

Abstract

Overseas Education for Taiwanese Military Officers:
Policy, Practice and Effects

By

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This thesis explores the relationship between the overseas education for Taiwan's military officers and the ongoing efforts to improve Taiwan's national defense. This thesis examines the individual benefits of overseas education, the potential aid to defense reform these benefits can confer, and the cultural and institutional obstacles that returning officers encounter. First, the thesis analyzes secondary sources relating to Taiwan's national security conditions, including the rise of China and Taiwan's diplomatic isolation and reliance on the United States. Next, the thesis examines the types of foreign education available to military officers, the general role of education in officer development, and the larger context of international military education, especially as provided by the United States. Then, through in-depth interviews, the thesis will examine the benefits and pitfalls of overseas education as experienced by current and former military officers. The conclusions are that foreign education can potentially play a valuable role in addressing many aspects of defense reform but officers face barriers such as rigid thinking, a culture hostile to change, potential peer and superior hostility, and stiff promotion competition, among others. However, the picture is not all bleak, because there are signs that reform will win out as time progresses, and there is high-level attention to addressing the paradoxical career barriers returning officers face.