

# RGICS

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# RGICS LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

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**The Indian National Defense University Bill,  
2015**

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### **KEY MESSAGES**

- a. There is an urgent need for a National Defense University to address the security concerns of the country
- b. The main aim of the University is to impart higher education and formulate policies for the defense personnel
- c. The draft Bill of the Indian National Defense University mentions that the three existing institutions of the armed forces will be incorporated in the University
- d. The draft Bill has been criticized by media reports for promoting monopoly of the military forces in the University

### **PART I. INTRODUCTION**

The Indian armed forces have several military academies to train its personnel. While the existing institutions of armed forces provide military training and fundamental courses on defense, a focus on higher education on India's defense has been missing. In this backdrop the setting up of a National Defense University is the need of the hour. The Indian National Defense University was proposed to be established at Binola in Gurgaon. The proposal for the university was accepted by the UPA government in 2010. The foundation stone of the University was laid in 2013 by Dr Manmohan Singh, the then Prime Minister of India (HillPost, 2013). The aims of the Indian National Defense University are as follows:

- To provide higher education for management of the defense of India and to provide knowledge base regarding the various security concerns of India through scholarly resources and training.
- Develop mechanisms to provide higher education in areas such as defense management, defense science and technology
- Promote policy research on issues related to national defense
- Prepare officers for higher level leadership and train them for policy responsibilities as well

The University will be headed by a President (who will be a three star serving General or equivalent officer with C-in-C status on appointment) and a Vice-President who will be a civilian (Times of India, 2010). Two thirds of the students would be from armed forces and 33% of the students would be from civilian government agencies and the police. The teaching faculty would comprise both of military personnel and civilians in the ratio 1:1 (Times of India, 2010). On August 2016 the Draft of the Indian National Defense University, 2015 went online for comments and feedback. Currently the Draft of the Indian National Defense University is expected to be introduced in the Lok Sabha in the second half of the Budget Session in March-April 2017.

### **PART II: BACKGROUND**

The idea of a National Defense University was initiated in 1967. In the aftermath of the Kargil war in 1999 a committee was set up by the Vajpayee government to consider the proposal for a defense University. The committee headed by late K.Subramanyam presented its report on the need for a National Defense University in 2002 (The Indian Express, 2016). In March 2012 a letter written by General V.K.Singh to the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh got leaked in the media. The contents of the letter indicated that Indian armed forces lacked knowledge regarding strategies on security concerns (Gupta, 2012). To address the existing gap in the armed forces, the foundation stone for the Indian National Defense University was laid in 2013 at Binola in Gurgaon (HillPost, 2013). However the Draft of the Indian National Defense University went online only in 2015 under the rule of the NDA government (The Indian Express, 2016). The Bill was made available online for six weeks in August 2016 to receive feedback and suggestions. The Bill proposes to establish an autonomous institution catering to the needs of National Importance under the Ministry of Defense. The main aim of the Bill is to develop a world class institution to serve the defense requirements of the country. The project is expected to be implemented in three phases spanning over a period of ten years at an estimated cost of Rs 2,072 crore (The Indian Express, 2016).The University will be a teaching and affiliating University for the existing training institutions of the three Services which will promulgate and develop strategies in higher education in National Security Studies, Defense Management and Defense Technology to promote policy oriented research on all aspects relating to national security (The Indian Express, 2016).

In this brief, we will analyze whether the government is addressing the concerns of the Indian armed forces through the existing draft of the Indian National Defense University Bill. Additionally the brief will also analyze how a focus on strategies will contribute in the development of the Indian military. While it is being suggested that the Indian National Defense University is the need of the hour, it is important to understand whether the gaps in the Indian military forces are being adequately being addressed through this bill.

### PART III: KEY ISSUES

The main aim of the Indian National Defense University is to offer higher education to the defense personnel. In this context some of the major reasons for an urgent need of a Defense University require to be highlighted.

- **Dependence on distant courses:** Currently the defense personnel are dependent on distant learning courses from Universities such as IGNOU. These courses lack specialization and do not offer a deep understanding of the Indian defense system.
- **Need for research:** Given the changing nature of threats to the geo-political scenario, it is important for the Indian armed forces to develop a knowledge base on the modern theories of strategy. Since developing strategies is pertinent for the Indian army, it is important to have a proper infrastructure where in-depth research can be conducted.
- **Need for policy perspective:** In addition to skills, it is also important to have a comprehensible educational system which will focus on the strategies and policies required to develop the military personal of India.
- **Important to have a reference point:** one of the major challenges for India's security is that it is dominated by the opinion of a small group of leaders. Developing a University which would focus on strategies and policies, will also serve as a referral point for requisite analysis and also outreach to related departments of other Universities for suggestions and recommendations.

With a discussion on the causes which indicate the need for a National Defense University, it is important to focus on the main contents of the proposed Bill.

### PART IV. THE [PROPOSED] BILL

The Draft of the Indian National Defense University 2015 went online in August 2016 for feedback and suggestions. In this section some of the main contents of the draft are discussed:

- **Impart Higher Education:** One of the major aims of the University is to develop and promote higher education and research in National Security Studies, Defense Management, Defense Technology and allied areas. To promote avenues for higher education for defense personnel through distance and open learning.
- **Promotion of Policy Research:** In addition to imparting higher education the University also intends to promote policy oriented research related to national security, both internal and external, including inter-agency responses for hybrid threats, defense and cooperation and to serve as a think tank contributing to policy formulation.
- **Development of leadership and strategy:** The goal of the University also includes preparing the personnel of the national security establishments and the academic community from within India and from friendly foreign countries for high-level leadership, staff and policy responsibilities. To encourage strategic thinking on defense and security issues and to initiate debate on such issues both nationally and globally.
- **Collaboration of defense services:** One of the clauses in the draft (2017) is “to instill a spirit of jointness amongst various elements of the national security system”. To develop competence relating to national security issues. The tri-services institutions for Professional Military Education (PME) in NDC, College of Defense Management (CDM) and Defense Services Staff College (DSSC) exist in India. The draft mentions that the University will augment existing PME capacities and provide intellectual underpinnings for “jointness” among different services. The goal should be to invite individuals from different networks and not cater to the needs of bureaucratic and service silos. The proposal to appoint the Defence Minister as the chancellor and chairman of the chiefs of staff committee as its pro chancellor defeats this purpose. With the top posts being held by the defence personal the University might become a monopoly of the armed forces.
- **Network with existing institutions:** The University will also network with other national, regional and international institutions or individuals of eminence engaged in the fields of education, research and industry. To encourage international and corporate fellowship programmes in the field of strategic studies.

### PART V. CRITIQUE OF THE BILL

Post the draft of the Indian National Defense University being available online, different sections have provided their share of criticisms. Drawing from media reports and the comments on the online portal, some of the major criticisms have been highlighted in this section.

- **Ambiguity over the idea of “jointness”:** While the University aims to create jointness in the existing tri-services institutions for Professional Military Education, it is important to understand that jointness cannot be achieved by merely creating additional structures for serving and retired military retired officers. The goal should be to invite individuals from different networks and not cater to the needs of bureaucratic and service silos. Additionally with the Defense Minister as the chancellor and chairman of the chiefs of staff committee as its pro chancellor. With the top posts being held by the defense personal the University might become a monopoly of the armed forces.
- **Lack of information:** The Draft Bill mentions that the Security Studies, Defense Management, Defense Technology will be the three main areas of the University. However there is no information regarding the content of the courses, duration of the courses and capacity intake. For a productive public debate it is mandatory to release information regarding these major areas.
- **Lack of civilians:** As the draft Bill mentions the tri institutions will be incorporated in the University. Currently none of the institutions have any representation from civilians. Without hiring civilians the students will be exposed only to the defense personnel as faculty members and not develop a broader perspective.

### **PART VI. CONCLUSION**

Given the fact that the Indian National Defense University was proposed to cater to the needs of security concerns in India, the government should address the gaps in the existing draft. Since the aim of the University is to promote policy research and focus on strategies, the government should prevent the monopoly of the armed forces. In addition to providing representation to the military forces the government should also incorporate representatives from institutions such as the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration and Sardar Patel National Police Academy, and other intelligence agencies. Drawing from the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, the government should appoint an academic council to enhance the academic exposure of the students. This perspective can be further corroborated by drawing from the National Defense University of USA. The National Defense University of USA provides intensive military training and higher education to all its students. The faculty of the National Defense University of USA comprises civilians, military personal and scientists. The India government should formulate guidelines for the Indian National Defense University according to international standards. Since the aim of the University is to address concerns of national security, it is important for the government to expand the scope of the institute and not adhere to bureaucratic procedures.



### PART VII. REFERENCES

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