

# NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE–TANZANIA’S PERCEPTION OF SECURITY: AN OVERVIEW

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## 1.0 Introduction

Security is a multifaceted concept which involves myriad stakeholders to deal with it in any state. It does not only demand local thinking but also a mindset across borders and specialities. Naturally, no nation in the world accepts insecurities, whether real or perceived. Thus, every state strives toward protecting its sovereignty as well as territorial integrity against any foreign invasion. The same applies to curbing domestic and international contemporary security threats. This is done via raising awareness by imparting relevant and requisite skills to its citizens.

At the onset, I wish to define the term security, but I am confronted with many words. Writers often fail to offer any clear definition of security. If one is offered, it is rarely accompanied by a discussion of why one definition is preferred over another. This could be due to its ambiguity, complexity and changing nature over time. With this in mind, I am convinced that security in its broadest sense has never existed throughout history. As Baldwin argues,<sup>1</sup> ‘If we cannot name it, we can ever hope to achieve it. Indeed, I am following the same line of argument by undertaking lifelong research for a secure state. Buzan<sup>2</sup> for example substantiates, ‘throughout the history of mankind, each state has been made insecure by the existence of others.’ Hence, this leads me to concur with Wolfers<sup>3</sup> on the title of his article, ‘national security’ as an ambiguous symbol. Therefore, as far as security has failed to adopt a blanket definition, the same applies to national security. As Buzan<sup>4</sup> further makes a point, ‘...we cannot expect the concept of national security to exhibit much unity of meaning in any general sense. Thus, Bernard et al.,<sup>5</sup> in the words of General Jacob Devers, also complemented that, ‘national security is a condition which cannot be qualified. We shall either be secure, or insecure. We cannot have partial security. ‘If we are only half secure, we are not secure at all.’ Accordingly, security is defined as a pursuit of freedom from threats. However, if this definition triggers any discussion, then Baldwin is correct. Consequently, among numerous definitions of national security Buzan<sup>6</sup> managed to put forward; he quoted one from the National Defence College–Canada that, ‘national security is the preservation of a way of life acceptable to ...people and compatible with the needs and legitimate aspirations of others. It includes freedom from military attacks or coercion, freedom from internal subversion and freedom from the erosion of the political, economic and social values which are essential to the quality of life.’ Thus, I deliberately adopted this definition, not because it is from National Defence College, but because it does not defeat the purpose of this article. In the case of Tanzania, security issues are dealt with at different levels. However, in terms of national security, a central forum such as the National Defence College (NDC)–Tanzania is required to provide its people with wider knowledge about national security.

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<sup>1</sup> See his conception of security (2000)

<sup>2</sup> See Buzan (1983)

<sup>3</sup> See Wolfers when discussing on national security (1952)

<sup>4</sup> See Buzan (1983)

<sup>5</sup> Refer to their conceptions of security (2000)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid (1983)

It is against this backdrop, this article draws from the institutionalism, collective security and social contract theories to assess the NDC's perception of security in the context of the changing security environment. It covers the historical overview of the National Defence College–Tanzania, the NDC's Perception and its role in security, some achievements of the College registered so far, its future prospects and conclusion. Hence, this article does not claim to be exhaustive but makes a valuable plus to the understanding of the NDC's perception of security.

## **2.0 Historical Overview of the National Defence College–Tanzania**

The idea of establishing the NDC as the country's main security and strategy nucleus did not sprout like a mushroom. It has deeper roots, dating back to the immediate aftermath of independence in 1961. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the forerunner and pioneer of Tanganyika's independence, was concerned with the security of both his country and other African countries. Thus, when Tanzania (then Tanganyika) gained her independence before other East African countries, Mwalimu Nyerere saw it meaningless if other African countries remained under the yoke of colonialism. Tanzania played a significant role in the liberation struggle. Mwalimu stood firmly in articulating the country's position on Africa's liberation. With this in mind, Mwalimu Nyerere agreed that Dar es Salaam to be the headquarters of the Africa Liberation Committee (ALC) after the Organization for African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963. The establishment of the ALC headquarters in Dar es Salaam reflected Tanzania's commitment to supporting conflict resolution strategies in the region by providing training and material support. Considering Tanzania's potential geostrategic nature, the Portuguese, who dominated Mozambique in the southern part of Tanzania, the apartheid regime of South Africa and the Smith regime of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), did not agree with the Tanzania's decision to harbour liberation struggles. Hence, these colonialists started to threaten Tanzania. The provision of the rear base turned Tanzania as an enemy of the apartheid and Portuguese governments. The country's southern regions became a target of the Portuguese military attacks. The notion of Tanzania getting involved in southern Africa affairs was not received by the repressive regime of apartheid South Africa. Tanzania had to learn these acrimonious strategic lessons from its infancy. At this time, there was a strong desire to establish an institution that would coordinate the national strategic thinking among stakeholders from various branches of government, including the military, civil service, intellectuals, strategic establishments and others. Only the NDC could be such an institution whose thrust was on national security and strategic studies.

However, one may wonder why the idea of establishing the NDC did not materialize five decades after independence. There were numerous predicaments for its delay; however, to say the least, the first was the Tanganyika Rifles (TR) mutiny of January 1964. Consequently, TR was disbanded and an entirely new Tanzania People's Defence Forces (TPDF) was established in September 1964. Temu et al.,<sup>7</sup> in the words of General Mrisho Sarakikya, the first TPDF Chief of Defence Force (CDF), 'As you remember, there was an occurrence of a mutiny. All British officers were removed from the army, and we controlled the army under my leadership as CDF.' As infant and young as it was, TPDF would not manage to establish NDC since it was lacking the know-how and broad expertise in security and strategic related matters. Second, up to the mid-1970s, there were insufficient Senior Military and Civilian Officers to run a National Defence College. Hence, only joint training of Officer Cadets and 'Party Cadre' was possible. A

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<sup>7</sup> See Temu and Tembe (1984)

Party Cadre Military School (PCMS) was established in Monduli in 1973. This was later amalgamated with the Officer Cadet School to form a National Leadership Academy (Chuo cha Taifa cha Uongozi – CTU) at the premises of the current Tanzania Military Academy. Third, the Kagera War, imposed on Tanzania by Ugandan maverick Idd Amin Dada in 1978–79, stymied the NDC’s arrival, which was followed by a period of severe economic difficulties. As Mkapa<sup>8</sup> accentuates, ‘we suffered a major economic disruption because of the war, which took us years to recover from. Going to war is a very grave decision and ought not to be taken lightly, for it causes enormous destruction and cripples the economy. The war was the last stroke that broke the economy’s back, costing one of the world’s poorest countries USD 500 million.’ However, all these predicaments did not diminish the need to establish an NDC in Tanzania. As a first step towards fulfilling this desire, a Command and Staff College was established in 1980, and High Commanders’ Defence Studies began to be offered in 1982 for military-professional studies. Thus, the establishment of the NDC–Tanzania in 2012 was met with joy and elation nationally, as well as regionally and internationally. The College has been named the prestigious institution

The NDC–Tanzania was founded when H.E. Dr Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete was the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Commander-in-Chief. He played a significant role throughout. This was not until Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, Minister of Defence and National Service, signed the Establishment Order in January 2012. Dr Mwinyi is currently the President of Zanzibar and the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council. However, in February 2020, the then-President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Commander-in-Chief, the late Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli assented to the National Defence College–Tanzania Instrument which revoked the Establishment Order by the minister. The subsequent registration and accreditation by the National Council for Technical Education (now NACTVET) established the NDC as an autonomous higher learning institution. In addition to the National Defence College’s prestigious symbol ‘*ndc*,’ which is a unique and internationally recognized award appended just after an alumnus’ name, the College confers Master’s degrees and Diplomas in Security and Strategic Studies. The College also offers capstone courses for one to two weeks. It draws participants from both governmental and non-governmental institutions. So far, the College has managed to conduct 13 capstone courses.

### **3.0 NDC’s Perception of Security**

Different schools of thought, academic institutions and security platforms perceive security differently depending on time, space and technological and scientific developments. The NDC does not isolate itself from this viewpoint in terms of curriculum and candidates. It admits senior officers from the Tanzania People’s Defence Force, the Police Force, the Tanzania Intelligence and Security Service, the Tanzania Prisons Service, the Immigration Services Department, the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau and Civil Servants from various ministries. It also accommodates senior military officers from both within and outside Africa. Mihanjo<sup>9</sup> supports this composition of Course Members when he rightly said: ‘NDC is a mindset change agent which seeks to integrate all sectors to impart knowledge on national security. With this mix of Course Members, the NDC has departed from the traditional perception of security (the realism approach) which assumes that armed forces are the only key players in security matters. It has moved away from merely military dimensions and it includes economic, societal, political and environmental issues, focusing on people rather than positing a state-centric perceptiveness in

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<sup>8</sup> See Mkapa in one of his speeches (2006)

<sup>9</sup> See Mihanjo (2015)

security studies. This is due to dynamic security threats as well as advances in science and technology. The contemporary security threats are contagious that know no geographical boundaries. They can spread from one individual to another, within society, institutions, and countries. Thus, dealing with them requires a coordinated and integrated approach. Therefore, the concept ‘national security’ now encompasses much more than national defence and internal security. This is also due to the rambling proliferation of new threats to human security which can be classified as non-traditional threats. In fact, the current security climate is very unpredictable and complex. This is the security landscape the NDC-TZ is currently operating.

The inclusion of civil society to pursue the NDC course is a result of time and circumstances. Climate change, which is a catalyst for environmental problems and water scarcity, not to mention food insecurity, cannot be solved with a gun barrel. It requires a multitude of stakeholders. Certainly, NDC’s sole purpose is to train senior officers to be experts in economic, political, military, scientific, international relations, national organization aspects, and planning in both internal and external complexities. As Mihanjo<sup>10</sup> remarks, ‘the NDC is a higher learning academic institution that aims at preparing ‘think tanks’ for the nation’s economic development.

Furthermore, retired Lieutenant General JN Waweru, former Commandant of the National Defence College-Kenya stated that, ‘the aim of the College is to train leaders who make things happen with the capability to strategically see far beyond the normal horizons to the future.’ His point is that security threats do not have short-term effects or only last a short time but can be long-lasting, and strategists must be prepared with solutions. In Booth’s words, those strategists who do not try to be part of the solution will become an increasingly important part of the problem. For instance, today, everyone is proud of the world’s technological and scientific advancement. However, this development has both positive and negative impacts. A good example is Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is lauded for a variety of benefits while also posing a security risk. Precisely, AI poses a serious threat to human security. It has begun to replace human labour in various occupations. This could eventually lead to massive unemployment, though it has started slowly. Indeed, the same scenario happened during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial revolution.

Biotechnology will replace human doctors, who will no longer perform consultations, diagnoses, and prescriptions. Harari<sup>11</sup> underscores, ‘AI continues to improve; human employees will need to repeatedly learn new skills and change their profession. General practitioners (GPs) who focus on diagnosing known diseases and administering familiar treatment will probably be replaced by AI doctors...No remaining human jobs will ever be safe from the threat of future automation because machine learning and robotics continue to improve.’ Human insecurity caused by advances in information technology and biotechnology may result in the scramble over scarce employment vacancies to cover for massive unemployed people. Hence, the situation may escalate into violence, resulting in a more insecure society. In this respect, Harari asks, ‘What do we do in order to prevent jobs from being lost; what do we do to create enough new jobs; and what do we do if, despite our best efforts, job losses significantly outstrip job creation?’ These appear to be strategic questions, as well as strategic thinking. Harari’s questions coincide with statement issued by Major General Ibrahim Michael Mhona, Commandant of the National Defence College – Tanzania, when opening the 9<sup>th</sup> NDC course in August 2020. He said, ‘You

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid 2015

<sup>11</sup> See Harari (2019)

are strategic Course Members; at the end of the course, you should ask yourself, do I think strategically? Do I decide strategically? Do I implement my decisions strategically? This is the role of NDCs around the world, and NDC – Tanzania in particular: to transform people’s minds. It transforms the way its graduates think, make decisions and implement those decisions differently in comparison to others who have not attended the NDC course. The NDC’s curriculum is structured to look far beyond the normal horizons into the future. In addition, the College is ready to accommodate other relevant security-related topics to improve its curriculum.

In one of his lectures, Elisante Ole Gabriel<sup>12</sup> appreciated the role of NDC-TZ by emphasizing that: ‘NDC will always be remembered for preparing ‘the brains,’ not just people’. This statement underscores the role of the College. Since insecurities are dynamic, investment in education and research is inevitable. Some of the contemporary threats are neither visible nor tangible, and therefore requires some appropriate countermeasures. Harari<sup>13</sup> substantiates that, ‘Today the main economic assets consist of technical and institutional knowledge...and you just cannot conquer knowledge through war.’ In fact, he emphasizes that traditional wars have dramatically decreased, and a new wave of wars has emerged that are muddled and complex.

In the 1990s most of the armed conflicts in the world had been intrastate rather than being interstate. Of the fifty-seven major armed conflicts occurring from 1990 to 2001, only three were interstate conflicts.’ For example, today’s world is overwhelmed by cyber warfare, which lacks guns and soldiers on the ground. Therefore, countering cyber war by artillery, missiles, rockets or even infantry skirmishes is nearly impossible but by means of smart, knowledgeable and intelligent brains they can be fought. This is consistent with Andrew et al.,<sup>14</sup> quotation of Barrack Obama, the former President of the United States of America, ‘...military action cannot be the only - or even primary - component of our leadership in every instance. Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail. This is not to say that every problem has a military solution.’ This statement exhibits the paradigm shift in the NDC’s perception of security. This is exactly what the College is doing: Bringing the world to the auditorium to discuss global security issues and impart vast knowledge in various expertises on current issues.

The NDC does not prepare only leaders but more importantly; strategic leaders. However, not everyone is a leader, except those who are born with the natural qualities of a leader. This implies that leaders are born; leadership is a natural gift given to a few people. No one can be a leader unless they possess leadership traits. Thus, the late Lieutenant General Paul Peter Massao, former NDC Commandant, remarked that the NDC course is for a few selected potential leaders who are gifted and talented as leaders to assume the leadership hierarchy of their respective institutions.’ This is the essence of not applying directly to the College. Slots are assigned to the respective institutions, and it is their responsibility to earnestly scrutinize the prospective candidates. Hence, the College sharpens and moulds them into exceptional strategists, outstanding policymakers and leaders. Therefore, the brains are not just people but the ones to lead people. As such, they are think tanks that accommodate all ethics, and cross-border patriotism, and, above all, they are strategy and policy machinery.

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<sup>12</sup> Prof E. Gabriel in one of his lectures (2016)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid (2019)

<sup>14</sup> See Andrew (2020)

Holding the ‘*ndc*’ prestigious symbol after 47 weeks of intense training was an unusual experience in Tanzania. Before the College’s establishment, only a few senior military officers were trained outside the country; however, no one from civil service attended such a course. This does not deny that, in the past, national security issues were exclusively associated with the military. Because of the paradigm shift in the conception of national security, the NDC, like all other NDCs across the globe, brings together both uniformed personnel and civil servant senior officers to participate in the course, which, among other things, instils national pride and patriotism. Whilst emphasizing the bifurcated nature of national security, hence the need for multi-participation of varied stakeholders, H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, asserts, ‘the NDC provides an excellent forum where the minds of senior officers and public servants converge to widen their horizons of knowledge and thinking, also develop synergy regarding the promotion of national security.’ He went on to emphasize the significance of the role played by NDC by saying, ‘It is only at the NDC where Course Members are imparted with knowledge and expertise ... so that, when they go back to their places of work, they become better players, as they will no longer be thinking inside their cocoons or in silos, but [they will] work like a powerful functioning system.

Despite the mix of Course Members, this article’s analysis of the NDC curriculum shows that it covers security in its broadest sense by including, among others, studies on the domestic security environment such as social-political studies, agriculture and industry. This does not conclude with theoretical lectures at the College but with two weeks of field practical training (FPTs) in various regions and key strategic institutions throughout the country. It aims at evaluating how policies and strategic directives are implemented from the ground; to also assess the synergy between the ministries, institutions and departments in the performance of their duties; and to observe real security challenges in addition to those learned in College. At the end of the visit, Course Members prepare an analytical report that addresses the identified challenges and their proposed solutions. Thereafter, one report is sent back to the visited regions for implementation.

As previously stated, the NDC perceives security in its broadest sense; however, this does not mean a complete neglect of the classical realist ideas. There is a special session in its curriculum that is often covered by lectures delivered by the heads of security organs, including the Chief of Defence Forces, who leads the Tanzania Peoples Defence Force, one of the instruments of national power (military). The College then conducts a study tour to these security organs. This indicates that hard power is still important. Hence, this is inconsistent with Saleh,<sup>15</sup> who claims, ‘that by the end of the 1980s, however, a decline in militarized thinking was becoming apparent and consequently the theory of realism will fall out of fashion. The NDC-TZ largely supports the view that the theory of realism is still relevant; although it is currently being applied differently. From the analytical point of view, this article assumes that the NDC considers security in its dual sense: state security and societal security, as advocated by the Copenhagen school. Thus, for the avoidance of contradictions, I adopted a definition of security as propounded by Buzan who also emphasizes the essence of about human security. However, the concept of state security, societal security, and human security is a lengthy lecture which is far beyond the ambit of this article.

As elucidated, security threats are contagious. In fact, given the interdependence nature of the globalized world, no single country today can claim to be safe if its surrounding neighbours are insecure. External threats will almost always comprise a major element of the national security

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid 2010

problem. Thus, the College foresees the international security environment as part of the curriculum, which narrows into studies on global issues, Tanzania's immediate and strategic neighbourhood and international security environment studies. The lectures on these subjects are delivered by eminent speakers with in-depth expertise and long-service reputable experience.

Besides, the theoretical part and domestic study visits, Course Members are exposed to international field practical training to merge and bring a nexus between the lectures delivered in classes and the practical world (realities). To achieve this, the Course Members are allowed to visit countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. Due to globalization, strategists, policymakers and decision-makers need to be acquainted with knowledge beyond their borders because the current national security threats are both dynamic and volatile. Taking this into account, the NDC prepares more flexible and patriotic strategists for any situation, anywhere and anytime that is likely to endanger our security. Thus, NDC's one-year intensive training focuses on developing leaders who can work tirelessly in situations of mental and physical exhaustion while maintaining making sound, wise and workable decisions for the betterment of our nation.

Therefore, 'the brains' at NDC are prepared through lectures from numerous distinguished guest speakers. These include both serving and retired Presidents from the United Republic of Tanzania, Zanzibar inclusive; Ambassadors and High Commissioners representing their countries to the United Republic of Tanzania; ministers; permanent secretaries (from mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar); Heads of Defence and Security Organs; outstanding practitioners from relevant fields, as well as lecturers from the renowned and highly reputable universities.

#### **4.0 Some Achievements**

Since its inception, the College became a unique higher learning institution in the country, bringing together prospective strategic leaders to acquaint them with prerequisite knowledge in the pursuit of national interest on both national and international scales. It has acquired reputation both locally and internationally. It is undeniable fact that the development of any state is in the hands of strategists and policymakers; without them, the state sinks into an abyss. Hence, the NDC is tasked with ensuring the security of the United Republic of Tanzania. Recognising this, the College is implementing its role in a patriotic, professional and dedicated manner. It has become a platform that promotes patriotism, accountability, and commitment in government, private organizations, and the community at large. When NDC alumni return to their workplaces, they demonstrate their transformations. The NDC's alumni excel in ranks and appointments. As noted above, the NDC prepares potential leaders, as evidenced by the majority of graduates being appointed to various higher positions. Good examples are the following ambassadors: Lieutenant General Yakoub Mohamed (Former TPDF Chief of Staff); Major General Jacob Kingu (Former NDC Commandant and Permanent Secretary), Major General Richard Makanzo (Former Navy Commander), Commissioner of Prisons Phaustine Kasike (Former Commissioner General of Prisons Service), Deputy Commissioner of Police Abdulrahman Kaniki and Ambassador Mindi Kasiga. Additionally, the alumni who were appointed to Permanent Secretary and Deputy Permanent Secretary positions are Ms Khadija Rajabu (Zanzibar) and Mr Gerald Mweli, (Mainland Tanzania), respectively. Lieutenant General Mathew Mkingule (Former TPDF Chief of Staff), Ms Nenele Wankanga (Clerk of the National Assembly of Tanzania) and Major General Ibrahim Michael Mhona (the current NDC Commandant). Others who have held or continue to hold high positions in the public sectors include Major General John Mbungu (Former Director General) and Ms Neema Mwakalyelye

(Deputy Director General) of the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau respectively. This implies that the NDC has added value to the government service by imparting senior government officials with unique and high-level security and strategy knowledge.

Since the NDC views security in its broader context, it considers the security of state in terms of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and other national interests. As a component of the state, people are also the main subject of the College in terms of human security, environmental security, food security, and many others. This compels the institution to visit different regions yearly to ascertain all security-related matters. Through these visits, the College witnesses security challenges at the grassroots level. After discovering them, the College assesses and analyses the challenges as well as advises on the best solutions to tackle them. In addition, it offers strategic consultations about security issues to the government. Thus, since its establishment, the College has managed to visit all regions in mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

As mentioned above, study visits are conducted in different countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America to exchange experience and expertise. Through them, the College avails itself a chance to learn about the contemporary security issues facing the world and the approaches adopted to address them. More importantly, the NDC establishment has saved the government coffers because previously senior military officers were sent to Bangladesh, China, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America for national defence courses. However, civil servants were not sent abroad for the same course. The College has managed to accommodate them by creating an appropriate composition of Course Members who accept the broad and non-military sense of what national security is all about.

## **5.0 Future Prospects**

In November 2021, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Commander-in-Chief, Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, visited the College for the inauguration of new premises. In her speech, she emphasized, ‘The time has come for the College to expand the scope of NDC Courses to start conferring doctoral degrees (PhDs)’ Again, the President stressed her point by saying, and ‘I will be delightful if one day I will be invited in the valedictory function for PhD graduates.’ The President’s remarks are already directives to the College. In response, the College administration has promptly started working on it by presenting the agenda to the College Governing Board, and the process to implement the President’s directives is underway. However, by conferring PhD degrees, the College will meet the standards of other NDCs that do so, such as the NDC–Bangladesh and the NDC–India to cite but a few for illustration. Additionally, the President emphasized the importance of allowing more young leaders to attend NDC courses so that, after graduating, they will have a longer time to apply their strategic knowledge before their retirement. In reality, the President’s directive will have a long-term impact on various public service offices as the graduates will have sufficient time to mentor other officials in their respective workplaces. The College has started to walk the talk by accommodating these directives in its future plans. The NDC plans to conduct outreach programmes. Since the President has directed to widen the scope of the NDC’s courses to ensure that a good number of government officials and non-government officials’ benefit from the courses, the College has a plan for outreach programmes. Numerous benefits will be realized from this programme. First, it is cost-effective and will reach many people at once. Also, it will not affect other College’s long and short courses commonly known as the Capstone courses.



## 6.0 Conclusion

The NDC has achieved domestic, regional and international recognition as a centre of excellence that brings together potential strategists, decision-makers and leaders drawn from diverse academic, proficiency and experience. It transforms their diversities into commonness toward national security. Since national security encompasses a multidimensional approach, it cannot be handled in isolation, thus necessitating the need for various people with diverse know-how who can decide to participate in the course. The NDC was founded for this reason. It enrolls senior military officers from Bangladesh, Botswana, Burundi, China, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, the Republic of South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Only senior civil servants are enrolled in the category of civil servants.

LONG LIVE NDC-TZ AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING MORE SUCCESS

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