

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose of the Research**

The military officer corps, like a country's diplomatic corps, is a tool of foreign policy, and the quality and characteristics of this tool directly affect national security. Moreover, both outside observers and the Republic of China (ROC) military establishment agree that defense reforms are needed to improve Taiwan's stance relative to the growing national strength of mainland China. Since the reforms urged are often drawn from the experience of Taiwan's closest defense partner, the United States, officers who have studied overseas, especially in the U.S., would seem to be a national asset in terms of implementing the recommended reforms. This thesis will examine the following questions: How does the overseas education of ROC officers relate to its national defense? What are the types of reform urged, and how do they relate to the benefits of education? Do overseas returnees face obstacles, and if so, what are they? I will show that the aggregate effects of the different varieties of overseas military officer education deserve consideration in Taiwan's defense conceptualization.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

No English-language materials directly address the question of overseas education for Taiwanese military officers, although the question of Taiwan's international security and foreign relations has of course received a wealth of attention. Unfortunately, many works have a somewhat limited shelf life: for example, Dennis Van Vranken Hickey comprehensively compared East Asian militaries, including Taiwan's and China's, in *The Armies of East Asia*, and examined the post-Cold War opportunities for Taiwan in *Taiwan's Security in the Changing International System*, but these two works, not even a decade old, cannot account for the current altered balance-of-power across the Taiwan Strait. There are also some works addressing the ROC officer corps, such as Gen Ming-ching Sun's look at the progress of officer professionalism "Taiwan: Toward a Higher Degree of Military Professionalism," or Kuang-hua Liu addressing the value of senior officer education in "Tentative Proposals for the Reform of Strategic Education in the NDU [National Defense University], ROC," which offer prescriptions to correct perceived deficiencies. In "Human Resource Policy of the ROC Military," Ping-Hsiung Lo calls for "more opportunities for

pursuing master degrees in the field of military administration and national security strategy.”<sup>1</sup> Wen-Chung Chai and Tzu-Yun Su, in “Military Education and Defense Reform,” assert that “for modern military countries, cultivating high quality manpower is more important than weapons and platforms research and development,” and call for numerous innovations.<sup>2</sup> However, neither Lo, Chai or Su mention foreign education at all, and so the possible connections between these two areas seem to be relatively unexplored.

This thesis will draw heavily on the works of Michael D. Swaine, James Mulvenon and Michael Chase, experts in Taiwan’s military modernization and reform, but whereas these authors focus on required changes, this thesis will focus on a potential mechanism for change, i.e. education. Where Swaine, et al, look to what has and has not yet been accomplished, this thesis will address, through interviews with internationally educated officers, the paradox between having officers keen to implement change and a culture that recognizes the need for change, but still resists it.

### **1.3 Methodology and Procedures**

This thesis combines research into secondary sources with in-depth interviews. The author conducted interviews from March to May, 2006, in Taipei, Hualian, and Gaoxiong. Interview subjects included retired or serving officers who had studies overseas, as well as an officer applying for an overseas study opportunity, two cadets selected for overseas study, and a personnel officer with extensive experience in human education policy within the Ministry of National Defense. Because of the potential sensitivities involved in discussing current policies, this analysis will refer to them anonymously, as outlined in Table 1. In addition, this author interviewed DPP Legislator Lee Wen-Chung on May 3, 2006.

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<sup>1</sup> Ping-Hsiung Lo, “Human Resource Policy of the ROC Military,” *Taiwan Defense Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Winter 2003/04), 279.

<sup>2</sup> Wen-Chung Chai and Tzu-Yun Su, “Military Education and Defense Reform,” *Taiwan Defense Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Winter 2003/04), 285.

Table 1: Interview Subjects

<b>Service</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Overseas Education</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Army	Colonel (retired)	4/18/2006	Undergraduate, Master's and PhD	AO61
Air Force	Colonel	4/21/2006	Master's (two)	AFO62
Navy	[withheld]	4/25/2006	Mid-level PME PhD	NOX3
Air Force	Lieutenant Colonel	4/27/2006	None (Personnel officer with extensive experience in Taiwan's policies.)	AFO54
Navy	Commander	5/9/2006	Undergraduate, Master's	NO55
Air Force	Colonel	5/17/2006	Mid- and senior-level PME (also extensive U.S. military training)	AFO66
Air Force	Major	5/17/2006	Undergraduate (also multi-year U.S. training)	AFO47
Air Force	Major	5/17/2006	Mid-level PME (also multi-year U.S. training)	AFO48
Air Force	Lieutenant Colonel	5/17/2006	Mid-level PME (also multi-year U.S. training)	AFO59
Air Force	Major	5/21/2006	Master's Degree	AFO410
Air Force	Major	5/21/2006	None – (Preparing for overseas study)	AFO411
Air Force	Cadet	5/21/2006	None – (Preparing for overseas study)	AFC1
Air Force	Cadet	5/21/2006	None – (Preparing for overseas study)	AFC2

This study is not a comparison of the quality of domestic versus overseas education. Many of the benefits of higher or professional education described within will apply to domestic students, and should not be attributed exclusively to overseas education. Rather, the focus is on those who come back from immersion not only in academics but in a foreign culture as well, and the reactions

This study is also limited by the question of access quantitative study would require analysis of promotion patterns across the Ministry of National Defense, accounting for different factors, such as the presence of advanced education, the comparative advantages of civilian study versus PME, the relative promotion rates within a career field, and so forth. It

is also possible that analysis by service branch would reveal different patterns or attitudes; this analysis relies mainly on the experiences of ROC Air Force officers.