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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**EVOLVING CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS AND TAIWAN'S NEW  
MILITARY SERVICE SYSTEM**

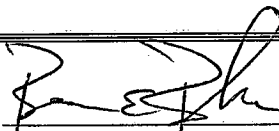
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
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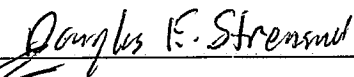
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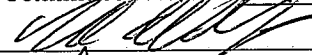
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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Evolving Cross-Strait Relations and Taiwan's New Military Service System

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**Thesis:** Taiwan's new cross-strait policy rapidly decreases the tension between the ROC and the PRC. In an era without an instant military threat from the PLA, Taiwan's military should eliminate its old "mass force" concept, which was used to intimidate the PLA, and should reform its military service and reserve system in order to engage future challenges.

**Discussion:** The previous conscription system successfully blocked the PLA with a "mass force" capability. However, the previous conscription system was badly hit by political interference, which is a serial reduction of military service duration. It was also ineffective because of the widespread belief that war with China is unlikely. Eventually, the conscription system crippled Taiwan's military capability. Based on the new government's effort to seek a peaceful solution, Taiwan's military must to look for a suitable military service system, which is an all-volunteer force to fix the serious manpower problem of the conscription system. Taiwan's military also needs to understand initial problems of the first effort of recruiting volunteer soldiers and must realize the importance of flexibility of recruiting and retention. Even though the military will suffer from an initial financial barrier, which is a dramatically increasing defense budget, the military will turn out healthy and competent.

Undoubtedly, the concept of mass reserve force needs to be examined as well. Instead of having an incapable mass reserve force, it is better to possess a smaller and competent volunteer reserve force, which can extend volunteers' skills and expertise. This study will not predict whether China and Taiwan will be friends or enemies in the future, but rather seeks to define how Taiwan should reform its military system at this time.

**Conclusion:** There is no guarantee that the peace of Taiwan Strait will exist forever. On the other hand, it is possible that the PRC will lift the blockade of Taiwan's international space. No matter what the scenarios would be, in order to prepare for future challenges, Taiwan must reform its military service system during the time that both sides seek a peaceful solution.

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### *Preface*

The following thesis is a result of the author's experience as the Battery Commander and Executive Offer for Artillery Battalion, 66 Brigade, Taiwan Marine Corps from February 2004 to March 2008. This continued study would not have been possible without the discussions with many Taiwanese military peers, especially, LtCol Feng, the first all-volunteer Battalion Commander, 99 Brigade, Taiwan Marine Corps. These discussions not only provided insight into real situations in Taiwan's military, but also gave the author a chance to evaluate Taiwan's new military service system. This thesis represents the culmination of a year of learning that would not have been possible without LtCol D. Burton, Dr. D.E. Streusand, Dr. D.F. Bittner, and my mentor Dr. B.E. Bechtol, Jr.

## INTRODUCTION

The Nationalist party's (KMT) successful campaign strategy of reducing the hostile confrontation with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in order to solve economic issues helped President Ma win Taiwan's 2008 presidential election. The victory also started a new era of cross-strait relations, which could mean more trade, better political understandings, and, possibly, the first military exchange since in the Chinese Civil War.

Several movements foreshadowed Ma's decision to improve the cross-strait situation. Vice president elect Siew's meeting with Chinese President Hu just the day after the presidential election presented Ma's determination to seek further cooperation with the PRC.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the "Three No's" policy, no unification, no independence, and no use of force,<sup>2</sup> Ma stated during his inauguration speech, clearly described his future vision of Taiwan-China relations, which created an effort to decrease the military tension and to seek peace in the Taiwan Strait since 1949.

More events show the possible future cross-strait military exchange. Based on Ma's defense policy to establish a confidence-building measures mechanism, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) plans the first-ever contacts between its military and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Moreover, the positive response from Chinese President Hu's "Six Points" proposition made future military exchange or even military cooperation a possibility.<sup>3</sup>

Because of Ma's new policy and evolving cross-strait relations, a large portion of Taiwanese has positive attitudes toward Chinese. According to a survey on the future of cross-strait relations, More than 73% of Taiwan's people believe that future cross-strait relations would eventually be friendly.<sup>4</sup> These numbers show there is little possibility of Taiwan going to war with the PRC. Moreover, the decreasing Taiwan Strait tensions also mean little possibility of an instant conflict with the PLA. Without the PLA's immediate threat, there is a golden time that Taiwan should

deliberate to build a new military without the concept of "Mass Force," which means a large size of military force. This concept, which has dominated Taiwan's military service system for decades, blocked the PLA from crossing the other side of Taiwan Strait. However, according to Taiwan's new cross-strait policy and likely diminishing military tension with the PLA, Taiwan must rethink the capability of the low-quality "Mass Conscription" and develop a new military service system in order to replace its mass conscription, which suffers from political interference and is unpopular among the Taiwanese.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Former Leaders' Cross-Strait Policy**

The victory of the Chinese Communists Party (CCP) in the Chinese Civil War not only expelled the Nationalists to Taiwan, but also created the tangled and complicated cross-strait relationship between the ROC and the PRC. Military, diplomatic, and political tension have been extremely high between ROC's and PRC's government since 1949. Due to the trauma of defeat in the Chinese Civil War, Chiang Kai-shek's mind was unwilling to negotiate with the CCP. Instead, the military preparation of the ROC against the PLA was always ready for the Communists' invasion and retaking of mainland China. Therefore, during Chiang's regime, and even during his successor, Chiang Ching-kuo's presidency, there was no communication and negotiation between the ROC and the PRC, only hostile military tension and propaganda operations.

Due to the unexpected death of President Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988, Vice President Lee Teng-hui took over the office. Later, in 1996, he won Taiwan's first democratic presidential election. It is significant that Taiwan and the PRC attempted a diplomatic rapprochement under his leadership. In 1992, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), an unofficial Taiwanese body dedicated to addressing cross-Strait issues, conducted a dialogue with the Association for



Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) in Hong Kong. The two sides relentlessly debated the concept of "One China" during the meetings and, eventually, there was no agreement about this issue between two sides. The meetings ended inconclusively, but the debate over the practical matters at hand as well as the "One-China" principle continued.<sup>5</sup> The following events such as ROC's F-16s procurement from the U.S., Lee's trips to small countries in order to court relationships with them, and his speech at Cornell University in 1995, ended with the PRC carrying out surface-to-surface missile tests and massing large numbers of troops in Fujian province, just across the Strait from Taiwan. At the same time, Beijing showed its tremendous economic influence to Taiwan by conducting military maneuvers. The Taipei stock exchange plummeted roughly on the announcement of the exercises, and Taiwan's dollar dropped precipitously.

Chen Shui-Bian, the chairman of Democratic Progression Party (DDP), the pro-independent party in Taiwan, won the 2000 presidential election. Because of his previous pro-independence statements, the PRC government was suspect of his position in office. By choosing two pro-independence individuals as prime minister and foreign minister, establishing a new constitution, and rectifying the names of all relevant government agencies and state-owned corporations, showed Chen's ambition, which was to clearly define Taiwan's identity and to achieve Taiwan's independence step by step. These pro-independence measures greatly worsened relations between two sides. Moreover, several controversial statements from Chen himself and his ministers created the worst relation since the 1992 consensus. For instance, Prime Minister Yu stressed his defense policy in 2004, which distanced Taiwan's long-term defensive strategy. Taiwan would not be purely defensive, if such an attack occurred. "You fire 100 missiles at me, I

fire 50 at you. You hit Taipei and Kaohsiung, I, at least, hit Shanghai. This is what we call balance of terror.”<sup>6</sup>

### Ma's Cross-Strait Policy

Ma Ying-jeou, a member of the KMT, won a solid 58% of the vote in the 2008 presidential election, promising to ease tensions across the Taiwan Strait. Unlike previous President Chen's pro-independence mindset, Ma's successful campaign strategy focused on rebuilding the stability of the Taiwan Strait in order to bring economic benefits. Comparatively, his predecessors deliberately limited the island's exposure by restricting cross-Strait economic interaction. For example, Chen proposed a limited measure by only opening the outlying islands to direct communication and transportation with the mainland for “small-scale trade.”<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Ma saw excellent trading opportunities with China's burgeoning economy as the best way to accelerate Taiwan's economic growth. In his inaugural address, Ma pointedly distanced himself from the approach taken by Chen, the former president and chairman of the DPP, declaring that he would steer away from controversial efforts to amend Taiwan's constitution and, by implication, avoid efforts to formalize Taiwan's *de facto* independence, which is to declare independence under the name of Taiwan. The approach of pursuing Taiwan's independence was a constant irritation to Chinese government during Chen's presidency. Ma, who is known for his diplomatic demeanor and his willingness to seek consensus, promised in his address “no unification, no independence, and no use of force.”<sup>8</sup>

Chen Yunlin, head of China's ARATS from 1996 to 2008, visited Taiwan with 60-member delegation on November 3, 2008, making him the most important policymaker from China to visit Taiwan since the end of the civil war. Even though the agreement with Taiwan's SEF emphasized the issues of direct flights between the two sides, direct shipping, postal cooperation, and food

safety, the symbolic significance was far beyond the economic cooperation.<sup>9</sup> President Ma expressed his desire for even higher-level visits between the two sides in the future. During Chen Yulin's visit, the two sides discussed Ma's long-term approach, submitting a proposal to participate in the activities of the United Nations Specialized Agencies, as well as granting "observer status for Taiwan in the World Health Organization."<sup>10</sup>

Ma's policy towards China aims to stabilize and normalize relations across the Taiwan Strait. He said that he will not pursue unification with the mainland, but that he also will not seek to make Taiwan more clearly or formally independent. Ma will also hope that Beijing might relax its policy of denying Taiwan access to the international community. He would like a "diplomatic truce"<sup>11</sup>—a tacit agreement between the two sides not to use "dollar diplomacy" to poach one another's diplomatic partners. Apparently, Ma's policy gained several positive responses from both China's government and the U.S., Taiwan's most important long-term unofficial ally. For example, Beijing was willing to overlook Ma's criticisms of the Chinese leadership during his presidential campaign. Moreover, the U.S. government granted Ma stopovers in Los Angeles, Houston, and San Francisco on his way to and from Latin America. Ma's treatment sharply contrasts with Chen's, who at the end of his final term, was allowed only short refueling stops in Alaska and Hawaii.<sup>12</sup>

#### Ma's defense Policy

Ma's defense policy emphasizes decreasing Taiwan Strait tensions and strengthening secure and peaceful cross-Strait relations in order to create a win-win situation for both sides and address the Taiwan's economic downturn. His defensive vision aims at safeguarding national security and pursuing cross-strait peace, regional stability, and domestic prosperity. Ma's white paper on defense policy states: "We will strengthen our defense without being provocative in the cross-strait

relations. We will try our best to maintain the status quo, resume cross-strait dialogue in order to avoid miscalculation and accidents, and assure peace in the Taiwan Strait and the well-being of the Taiwan's people."<sup>13</sup> Obviously, Ma's idea of promoting economic growth and prosperity is based on maintaining the stable nation, increasing cooperation, and seeking exchange instead of *de jure* independence.

The 2008 presidential election showed that most of Taiwan's public supported Ma's policy towards the cross-Strait issue. However, 41% of those who participated (over five million people) did not support him.<sup>14</sup> In other words, many Taiwanese do not believe the Chinese Communists will abandon their efforts to "recover" Taiwan, even though Taiwan has showed its peaceful intent unilaterally. Moreover, many people, particularly the DPP hardliners, still believe strongly that Taiwan could end its formal diplomatic isolation by declaring independence. On the other hand, even Ma's advocates agreed that the endeavor of pursuing the peace in the Taiwan Strait could not amount to a weakening Taiwan's defense. Therefore, Ma stood for building a new military based on a defensive "Hard ROC" strategy that is unshakable with high morale, undefeatable by blockade, unconquerable under invasion, and unbreakable with sustained resistance.<sup>15</sup>

Consistent with Chen's demand, Ma also asked China to withdraw its thousand of missiles aimed against Taiwan. Essentially, unlike all the previous ROC leaders, he has an unprecedented defense policy, which is to initiate military-to-military exchanges and negotiate to establish a confidence-building measures mechanism. In his mind, ending the long-term military hostile confrontation is the best solution to bring the peace and prosperity to the Taiwan Strait.

In an effort to build a new, strong, and competent military that fit his vision for future cross-Strait relations, Ma described some necessary reforms. These include reorganizing the

military structure, building morale, evaluating the effectiveness of national command and joint staff composition, providing more training and live fire exercises, modernizing the logistic and support systems, and reinvigorating will and spirit to fight. Moreover, proposals to downsize the military, to sustain defense expenditures above 3 % of the GDP, and to modify mobilization law would be important changes for Taiwan's military. Significantly, the policy of adopting an all-volunteer system instead of compulsory service in four to six years is a biggest step to reshape Taiwan's military.

### **A COMPLEX SYSTEM WITH MANY POLITICAL INTERFERENCES**

From the viewpoint of defense budget, conscription must be an "inexpensive" way to boost defense capability from the quantity perspective. However, being relatively cheap, military commanders are encouraged to substitute labor for capital (weapons) and adopt labor-intensive force structures, as well as maintain a substantial training industry determined by the requirements of conscription.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the "inexpensive" conscription system did save defense expenditures of manpower, but the hidden expenditure such as lack of experienced soldiers to maintain modern weapons and more training investment for branches that require high expertise. In short, the compulsory military system is an inefficient method of obtaining military manpower.

Conscription was a perfect military service system during the early age of reestablished the ROC in a small island with small population. Particularly, facing an overwhelming adversary, Communist China, was always a threat and ready to take aggressive movements. When the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan, which was ROC's last strong fortress, Chiang Kai-shek implemented compulsory military service for all males reaching 18 with 3 years' service in an effort to maintain military leverage with the Communists, and, even more, to gain a golden chance

to fight back. No doubt, there were few options for Chiang to conduct conscription for national surviving interest, which is the inexpensive, simple, and fast way bolster the Taiwan's defense capability against the PLA.

Taiwan's original military service system consisted of volunteer officers and sergeants with 4-year contracts, military school graduates with 8-years of service, drafted officers (2<sup>nd</sup> LT without further promotion), or soldiers (possible promotion as Corporal) with 3-years of service. This military system was a combination of compulsory service and volunteer service. The men who have the bachelor educations could choose to either sign contracts or be drafted officers. On the other hand, the youths who held high school educations could be either volunteer sergeants or drafted soldiers. This system provided opportunities to people who were willing as volunteer officers or sergeants with higher pay and serving four years, which was only one year more than drafted soldiers.

Due to the lifting of martial law, the requirement of the service period dropped to two instead of three years. The shorter service time challenged whether the military was able to train professional soldiers. In addition, it diminished the number of people willing to serve as volunteer officers and enlistees, which would require one more year service than before. Unfortunately, in 2007 and 2008, two further reductions shortened military compulsory service, which, ultimately, was only 12 months of service for drafts.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry of National Defense (MND) developed the best solution, which was recruiting more volunteer soldiers instead of full conscription, and tried to convince the public with optimism that the vacancy would be filled without any threat of national security. The DPP government serial movements of shortening the service period were highly suspect and were seen as an attempt to get votes in elections. Ironically, even though both

DPP government and his opponent, KMT party had the common understanding of the impact of national security. Eventually, the lawmakers smoothly passed the legislation without major resistance. As anticipated, the short period of compulsory military service, indeed, was in favor of most of Taiwan's new generations and their parents who considered military service a barrier between an education and a career. Even though the PLA never promised not to use its military invasion, the people who support the short duration of compulsory military service still believe the possibility of having a war with the other side of the Taiwan Strait is unlikely.

The new compulsory law condensed military service training schedule. A soldier with 12 months compulsory service only completes 35 days in boot camp for basic training and six to eight weeks of an advanced training course, which means there are about nine months left before he is dismissed from the military and becomes a reservist. For instance, during 2007 more than 280,000 military personnel and 10,000 reserves participated in the annual Han Kuang military exercises. Officials of a group of US military consultants who provided advice said that they were surprised that the reservists had performed significantly better during the exercises than did service personnel. They also worried that the reduction in compulsory military service would further degrade performance.<sup>18</sup> This incident did not demonstrate that the reservists had the better performance during their mobilization training, but it shows that they were better because of the military experience and training, which they received during their longer active service. Undoubtedly, the insufficient military service period diminishes Taiwan's military capability; the lack of qualified personnel cripples the road the military modernization, which requires competent soldiers to efficiently operate and maintain advanced equipment and weapons.

## **A ROAD TO ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE**

### **A Golden Opportunity**

The new administration's policy of pursuing the peaceful solution for the Taiwan Strait problem might rapidly decrease military tensions between the two sides. Without urgent threat from the other side of Taiwan Strait, it would be a golden opportunity for Taiwan to evaluate whether the concept of keeping mass armed force in order to intimidate the PLA's millions of force and balance military capability is feasible. Moreover, nowadays, military capability has nothing to do with the size of force. Obviously, the concept of "mass force" has lost its capability, even though it successfully blocked the PLA on the other side for decades. Thus, Taiwan needs to find a more efficient and capable way to defend herself.

In addition, Ma's defense policy of implementing an all-volunteer system in four to six years, raising wages for volunteer soldiers, and revising the mobilization law shows his determination to reform military service system. In fact, the Taiwan's military has been recruiting the volunteer soldiers for several years. Unfortunately, a volunteer service system did not reinforce military capability; instead, it was a political excuse in order to earn public favors. By forming better relations with the PRC, there is a great opportunity for Taiwan to shift its military focus from quantity to quality and to examine the compulsory military service and present volunteer service system, which were broken with political interference and public unpopularity. Therefore, Taiwan has to create a new military service system, an all-volunteer force with a competent and reasonable military size that is able to adapt to the current environment and public expectations. By doing so, Taiwan's military will be able to implement its military modernization and to succeed in possible future challenges.



### Difficulties in Recruiting Volunteers

Taiwan's military has reason to replace its compulsory military service with an all-volunteer force. By gradually replacing draftees with volunteer enlistees, Taiwan's military should be able to support military modernization. In fact, the MND saw the benefit of a volunteer force and its important role in Taiwan's future. Since 2003, Taiwan's MND has commenced recruiting volunteer soldiers while simultaneously evaluating the feasibility of the new policy. The first attempt to recruit soldiers was disappointing. Although the salary of a volunteer was much higher than a draftee's; the outcome of recruiting volunteers only reached 57% of the initial goal.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned above, the major attractions for volunteer services were higher rank, higher pay, and, the most essential, only serving one more year than the original 3-year compulsory service. However, since the compulsory service time was cut to one year, the 4-year volunteer service hesitates youths to be volunteers because of three more years of volunteer services than compulsory ones. Moreover, previously volunteers signed contracts to become officers or sergeants. Now, people are required to sign to become privates. This change created a mindset that prevents many from signing up as volunteer soldiers, as a result, failed to find qualified and motivated youths.

The other problem for the early volunteer force policy is retention, which means to prolong volunteers' professions in service in order to save investment for retraining new soldiers. The low retention rate means that more recruits were needed every year than anticipated. The constant churning of the force translated into lower levels of experience and expertise in units as well as higher costs for recruiting and training.<sup>20</sup> During the first year of the all-volunteer force, evidence revealed the MND determination to draw more volunteers in service. According to *Taiwan's 2008*

*National Defense Report*, "Under the precondition of incorporating the progress and planning of the 'Jingjin Program,' as of 2007, the enlistee-to-draftee ratio is now 55%: 45%, and by 2008, the targeted enlistee-to-draftee ratio of 60%: 40% is expected to be reached."<sup>21</sup> Luckily, the recent economic downturn was able to allure more youths to join volunteer service. When the MND confidently proclaimed the achievement that the 2008 goal of recruiting volunteer soldiers had reached, the hidden number of how many recruits continued for their next term of volunteer service stayed unclear. For instance, a manpower question of the 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry battalion under 99 brigade, the first experimental all-volunteer unit in ROC Marine Corps, shows actual problems of retaining volunteer Marines. Over 90 percent left when they finished their first term and took away a huge investment, which was the best training and great experience.<sup>22</sup>

The main reason volunteers were forced to give up their possible promotion and higher pay was the unhealthy volunteer service system. Initially, the only two things that could really separate volunteers and conscripts were higher pay and longer service time. Moreover, there was no attempt from the MND to keep professionals, who the military invested a huge amount of money in. Instead of finding a solution to keep professional volunteers, the MND exploited economic woe to convince the public the volunteer system on the right track.

### The Debate of the Defense Budget

According to President Ma's defense policy, military service should enlarge the proportion of volunteers in the armed forces and the minimum salary of volunteer soldiers will be at least double the lowest wage prescribed by the labor law. Eventually, in his vision, an all-volunteer system will completely replace conscription in four to six years. At the same time, new military service system will completely replace the long-term compulsory military service system. The outcome of the

2008 presidential election proved that most of Taiwan's people favored Ma's concept of recruiting the men who are willing to serve instead of forcing them. However, the most controversial question was whether the defense budget could support the idea to provide the higher wages, additional welfares, even pension to volunteer force. Based on the 2008 National Defense Report, approximately, personnel maintenance made up 40 percent (NT\$ 133 billion) of 2008 defense budget.<sup>23</sup> The seminar, "All-Volunteer Force and National Defense Transformation," predicted personnel maintenance of an all-volunteer service in 2013, which could exceed 45 percent (NT\$ 153 billion) of defense budget.<sup>24</sup> It will be about NT\$ 20 billion shortage of defense budget, even though military will shrink its size from 270,000 to 200,000.

There is no argument that the volunteer force is much more expensive than the drafted force. The government will absolutely suffer the pain of the manpower expenditure, which could impact other elements such as weapons and equipment procurement. However, the long-term benefit will create a more feasible and healthy military. This is a good example of the advantage of conducting an all-volunteer force:

In 2002, the United States spent just 27 percent of its military budget on personnel, compared with 34 percent in 1970, before the advent of the all-volunteer force. Today, countries with all-volunteer force generally devote smaller shares of their budgets to personnel expenditures and larger shares to developing and purchasing new equipment than do those that retain conscription. For example, taken together, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom—three NATO countries with long-standing all-volunteer force devote 28 percent of their total defense budgets to modernization. In contrast, the combined share of defense budgets dedicated to modernization in all the other countries of NATO comes to just 16.6 percent.<sup>25</sup>

Apparently, in the long-term, an all-volunteer force did not raise personnel costs. In contrast, an all-volunteer force will be able to save the investment of re-recruiting and retraining new recruits. Furthermore, qualified volunteers offer better skills for maintaining advanced equipment and

weapons, which will decrease the cost of equipment attrition. Finally, the budget, which accumulates from an efficient all-volunteer force, can be used for pursuing future military modernization.

### Sustaining the Force

Except the financial issue, the most important element of an all-volunteer force would be how to sustain the force, both through recruiting and retention. The positive result of 2008 recruiting brought the optimism for implementing a new military service system due to the economic downturn. However, the military capability cannot rely on economic situations. In other words, it must have something that can really interest youths. Absolutely, the first incentive of the volunteer service is pay. Indeed, the government's promises to raise volunteer soldiers pay might lure more youths. However, it is not just a simple concept of raising volunteers' salaries. The policy must be flexible and feasible. Several lessons from European countries' efforts to speed an all-volunteer transition show that merely raising pay will not sustain the force:

European countries in transition hope to make military pay more competitive and to use bonuses or other supplements to basic pay to attract and keep people with key skills and offset the negative impact of frequent deployments. For example, France increased starting pay for privates. Belgium raised pay, introduced changes that would allow for overtime compensation, and expanded allowances for some occupational specialties. Spain added generous bonuses for volunteers who renew their contracts and hopes to fund a large basic pay raise this year, despite severe budgetary pressures. The Czech Republic instituted bonuses for serving in some operations.<sup>26</sup>

The European experiences indicate that an all-volunteer system must be flexible based on different societies and environments. The successful volunteer service policy cannot fully adapt to the other nation with 100 percent success. Even one nation will fail if it disregards the change of environments. Therefore, Taiwan's military needs to realize the situation and to know how to use a

flexible salary system to conduct recruiting and retention. Instead of sticking to a strict salary standard, the appropriate bonuses and compensation of the salary system will provide the military with a dramatic benefit, which is able to bring more high-quality youth and keep skilled soldiers. Moreover, in terms of recruiting, the military has to recognize the importance of entrants' quality. Low-quality recruits mean a low-quality force, more work for trainers and leaders, greater attrition, and even failure of handling their assigned duties.<sup>27</sup> Hence, no flexible plan will discount the endeavor of an all-volunteer force, which looks for a qualified and professional force.

In addition to the bonuses from a flexible pay system, others bonus programs will create incentives for youths. For instance, the U.S. developed a successful educational program that provides generous benefits for service members who wish to go to college or technical school after leaving the military.<sup>28</sup> An educational program, this is a good example for Taiwanese military to implement. In fact, a capable educational program will not just attract more volunteers, but can also change the old stereotype from Taiwan's society, which discounts volunteer soldiers. To provide financial assistance to volunteers in order to obtain higher education can really retain their expertise in military when they serve their payback tours. Furthermore, it will be beneficial for the nation's development while volunteers become civilians.

Based on different situations, bonuses and compensations can be used in order to approach a successful all-volunteer force. However, all above examples show the weight of flexibility for sustaining the force. Two current examples reinforce that the flexibility is a major element for a victorious all-volunteer force in modern day. The U.S. Army, aiming at Asian Americans and new immigrants, exploited the most significant desires of the youths, who want to gain citizenship in a shorter period of time.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, with the navy short 2,020 personnel, Australia's navy shut

down the base temporarily and provided a two-month Christmas break for sailors in order to retain skilled people and recruit new people. As Australia's defense minister states, "we can invest billions dollars for advanced equipment, ships, and high-speed aircrafts, however, if no one can operate them, every effort will be in vain."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, even though advanced technologies might decrease the demand of military manpower, it still needs more qualified and experienced soldiers who are able to operate them.

Taiwan's military needs a flexible all-volunteer policy, which is suitable and acceptable for Taiwan's society, and must realize two major considerations. First, it is necessary to reestablish military societal perception. In the compulsory military service, the easy channels to be volunteer officers and sergeants have discouraged youths from becoming privates. More than this, Taiwan's society defines people who join volunteer military service as individuals who perform poorly in school and have difficulty finding a job. Based on this stereotype, instead of a life-long career, most people consider volunteer military service as temporarily job. Taiwan will never reach her ambition to build an all-volunteer force if the MND fails to appreciate this critical factor. Second, volunteers need a clear vision of their future. The MND must take a close look to evaluate what is the critical demand from volunteers. No matter what types of bonuses and compensations, they have to meet people expectations.

## **DOES TAIWAN NEED 2.7 MILLION RESERVES?**

### All-Out Defense Policy

Based on Article 3 of the ROC National Defense Act states, "The national defense of the Republic of China is of all-out defense, involving affairs pertaining to military, civil defense and those in political, economic, psychological, and technological domains, which may directly or

indirectly contribute to the national defense.”<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly, the concept of all-out defense is a great model for Taiwan, which is a nation with small territory and population compared to her potential enemy, the PRC. This concept could be the best explanation as to why Taiwan stays a mass reserve force in order to prepare for likely full-scale conflict with the PRC.

The all-out defense policy clearly explains the responsibility for everyone who lives on this island. By following this policy, Taiwan’s military stays the respectful reserve mobilization capability. According to *Taiwan’s National Defense Report*, the MND supervised over 2.7 millions of reserve personnel. Additionally, based on “The Enforcement Rule Of Military Service System Act”, the MND drafted the mobilization selection criteria policy for Armed Forces personnel and selected physically capable personnel within the over 900,000 physically fit people retired from the armed forces within the last eight years as the reserves.<sup>32</sup> However, the factors of the short compulsory military service, the inadequate and inefficient reserve training, and the changing mindset of Taiwan’s society would create the suspicion whether the 900,000, even 2.7 million civilians are ready to fight.

Does Taiwan need 2.7 million reserves? The answer is yes. However, a capable reserve force, Taiwan needs, is nothing about quantity of force, nor keeping mass force in order to intimidate the PRC. It is a mindset for protecting their nation and understanding his or her responsibility to fight for survival interest. Therefore, the all-out defense concept is always essential to protect Taiwan, but the way to fulfill this concept need to be replaced by an all-volunteer reserve force. During the time Taiwan’s government realizing the best military service system for military, it needs to consider the suitable reserve system as well.

## The Competent Reserve Force

Regarding the new defense policy, Ma's administration shows an effort to reform Taiwan's military reserve system. Ma's defense policy, which mentions to modify mobilization system, states:

Men and women will not be drafted in the peacetime, but will be mobilized at wartime. By modifying current laws and regulations, qualified nationals at the draft age will only need to receive military training for three months in the summer and winter time. Such training is compulsory for the male but voluntary for the female. At wartime, they will be organized as ground reserve force immediately.<sup>33</sup>

On one hand, Taiwan's military should not spend huge resources to train mass reserve force in peacetime, particularly, without real military capability but propaganda to the PLA. Furthermore, the ability to integrate active units and to maintain a vast amount of equipment and weapons for mass reserve force is questionable. On the other hand, it is unrealistic to expect reservists, which can conduct missions in wartime based on only three months training without routine trainings in peacetime. Instead, Taiwan needs a reasonable and capable size of reserve component, which combines an effort of an all-volunteer force.

In integration of all-volunteer system, the best way to establish capable reserve force is a volunteer reserve force. Unfortunately, when the first volunteer soldiers left active duty, the same as conscripts, they automatically transferred to be reservists by mobilization laws. There was no consideration what the benefit of volunteer soldiers can contribute to a reserve force. Volunteers who decide either to remain in active duty or to become in reserve units can extend their skills and expertise in military. Apparently, the new military system did not connect with the reserve system and wasted money, which was invested on volunteers.



Taiwan's military has to prolong the all-volunteer effort, with either an active force or a reserve force. Therefore, building the all-volunteer reserve force by recruiting retired volunteer soldiers will be more effective than a 2.7 million reserve force. In addition, anyone in uniform who actively serves our nation and strengthens our total force deserves equitable compensation and benefits for the service they provide, regardless of whether their duty is classified as active or reserve.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the problems for recruiting and retention of a volunteer reserve force will exist as sustaining a volunteer force. A flexible plan that provides reasonable and acceptable incentives is crucial for retaining the volunteer reserve force.

## CONCLUSION

As President Ma declares, "there would not be war in the Taiwan Strait in the next four years, but his administration would nevertheless earmark a 'reasonable and sufficient' budget to maintain a strong military."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, an era of seeking peaceful solution deals with argument of Taiwan Strait in no meaning of giving up Taiwan's defense capability; neither is it any meaning of the future unification with the PRC. On the contrary, Taiwan's military should consider the better cross-strait relations to be a starting point, which completely examines the inappropriate "mass force" concept and builds a feasible and competent force. Moreover, the road towards military modernization means neither only to gain advanced weapons and equipment, nor to sustain a quantity of personnel. Instead, military modernization indicates the fundamental and essential element, manpower, which operate and maintain weapons and equipment with efficiency.

Due to the political interference and changing public opinions towards the PRC, Taiwan's conscription system has produced serious manpower problems. The best answer for Taiwan's military is to implement an all-volunteer force. Absolutely, the road to an all-volunteer force is not

a simple mission to accomplish. By understanding the methods to deal with recruiting and retention according to current environments, and by studying successful cases of other nations, the road could be shorter and smoother.

In short, there is no guarantee that peace in the Taiwan Strait will exist forever, especially since the PLA has never promised to abandon its military threat. On the other hand, it is possible that the PRC would lift the blockade of Taiwan's international space, and further, Taiwan's participation of international affairs. No matter what the scenarios would be, in order to prepare for future challenges, Taiwan must reform its military service system during the time that both sides seek a peaceful solution.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup>Associated Press, "Full text of President Ma's Inaugural Address," *China Post.com*, May 21, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2008/05/21/157332/p3/Full-text.htm> (accessed December 30, 2008).

<sup>3</sup>Russell Hsiao, "Hu Jintao's 'Six-Points' Proposition to Taiwan," *China Digital Time*, January 1, 2009, <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2009/01/russell-hsiao-hu-jintaos-six-points-proposition-to-taiwan/> (accessed January 15, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>Associated Press, "Before renegotiations, how do Taiwanese predict future cross-strait relations," *GVSRC Survey*, June 10, 2008, <http://www.gvm.com.tw/gvsrc/index.asp?page=3> (accessed January 15, 2009).

<sup>5</sup>Ted G. Carpenter, *America's Coming War with China: A Collision Course over Taiwan* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England RG21 6XS: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 64.

<sup>6</sup>Carpenter, 88.

<sup>7</sup>Carpenter, 80.

<sup>8</sup>Associated Press, "Full text of President Ma's Inaugural Address," *China Post.com*, May 21, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2008/05/21/157332/p3/Full-text.htm> (accessed January 15, 2009).

<sup>9</sup>Edward Wang, "President of Taiwan Greets Envoy from Beijing," *New York Times*, November 7, 2008, <http://www.proquest.com/>.

<sup>10</sup>Associated Press, "Ma aiming for 'WHA observer status,'" *China Post.com*, November 9, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2008/11/09/182358/Ma-aiming.htm> (accessed January 16, 2009).

<sup>11</sup>Associated Press, "Diplomatic truce not dual recognition: Ma" *China Post.com*, August 18, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign%20affairs/2008/08/18/170551/Diplomatic-truce.htm> (accessed January 16, 2009).

<sup>12</sup>Shih Hsiu-Chuan, "REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK: Ma sets precedents with low-key approach to travel," *Taipei Times.com*, August 14, 2008, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2008/08/14/2003420319> (accessed January 16, 2009).

<sup>13</sup>Ma-Siew Campaign Headquarters, "Ma/ Siew White Paper on Defense Policy," *KMT.com*, March 17, 2008,

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<sup>14</sup>Associated Press, "Taiwan's 2008 Presidential Election," *UDN.com*, April 4, 2008, <http://mag.udn.com/mag/vote2007-08/index.jsp> (accessed January 17, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>Ma-Siew Campaign Headquarters, "Ma/ Siew White Paper on Defense Policy," *KMT.com*, March 17, 2008, <http://www.kuomintangnews.org/client/eng/NewsArtical.php?REFDOCID=00ari2gs4xeej99a&TYPIDJump=00ardbyruqn4r9sb> (accessed January 17, 2009).

<sup>16</sup>Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, *Armed Forces and the Welfare Societies: Challenges In The 1980s* (New York, US: St. Martin's Press), 29.

<sup>17</sup>Edwin Hsiao, "Nation's military to become fully professional, all-volunteer force," *Taiwan Journal*, August 9, 2008, <http://taiwanjournal.nat.gov.tw/ct.asp?CtNode=122&xItem=44706> (accessed January 17, 2009).

<sup>18</sup>Jimmy Chuang, "Compulsory service cuts questioned," *Taipei Time*, June 19, 2007, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2007/06/19/2003365903> (accessed January 17, 2009).

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<sup>20</sup>Cindy Williams, "From Conscripts To Volunteers," *Naval War College Review*, winter 2005, <http://www.proquest.com/>.

<sup>21</sup>Ministry of National Defense, ROC, *National Defense Report 2008* (Taipei, Taiwan: September 9, 2008), 278.

<sup>22</sup>Peter Feng, telephone conversation with author, January 12, 2009.

<sup>23</sup>ROC, *National Defense Report 2008*, 226.

<sup>24</sup>Associated Press, "139 billion not enough for All-Volunteer Force," *The Liberty Time*, December 16, 2008, <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2008/new/dec/6/today-p8-2.htm> (accessed January 14, 2009).

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<sup>30</sup>Associated Press, "Australia temporarily shuts down navy," *AFP*, November 17, 2008, <http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews/articleid/2807744> (accessed January 13, 2009).

<sup>31</sup>Ministry of National defense R.O.C., National Defense Act, (Taipei: Ministry of National defense R.O.C. 2008), Article 3, <http://law.mnd.gov.tw/FLAWDAT0201.asp?lsid=FL005392>.

<sup>32</sup>ROC, *National Defense Report 2008*, 245.

<sup>33</sup>Ma-Siew Campaign Headquarters, "Ma/ Siew White Paper on Defense Policy," *KMT.com*, March 17, 2008, <http://www.kuomintangnews.org/client/eng/NewsArtical.php?REFDOCID=00ari2gs4xeej99a&TYPIDJump=00ardbyruqn4r9sb> (accessed January 17, 2009)

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<sup>35</sup>Ko Shu-ling, "Ma promises no Strait war in next four years," *Taipei Times.com*, October 22, 2008, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/10/22/2003426599> (accessed January 13, 2009).

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