of education provided by NIDS has thus changed.

#### **4. Challenges Facing the Education at NIDS**

There are a number of challenges we still have to tackle. First, we must improve the substance of curriculum, which may help students cultivate their international understanding and internationally-minded outlook so that they can contribute to building confidence among the countries concerned. In order to further strengthen international outlook of the students we need to step up our efforts to promote student exchanges among defense universities of different countries. Such a program would include enrollment not only in the full curriculum but also in the partial one. A system of mutually accepting credits and/or degrees awarded by other countries and a more exchange of professors among defense universities should be considered.

Second, we have to step up making use of information technology. We understand that some of defense universities are making full use of video conferences. Due to the lack of facilities, we are not able to do similar things. However, we are considering the possibility of holding bilateral and multilateral exchanges of lectures, seminars and student debate through video conferences. It is also necessary to digitize books of our library and materials relating to military history, and develop a database of research papers we have accumulated at NIDS.

Third, efforts should be made to step up education in military history from a wider perspective. To educate military personnel to be open-minded and free from narrow-minded nationalism, it is necessary to help students gain a broader and properly detached perspective. That way they can view the history of their own country and the world in an objective manner, and develop intellectual ability to judge things in a balanced manner. Therefore I believe that it is advisable to promote joint academic study on military history between or among defense universities.

Fourth, there is a necessity to upgrade education in joint operations of the ground, navy, and air forces. Of course, joint operations are neces-

sary in carrying out the traditional mission of national defense. But the necessity for such joint operations in the fields of international cooperation or disaster relief operations has been felt more acutely than ever, and steps must be taken to further strengthen the education in cultivating the joint operation-oriented mind and the ability.

With this I conclude my presentation. Thank you for your kind attention.

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