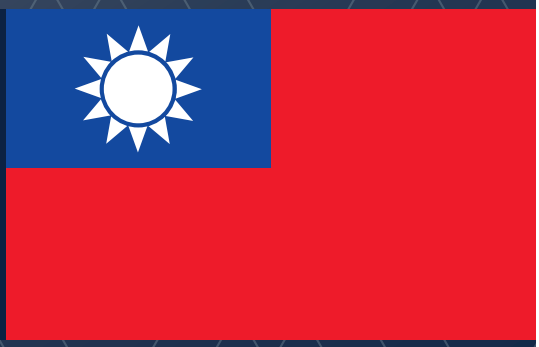
DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

POST-WAR SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN TAIWAN



Wei-chin Lee

About this publication project

This publication is part of a policy research project on Post-War Security Sector Reform, entitled 'Striking a Balance between Effectiveness and Democratic Accountability within the Defense Sector: Learning lessons from Finland, South Korea, and Taiwan with a view of Ukraine' undertaken by DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance.

This comparative policy research project aims to identify challenges and best practices of post-war Security Sector Reform (SSR). It focuses on external strategies for building defense and security alliances, and internal strategies aimed at enhancing credible deterrence, democratic civil-military relations, and accountability—drawing lessons from Finland, South Korea, and Taiwan with a view to Ukraine. In a similar way as Ukraine, these countries were at war and have experienced a permanent threat of war over decades. Nevertheless, they have succeeded in enforcing their sovereignty despite facing asymmetrical power relations and being on the edge of geopolitical tensions. Moreover, they have managed to become consolidated democracies despite the constant pressure of securitization. What lessons can inspire, and which challenges may provide food-for-thought for Ukraine's own SSR efforts during and post-war?

This project has been made possible by the generous support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

ISBN: 978-92-9222-784-5

Cite as: DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. Post-War Security Sector Reform in Taiwan. Geneva: DCAF, 2026.

Editors: Gabriela Manea, Mariia Kostiv
Copy editing: Alec Crutchley
Design & Layout: Petra Gurtner

Table of contents

	List of tables and figures	4
	List of acronyms and abbreviations	5
	About the author	6
	Abstract	7
CHAPTER 1	**Introduction**	**8**
CHAPTER 2	**Historical context**	**9**
	The era of Chiangs in command, 1949 – 1986	9
	The era of democratic transition, 1986 – 2000	9
	The era of democratic government turnovers, 2000–2024	10
CHAPTER 3	**External balancing strategies: international military cooperation and defense diplomacy**	**12**
CHAPTER 4	**Internal balancing strategies (1): establishing the effectiveness of the defense sector**	**15**
CHAPTER 5	**Internal balancing strategies (2): accountability and democratic control of the armed forces**	**20**
CHAPTER 6	**Learning lessons with a view of Ukraine's post-war Security Sector Reform**	22
	References	24
	Appendices	30

List of tables and figures

Table 1	Phases of Taiwan's political development and civil-military relations	11
Figure 1	Taiwan's defense budget, 2004–2024	13
Figure 2	Taiwan's defense budget and its GDP percentage, 2004–2024	13
Figure 3	Changes in Taiwan's compulsory military service	19

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
DCS	Direct Commercial Sales
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EU	European Union
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDI	Government Defense Integrity Index
GFI	Global Firepower Index
GMI	Global Militarization Index
KMT	Kuomintang
NT$	New Taiwan Dollars
ODC	Overall Defense Concept
PAC-3	Patriot Advanced Capability-3
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
R&D	Research and Development
TPP	Taiwan People's Party
US	United States

About the author

Dr. Wei-chin Lee is a professor in the Department of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University. He earned his Bachelor's degree from National Taiwan University in 1978, a Master's degree from the University of Oregon in 1983, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Oregon in 1986. His research interests include the foreign policy and domestic politics of China and Taiwan, U.S. policy toward East Asia, international security, and international institutions. Dr. Lee has published several books, including the recently edited volume Protests, Pandemic, and Security Predicaments: Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and the U.S. in the 2020s, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

Abstract

Taiwan's civil–military relations have been through several transitions since the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) retreated to the island in 1949. With the establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986, Taiwan's democratic transition and consolidation started rounds of regime turnovers (KMT, 1949–2000 and 2008–2016; DPP, 2000–2008 and 2016–2024). Each change in civilian regime became a testing ground for Taiwan's civil–military relations, which is an important testimony to Taiwan's democratic resilience and vitality in facing security threats from China. This research briefly describes the trajectory of Taiwan's civil–military relations. It then draws several crucial variables affecting civil–military relations, including the geopolitical changes in the international environment and cross-strait relations, the democratic prerogatives of transparency and accountability in defense spending, the shift in Taiwan's defense strategy, defensive effectiveness, military service personnel, the public's view of Taiwan's military capability, US military assistance, and identity controversy between indigenous identity awareness and the former China-centered identity. It concludes with some lessons that Taiwan's civil–military relations can impart to Ukraine.

Keywords: arms sales, China, cross–strait relations, Taiwan, United States

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The military is an exceptional actor within the state apparatus. Its vigorous training, strict discipline, formal chain of command, and licensed possession of lethal means of coercion prepare the military to be a guardian of national security in armed conflicts against external threats and a protector of internal stability. However, a disgruntled military can turn its weapons around to both be a source of insecurity and to challenge the civilian government to remove civilian leaders. Hence the civil–military 'problematique' raised by Feaver (1996) is to explore the dynamics of securing the military's submission to civilian leadership and command as well as its effectiveness in national defense within the strategic realm drawn by the civilian authority. Analysis of civil–military relations is thus political in nature, not simply an examination of military force and personnel.

This research seeks to explore the causal mechanisms leading to the consequential changes in Taiwan's civil–military relations during the era of democratic transition and consolidation by highlighting several key variables affecting interactions between military elites and political leaders. These hypothesized variables include changes in international geopolitics and cross-strait relations; democratic prerogatives of transparency and accountability in legislative scrutiny of defense budgets and military administration; civil society engagement in defense policy debates, Taiwan's evolving strategic doctrines, defensive effectiveness and troop size; public perceptions of the island's defense capability; US military assistance; and national identity controversy. Like Ukraine's geopolitical circumstances, Taiwan has faced a security threat from China, which has sought the unification of the island with the mainland. Taiwan's civil–military relations illustrate how the island has built an effective military as a deterrent against China and has reformulated its defense strategies and means to democratically control the defense sector to ensure civilian supremacy over the military. The expectation is that the study of Taiwan's experiences will impart useful lessons and implications for Ukraine's civilian government in managing civil–military relations effectively in its post-war era.

The paper begins with a brief description of the evolution of Taiwan's civil–military relations, summarized in terms of leadership changes since 1949. Next, it highlights Taiwan's geopolitical position within the US–China framework of strategic competition, noting possible impending events as well as what the already extant tensions in the area, and its efforts in international military cooperation and defense diplomacy for external balancing. The third section focuses on Taiwan's endeavors in internal balancing in indigenous arms development, domestic deliberation over a feasible strategic doctrine and practicable tactics to deter China and repel any potential invasion. The Ukraine war has contributed valuable lessons to Taiwan's contingency planning regarding a potential Chinese invasion. The fourth section addresses Taiwan's democratic control of the armed forces through legislative scrutiny and civil society challenges, along with its difficulty in troop recruitment and retention. Finally, it attempts to draw some lessons from Taiwan's civil–military relations for Ukraine. The Taiwan case illustrates that regular, open, and fair democratic elections, strong legislative scrutiny, regularized institutional rules on elite mobility, and viable civil society in political deliberation could mitigate military elites' challenges of the supremacy of civilian elites.

CHAPTER 2

Historical context

The era of Chiangs in command, 1949–1986

When the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) lost the civil war in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in mainland China. The KMT under Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan to ensure the regime's survival and the island's security. During the authoritarian eras of Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) and his son and successor, Chiang Ching-kuo (1910–1988), Chiang Kai-shek's aspirations towards 'recovering mainland China' and the 'admixture of military and civilian symbols,' in Janowitz's words (1977: 72–73), dictated Taiwan's civil–military relations, although Chiang Ching-kuo did begin to disengage the military from the civilian sphere of governance. Even so, 'China-centered' social and identity constructs permeated in multiple aspects of civil–military relations. During the Cold War, 'anti-communism' was the strategic imperative. It securitized the CCP regime as an evil threat, contrasting it with the KMT as a guardian of the freedom and prosperity of the people. Taiwan's military forces were thus instructed to repel any communist invasion as well as to recover mainland China for national unification. Active military preparation was thus for both defensive and offensive purposes, although the strategic focus shifted in the 1970s to a defensive posture for Taiwan's self-preservation given the circumstantial changes in East Asian geopolitics and socio-economic transitions across the Taiwan Strait. These include increasing recognition of the PRC's status in the international community, the strategic rapprochement between the US and China with Nixon's visit to China in 1972, China's economic reforms in the late 1970s, Taiwan's socio-political pressures for democratization as a result of economic development, and the continuous US refusals of Chiang's requests to 'recover mainland China.'

During the era of the two Chiangs, Samuel Huntington's (1957: 1–2) concerns regarding a potentially powerful military force vis-à-vis civilian elites due to its functional/military imperatives of effective deterrence against external threats appeared to be kept within the leash of the KMT's socio/political imperative — the KMT's China-centered socio-cultural expectations, tight thought control within the sanctioned ideological frameworks, and institutional constraints in military reforms. Such institutional constraints included the scrutinization of military spending, periodic rotations of commanders of troops to prevent the formation of military patron–client cliques, and mandatory retirement for officers at different ranks to provide elite mobility. Meanwhile, the KMT's inability to recover mainland China and the likelihood of remaining in Taiwan for an uncertain future prompted the government to start the recruitment and promotion of native Taiwanese elites in the political and military spheres to provide regime legitimacy and political support in the 1970s.

The era of democratic transition, 1986–2000

Taiwan's economic achievements in the 1970s and 1980s signified the opening of its market and merchandise to global trade, the emergence of the middle classes, and public yearnings for democratic participation in political space resembling the path of development to democracy described by Inglehart and Welzel (2009). Prior to his passing, Chiang Ching-kuo's decision to allow the establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) by political opponents and democracy activists in 1986, the end of Taiwan's martial law in 1987, and the opening of cross-strait civil and economic exchanges in 1987 all signaled the beginning stage of Taiwan's transition to a pluralist democracy and political reform. While economic prosperity enhanced Taiwan's arms acquisition capability, cross-strait economic exchanges reduced bilateral threat perceptions. Taiwan's democratic transition was further advanced by Lee Teng-hui, Chiang Ching-Kuo's successor, in the late 1980s. Along with reform-minded KMT elites, Lee accelerated the speed and broadened the scope of political transition by persuading conservative elites within the party that democracy was the only game in town for the party's sustainability and international support for the island's security. As a native Taiwanese with a hidden agenda of Taiwanese independence, Lee convinced the DPP

that the parliamentary route offered the best opportunity for smooth regime transformation without a risk of intervention by a military force closely associated with KMT conservatives (Lee 2003). To consolidate his power within the KMT, Lee appointed Hao Pei-tsun, a former military leader of mainlander origin, as premier in 1990–1993. It was a political compromise with the party's conservative heavyweights in intra-party competition, but also a crafty move to ensure Lee's control of the military through Hau during the transition period (Bush 2005: 75–79).

Stated differently, one democratic imperative in civil–military relations are to proclaim the principle of civilian supremacy (Finer 1962; Janowitz, 1960; Feaver 1996: 153; Feaver 2003: 5–6). While the military focuses on military preparation and costs, civilian leaders try to ensure that the military remains within the confines of societal expectations, ideological dictates, and institutional constraints laid out by the civilian regime. Even though military elites asserted non-partisan and impartial roles in Taiwan's democratic transition — a period of 'regime concession and societal conquest,' in Alfred Stepan's words (1988: xv) — the military remained entangled in tumultuous national identity reconstruction within the political process, occurring alongside continuous security threats from China. The democratic transition brought military budget and defense plans increasingly under legislative scrutiny. The rise of rights-based civil society organizations led to demands around information transparency and policy accountability from the military.

Lee Teng-hui's employment of Taiwan's indigenous identity as a campaign slogan provided him with electoral victory as Taiwan's first democratic president in 1996 amid Chinese military excises and missile drills in 1995–96. Meanwhile, his calls for an indigenous Taiwan-centered identity during the period of democratic transition and consolidation rattled Taiwan's political landscape formerly dominated by the KMT into partisan competition for electoral advantages between the KMT's China-friendly attitudes and the DPP's pro-independence vision. Taiwan's polarization of national identity challenged its military elites, who embraced the China-oriented consciousness under the KMT's long-term leadership.

The era of democratic government turnovers, 2000–2024

Torn between the creed of disciplinary obedience to the civilian leader and its national loyalty to the Republic of China's (ROC) Constitution and national title, some military generals displayed their displeasure at the DPP and President Chen Shui-bian's pro-independence stance after Chen won the presidential elections in 2000 and 2004. The top brass expressed their anti-independence stance and worried that the DPP's careless act would provoke Chinese military responses. In brief, Chen's relations with the military elites were tense, partially because of Chen's strong stance on independence in contrast to the military elites' identity constructs and partially because of the corruption scandals involving the president's family, accusations of bribery related to generals' promotions, and political expediency in official appointments at the expense of the well-established rules and norms of military officers' career advancement (Lee 2007: 210–211). The expected civilianization of the military resulted in the politicization of military elites vying for fast promotion through the ranks. Hence Chen exercised his commander-in-chief authority to reshuffle military commanders and speed up promotion to co-opt military support and to erode 'old boy' elite networks and the military's China-centered identity constructs by appointing more commanders with Taiwanese ethnic backgrounds and emphasizing indigenous symbols and policies in the macro-military context, such as naming ships after Taiwanese localities. Unlike the US and other countries, the promotion of generals and appointment of commanders are the commander-in-chief's sole prerogatives. The legislature's authority resides in budgetary approval and hosting hearing sessions for issues related to defense policies.

The regime turnover in 2008 to the KMT under Ma Ying-jeou signified the resumption of prior civil–military relations. Cross-strait economic exchanges also coincided with the Obama administration's engagement policy. Naturally, Taiwan's economic growth and heightened demand for welfare services corresponded with all parties' calls to streamline the armed forces and trim military service time in a mutual bidding process to solicit votes. Yet the case of Private Hung Chung-chiu's accidental death during his conscription service in July 2013 set off the White Shirt Movement, with young protestors wearing white T-shirts to challenge the military's shield of secrecy about military affairs. President Ma of the KMT apologized, the defense minister resigned, officers in the command chain were swiftly punished, and the Code of Court

Table 1 Phases of Taiwan's political development and civil-military relations

	Geopolitical circumstances	Political regime	Features of civil-military relations
The era of the Chiangs in command, 1949–1986	Cold War and cross-strait clashes	Authoritarianism, strong rulers with military credentials and charismatic personalities	KMT's party-state dominance; symbiotic relations between the party-state and the military
The era of democratic transition, 1986–2000	The end of the Cold War in 1990–91, cross-strait exchanges and crises (1995–96), US–China engagement and confrontation	Top-down, elite-driven democratic transition with charismatic leaders	Shifting to civilian supremacy after democratization; strong oversight of civil society organizations; information transparency; legislative scrutiny of the security sector and military practices
The era of democratic government turnovers, 2000–2024	Cross-strait tension during the DPP governments; the 9/11 attack and the war on Afghanistan in 2001 and the Iraq war in 2003; US hardening against China after 2016 and Taiwan's support for US directives	Regular democratic elections; government turnovers with different ruling parties (DPP, 2000–2008; KMT, 2008–2016; DPP, 2016–2024); expansion and deepening of political and civil rights	Strong civilian supremacy and legislative oversight with partisan competition; rights protection of military personnel; national identity contention resetting the perimeter of Taiwan's civil–military relations in policy and practice.

Martial Procedures was amended in 2015 to restrict the use of military law in peacetime. Military morale and pride crumbled, affecting the recruitment of an all-voluntary service force. The KMT's falling approval rating encouraged the surge under Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP, who wore black headbands with the inscription, 'National Defense Cloth,' ridiculing the military's habitual cover-ups of scandals and corruption.

This widely publicized image became a defining moment in Tsai's civil–military relations after her presidential victory and a solid DPP legislative majority in 2016. The electoral mandate gave the DPP full confidence in pushing forward with reforms to military and civil servants' pensions because both groups had long been considered the KMT's 'iron tickets' in elections. Former presidents Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou has realized the need to revise the pension plan to ensure its long-term affordability, but both had failed to do so. In fact, the pension funds of both civil servants and veterans were relatively small in comparison with total labor pension funds. With the DPP's legislative majority and the party's discursive campaigns online and in media commentaries accusing veterans' pension plans of being in violation of socio-economic equality, the veterans' pension reform bill became the DPP's answer to its electoral pledge to 'equalize' income gaps between classes and generations. Yet by treating military veterans as sacrificial lambs, the DPP government placed the military — i.e. future veterans — into a confrontational position in civil–military relations. The DPP's incendiary attacks and uncompromising stance in legislative negotiations eventually swayed public opinion in an asymmetric civil–military political quandary (Lee 2022). Later, the party suffered a catastrophic defeat in the mid-term local elections in 2018, but the 2019 Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests incited anti-China fervor and helped secure Tsai's second presidential term in 2020 (Wang & Cheng 2023). Tsai's presidency, 2016–2024, continued to reconstruct Taiwanese identity to resist Chinese unification pressures. Externally, US–China power competition and contention on economic, diplomatic, and strategic fronts from 2017 became beneficial for Taiwan to consolidate its *de facto* autonomy from China in the international community. Overall, Taiwan's competitive party politics and regular presidential and legislative elections in the 21st century offers the public periodic assessments of Taiwan's strategic visions, military tactics, weapons development, and arms transfer policy. Contention over national identity during the electoral process gives the military the chance to reflect and reset its policy perimeter and practice. The peaceful transition of governments is a testimony to the principle of civilian supremacy in Taiwan's civil–military relations. All these will be examined and elaborated in the sections on international balancing strategies (Chapter 3).

CHAPTER 3

External balancing strategies: international military cooperation and defense diplomacy

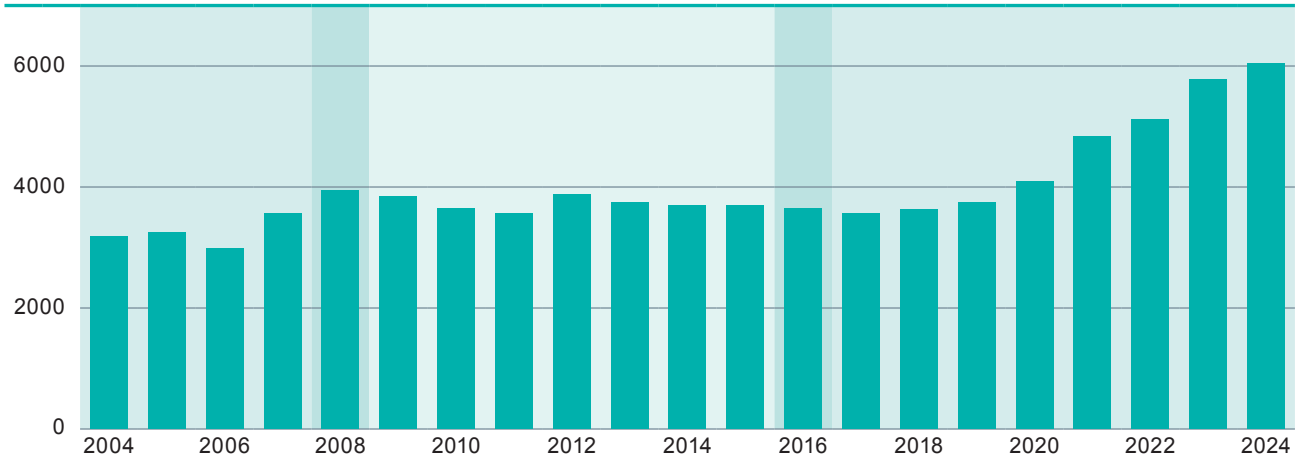
The DPP government was surely elated to see the shift in US–China relations from competition to confrontation in ideational beliefs, trade and tariffs, technological transfer, and security postures from 2017 onward. As a small island country situated between two major contenders, Taiwan's choice is to side with the US for the effect on its domestic audience, security protection, and international diplomatic benefits. The 'rock solid' US–Taiwan relations in military exchanges and arms sales boost Taiwan's military morale, gain Taiwanese public support, and strengthen East Asian regional stability. The intended message is that that any Chinese invasion plan would incur exorbitant costs for China domestically and internationally — 'deterrence by punishment'— and would have a low probability of success — 'deterrence by denial' (Brands 2023: 60).

In several official reports, the US has named China as a major 'revisionist power' challenging US hegemony and has stressed the US's commitment to Taiwan's security (US White House, 2017: 25, 45–47; US White House, 2022: 17, 23–25; Rogin, 2021: 25–83). China as a 'strategic competitor' and a strategic rival challenges the US-orchestrated East Asian regional order. In the asymmetric power relations between China and Taiwan, Taiwan's possession of cutting-edge assets in the production of sophisticated and irreplaceable products, e.g. high-end semiconductors, and sufficient defensive capabilities based on a 'porcupine' strategy might deter China from taking unnecessary risk. Even if the Taiwanese armed forces were willing to fight, US security assistance in arms supply and allies' deployment of forces to assist war efforts remain critical to Taiwan's defense. Given Taiwan's proximity to China and its long distance from the US, as Boulding's loss-strength gradient (1963: 262) indicates, the US will need to substantially strengthen its forward-positioned forces in bases close to Taiwan and deliver necessary support in a timely manner to ensure Taiwan's self-defense capability in withstanding initial strikes long enough to allow for the arrival of reinforcements from its allies (Webb 2007). That is, US forces encounter the issues of geographic distance, time constraints, the scale of invasion, the vast water space over which to transport troops, and domestic support in any effective aid to Taiwan (Bremer & Grieco 2023). While the US has consulted and cajoled major allies like Japan and Australia, at the time of contingency, each ally could have different threat perceptions and domestic considerations over and above their commitments to Taiwan's defense in crisis. The free rider's tendency in coalition politics to 'pass the buck' may undermine timely assistance (Waltz 1979: 164–165).

In this case, US–Taiwan security exchange and military training assistance would be beneficial. It is not a secret that US security enhancement has included military personnel visits to Taiwan and collaboration with Taiwan's defense planners in defense planning and war game scenarios for improvements in strategic coordination, force layouts, combat tactics, and the prioritization of weapons acquisition for appropriate island defense. While there are frequent reports of US military specialists training soldiers in Taiwan, the latter also sent troops to the US in 2023 to familiarize them with US techniques in joint combat exercises (Saballa 2023; DeAeth, 2023).

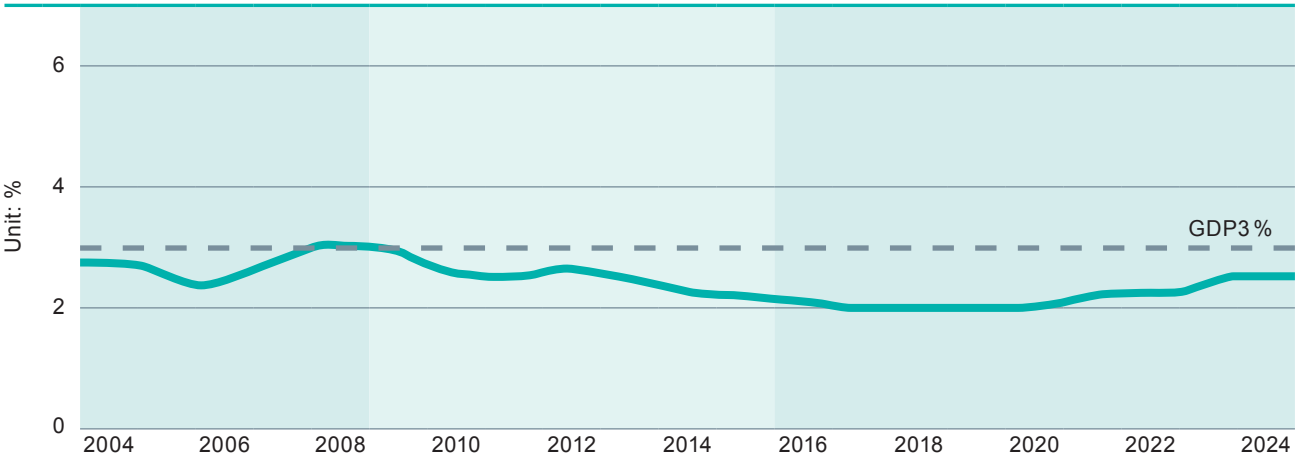
Arms acquisition for defense is critical for Taiwan's defense and deterrence. Taiwan relies heavily on US arms, with 77 percent of Taiwan's conventional weapons from 1979 to 2020 imported from the US, except for the 1981 purchase of two *Zwaardvis* submarines from the Netherlands and the 1992 deals for Mirage 2000 jet fighters and Lafayette frigates from France (FAT 2023; Lawrence & Morrison 2017: 32; SIPRI 2023). Non-US arms suppliers are expected to bear the hefty cost of China's diplomatic reprisals and economic sanctions. Meanwhile, Taiwan must solve non-US weapons' operational systems' compatibility with existing US hardware and secure non-US suppliers' uninterrupted maintenance of equipment, continuous supply of parts, retooling of operational tactics, and others (Lee 2010a). One way to bypass the reliance on US arms supply is indigenous development, such as medium range missiles and indigenous fighter jets in the past, but Taiwan's R&D and manufacturing

Figure 1 **Taiwan's defense budget, 2004–2024 (Unit: NT$100 million)**



Source: Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, a branch of the Executive Yuan of the Republic of China (Hong 2023).

Figure 2 **Taiwan's defense budget and its GDP percentage, 2004–2024**



Source: Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, a branch of the Executive Yuan of the Republic of China. The percentages in 2023 and 2024 are based on estimates (Hong 2023).

are undoubtedly long in process, costly in investment, uncertain in success, and find it hard to deliver battlefield effectiveness comparable with existing weapon models.

US–China confrontation has made the US more eager than before to sell more advanced arms to Taiwan. The Trump administration approved sales valued at US$18.37 billion, 2017–2020. The Biden administration granted US$4.35 billion in arms sales, 2021–August 2023. These figures in a span of approximately 6 years were slightly higher than the notification of arms deals totaling US$14 billion in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and US$6.2 billion in licensed Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) during the Obama administration, 2009–2016 (Lucas & Vassalotti 2020; Estimates in Appendix II). The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, Public Law 117–263), approved on December 23, 2022, also authorized the administration's proposed Taiwan foreign military finance grant assistance by granting US$2 billion per year 2023–2027 and an annual appropriation of US$100 million for regional contingency stockpiles 2023–2032 (22 USC 3351, Sec. 5502) to upgrade Taiwan's defense capability and show US support.

Correspondingly, Taiwan's defense budget climbed from 580.3 billion New Taiwan Dollars (NT$; US$18.4 billion) in 2023 to NT$606.8 billion (US$19.1 billion) in 2024, an increase from 2 percent of GDP to around 2.5 percent of GDP (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The US hoped Taiwan's defense spending would reach 3 percent of its GDP. Regardless of Taiwan's effort in defense budget and spending, Taiwan's 2024 defense budget accounts for roughly 8.5 percent of China's official defense spending in 2023 — US$224 billion (Sacks 2023; Teng 2023).

The percentages in 2023 and 2024 are based on estimates (Hong 2023). Accordingly, there are several characteristics of US arms transfer to Taiwan. The US does not necessarily agree to fulfill Taiwan's wish list. Even if a sale is approved, the functionality of the weapons might be curtailed by the US so as to avoid drastically affecting the cross-strait military balance to either embolden Taiwan's independence movement or provoke China's ferocious protest and thereby endanger US–China relations. Because the US has long been Taiwan's predominant arms supplier, Taiwan's arms purchase prices might be comparatively higher than similar US weapons sold to other allies. Since the US is the supplier of military technology and end products, the terms and conditions of arms transfer are usually unfavorable to the buyer. One example is the 2004 special arms procurement package of NT$610.8 billion (US$18.2 billion), which included the acquisition of twelve P-3C Orion submarine-hunting aircraft, eight diesel-electric submarines, and six PAC-3 (Patriot Advanced Capability-3) missile batteries. The deal was blocked by the opposition parties led by the KMT because they suspected price gouging by US arms suppliers, questioned the necessity and priority of those weapons, and worried about a potential security dilemma and arms race across the Taiwan Strait.

CHAPTER 4

Internal balancing strategies (1): establishing the effectiveness of the defense sector

One key feature of democracy is a belief in policy transparency and accountability, which requires legislative scrutiny and assessment of the government's military planning and policy implementation. Even if they are considered sensitive national security issues, closed sessions of legislative review of classified documents with participants bound by non-disclosure pledges remain feasible in a democratic society to prohibit abuses of authority, scandal cover-ups, data fabrications, corruption, and other illegitimate activities for the integrity of the military.

There have been several major scandals in Taiwan's defense sector which have tarnished the reputation of Taiwan's armed services other than wrongful deaths and rights abuses as indicated in the case of Private Hung Chung-chiu during his conscription service in July 2013 and the speedy trial and wrongful accusation of Private Chiang Kuo-ching in 1996. One major corruption scandal was the French Lafayette frigate purchase scandal in 1993, which involved the mysterious death of Colonel Ching-feng Yin and other related personnel in Taiwan and France, and subsequent lengthy court proceedings for the Taiwanese government to retrieve illegal payments (Liang 2017). Another well-known case was the DPP government secretly setting up a partially state-invested company, Taiwan Goal Company Limited *(Dazhen),* to facilitate future arms transfers without legislative scrutiny and official accounting and auditing procedures. In this case, the participants would have been able to reap private commissions from secret arms deals after the anticipated regime change from the DPP to the KMT in 2008. However, after the case was exposed by the media, the minister of defense resigned, the DPP government immediately withdrew its investment, and the company was dismantled (Hong 2022). The scandal became one of the reasons for regime change in the 2008 presidential elections.

In other words, the vitality of civil society organizations, freedom of the press, proliferation of social media platforms, and legislative inquiries by opposition parties have made the armed forces open to public examination and criticism. For example, they questioned the quantity, effectiveness, and reliability of Patriot missiles, the suspicion of price gouging by US suppliers, the risk of over-reliance on the US, the necessity of those proposed weapons, the priority of weapons, and the likely repercussions of a security dilemma on the Taiwan–China arms race. In March 2004, Taiwan's nationwide referendum concerning the acquisition of advanced anti-missile weapons, i.e. PAC-3 missiles, failed to pass. The opponents also questioned the estimated cost of US$657 million for US diesel-electric submarines in 2006 without knowing the proposed submarine model and the submarine manufacturer. Later, the government had to cut the arms purchase budget (Lee 2010b: 253–254). After all, US submarine builders had not built diesel-electric submarines since 1990 (Stillwell 2008) and there were no known sources of US submarine suppliers indicated in the government's arms proposal. While countries trade extensively with Taiwan, major countries with advanced defense industries usually reject Taiwan's requests for R&D collaboration on advanced weapons systems for fear of challenging China's 'one China' principle and facing Chinese retaliation.

Similar concerns recurred in the case of indigenous defense submarines launched by the Tsai government. The difficulties in acquiring new submarines abroad to replace Taiwan's aging and outdated submarines prompted the DPP government to pursue the route of indigenous production. Although it claimed to be an indigenous attempt launched in November 2020 to build eight ships in total, with the delivery of the first submarine *Hai-Kun* (Narwhal class) to the navy before 2024, it has relied heavily on numerous foreign submarine contractors for highly sophisticated mission-critical systems, sensitive components, and technological know-how, such as the MK 48 anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare torpedoes by Lockheed Martin and experts from South Korea and India (Lee 2023).

The first ship was given a budget of US$1.54 billion (NT$49.36 billion) with approximately 60 percent of the spending on the acquisition of materials and equipment abroad (Cheung 2023; Wong 2023). While the DPP government used the submarine launch ceremony to rally public support and to deter China prior to the January 2024 presidential election, and all parties undoubtedly supported indigenous efforts, opposition parties have inquired about the cost-effectiveness of the submarine budgets in design and construction in comparison with submarine cost per ship in Japan and Australia, have suspected abuse and misuse of funds hidden behind the veil of security confidentiality, have doubted its system integration to ensure operational safety, and have raised concerns of partisan charges around the potential leaking of highly classified information in 2023 (Hsia 2023; Hille 2023).

Taiwan is not included in the Global Militarization Index (GMI), an index composed of military spending in relation to GDP and health spending, military personnel numbers in comparison to the total population and physicians, and the number of heavy weapons relative to the overall population, but China's GMI score was relatively stable in 2017–2022 (BICC 2022) and showed no drastic change in its level of militarization. Yet the Global Firepower Index (GMI 2024) of 2024 ranked Taiwan 24th in firepower among 145 countries, far behind China's rank of 3rd. A detailed comparison of the cross-strait balance released by the US Department of Defense clearly illustrated the hard power asymmetry between Taiwan and China in 2023 (Appendix 3).

While the continuous stream of arms sales and the passage of US bipartisan bills supporting Taiwan's defense truly boosted military morale and excited the public, the DPP government took the opportunity of repeated sales to securitize China's threat and legitimize its anti-China policy. Yet initial public elation gradually gave way to audience fatigue and concerns around the gradual modification of US strategy toward China from 'de-coupling' to 'de-risking'; the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, currently without any sign of resolution; and the Israel–Hamas conflict that started on October 7, 2023. Instead, reports of bombings, casualties, infrastructure destruction, alliances' aid fatigue in Ukraine, and neighboring states' responses due to domestic changes all appeared in news and commentaries with reference to cross-strait tensions. There are several issues closely associated with Taiwan's defense effectiveness, including: (1) strategic doctrine debates considering the war in Ukraine; (2) securitization discourses, political mobilization, and force recruitment; (3) public perception of US troop deployment and military aid in cross-strait conflicts; and (4) the impact of Taiwan's identity politics on civil–military relations.

First, Taiwan's past strategic doctrine was to maintain a strong deterrence capability with US assistance and arms supply in case of cross-strait conflict. With Taiwan's past superiority in air defense and naval capability, Taiwan's previous strategic doctrine was to eliminate and repel Chinese invasion forces from landing on the island's beaches. China's recent quantitative and qualitative advancement in aircraft and naval ships have undercut Taiwan's military advantages and have challenged Taiwan's deterrence and defensive capability. Hence Taiwan's defense doctrine has stretched from air and maritime interception of invasion forces in the Taiwan Strait decades ago to coastal, anti-landing defense against the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) amphibious forces one decade ago. While Taiwan's strategic plan of destroying enemy air forces and naval fleets in the strait to prevent landing on the island's beaches remains part of the current defense doctrine, military planners have begun to seriously consider various scenarios around possible landing sites, beach force layout, and resulting ground warfare, including urban combat and resistance. Taiwan's 2023 National Defense Report began to devise a multi-layered 'defense in depth,' including urban and residential battle scenarios, to engage in asymmetrical warfare (MOD 2023: 63–64).

The strategic tilt toward ground battles following US military advice means an emphasis on combat training of army soldiers and periodic training of reserve forces. Taiwan thus established the 'All-Out Defense Mobilization Agency' *(Quanmin fangwei dongyuanshu)* on January 1, 2022, to oversee the civil defense plan and the training of reserve forces. Suggestions made by US politicians and advisers, such as widespread offering of weapons to the public, the use of landmines, and the storage of anti-tank rocket launchers at local police stations for urban warfare, aroused public controversies and concerns (O'Brien 2021:8). It is a huge task because firearms possession in Taiwan is tightly controlled. Therefore, the provision and training of the use of firearms caused public debate and the discussion seemed to suggest an imminent danger of cross-strait conflict — a sensational campaign topic in elections.

Within the military, there are debates about the suitable strategy for tackling China's military superiority. Some still argue that air and naval superiority remain crucial to repelling a Chinese invasion force in the strait. Others suggest embracing 'porcupine' asymmetric defense, e.g. former Admiral Lee Hsi-min's 'Overall Defense Concept' (ODC), with an emphasis on the acquisition of and training on weapons that are cost-effective and harder for the invasion force to destroy and conquer, and mobilizing reserve units of civilians to engage in guerrilla warfighting, mirroring Ukraine's Territorial Defense Force, rather than purchases of conventional, big, and pricey items like fighter jets, tanks, and warships (Chau 2023). According to the principles of ODC (Lee & Lee 2020), they provide non-conventional warfighting capabilities that are aimed at exploiting natural advantages and the enemy's vulnerabilities while delivering maximum tactical impact with minimal effort. Taiwan's asymmetric systems must be small, mobile, lethal, and numerous for strategic dispersion. They must be cost-effective and easy to develop and maintain, yet also resilient and sustainable. They must complicate enemy operations by being difficult to target and counter. The essence of Taiwan's asymmetric capabilities is a *large number of small things.* David Helvy, US acting assistant secretary of defense, in October 2017 urged Taiwan to prioritize arms acquisition and combat training gearing toward 'affordable, timely, and cutting-edge systems that are integrated into a multi-domain defense' for a 'credible, resilient, and cost-effective' deterrent in asymmetric warfare (Helvey 2017).

While Taiwan might expect allies' military assistance, political condemnation, and economic sanctions against a Chinese invasion, it is hard to foretell how long Taiwan's military could withstand an attack, the 'pain ratio' of the Taiwanese public, and the limit allies' 'aid fatigue.' Without a written security treaty in place, rhetorical pledges to come to the rescue in a crisis will be subject to the interplay of multiple variables, including their relations with China, free rider temptation, the affordability of defense aid, domestic public opinion swings, and others (Brands 2023). Moreover, Taiwan's reliance on maritime imports for about 98 percent of its total energy resources is a critical security issue, particularly if China decides to launch a naval blockade of the island to subdue Taiwan (US Energy Information Agency 2021). The Russian invasion of Ukraine highlights the interlocking nature of national and energy security to Taiwan as well as its neighboring countries. Taiwan must consider effective countermeasures with sufficient substitute energy sources as well as warships, aircraft, submarines, and other platforms to breach China's naval blockade (Webster 2023; Heintschel von Heinegg 2000). Allies also need to contemplate solutions because the blockade would obstruct the uninterrupted inflow of energy resources to Taiwan for production as well as the continuous outflow of vital Taiwanese commodities for the economic sustainability of trading partners.

Second, the Hong Kong protests in 2019 intensified an anti-China fever with the 'Today Hong Kong, Tomorrow Taiwan' slogan used by the government to achieve political gains and win the 2020 presidential election. The updated analogy of 'Today Ukraine, Tomorrow

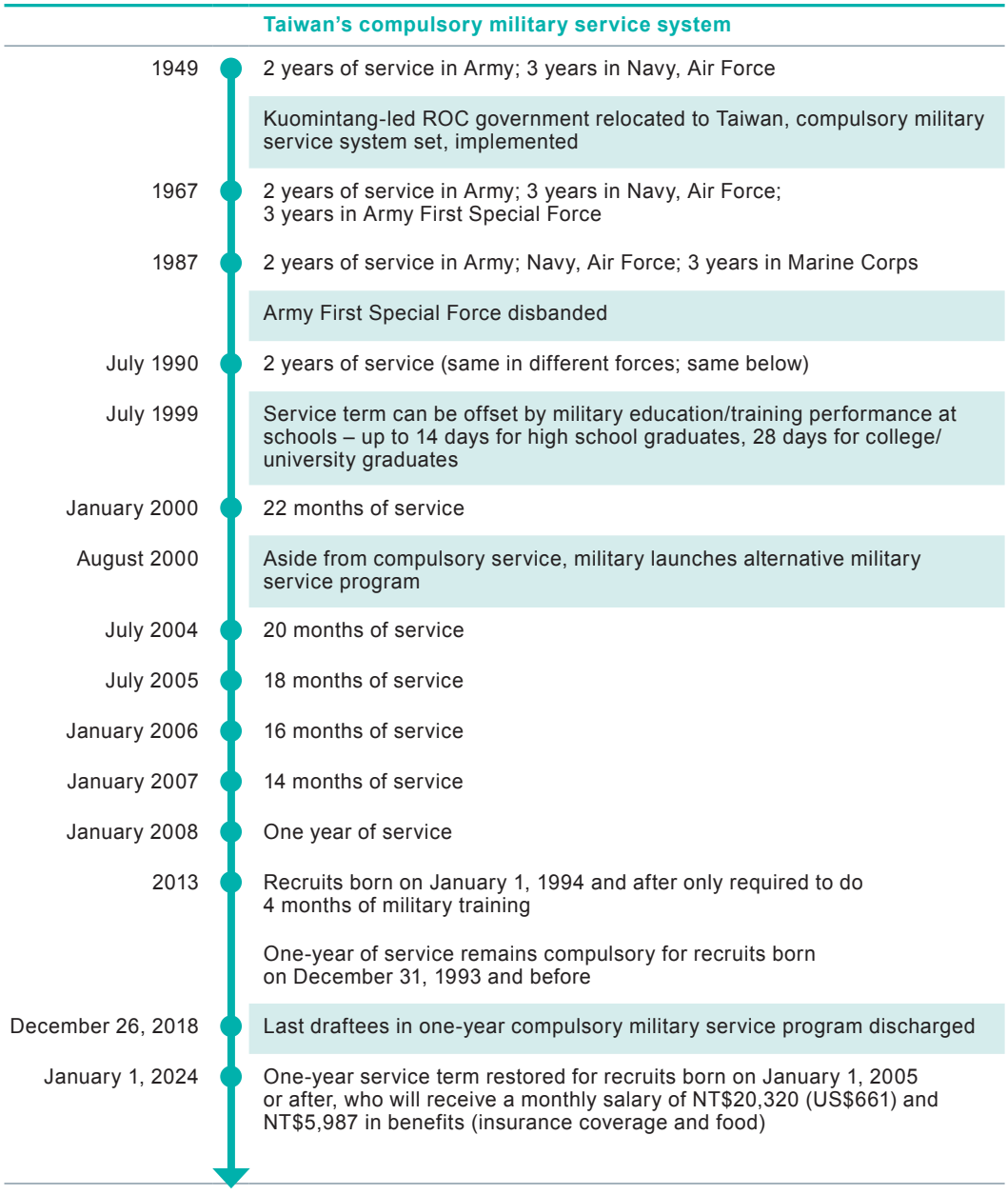
Taiwan' was repeated in 2022 by the government and the military to offer discourses of securitization of the China threat, the importance of arms purchases and civil defense, and the extension of compulsory military service to one year. Yet the Russia–Ukraine war and the conflict between Israel and Hamas have raised public concerns over casualties and economic damage, and the likelihood of cross-strait conflict. Interestingly, a potential 'Today Israel/Palestine, Tomorrow Taiwan' slogan has been absent from the government's securitization discourse.

Taiwan's close alignment with the US against China and declination to communicate with China has raised widespread public concerns over the possibility of cross-strait military conflict. Since the DPP government extended service time to one year starting from January 1, 2024, opposition parties like the KMT and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP) have included cross-strait dialogues on war avoidance as part of their campaign agendas in the 2024 presidential election. Some campaign proposals to win support include reinforcement of the all-volunteer forces. Meanwhile, the KMT may entertain an electoral agenda to reduce the one-year mandatory service back to four months to win the support of younger generations with a precondition of the reduction of cross-strait tensions via dialogue — a precondition to soothe US concerns around Taiwan's insufficient defense forces. The KMT presidential candidate, Hou You-ih (2023), also proposed a 3D strategy — deterrence, dialogue, and decreasing risk—in his US tour in September 2023 (Wang 2023). The KMT have stressed deterrence as the predominant strategy to reassure the US as well as military elites that Taiwan's military buildup to deter China remains crucial and takes precedence over its dialogues with China to de-risk and seek to avert war. The goal is to prepare a 'deterrent' defense as stated by Schelling to make an invader's attempt costly and painful (Schelling 1966: 78–79). Taiwan's unending arms purchases and the continuous issuance of US commitments to Taiwan communicate Taiwan's credibility and capability in resisting any aggressive intentions from China.

The Russia–Ukraine war prompted the US to urge Taiwan to renovate its civil defense planning in shelter arrangements, triage plans, designation of local medical facilities, and even firearms training for civilians and internal security forces. However, the DPP government's civil defense plans not only prompted public fears and sowed confusion among the public, but also spurred opposition parties' accusations that the focus on civil defense plans was intended to incite anti-China sentiment for electoral gain prior to the presidential elections. Even after the DPP won the presidential race but lost its legislative majority in the January 2024 elections, the announcement and publicity of a variety of civil defense forms remained a discomforting matter for public contemplation of Taiwan as a likely cross-strait battlefield (Domingues 2024).

The end of the Cold War, the de-escalation of cross-strait tension in the 1990s, the idea of the welfare state, and the task of creating a better and more capable force for modern warfare led Taiwanese politicians to reduce the service time of male-only military conscripts to ensure sufficient financial revenues for decommissioned personnel and new recruits. Through the mutual bidding process by politicians and parties appealing to voters during elections, Taiwan continued to reduce the size of its male-only conscription troops and started to implement an all-volunteer active-duty force without gender distinction in 2014 (Tu 2018; Figure 3). Such an idealistic plan encountered difficulty as recruitment hardly reached its expected quota due to the demographic decline of the young population and changing socio-economic circumstances (Horowitz 2009). Active-duty personnel shortages remain an unresolved issue. As revealed in Taiwan's National Defense Report in 2023, 18 percent of planned recruitment slots in Taiwan's military remained unfilled, with a percentage increase of 12 percent in 2022, 11 percent in 2021, and 13 percent in 2019 (Hong 2020; Wu 2023). Meanwhile, after the extension to one-year service, the estimate is that about 70,000 male adults, including those serving one-year alternative service (born before December 31, 2003), four-month military trainees (born 1994 –2004), and one-year conscription

Figure 3 **Changes in Taiwan's compulsory military service**



Source: Yeh, 2023.

troops (born after January 1, 2005) will be drafted annually from 2024 to 2029. One-year service conscripts will gradually increase from 9,000 to over 53,000 to serve as garrison forces, local paramilitaries, and in civil defense operations (MOD 2023: 97).

Since the adoption of all-volunteer forces in addition to conscription troops, Taiwan's military has seen a transition from the model of 'institution' to one of 'occupation' dealing with the challenge of the market economy with an emphasis on salary competitiveness and prestige based on monthly pay and rewarding pension plans, as opposed to its previous focus on duty, honor, and professional pride. Material incentives mixed with noble causes are the drivers of recruitment, as Moskos indicated decades ago (Moskos 1977: 41–50; Moskos 1986: 377–382). The civilianization of the military hence implies the marketization of the military to keep new recruits' loyal service. The hierarchical chain of command in the military becomes quasi-equivalent to occupational ranks in a corporation. It is a challenge to Taiwan's armed forces to retain new recruits without competitive pay and socially comparable rights and compensation. Without proper care and management, the military's functional imperative for defensive effectiveness would be seriously undercut.

Third, the Taiwanese public do not have strong confidence in Taiwan's military to defend the island or US willingness to deploy troops to defend Taiwan in a crisis. According to the Taiwan National Security Survey, for example, 59.6 percent of respondents in 2020 and 66.4 percent in 2022 expressed no confidence in the Taiwanese military's defensive capability. In 2022, 59.4 percent of respondents supported a national draft of males aged 18 to 60 to defend Taiwan if a conflict like the Ukraine war occurs, and 78.9 percent supported extension of military service from four months to one year.

In 2020, 53.2 percent of respondents thought that the US would deploy troops to help if a Taiwanese independence declaration caused a Chinese invasion. The percentage reached 67.2 percent in the same year, given that Taiwan maintained the status quo without an independence declaration. Yet if a Taiwanese independence declaration were to provoke a Chinese invasion, public expectations of US forces deployment to Taiwan in December 2022 dropped significantly to 19.3 percent, though 44.4 percent still believed that the US would aid Taiwan only with arms, like in the Ukraine war that started in February 2022. However, if China were to invade Taiwan without a Taiwanese declaration of independence, Taiwanese public expectation of US forces deployment rises to 33.8 percent and expectation of arms aid alone falls to 34.7 percent in 2022. Even so, 69.6 percent supported strengthening US–Taiwan military cooperation in 2022 (TNSS 2020: C12, C14, C15; TNSS 2022: C14, C15, C16, C18, & C21). In a separate poll conducted by Academia Sinica, 56.6 percent of Taiwanese respondents in November 2022 and 55.3 percent in September 2023 did not consider the US a trustworthy country, an increase from 47.5 percent in September 2021 (Wu et al. 2021: C10, 2022: C18, 2023: C14). In brief, Taiwan's *de jure* act of claiming independence becomes the key variable that could provoke a Chinese military invasion and a subsequent US reaction. Furthermore, the Ukraine war no doubt changed the Taiwanese public mind about US forces deployment to assist Taiwan in cross-strait conflicts.

CHAPTER 5

Internal balancing strategies (2): accountability and democratic control of the armed forces

As described in the development of Taiwan's civil–military relations, the KMT's endeavor immediately after 1949 was to safeguard Taiwan from Chinese Communist threats by orienting the military and a society that had been colonized by Japan for 50 years toward China-centered identity constructs. Taiwan's democratic transition with the lifting of martial law in 1987 opened the formerly monopolized political sphere under the KMT's control to new elites and emerging political parties for electoral competition. Although most Taiwanese residents before 1949 were Chinese immigrants, aspiring new elites vying for political authority employed a populist card of a distinctive Taiwanese national identity to outbid the old KMT elites. The repeated promotion of nationalist populism to legitimize and appeal for electoral mobilization based on Taiwanese indigenous identity caused cleavages between military elites and civilian leaders (Snyder and Ballentine 1996: 9–11).

Democratic transition enabled diversified political actors, parties, and civil society organizations alike to gain public space to promote their preferred agendas, access multiple channels and platforms for policy propagation, and lobby to secure public support and favorable bureaucratic endorsements. The availability of cyberspace for deliberative democracy also gave space for progressive ideas and civil society organizations to collaborate with parties in articulating interests and gaining representation. An example of social movements prompted by civil society organizations in the DPP coalition was the outrage and protest — the so-called 'White Shirt' movement — launched by youngsters against military mistreatment which had caused the death of a young army conscript in 2013. The political momentum in 2013 carried over to the DPP-supported Sunflower Movement of 2014, protesting against the KMT government's rush to seal the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement with China (Pate 2016; Lee 2021: 50–51). While the Sunflower Movement signified populist resistance to the KMT's China-market friendly policy, the White Shirt movement tainted the military's reputation and affected its recruitment efforts.

Moreover, several institutional mechanisms of accountability and anti-corruption have been established to ensure civilian control of the military in Taiwan. Legislative screening of issues concerning the defense sector plays a predominant role. Legislators, particularly those in the opposition party, can take advantage of the interpellation period, either in the whole chamber session or committee setting, to raise critical issues for policy explanation and revision. Of course, sensitive security matters are conducted in closed sessions. With the help of whistleblowers and parliamentary immunity from prosecution, legislators gain media coverage, image enhancement, and poll ratings. The Foreign and National Defense Committee in the legislative branch can also schedule visits to inspect various defense units.

Furthermore, the Act on Property-Declaration by Public Servants adopted in July 1993 stipulated that 'Chief officers, deputy chief officers, and administrators at all levels above the rank of colonel in the military' (Art. 2(7)) and essential personnel in military justice and discipline inspection are obligated to declare all property owned by the filer, spouse, and underaged offspring. These include immovable possessions, cash, bank accounts, jewels, artworks, equities, debts, investments, and others. High-ranking officers file a report after they report for duty and make annual property declarations to Taiwan's Control Yuan *(Jiancha Yuan)* (Art.2, Sec. 7, Art. 3–5), which will compile them for public access and inspection. Untruthful declarations without justifiable reasons are subject to monetary penalty and further investigation by appropriate agencies (Ministry of Justice 2024). Taiwan's Ministry of Defense even openly and randomly selects 10 percent of all annual filings by military personnel for examination prior to their submission to Taiwan's Control Yuan *(Jian Cha Yuan)* based on the transparency principle. For example, 314 reports out of 3,137 required declarations for ministry-level inspection and 7 cases out of 314 reports are chosen for cross-year comparisons by random drawing through computer sampling (Hong 2024). These centralized institutional mechanisms and regular military

accounting and auditing arrangements, like the Inspector General's Office within the Ministry of Defense and disciplinary oversights in financial management at different levels, have led to Taiwan's low corruption risk in the Government Defense Integrity Index (GDI) in 77 areas of assessment of the integrity of national security institutions. Taiwan was only below Japan among 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the 2020 report. However, Taiwan's non-transparent defense procurement process in arms deals to avoid Chinese obstruction heightened its corruption risk (Transparency International: Defense & Security 2020).

On the identity front, military elites were aware of the DPP's inclination toward independence and contempt for the KMT's sentimental attachment to the ROC and its historical discourses, which included the military's high respect for Chiang Kai-shek's role in ROC army building and his charismatic leadership in the war against Japanese aggression. The military kept a low profile in any anniversary celebrations to avoid irritating DPP political elites. Conversely, DPP elites reciprocated to keep the peace (Cheng2017). Given time, elites on both sides reached a mutual understanding that DPP elites would refrain from raising sensitive issues so as not to embarrass military leaders and military elites would likewise maintain neutrality in media inquiries. Still, the Taiwanese government is concerned that veteran generals and officers might be driven by financial rewards and 'China-centered' identity affiliation to collect sensitive intelligence information or set up pro-China networks in various military units (Lin 2023). Regardless of their ideological differences and identity variation, Taiwan's civil–military interactions rest on their consensus over the protection of a country named the Republic of China, though each side might have differing definitions of this national title. Meanwhile, the DPP established the Transitional Justice Commission in 2018 to deal with the two Chiangs' authoritarian past. The commission repeatedly requested that the military remove roughly 159 statues of Chiang Kai-shek within military compounds. However, the military constantly refused the commission's requests (Chen 2021).

In these interagency rhetorical disputes, the presidential office usually remained uninvolved by confining these charges and responses within the bureaucratic sphere, implying its tacit support of the military. The issue became muted with the dissolution of the Transitional Justice Commission in 2022.

It is understandable that senior military elites refused to follow civilian elites' requests for transitional justice after regime changes from the KMT to the DPP, because their lifetime of institutional experiences and organizational interests were incongruent with the political agendas of their DPP civilian counterparts. Even so, Taiwan's military elites have restrained themselves and respected civilian command, and civilian elites have reciprocated with equal respect toward their counterparts. In general, the principle of civilian supremacy has been embedded in Taiwan's military sphere. Even a party with a specific ideological vision has realized it must treat the military gingerly to maintain civil–military accord in the interest regime stability and national security in an identity-polarized society like Taiwan.

CHAPTER 6

Learning lessons with a view of Ukraine's post-war Security Sector Reform

There is no doubt that the US and Western allies have helped Ukraine fight against Russian aggression to safeguard Ukrainian democracy and sovereignty. Yet the US's intention to weaken Russia through the war has also been debated in Western public forums and policy circles. Similarly, in the public view and discourses, the US's strategic intent to assist Taiwan is to treat the island not only as a model of democracy worthy of protection against aggression but also as a key strategic base and chokepoint to China's Pacific ambition. Nevertheless, a cross-strait conflict may be a repeat of the 'you lead, we bleed' circumstance found in Ukraine, with no involvement of US troops. Consequently, some Taiwanese politicians and pundits have argued for Taiwan's autonomy in keeping a balancing act between China and the US. Meanwhile, heavy military casualties and public suffering in the Russia–Ukraine war appear to have given the Taiwanese public reason to assess their liberal aspirations against the cross-strait reality. As a public opinion survey has shown, Taiwanese public sentiment swings between acknowledgement of cross-strait military asymmetry and their affection for liberal values and democratic beliefs. However, when the probability of cross-strait military conflict heightens, public fear of Taiwan having a similar experience to Ukraine without continuous defense assistance and rapid US forces involvement has led to political elites taking a conciliatory tone and seeking a suboptimal option for war aversion. Naturally, Taiwan's past path in cross-strait conflict mediation may not be applicable to other military conflicts due to country-specific factors such as history, culture, and geopolitical circumstances. Still, achieving a balancing act between two competitive powers in order to obtain policy autonomy will be Ukraine's primary task in its post-war era for peace and stability with its neighbors.

Additionally, like Ukraine's identity polarization between pro-Russian Eastern Ukraine and pro-EU Western Ukraine before 2014 (D'Anieri & Kuzio 2017), Taiwan's national identity disputes between the Taiwanese identity and the Chinese identity have polarized society and added complications to Taiwan's civil–military interactions. However, Taiwan's fair, open, and regular elections have moderated the competition and resulted in identity convergence and shifts in multiple presidential elections. Every election result is a reconfirmation of political mandates, and every political mandate is a testimony to public sentiment regarding national identity preferences. With the growth of indigenous identity and the gradual decline of the China-centered identity construct, Taiwan's military, with periodic elite rotation and identity reconstructions between generations, is expected to correspond to the socio-economic changes and be subject to the whims of political elites with an electoral mandate. At this moment, the fundamental concern for Taiwan's civil–military relations is how Taiwan's military can maximize its defensive capability without stirring up noisy and rampant identity controversy and partisan politics within society. Likewise, it is beneficial to examine and evaluate the causes, processes, and consequences of the Russia–Ukraine war in the post-war era. Still, it is essential to prevent the Ukrainian military from being dragged into partisan mudslinging campaigns for political capital.

Finally, democratic vitality is an important factor in maintaining healthy civil–military relations in post-war Ukraine. Missteps by the DPP in Taiwan's civil–military relations include its excessive exploitation of the wrongful death of a soldier in 2013 to gain the support of the younger generation in the 2016 presidential elections and the deliberate launch of veteran pension reforms without persuasive justification and equitable compensation. The unintended consequences were society's pervasive disdain for the military, veterans' resentment over losing their pensions, and active-duty service members losing their sense of pride in their service. They undermined Tsai's later attempts to convince society of the military's valuable contributions and recruitment efforts to persuade younger generations to enlist in the military.

Consequently, when Russia and Ukraine reach a ceasefire accord, one could anticipate that substantial Western funding for Ukraine's economic recovery, infrastructure reconstruction, and military buildup will be provided in order to rebuild Ukraine as a liberal democratic polity and a critical security partner against the Russian security threat. Once Ukraine resumes a state of normalcy, regular and periodic regime turnovers will show military elites that political rotation also leads to the circulation of military elites provided there are fair institutional rules in place for promotion. That is, if democratic regime change represents an institutional makeover in the sociopolitical sphere, a new group of civilian leaders will also recalibrate civil–military relations according to its own vision, as indicated by Taiwan's civil–military experiences. The regular change of partisan control in the legislature also implies fresh legislative scrutiny of military spending and policy practices. Taiwan's requirement that military elites make public property declarations increases accountability and transparency within the military sphere. The care and wellbeing of veteran's health and decent pension plans should be a top priority for Ukraine's post-war administration in managing civil–military relations. Moreover, continuous arms transfers of advanced weapons from the West would placate Ukraine's military and consolidate their loyalty and support for Ukraine's national defense. Finally, as illustrated in the case of Taiwan, frequent military personnel exchanges and joint exercises with Western allies will strengthen Ukraine's military expertise as well as professional ethics.

References

Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies (BICC). 2022. Global Militarization Index (GMI). Retrieved from **https://gmi.bicc.de/ranking-table**

Brands, H. (2023). The Taiwan Problem. Foreign Policy, Fall (250), 56–62

Bremer, M. & Grieco, K. (2023, December 4). The Pentagon Needs Fresh Ideas for Evading Taiwan Logistics Pitfalls. Defense News. Retrieved from **https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/2023/12/04/the-pentagon-needs-fresh-ideas-for-evading-taiwan-logistics-pitfalls/**

Bush, R. (2005). Lee Teng-hui and 'Separatism.' In N. B. Tucker (Ed.) Dangerous Strait: The US-Taiwan-China Crisis (pp. 70–92). New York: Columbia University Press

Chau, T. (2022, July 20). Taiwan's Ex-defense Chief Calls for Sweeping Military Reforms. Nikkei Asia. Retrieved from **https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Taiwan-s-ex-defense-chief-calls-for-sweeping-military-reforms**

Cheng, J-W. (2017, July 7). Bian Tsai dang shanjun tongshuai, shanduo 'kangzhan jinian' ge you qizhao" (As the Commander-in-Chief of Tri-Services, Chen Shui-bian and Tsai Ing-wen Each Had Own Ways Avoiding "Anniversary of Fighting Against Japanese Aggression"). United Daily. Retrieved from **https://theme.udn.com/theme/story/6773/2568628?fb_comment_id=1749745128370785_174986 5125025452**

Cheung, E. (2023, September 28). Taiwan Unveils First Domestically Built Submarine as China Threat Grows. CNN. Retrieved from **https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/28/asia/taiwan-celebrates-submarine-construction-intl-hnk/index.html**

Chen Y-F. (2021, April 22). Guofangbu cheng junying liangjiang tongxiang bushu gonggong kongjian, cuzhuanhui dalian (The Defense Ministry Claims That Statues of Two Chiangs Are Not Public Space and Transitional Justice Commission Refuted). Liberty Times. Retrieved from **https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/3508232**

D'Anieri, P. & Kuzio, T. (2017). Public Opinion and Ukrainian Foreign Policy. In T. J. Cheng & W.-C. Lee (Eds.) National Security, Public Opinion and Regime Asymmetry: A Six-County Study (pp. 115–145) Singapore: World Scientific.

DeAeth, D. (2023, September 2023). Taiwanese Soldiers Joined US Military Exercises in Michigan. Taiwan News. Retrieved from **https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4988338**

Dominguez, G. (2024, January 12). Taiwan Civil Defense Groups Push for More Resilience as China Threat Grows. Japan Times. Retrieved from **https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/01/12/asia-pacific/social-issues/taiwan-civil-defense-groups/**

Feaver, P. D. (1996). The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz and the Question of Civilian Control. Armed Forces and Society 23 (2), 149–178. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9602300203**

Feaver, P. D. (2003). Armed Servants. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Finer, S. E. (1996). The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics. New York: Praeger, 1962

Forum on the Arms Trade (FAT). (2023). US Arms Sales to Taiwan. Retrieved from **https://www.forumarmstrade.org/ustaiwan.html**

Global Firepower Index (GMI). (2024). Retrieved from **https://www.globalfirepower.com/**

Heintschel von Heinegg, W. (2000). Naval Blockade. International Law Studies 75, 203–230. **https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1429&context=ils**

Helvey, D. (2017, October 16). Prepared Remarks of David Helvey, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs. Defense Industry Conference, US-Taiwan Business Council. Princeton, NJ. Retrieved from **https://www.us-taiwan.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/2017_october16_david_helvey_dod_keynote.pdf (Accessed September 29, 2023).**

Hong, S-C. (2023, August 26). 2024 Nian Guofang yusuan 6068 yi zaichuang xingao (The 2024 Defense Budget Reached a New Height, NT$606.8 billion). Gongshi xinwen wan (Public Television Service Network). Retrieved from **https://news.pts.org.tw/article/653306#fang-suan-xingao-danrengwei-gdp-3**

Hong, Z-Z. (2020, October 5). Guofangbu: Niandi wangcheng mubingzhi zhuanxing (Ministry of Defense: Complete Transition of an All-Voluntary Force at the End of the Year). United Daily. Retrieved from **https://udn.com/news/story/10930/4911432**

Hong Z-Z. (2022, December 13). Jie Dazhen shijian shimo (Expose the Beginning and the End of Dazhen Incident), United Daily. Retrieved from **https://udn.com/news/story/10930/6836511**

Hong, Z-Z. (2024, February 21). "Guofangbu 112 niandu gongzhi renyuan caichan shengbao shizhi shengcha, shangwu wancheng chou qian" (The Ministry of Defense Completed Drawing in the Morning for the Drawing of Public Servants' Property Declarations in 2023 to Conduct Substantive Examination). United Daily. Retrieved from **https://udn.com/news/story/10930/7781918**

Hou, Y-I. (2023, September 18). Taiwan's Path Between Extremes. Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from **https://www.foreignaffairs.com/taiwan/taiwans-path-between-extremes**

Hsia, X-H. (2023, October 2). Taiwan zizao qianting houxu fengbo, liwei shexian xiemi (Taiwan's Indigenous Built Submarine's Subsequent Disturbance, Legislator Was Suspected of Leaking Secrets). Radio Free Asia. Retrieved from **https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/gangtai/hx1-10022023100907.html**

Huntington, S. P. (1957). The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Inglehart R., & Welzel, C. (2009). How Development Leads to Democracy. Foreign Affairs 88 (2), 33–48.

Janowitz, M. (1977). Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Janowitz, M. (1960). The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. New York: Free Press.

Kathrin Hille, K. (2023, September 28). Taiwan Unveils First Locally Built Submarine in Pushback against China. Financial Times. Retrieved from **https://www.ft.com/content/90e61099-4c36-428f-b1c6-3d302ae95638**

Kenneth Boulding, K. (1963). Conflict and Defense. New York and London: Harper & Row.

Lawrence, S. V. & Morrison, W. M. (2017, October 30). Taiwan: Issues for Congress. Congressional Research Service, 7-5700, R44996. Retrieved from **www.crs.gov** (Accessed September 28, 2023).

Lee, C. (2023, September 28). Taiwan Unveils Its First Indigenous Defense Submarine. Naval News. Retrieved from **https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/09/taiwan-unveils-its-first-indigenous-defense-submarine/**

Lee, H-M. & Lee, E. (2020, November 3). Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept, Explained. The Diplomat. Retrieved from **https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/taiwans-overall-defense-concept-explained/**

Lee, W-C. (2003). Sayanara to the Lee Teng-hui Era In W-C Lee and T.Y. Wang (Ed.). Sayanara to the Lee Teng-hui Era (pp. 1-24). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Lee, W-C. (2007). The Greening of the Brass: Taiwan's Civil-Military Relations since 2000. Asian Security 3 (3), 204–227. **https://doi.org/10.1080/14799850701530176**

Lee, W-C (2010a). Arms Twisting: US Arms Transfer to Taiwan in the 2000s, Issues and Studies 46 (3), September, 151–186.

Lee, W-C. (2010b). Sound and Fury: US-Taiwan Relations under Chen Shui-bian in the 2000s. In W-C. Lee (Ed.), Taiwan's Politics in the 21st Century: Changes and Challenges (pp. 227–263). Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co.

Lee, W-C. (2021). Leftist Proclivity in Taiwan's Political Development. In C. Clark, A. Tan & K. Ho (Eds.), Taiwan: Environmental, Political and Social Issues (pp. 33–60)Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

Lee, W-C. (2022). Charting the Way Forward: Taiwan's Civil-Military Relations after 2016. In J. Hsieh & R. Cox Democratic Governance in Taiwan (pp. 144–162). John Hsieh and Robert Cox. Routledge.

Liang, X. L. (2017, May 5). Taiwan's Lafayette Frigate Affair. The Fletcher School, World Peace Foundation. Retrieved from **https://sites.tufts.edu/corruptarmsdeals/taiwan-the-lafayette-affair/**

Lin, Y-M. (2023, November 27). Tsai Ing-wen zhengfu fang bianjie shi jianshan, guoanju jiaopan tiaochaju shengmi “tuijiang zuangan” (The Tsai Government Fears of Traitors and Losing One’s Country. The National Security Bureau Assigned a “Veteran Generals’ Special Project” to the Bureau of Investigation to Administer). The Storm Media. Retrieved from **https://www.storm.mg/article/4919739.**

Lucas N. J. & Vassalotti, M. J. (2020, February 21). Transfer of Defense Articles: Foreign Military Sales (FMS). In Focus, IF11437, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Ministry of Defense (MOD), Taiwan (2023). 2023 Taiwan National Defense Report. Taipei, Taiwan. Retrieved from **https://news.usni.org/2023/09/13/2023-taiwan-national-defense-report**

Ministry of Justice, Taiwan. (2024). Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China (Taiwan). Retrieved from **https://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=I0070005**

Moskos, C. C. (1977). From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization. Armed Forces and Society 4 (1), 41–50. **https://www.jstor.org/stable/45346051**

Moskos, C. C. (1986). Institutional/Occupational Trends in the Armed Forces: An Update. Armed Forces and Society 12 (3), 377–382. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X8601200303**

O’Brien, R. C. (2021, December 20). 2021 Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue: Mapping the Democratic Agenda for the Next Generation. Taiwan-US-Japan Trilateral Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue TAJUS, Prospect Foundation. Retrieved from **https://www.pf.org.tw/wSite/public/Attachment/0/f1646210703031.docx** (Accessed November 25, 2023)

Pate, S. W. (2016). Taiwanese Youth Nationalism and Its Implications for US Foreign Policy. The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs 40, 157–172

Rogin J. (2021). Chaos under Heaven: Trump, Xi, and the Battle for the Twenty-First Century. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Saballa, J. (2023, April 18). US Sends 200 Troops to Train Taiwanese Soldiers: Report. The Defense Post. Retrieved from **https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/04/18/us-troops-taiwanese-soldiers/?expand_article=1**

Sacks, D. (2023, August 30). Taiwan Announced a Record Defense Budget: But Is It Enough to Deter China? Council of Foreign Relations. Retrieved from **https://www.cfr.org/blog/taiwan-announced-record-defense-budget-it-enough-deter-china**

Schelling, T. C. (1966). Arms and Influence. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. (2023). Retrieved from **https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php**

Snyder, J. & Ballentine, K. (1996). Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas. International Security 21 (2), 5–40

Horowitz, S. A. (2009, October). Implementing an All-Volunteer Force in Taiwan. Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis. IDA Document D-3915. Retrieved from **https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA509059.pdf**

Stepan, A. (2007). Rethinking Military Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Stillwell, P. (2008). The Last Diesel Boat. Naval History Magazine 22 (1). Retrieved from https://www.usni.org/magazines/naval-history-magazine/2008/february/last-diesel-boat#:~:text=And%2C%20over%20time%2C%20more%20and,581)%2C%20departed%20in%201990

Taiwan National Security Studies (TNSS). (various years). Taiwan National Security Studies (TNSS) Survey, Duke University. Retrieved from https://sites.duke.edu/tnss/

Teng, P-J. (2023, August 24). Defense/Taiwan's Defense Spending to Reach Record NT$606.8 billion in 2024. Focus Taiwan. Retrieved from https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202308240029

Transparency International: Defense & Security. (2020). Government Defense Integrity Index, Taiwan: Country Report. Retrieved from https://ti-defence.org/gdi/countries/taiwan/

Tu, J-M. (2018, January 28). Jianyuan baogao: mubing zhanli xiankuan, weineng zhengming youyu zhengbing (The Current Fighting Capability of Volunteer Recruits Cannot Prove to Be Better than Conscripts). Liberty Times. Retrieved from http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/1172558

US Department of Defense. (2023). Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China. Retrieved from https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF

US Energy Information Administration. (EIA) (2021). Taiwan. Retrieved from https://www.eia.gov/international/overview/country/twn

US White House. (2017, December). National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Retrieved from chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdfUS White House. (2022, October). National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf

US-Taiwan Business Council. (n.d.). Taiwan Defense and National Security. Retrieved from https://www.ustaiwandefense.com/taiwan-arms-sales-notified-to-congress-1990-2023/

Waltz, K. (1979). Theory of International Politics. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Wang, R. (2023, September 26). Taiwan's Opposition Candidate Outlines Tougher New Strategy against China. The China Project. Retrieved from https://thechinaproject.com/2023/09/26/taiwans-opposition-candidate-outlines-tougher-new-strategy-against-china/

Wang, T. Y. & Cheng, S-F. (2023). Threat Perception and Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Election. In W-C. Lee (Ed.) Protests, Pandemic, and Security Predicaments: Hong Kong Taiwan, China, and the US in the 2020s (pp. 121–145). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Webb, K. (2007). The Continued Importance of Geographic Distance and Boulding's Loss of Strength Gradient. Comparative Strategy 26 (4), 295–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/01495930701598607

Webster, J. (2023, July 7). Does Taiwan's Massive Reliance on Energy Imports Put Its Security at Risk? New Atlanticist. Retrieved from **https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/does-taiwans-massive-reliance-on-energy-imports-put-its-security-at-risk/**

Wong, T. (2023, September 28). Haikun: Taiwan Unveils New Submarine to Fend off China. BBC News. Retrieved from **https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66932808**

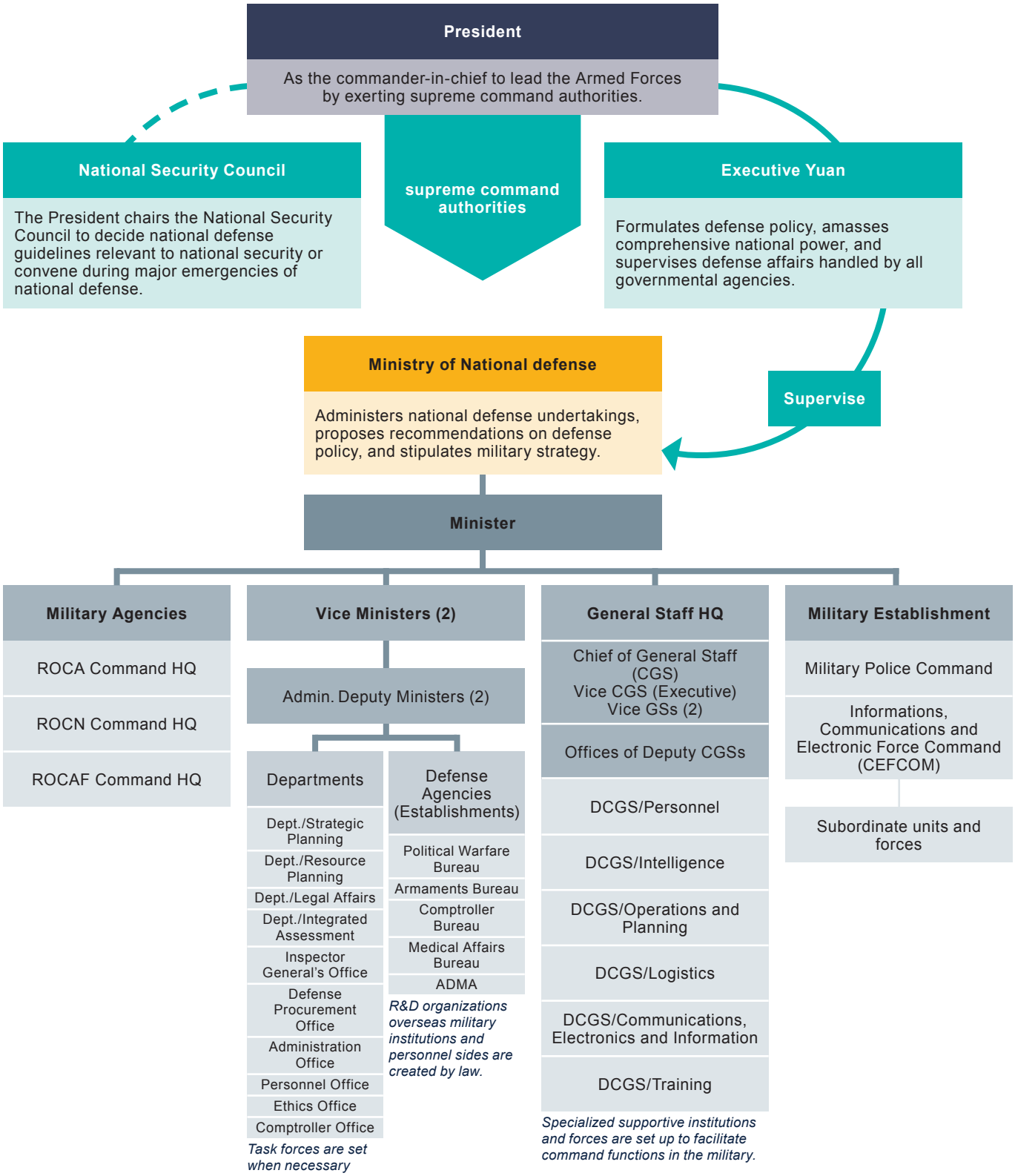
Wu, C-H., Pan, H-H., Wu, W-C., and Lee, J. (2021–2023). American Portrait Survey. Institute of European and American Studies. Academia Sinica. Retrieved from **https://www.american-portrait.tw/en/**

Wu, S-W. (2023, April 16). Guojun bianxianbi liansannian, kuai diepo bacheng (For Three Years, National Army's Ratio of Actual Recruitment Number versus Target Number, Almost Fell Below 80 Percent). Liberty Times. Retrieved from **https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/paper/1577750**

Yeh, J. (2023, September 12). Defense/Taiwan Releases First Defense Paper Since Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Focus Taiwan. Retrieved from **https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202309120008**

Appendices

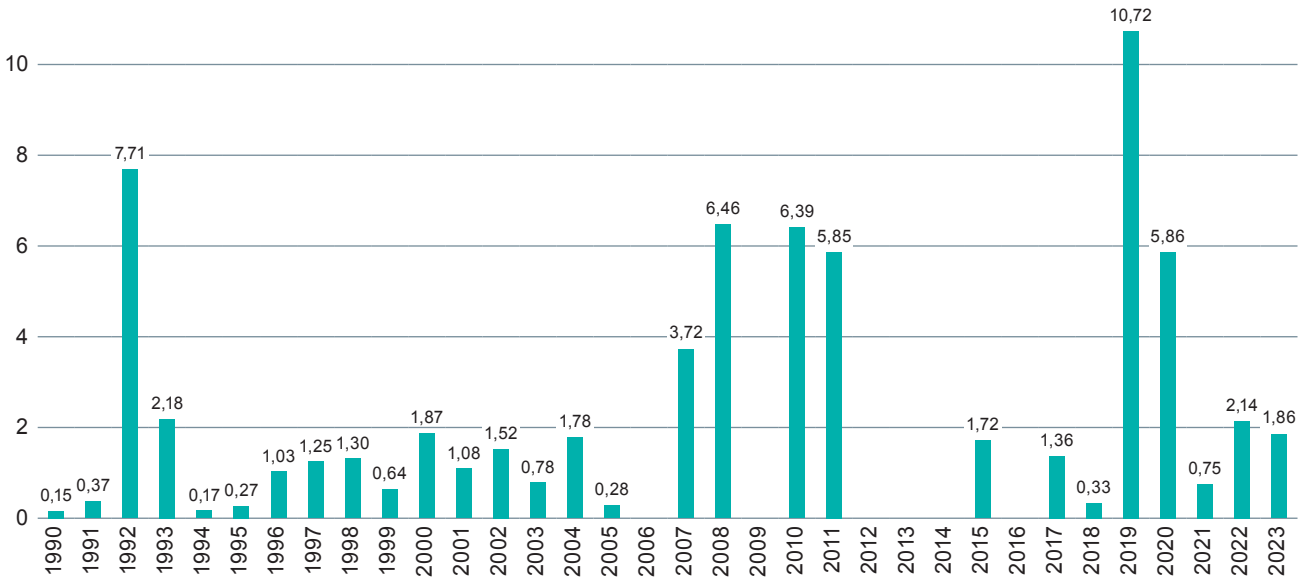
Appendix 1 **Taiwan's defense organizational structure and authorities**



Source: Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 2023: 69.

Appendix 2 US arms sales to Taiwan, 1990–2023

Notified Taiwan Arms Sales 1990–2023 (US$ Billion, FMS)



Source: US-Taiwan Business Council. Taiwan Defense and National Security.
https://www.ustaiwandefense.com/taiwan-arms-sales-notified-to-congress-1990-2023/

Appendix 3 Taiwan-China military balance

Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Ground Forces

	CHINA		TAIWAN
	Total	Taiwan Strait Area*	Total
Total Ground Force Personnel	1,050,000	420,000	89,000
Group Armies/Army Corps	13	5	3
Combined Arms Brigades	82	31 (6 Amphibious)	7
Artillery Brigades	15	5	3
Army Aviation Brigades	13	4	2
Air Assault Brigades	3	1	0
Airborne Brigades	7	7	0
Marine Brigades	8	5	2
Tanks	4,200	1,100	900
Artillery Pieces**	7,600	2,300	1300

*For the purposes of this document, the 'Taiwan Strait Area' includes the PLA's Eastern and Southern Theaters.

**For the purposes of this document, 'Artillery Pieces' refers to systems 100mm and larger, either towed or self-propelled, and includes Multiple Rocket Launchers (MRLs)

Appendix 4 Taiwan-China military balance

Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Air Forces

	CHINA		TAIWAN
	Total	Eastern and Southern Theater	Total
Fighters	1,900 (3,100*)	750 (900*)	300 (400*)
Bombers/Attack	500	300	0
Transport	500	40	50
Special Mission Aircraft	250	150	20

Note: This chart displays estimated totals of military aircraft from both PLAAF and PLAN aviation. However, PLAAF may supplement its military transport with civilian aircraft in a combat scenario.

*The totals in parentheses include fighter trainers.

Source: US Department of Defense, 2023: 185.

Appendix 5 Taiwan-China military balance

Taiwan Strait Military Balance, Naval Forces

	CHINA		TAIWAN
	Total	Eastern and Southern Theater Command Navies	Total
Aircraft Carriers	2	1	0
Amphibious Assault Ships	3	3	0
Cruisers	8	4	0
Destroyers	42	30	4
Frigates	47	30	22
Corvettes	50	40	0
Medium Landing Ships/Tank Landing Ships/Amphibious Transport Dock	57	50	50
Attack Submarines	47	31	4
Nuclear-Powered Attack Submarines	6	2	0
Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarines	6	6	0
Coastal Patrol (Missile)	60	60	43
Coast Guard Ships	142	N / A	168

Note: The PLAN has the largest force of principal combatants, submarines, and amphibious warfare ships in Asia. In the event of a major Taiwan conflict, the Eastern and Southern Theater Command Navies would participate in direct action against the Taiwan Navy. The Northern Theater Navy (not shown) would be responsible primarily for protecting the sea approaches to China but could provide mission-critical assets to support other fleets. In conflict, China may also employ CCG and CMM ships to support military operations.

Source: US Department of Defense, 2023, 185–186.

About DCAF

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
1202 Geneva
Switzerland

www.dcaf.ch

DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
1202 Geneva
Switzerland

www.dcaf.ch