

Taiwan Fellowship Report

The new 12-month conscription programme in Taiwan as a catalyst for the transformation of civil-military relations: Military education and Generation Z

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Abstract

A key question Taiwanese society will have about the new 12-month conscription programme will concern whether the new programme will deliver a relevant and authentic conscription experience. Willingness to imagine the new programme in the most positive terms will be understandably tentative as confidence in the military has been undermined by the performance of the incumbent 4-month conscription programme. In such circumstances, the 12-month conscription programme offers an opportunity to make a clean break from the past. With this idea in mind, it would seem invaluable to think about the new 12-month conscription programme as an innovation capable of addressing some of the key problems at the heart of the military's role in defending Taiwan's democracy. It will be argued in this paper that the new programme offers an opportunity to transform the typography of Taiwanese civil-military relations and that this could be best achieved through the inclusion of military education in the new conscription programme. The purpose of this innovation would enable conscripts to identify with the educational aspect of the conscription experience. The implementation of this initiative would make conscription a catalyst for change in civil-military relations, and increase the incentive for cooperation between civil society and the military. Central to this discussion is the idea that military education will benefit the individual conscript's post-conscription trajectory in both their studies and professional careers. This added value will be incurred as a result of the motivation that military education provides conscripts, by enabling conscripts to visualise a learning pathway from *pre-conscription education* and *military education during conscription* through to *post-conscription life-long learning*. As such, the historical narrative concerning the time lost when doing conscription, is transformed and the common mission that depends upon more cooperative civil-military relations becomes a more achievable goal. Rather than an academic report, the argument here is developed with the purpose of initiating change through promoting the need for wider discussion on the topic. The approach is sociological, anthropological, and philosophical, and engages the above problematic through proposing the need for a cross-sector intervention, involving open and social innovation engaging all relevant actors party to civil-military relations.

Key words: 12-month conscription programme, conscripts, military training, military education, Generation Z, open and social innovation.

¹ The Institute of National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) is Taiwan's leading research institute and think tank on defense and security. INDSR sits underneath the Ministry of National Defense (MND) and serves the President's portfolios; MND, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Council.

Introduction

Taiwan Strait, on account of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) escalation of its rehearsal-for-war type activities (MND, 2023), has become a theatre of increasing concern for the Taiwanese National Security Council and the Ministry of National Defense (MND). PLA activities have increased in intensity and complexity, especially since Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, making it apparent that Taiwan's democracy cannot be defended against neighbouring autocratic and invasive interests without, among other initiatives, there being a return to the 12-month format for compulsory military training. While the Taiwan Government would have anticipated that the resumption of the 12-month programme would be unpopular with conscripts, with respect to deterrence in the Taiwan Strait requiring a longer conscription period, it is also understandable that the next generation of conscripts should be conflicted about the quality of the new conscription programme, given the experience of conscripts who participated in the 4-month conscription programme (see Captain Jimmy Chien, 2023).

While nearly 80% of Taiwanese are in favour of the new 12-month conscription programme (Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation, 2023), and over 70% of Taiwanese say they will stand and fight in the event of a military conflict (Chien, 2023), a significantly smaller percentage of young people – men of the age-group who will participate in the new conscription programme – are likely *to willingly embrace the need to do* compulsory military training (Li, 2023; Li, 2023, personal communication).

The Government understands addressing the developing security and defense situation as one that concerns (1) the need for a longer and more meaningful conscription period and (2) remuneration to conscripts such that conscripts will not financially suffer during the time they are required to step away from their studies or work (MND, 2023). Both these issues were addressed during the December 2022 announcement (Chung, 2022) that Taiwan would reestablish the 12-month conscription period.

While the social response to the extension of the conscription period from 4 to 12 months has been muted during the 12 months since December 27, 2022, it may be that this muted response was because the right questions were not asked. Recent research by Captain Jimmy Chien (Chien, 2023), of the US Air Force, has revealed that while over 70% Taiwanese are, in the first instance, prepared to stand and fight in the event of a conflict, it would appear that this segment of the population would only commit to Taiwan's defense on the proviso that there is "sufficient training" and there would be "US support".²

Leaving the latter point aside, what should be evident from the above statement is that there needs to be sufficient training and, that in the meantime, the Taiwanese are suspending judgement as to whether the new 12-month conscription programme will in fact provide sufficient training. After all,

² See also Sun and Hetherington (2023).

the new programme has not begun, meaning the significance of what sufficient training means is still to be evaluated; something that US advisors will no doubt have an interest in during the following 12 months (see Liu, 2023b). At this stage, all we have, concerning the content of the 12-month conscription programme, is the 'Force structure adjustment of all-out defense' document (MND, 2023),³. In the meantime, what we know from colloquial understanding in the defense and security sector is that the design of the 12-month conscription programme continues to be a work-in-progress, meaning to say there will be more policy documents to follow.

It would be easy to leave the significance of this issue to those who continue to work on the design of the new programme. However, there is a broader and more complex problematic that should be addressed. This problematic concerns, among other factors, training practices used during the last 10 years,⁴ and what these training practices, on the one hand, have to say about the Taiwanese MND and Armed Forces, with respect to what it is that made these practices permissible, and on the other, how these training practices impacted civil-military relations – and in particular the thinking of young people about the value of conscription, as an affirmation of Taiwanese military thinking. Trust in the military has been severely eroded. What action is taken now needs to have the effect of rebuilding trust as an affirmation of cooperative civil-military relations.

In highlight this problem, I need to state that I am not extrapolating this problematic to apportion blame. I am a foreign actor and it is not my intention to interfere where it is not my role. Nevertheless, I think it is worth highlighting the complexity of this problematic as long as it continues to be significant (see, Dominguez, 2023). As we speak, it becomes more and more important that we find a new point of departure with respect to how this problematic should be addressed. There is a moral responsibility to identify the way forward as an experience that renews trust and coordinates civil and military interests around a common mission.

So the question becomes how we should understand the problematic that I speak of and how should it be addressed. The new 12-month conscription programme must be seen as an *opportunity*. What am I referring to when I describe the new programme as an opportunity? The new programme is an opportunity not just because there needs to be a longer and more meaningful conscription programme, but it is also an opportunity because the new programme needs to do something that enables change in Taiwanese civil-military relations.

³ Published January 10, 2023.

⁴ The 4-month conscription programme was operational between 2013 and 2023. The 12-month conscription programme was previously operational between 2008 and 2013. The practices that are in question here are practices concerning relevance and authenticity (see Cheung, 2023).

To be more specific, this new conscription programme is: (1) an opportunity to win the commitment of all young men in the new programme; (2) an opportunity to offer conscripts something that will benefit their careers post-conscription; (3) an opportunity to change the societal narrative on the value of conscription; (4) an opportunity to create greater cooperation in civil-military relations; (5) an opportunity to treat the new 12-month conscription programme as an innovation; and (6) an opportunity for the new conscription programme to enhance the warfighting capacity of the Reserve Force. All these opportunities are features of what should be a single project – they need to be taken together and worked on ecologically such that their interests are governed by the rules of a common and integrated design. The most important features of this opportunity are numbers (1) and (5), although all are important and none can be left in the margins – atrophy in any of these areas will only undermine the core purpose of change. It is as a result of my analysis of these various aspects of this problematic, that I have come to explore how we might motivate young men to see the new 12-month conscription programme as an experience that might benefit their post-conscription careers in civil society.

In effect, what is developed in the discussion that follows is an attempt to coordinate the conscript's conscription experience with the same individual's post-conscription formation, such that, that which benefits the individual conscript during conscription leads them to contribute more as a civilian in professional life. The idea, in summary, is that if conscripts understand that the conscription programme will benefit their studies and professional/work trajectory in the civil sector (the extrinsic motivation), then they will fully implicate themselves in the conscription experience. The key argument made in favour of conscripts' capacity to implicate themselves in the new programme is that they will identify with the conscription programme if they see themselves reflected in the makeup of the programme. To achieve this, they will not only need to be convinced of the relevancy and authenticity of the training methods used, but they will also need to see that the new programme contains a *military education* element that recognises their existing capabilities to think critically, thus enabling them to see how conscription might further develop these capabilities and therefore benefit their careers. It is the *interpolation* of military education in the new programme that is at the heart of the innovation that the new 12-month programme could be for both the military and civil sectors. It is military education taught in this lower echelon of the Armed Forces that is thought here as having the potential to affect a shift in the typography of civil-military relations such that the civil and military sectors become capable of being more cooperative both during peacetime and, importantly, in the event of a military conflict.

The method of extrapolating the discussion will be to use philosophy to think through the various paradoxes that have historically inhibited the initiation of such a discussion. The civil and military

sectors sit in a paradoxical relation, where the interests of each cannot be measured according to the interests of the other. They must cooperate productively without seeking to dominate the other and all the while working for the same mission (Gaub, 2016). Likewise, all other aspects of this discussion sit in a paradoxical relationship, including, military training and military education; the Generation Z conscript and the military instructor; the conscription programme, and the conscript's professional trajectory in the civil world; not forgetting the efforts to ensure peace through the preparation for war; or Taiwan's experience of dictatorship from 1949 to 1987, and its history and current experience of democracy. Part to the above aspects of the discussion is also a discussion on open and social innovation, and how these ways of thinking about change might effectively bring the military and civil sectors into a more collaborative relationship. The discussion on the new conscription programme as an innovation occurs later in the paper and after the main argument has been fully laid out.

To think through such paradoxes as those described above, it was necessary to engage with a broad range literatures and human encounters, including a mixture of academic literatures, government policy documents, public media, interviews with researchers and other professionals in the security and defense sectors, including personal conversations with education researchers, personal conversations with researchers working at INDSR and at the University of National Defense, not forgetting personal conversations with researchers at overseas think tanks.

While there exists a significant body of academic literature on civil-military relations, it appears that nobody till now has researched these relations in relation to the need to include military education in Taiwan's conscription programme as a means of mediating civil-military relations such that these two sectors might become more cooperative. As such, the genealogy of this problematic engages a broad array of actors, influences, historical practices and ideas that, sometimes, do not share the same objective. To manage the cognitive dissonance and the atrophy that result from this problematic having been left unattended over time, an ecological approach is taken so as to be open to whatever idea that might liberate the process of thought and produce a solution. To achieve this outcome, I have employed an integrated design, a method not normally used in this field – yet one that serves the circumstances in which the problematic at hand needed to be better understood.

Lastly, this is not a research paper that attempts to address all the questions it raises. Furthermore, the argument pursued does not draw on what could be learned from military education as it would be understood in political warfare education, military education in Taiwan's military academies, or military education as it might be understood to contribute to the traditional development of leadership in soldiers who have been recruited. In some cases, I will highlight the need for further research while in others I will make suggestions as a means of identifying the pathway to achieving further progress. This said, in the final section, I explicate a series of ideas for new initiatives that I

think could be taken, once the civic and military sectors agree to an understanding on the importance of the problematic outlined earlier.

The discussion begins with an examination of the role of motivation and proceeds to an exploration of how conscription, in a form that would include military education, could be a catalyst for meaningful change in the typography of civil-military relations. In order to innovate, there needs to be a clear articulation of what it is that needs to be changed and why this is necessary. As such, conscription is examined with a view to explaining why the military training aspect of conscription does not do enough when engaging the contemporary conscript and, therefore, why military education should be a necessary component of conscription. In order to make the latter point, an examination is done of professional and life situations of the conscript-to-be. This is followed by an explanation of what this cohort of conscripts – Generation Z – brings to the table and why this generation of conscripts should be thought of as a potential military asset. Having established the potential added value that military education brings to both conscription and the conscript, and not least civil-military relations, the urgency with which this innovation needs to be addressed is discussed. This is followed by an explanation of how innovation must be thought of in the context of this problematic: that the most important thing is to initiate change as an experiment worth making, and then to incrementally remodel the *modus operandi* of this change (conscription), with a view to serving the Ministry's long-term aspirations for both conscription and the Reserve Force. Finally, a number of recommendations are made with a view to facilitating the innovation process over time that the new 12-month conscription programme should represent.

1. Motivation and compulsory military training

National conscription is, by definition, compulsory. Young people in Taiwan born after January 1st, 2005, which is to say those who are over the age of 18 on January 1st, 2024, are, by law, required (Chung, 2022) to present themselves to the National Conscription Office for enrolment in a programme of 12 months of military training. While conscription initially begins with training in the Army, conscripts are subsequently assigned to training with the army, navy, air force or marine corps.

Given that conscription is a legal obligation, one might ask, why should motivation be a problem for the Armed Forces in the implementation of Taiwan's schema for meeting the requirements of military preparedness in the current international security setting? It goes without saying that motivation plays an obvious role in military instruction and in the inculcation of military values, both with the formation of conscripts and in all other echelons of the Armed Forces. This is a responsibility of the Armed Forces in that their purpose, in the building and the capacitation of soldiers is to provide technical and

physical preparation, and the creation of order and tactical understanding of the mission (MND, 2023).⁵ This assumption of responsibility by the Armed Forces is not in question here.

This said, the question of whether young people will both accept to do 12 months of compulsory military service and, furthermore, defend their country in the case of a military conflict are questions that cannot be answered, as neither the 12-month training programme has officially begun and nor is a military conflict eminent, even though Taiwan is threatened on almost a daily basis.⁶ What is clear is that, once compulsory military training begins, motivation is something driven by those who instruct and train conscripts. Motivation in this sense occurs in an exclusive domain – a domain of activity that answers to its own set of values. However, in saying this, the question of what motivates young people does not end with the power of the military to form young conscripts as warfighting soldiers through traditional military instruction and dispensing of orders.

Today's conscript, like any conscript in history, is a subject of their own time. Today's conscript is not the same person that his instructor was when the latter did his compulsory military training. Not only have the social, cultural and political conditions that govern society's interests changed, but this individual's approach to interpreting the significance of these said interests has evolved such that the current generation of conscripts are able to distinguish themselves from the previous generation. Young people are more educated *by* the world and *for* the world that they live in. Not only do they have their own opinion, and they wish their opinion to be heard (Russell, 2019). This is to say, today's conscript is someone who wants to exercise their intellectual agency – a not altogether unexpected expression of the times.

The key here is that young people feel such agency that they believe that it is they who should decide their futures. If we accept the accuracy of this profile, the question then becomes, how should we reconcile this sociocultural disposition with the legal obligation that requires young men of eligible age to do compulsory military training? This question cannot be simply reconciled through young men of eligible age fulfilling their obligation to the State and society, as this would be to negate this new subject's distinctive disposition and the way in which this individuality has been formed over the last decade. There are a number of factors concerning the formation of this subject that I will get to when I discuss Generation Z and its values in Section 5.

This reconciliation of the sociocultural disposition of the young men who will do compulsory military training with the legal obligation that they do conscription is not one that can be forced by the State

⁵ The use of the term soldier in this paper will refer to servicemen serving in the Armed Forces, including those in the Army, Air Force, Navy (including the Marine Corps) and the Military Police.

⁶ See the Republic of China's Ministry of National Defense webpage for military news updates: <https://www.mnd.gov.tw/english/PublishTable.aspx?types=Military%20News%20Update&Title=News%20Channel>

and its legal mandate to govern without the risk of alienating some young people, for reason that the State itself is there to mediate the interests of society when it comes to society's relationship with the military. Sociocultural interests, and importantly the economic interests, are responsible for the conditions under which society finds itself, and therefore society is, in turn, bound to influence the State's philosophy towards the evolution of its role in implicating the young people of today in the challenges it faces in the ambit of defense and security. I will speak more specifically to the relationship of government, society and the military in the next section.

The best way to appeal to the interest of this new generation is to recognise what they wish for themselves and thus reconcile the above question through engaging the vision that this new generation has for itself; that is, their desire to see the world positively (De Witte, 2022; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023). To achieve this level of engagement, and activate the implicit motivation that such a reconciliation supposes, the military needs to enable young conscripts to identify the desires they have for themselves in the content of the conscription programme provided by the Armed Forces – a question that concerns both what military pedagogy and curriculum content; both of which I will get to later in the paper.

If the military could achieve this level of engagement with its new conscripts, it would not only be achieving an optimization of the conscript's commitment to military training but they would also be contributing to the formation of a reserve soldier who is more likely to conserve the values that they inculcated during training. Both these outcomes also suppose an optimal response of the individual conscript or reserve soldier in the case of military conflict, which is after all the principal aim of compulsory military training.

So, motivation here not only refers to the effectiveness of military instruction, as it has traditionally been understood to mean, but also to that which enables conscript to see themselves in the education values promoted in the conscription programme. In the latter, we are referring to those elements of military preparation that add to the conscript's professional development, not simply as a soldier, but as a professional or worker after they have returned to their civil career.

2. Military education and civil-military relations

The very youth of Taiwan's modern democratic state⁷ supposes that civil-military relations would need time for these relations to become truly cooperative in the sense that Taiwan's democracy supposes

⁷ For those reading this paper with little knowledge of Taiwan's history, the country's democracy began to *formally* emerge in the late 1980s with the first democratic election taking place in 1992. For more reading on the history of the democratic spirit in Taiwan, one might read works that track earlier developments, including, *Taiwan's 400-year history* (Su Beng, 2017);

this should be possible; that is, for civil society and the military to identify a path to optimal cooperation while permitting the full expression of their distinctive roles.

Taiwan's post-World War II history and its transformation, from one governed by martial law during nearly four decades to becoming one of the most exemplar demonstrations of how a democratic society and state should function, might logically suppose an *equivalent* transformation over time in its civil-military relations. This said, we know that the civil and military sectors must, in peace time, carry out their functions in *relative isolation* from one another (Gaub, 2016). This should not be surprising, in that the task of the military, in guaranteeing national security and defense, makes its isolation logical, in that this task involves the inculcation of the idea that military conflict must involve both a willingness to sacrifice life and the will to take the lives of others. This is to say, such cooperation during the national transformation of civil-military relations would not occur without there being some growing-pains, if the military's autonomy, in its capacity to defend the nation, with the possible consequence of the loss of life, must also suppose the political agency to govern the pace and orientation of its own development.

From this, we can take that there is an inherent risk in the military exercising of autonomy when it is not subject to constant vigilance, with respect to how the state oversees that the needs of society, and furthermore as to whether the preparedness and effectiveness of the military corresponds to the needs of the day. In these circumstances, it would seem easy for traditional ways of thinking to go unchecked, and for opportunities for new developments to go unnoticed. It is true of course that without traditional thinking and practices, that which is worth conserving is lost – as in, traditional attitudes suppose the preservation of tried-and-true ways of thinking and doing. Nevertheless, without openness to change, to the novel, to the new, traditional ways of thinking and acting can stifle the heart of that which makes its purpose just. The balance between the need to hold onto proven ways, and the need to be open and to make innovative adjustments, which factor in current and future realities, is not an easy balance to strike. This said, if current and future realities are to be analysed and responded to with the effectiveness of a society that has the capacity to freely choose its *own* destiny, then being open to testing the value of change against proven and older ways of thinking and acting becomes imperative – and especially when time is of the essence. This is a moment when the military cannot afford to barricade itself in the garrison of the mind. It needs to seek out the catalyst of this change and make it relevant to its own just purpose.

A new illustrated history of Taiwan (Wan-Yo Chou, 2020); and *Maritime Taiwan: Historical encounters with the East and the West* (Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, 2016). With this history, the nature of Taiwan's political experience from 1949 through to 1992 becomes more discernible.

In this discussion, it is the conscript in the new 12-month military training programme that, I argue, presents himself as the catalyst of change. For this opportunity to be seized, we need to get to know this the generation of conscripts, understand what they are capable of and what they have to offer that is unique to their generation. Only in this way, does it appear that the coordination of purpose, that needs to characterise cooperative relations between the civil and military sectors, can be achieved. And, of course, we all intuit that without this cooperation, there can be no cohesive social response in the event of a conflict. With this thinking in mind, the new conscription programme could be considered a laboratory for the exploration of how national unity of purpose might be better coordinated.

Conscription as a catalyst for change is not, despite the military's autonomy and historical agency in matters relating to its own activities, a phenomenon that falls uniquely within the domain of the military's interests and, therefore, uniquely within the military's realm of responsibility. The tenableness of the value of the performative paradox of civil-military relations (meaning both sectors enter openly into cooperative relations), depends on a mutual appreciation of the value of democracy by both civil and military sectors (see Donnithorne, 2013; Gaub, 2016). This is to say, if the democratic state of Taiwan responds to the challenges it faces by enhancing its democratic capabilities, then the relationship between the civil and military sectors will need to become more collaborative. Conversely, if the military wants to advance its capabilities in a manner than presumes greater implication from the civil sector, then both sectors will need to become more collaborative. The call for social innovation is both a mutual problem and of mutual benefit. In this paper, I am arguing that one of the challenges that the state now faces is *how* to implicate young people in the 12-month conscription programme, such that young people see conscription as a professional opportunity – to either go on and become a professional soldier or with respect to how the conscription experience might enhance their professional career in civil society. Democracy being at the base of the function of cooperative civil-military relations, it is logical that we should be required to understand what might motivate young conscripts to recognise and respond to this opportunity – to the conscription experience as both a training and educational experience.

With this question in mind, we should briefly look at how the typography of civil-military relations might be understood in Taiwan. As Gaub (2016, p. 9) describes the paradox of the civil-military relationship, while civil society, through its leadership, formally controls the military, the military informally, because it is armed, has the potential to overthrow its civilian overseers. As Gaub intimates, this relationship of civil leadership as the principal and the military as agent, produces an inherent tension in that the relationship cannot be one that permits too much interference from either party into the affairs of the other, or for that matter too much distance between them, where

each is working with too much independence such that there is no longer oversight on the part of state and/or the military, leaving either sector to follow its own political agenda. Therefore, the cooperation that is required, for both sectors to function in an effective collaboration, presumes respect for the need for transparency and openness in relation to their common goals. It should go without saying that this relationship will always depend on “the creation of a constructive and resilient relationship which cannot only adapt to changing conditions and overcome crises” (Gaub, 2016, p. 9), but what is more provide the security their collective mission supposes and hence meet the defense needs of the country. Such collaborative creativity requires “cooperation ... [to be exercised] in the strategic, organisational, operational and social domains”.

The military education of conscripts would therefore imply the need for new developments in all these four domains: strategic (for example, in terms of how conscript training must focus on producing a new kind of reserve soldier), organisational (for example, in terms of who teaches military education when this education needs to benefit the conscript’s civil and professional trajectory), operational (or example, in terms of the type of preparation and the agency to enable decision-making in conscripts) and social (for example, in terms of how the feedback loop would need to inform the social narrative that accompanies knowledge of the new 12-month conscription experience in the media and in society).

In relation to the last example, if the first intake of conscripts to the new 12-month programme is accompanied by the idea that the new conscription programme involves the implementation of an innovation, then for this innovation to succeed over time, the performance of the programme will need to be analysed with the intention of making improvements and further adapting it to both the needs of the military in the creation of the reserve component of the Armed Forces and also in terms of the positive takeaways that should be used to inform civil society and future conscripts as to the value and success of the programme.

This brings us to the question: *under what circumstances* would Taiwan’s civil-military relations need to change such that this change would implicate both civil and military sectors?

According to Gaub (2016),

Broadly speaking, civilians can cooperate constructively with the armed forces as an equal partner while keeping them in check (the normative ideal-type scenario); civilians can exert excessive control over the armed forces (a situation described as ‘constabulary control’); civilians and the military can coexist but the military has more power than the civilian sector (known as the ‘garrison state’); and lastly, the military can interfere in politics (‘the praetorian state’). (Luckham, 1971 & Perlmutter, 1969, cited in Gaub, 2016, p. 10).

To this, Gaub (2016) adds that in “the democratic context, only the first three of the above-mentioned paradigms are permissible” (p. 11).

According to such a typography of civil-military relations, we might conclude that the circumstances under which Taiwanese democratic institutions function, when assessing the problem of bringing about change, are those circumstances that are conditioned by the interests of “the normative ideal-type scenario” and the interests of the “garrison state”, with the former being the dominant scenario as the country moves towards exercising greater and greater confidence in its democratic system. The garrison state, as a description of civil-military relations, could be thought of as referring to those attitudes that are a product of times when the Armed Forces served as the party-army during the dictatorship and the rule of the Kuomintang (KMT), which is contrary to what it should currently be doing, which is serving the democratic state of Taiwan.⁸

3. Conscription, military training, military education.

With the return in Taiwan to a 12-month conscription programme, we need to look at what the conscription curriculum will look like. Of course, curriculum is not just about content, it is also about the pedagogy. We can assume, unless we hear otherwise, that the pedagogy used for the new 12-month conscription curriculum will involve strict training and the inculcation of discipline through the delivery of orders. On January 10, 2023, The MND released ‘Force Structure Adjustment of All-out Defense’, a document that explains, among other things, the necessity of the return to a 12-month programme and how this programme sits within the wider makeup and operations of the Armed Forces, both in the training scenario and in the event of a conflict.⁹ From this document, we understand that the new conscription curriculum will comprise “recruit training, specialty training, collective training, rotational training, and joint training” (MND, 2023, p. 11) – the previous conscription programme involved the first two of these (recruit training, specialty training) over a shorter period. What we understand about the content of this training is that it will draw on the approach used in US military training units. Recruit training will involve the acquisition of “military ethics and basic combat skills” (p. 11), specialty training involves “[a]dvanced weapon operational training, territory defense mission training, special training for protection of key infrastructure, civil

⁸ The question might remain as to how Taiwan might stand up to its cross-strait rival without its continued employment of a garrison state mentality.

⁹ In fairness to the authors of this document, this document is more a policy document that seeks to demonstrate how conscript training serves the Joint Force response. Yes, it briefly outlines the curriculum in terms of what they will be taught but that is all.

task defense mission, and joint exercises & coordinated defense mission training are included to enhance the strength of ... [military occupational specialties] training” (p. 15).

The important point to understand when examining the curriculum content is that, at every moment, it involves *training*. This is to say that training is the task of forming conscripts into soldiers, and by implication conscripts into reservists. The role of the Reserve Force will be to “[c]onduct hometown defense mission[s], support active (garrison defense) force operations, and [providing] disaster relief mission” (MND, 2023, p. 6). Notwithstanding the preciseness with which the above curriculum and mission is articulated, there are several issues relating to the semantics of the term *training* that merit further discussion.

Let’s begin with what we understand the term training to refer to here. Without understanding the context of a given training activity, which military service we are referring to or in which country this military service is provided, the term training is more ambiguous than many may realise. Generally speaking, military training literally refers to what we think it means – for example, teaching a practice by instructive demonstration, for example how to dismantle and reassemble a weapon; an action that needs to be learned and repeated by the conscript. In this context, instruction is producing an action that should correspond to an external ideal of what that action needs to look like, or how it needs to be performed. The only difference here between training an animal and training a soldier is the sophistication of the task. Of course the animal cannot perform the task that the soldier can. This said, a soldier is expected to perform the task in just the same manner that any other soldier can perform it, meaning all conscripts will need to perform the task with total fidelity to the ideal of how it should be performed. This is what makes a soldier dependable, efficient, and a good team-member. Key to understanding the semantic meaning of *training* is that training refers to the formation of a repeatable action, and just that. It does not refer to the formation of the mind of the same soldier, outside of what the discipline of the repeatable action requires of the mind – technical know-how. For example, situational awareness, as it might be required in a conflict, could not be taught merely by training?

This line of thought should by now be alluding to the idea that there is something missing – the soldier’s capacity to think for himself and to lead when necessary or when it is his role. This latter capacity cannot, as such, be trained. Attributes associated with the conscript needing to think for himself – for example, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking – need to be acquired through education, not training.

Further questions should follow. Is the trainer also playing the role of the educator? Are training activities and education activities delineated from one another? If training doubles for education, how do we test that education is taking place, if training *per se* is the default activity and objective of the

instruction? We could take it a step further and ask whether the result is the same when we compare the conscript who has been formed in the context of an ambiguous application of training activities (where training doubles for education) with the situation where training and education are sufficiently delineated such that the value of education can be tested on its own. Each service will be different with respect to how it treats the relative importance of military education – some won't give importance to it at all (Taiwan being an example of this approach), while others will give it paramount importance (for example, the US Armed Forces).

Then there is the context, where military training is not the default terminology (for example, in Sweden) and instead what we know as military training in Taiwan, is, in Sweden called military education (see Savcic, Theodoropoulos & Xefteris, 2023, among others). While this may be the situation in some countries, we should stick to original meanings, and especially in the case of the Taiwan Armed Forces, as the task of this paper is to argue for the addition of a new element to military preparation; one that can only be captured by what we mean by military education.

Returning to the question relating to the soldier's capacity to think for himself and to lead, we need to highlight that it is easier to bring clarity to the above ambiguity if we understand that in each case a distinctive pedagogy is required. Furthermore, the limits and possibilities of these distinctive pedagogies suppose the presence of two distinctive subjects – the conscript who is told *what* he needs to know and do (to perform the repeatable action), and the conscript who is taught in a manner that is conditioned by the teacher's knowledge of *how* a particular conscript learns – each conscript being a distinctive individual thinker with a distinctive disposition and temperament. While these dispositions and temperaments of these two subjects are distinctive, we are dealing with the same conscript – the conscript who is trained and who is also educated. These distinctive dispositions are fluid and organically connected. As Egan (1978) might say, there is no meaningful curriculum and therefore no education, if *what* is taught (the content) is not conditioned by an understanding of *how* this content should be taught (the method). General Martin E. Dempsey (Dempsey, 2012), of the US Army, takes this distinction a step further when he distinguishes military training from military education, saying that while the former concerns *what* needs to be taught, the latter concerns both the need to understand *how* and *why* any one thing should be taught in a particular way, and by inference *how* and *why* any one thing might be learned in a particular way.

It should be noted that in the latter case we have a conscript who is an individual who arrives in the Armed Forces as a military asset – meaning he has the intellectual capacity to think for himself. For this reason. As General Martin E. Dempsey (Dempsey, 2012) in his white paper *Joint Education*, encourages us to understand, this military asset (the individual who thinks) should be valued and developed because it is with engagement with the attributes of the mind that the individual becomes

a more complete soldier – one who is able to not only perform in a way that reflects the value of his training but also one who is able to both understand *how* to learn and *why* he should learn – attributes that are indispensable in the field of combat, as we are seeing in the war in Ukraine.

Another way of thinking whether military education needs to be introduced alongside military training as an essential component of the conscription curriculum would be to ask the question, is to teach the conscript *what* they need to know enough? If the conscript already has the capacity to understand *how* they best learn and question *why* it is better to think in one way rather than another about a particular aspect of curriculum content, why wouldn't the Armed Forces engage this military asset and put it to use, for example by developing conscript agency when contributing to decision-making etc.? Earlier, we highlighted that the 'Force Structure Adjustment of All-out Defense' states that conscripts will learn "military ethics". How will the problem of acquiring a moral code of military ethics be achieved without the conscript understanding combat situations in relation to their own experiences and perspectives? For military ethics to be applicable in the field, it would seem military education becomes indispensable.

But what is the situation in the Taiwan Armed Forces? Military education is taught nowhere in the Armed Forces in Taiwan except for in the military academies. This is to say, enlisted soldiers in the regular army, in the navy or air force are not provided with a military education, meaning for example they are not taught critical thinking. Military education not being necessary in the enlisted echelon of the Armed Forces, where there is a lot more time to develop such a feature of military preparation, it may seem illogical that the 12-month conscription programme should provide conscripts with a military education. However, this is just one point of view.

If it is already proven that there is enough time in the 12-month conscription programme to provide conscripts with a military education – as it is done in other countries (for example, Norway, Sweden, and Finland) – then we might have to look at the development of military education in Taiwan in a more aspirational way. For example, why shouldn't the new 12-month conscription programme be the incubator and experimental platform for how military education could be taught in the regular army and other enlisted services? There is evidently no flow-on effect from the military academies to the enlisted services. Military education could be trialled in the new conscription programme as an explorative pilot project with the aim of scaling up to incorporate military education in the enlisted services. It would seem that this development should be indispensable to the coordination of Taiwanese and foreign Armed Forces, should there be a military conflict that involved the incorporation of troops from allied democratic partners. At the very least, it would seem important that there be some planning around how to incorporate military education into the enlisted services, with an aspiration, a design and a timeline being essential initiatives. Another reason why this

initiative would seem important is that military education would bolster the development of leadership and facilitate the filling of gaps in the ranks that remain a concern.

An important point to be clear on is that while I am promoting the incorporation of military education into the 12-month conscription programme, I am not meaning to denigrate the value of military training *per se*. Basic military training, if it is relevant and authentic, is of course fundamental to the development of young conscripts and their warfighting capabilities. Apart from the practices of military training, there is value in the homogeneity produced by the wearing of uniforms, living in the same conditions, meeting the same physical and mental challenges together. These aspects of military training foster camaraderie, as well as building character and resilience (Ibrahim Mert, 2023, personal communication).

4. Generation Z and the value of promoting military education as a key aspect of conscription

On December 27, 2022, the Taiwan Government (Chung, 2022) announced that 12-months compulsory military service will resume in January 2024. This change in the law means that all men born after January 1st, 2005, will need to do 12 months of compulsory military service (MoND, 2023) from January 1st, 2024. The re-establishment of the 12-month conscription programme is characterised by the fact that the first intake of conscripts will be young men from the generation we call Generation Z, i.e., those born between 1997 and 2012 (Pew Research, 2019).

Generation Z, like any new generation, isn't a neutral social unit that should be thought of as replicating any previous generation. This generation's experience of the world is of course distinctive from any other. Like all other generations, Generation Z will be interpreting the political-economic circumstances in which it finds itself in, according to its own experience of these conditions, having constituted itself during its early years and youth in response to a distinctive educational experience. In Taiwan, like elsewhere, adolescence and emergence into adulthood have involved navigating education and work challenges during the additional menace and constraints of covid-19 and the precautionary lockdowns, increased global connectivity through social media, the need to interpret and navigate foreign manipulation in the gray zone, heightened cross-strait tensions, a heightened focus on Taiwan's pivotal position in the democratic world, heightened difficulties in securing manageable rentals, greater competition in the job market, a heavily weighted assessment driven education system, wages and salaries that are unable to keep up with the rising cost of living, among others (Brading, 2020). It needs to be said that the conditions in which this generation has grown up presents circumstances that are unique to this generation as an experience of individual growth. While older generations concentrate on their own challenges, the set of challenges that confronts

Generation Z is often in danger of going unnoticed. The extent to which Generation Z is different from previous generations, and therefore, possibly different in the way that it will respond to the new conscription programme should make it, as a social category, important to better understand.

Understanding the problem of optimizing the value of conscription is, as previously iterated, one that needs to satisfy both the needs of the military in its preparations for defense, and the needs of civil society with respect to what it is thought that these young men should achieve, both as combat capable soldiers but also as a cohort who should benefit from their training and contribute to civil interests of society – a benefit that should have the flow-on effect of creating greater social cohesion.¹⁰ With these dual aims in mind – the military and the civil – it is argued here that, if national unity requires social cohesion, this social cohesion cannot be achieved without our understanding the particular character and interests of Generation Z. In other words, we would do well to ask, *who is* this cohort of young Taiwanese men who will begin the conscription programme in January 2024?

Notwithstanding that military training is a legal obligation for every male in this age-group, it becomes relevant to examine this generation with respect to how their economic situation, political inclinations, character traits and cultural inclinations impact the way in which they are expected to implicate themselves in military training. Implicit to asking who this cohort of young men is, is the question concerning how Generation Z is likely to see compulsory military training, not from the point of view as to whether the Government took the right initiative in extending the period of training, but in relation to the value that these future conscripts expect their training to have for their professional careers in civil life. More specifically, I am interested *not* in the value of what could be, in Taiwan, called traditional military training but in the value of that aspect of military service that is called military education, i.e., that which will benefit their professional careers in the civil sector upon completion of their conscription. I believe the conscript's self-identification with this latter element of their conscription curriculum could become an important motivator when it comes to the willingness of conscripts in their commitment to compulsory military training. This is to say, if conscripts can see extra benefit coming from the conscription experience, on account of their identification with the value of the military education element that benefits their post-conscription careers, then they will not only transmit this positive value to the rest of society, but they also become better reserve soldiers, and therefore improve the quality of the Reserve Force.

¹⁰ Instead of conscription producing a disruptive discourse in civil society about the value of the military which fuels divisive political attitudes about the value of national security and defense, conscription could be creating greater social cohesion, not only in relation to issues of security and defense, but also in relation to other issues concerning Taiwan's future development.

While this interpretation of the value of conscription supposes cause to treat conscription as a positive opportunity for both the military and conscripts alike, the merit of such an outcome might logically rely upon the examination of a series of key factors, including: (1) the political-economic situation of young men participating in compulsory military training, (2) the implications of the state's commitment to increase conscript salaries, (3) Career disruption caused by the new 12-month conscription programme, (4) the transformation of compulsory training such that the new programme creates respect in both conscripts and society, (5) The value of military education during conscription, and (6) will Generation Z conscripts respond positively to military education?.

The political-economic situation of young men entering the new conscription programme. Taiwan today is often promoted as a small economy that punches significantly above its weight (see Bajpai, 2022). However, if we interpret the country's economic performance with an interest in solely highlighting the fiscal indicators, and not also Taiwan's economic performance as something that rewards the human resources that give these indicators their importance, then we might be mistaken in thinking that the economy is running on a system of self-pilot that does not require human implication. In these circumstances, how is it possible, for example, to accurately assess young people's concerns relating to their economic situation, and then to think of how these concerns condition their attitude towards compulsory military training? Reiterating, young people are not normally part of the narrative that explains Taiwan's economic stability, performance and development (Wu & Chen, 2017), or as local and international media is prone to promoting its star performance on account of the performance of its 10 largest companies.

Corresponding with the authors of 'Taiwan's Economic Miracle Long Gone: Chronicling a 20-Year Decline' (2017),¹¹ Lee Zong-rong, and Thung-Hong Lin, I developed the following overview of what would be currently concerning young people their economic situation (Thung-Hong Lin, 2023, personal communication). Firstly, while Taiwan's economic situation has improved as a result of the impact of the covid pandemic on China's economy, China being Taiwan's largest trading partner with around 25% being exported across Taiwan Strait (Taiwan Country Commercial Guide, 2022), with economic growth being at 2.32% for the last 12 months to the end of the third quarter in 2023 (FocusEconomics, 2023). Essentially this creates a degree of uncertainty for young people, as contractions are most likely to be felt by people entering the workforce and saving for an apartment etc. Hence Generation Z complains about high real estate prices and the increase in inflation, which is

¹¹ 'Unfinished miracle: Taiwan's economy and society in transition' (Lee & Lin, 2017) is the original article (only published in Traditional Chinese), to which the interview 'Taiwan's Economic Miracle Long Gone: Chronicling a 20-Year Decline' (Wu & Chen, 2017) refers.

currently running at 3.05% (Trading Economics, 2023), which comparatively is not that bad in that the OECD global rate for 2023 (OECD Data, 2023), for example, is 6%. According to Thung-Hong Lin, income equality has worsened, which again is likely to affect more those entering the workforce.

Such economic account falls short of providing an accurate assessment, as the picture continues to remain unclear, especially when we compare these figures with what we find internationally in countries that might be similarly ranked. This being the case, we need to look at a series of less visible factors including social welfare (Huang & Ku, 2011), the cultural values of work and efficiency (Belote, 2006), and the cultural pressure to begin a family (Raymo, Park, Xie & Yeung, 2015). While many countries in the OECD might score more poorly, for example in unemployment index, being unemployed in Taiwan has more severe consequences: if you don't work, you will live on the street, unless there is someone in the family to take you in. This is to say, young people in Taiwan are beginning their careers without the safety-net of social welfare that societies with perhaps weaker economies might enjoy. This situation will create internal pressure for many because there is no leeway to fail. In relation to the second factor – the cultural values of work and efficiency – if the price of real estate is higher than it was in real terms for the previous generation, those in Generation Z will, by comparison, be in same situation of being able to afford to buy an apartment significantly later than their predecessors, with the internal pressure again mounting as real estate prices go up. This situation will be exacerbated by the fact that this generation is more “money driven” and “ambitious” (Henderson, 2023), “self-driven” (De Witte, 2022), with an acumen for understanding financial challenges (The Annie E Casey Foundation, 2023) than the previous generation. The last factor – cultural pressure to begin a family – logically falls behind work and efficiency in the hierarchy of importance, with respect to which needs to be addressed first. It's not surprising that the Taiwanese Government is very worried about the trending drop in the fertility rate (National Development Council, 2023)¹² – an issue that all parties recognise as they canvas voters for the January 13, 2024, national election.

The implications of the state's commitment to increase conscript salaries. A key reason for why it is thought that the new conscription programme will get greater support, from conscripts, than the current 4-month programme is that the starting salary has been significantly increased from NT\$6,510 to NT\$26,307 (which includes NT\$5,987 per month for insurance coverage and food) (see MND, 2023).¹³ While this increase is a positive initiative, especially given the discussion in the last

¹² The total fertility rate in Taiwan is currently 0.87 (National Development Council, 2023).

¹³ The average monthly salary in Taiwan is NT\$53,729.53 (CEIC, 2023), making the conscript's monthly salary half the national average monthly salary.

section, it needs to be supported by improvements in the delivery of both military training and, in the opinion of the author, the introduction of military education. If the new programme does not live up to conscript and civil expectations (see, for example, *Taipei Times*, 2023a, 2023b), the significance of this salary increase will depreciate such that it no longer appears so significant, which will return civil-military relations to their current base line – something nobody wants! To reiterate, in the event of the Armed Forces not delivering a more meaningful conscription experience, the focus will return to the conscript's absence from civil life and their struggle to save to buy an apartment while fighting father time to begin having a family in rhythm with traditional cultural expectations.

Career disruption caused by the new 12-month conscription programme. It is questionable as to whether the new conscription programme will inevitably cause disruption to the studies and careers of the young men involved. If the quality of the 12-month conscription programme is a significant improvement on the delivery of the 4-month programme, and the new programme addresses the needs of conscripts to make use of their conscription experience when returning to university study or their professional careers, then the new programme shouldn't be thought of as a disruption to the individual's study and professional trajectory. Instead, the reality should be the contrary. Compulsory military training could instead be thought of as providing added value – new human capital (Toronto, 2015). At the time of writing, the complaint that the 12-month programme is going to disrupt the study experience or professional careers of individual conscripts would seem to be a projection of past of complaints about how time was wasted during the 4-month programme. While the value of the new programme has not been disproven, then I would argue that we should take an impartial approach in our assessment of its worth, and allow the Armed Forces to initiate and implement the innovation that the new programme supposes it should be.

It would be amiss to not add that the MND and the National Security Council have thought about this issue: the coordination of conscription and study. When the Force Structure Adjustment of All-out Defense document was released on January 10, 2023, mention is made of the work being done to align conscription and study. Later during the year, the Ministry of Education introduced the 3 + 1 programme, which has the purpose of supporting the Government's extension of the conscription period by shortening the time it takes to complete an undergraduate degree from 4 to 3 years – where 4 years of study are compressed into 3 years by raising the number of credits a student can earn in a semester. We should add that this approach to dovetailing conscription and university study optional. At this stage it would seem there isn't a lot to be gained from speculating how this programme will impact young men's motivation towards attending and implicating themselves in the 12-months' conscription programme. We will need to see how the increased credits that can be

earned in a semester impacts the quality of university education; what adjustments are made both to teaching pedagogies and learning under these conditions.

The transformation of compulsory military training such that the new programme creates respect in both conscripts and society. It is on record that the 4-month program created a negative societal and social media discourse (Sun & Hetherington, 2023), a discourse that no doubt conditions the thinking of future conscripts about the value of conscription *per se*. However, the 12-month programme is a new programme and has to be treated as an opportunity to bring the military and civil sectors closer together with the intention of creating social unison around (1) how society can play the most effective role in strengthening Taiwan's Armed Forces and (2) how the MND leads the country's military preparation such that it optimises its use of the pre-existing value of conscript human capital, including analytic skills, critical thinking, problem-solving and leadership skills acquired prior to conscription.

Thought of in this way, the new programme needs to be treated as an innovation and, as such, as a programme that can be continually improved – something that it not achieved without failure and the learnings that arise from these failures. While it might be antithetical for the Armed Forces' pedagogical thinking to anticipate the value of failure, in innovation there is no learning or long-term improvement in performance without failure (Schrage, 2014). Implementing the new programme therefore needs to risk failure for its initial settings to be sharpened and made more relevant, authentic and practical. It is what is learned from these failures that will ensure that ongoing progress is made. It is, as a result of this progress, that it becomes possible to re-narrate the conscription experience and change societal discourse on the importance of conscription. This interpretation of conscription as an innovation should be a basic aspiration of the implementation of the new programme. Such a development would provide the positive groundwork in case it was deemed necessary to mandate a longer conscription period in the future.¹⁴

The value of military education during conscription. Military training necessarily occurs in isolation from all other activities of democratic life. The consequences of MND's role in guaranteeing the security and defense of society and the nation at large are potentially grave, meaning the Ministry must bear, in the case of conflict, the possible loss of life to the Armed Forces and the nation, and to minimize the latter, its soldiers must be prepared to kill. The imperative that this preparation should

¹⁴ South Korea requires a minimum commitment of 18 months and up to 2 years, depending on the service. Singapore requires a commitment of 2 years.

be carried out in isolation does not however presume a disconnection from civil society on all levels. Plainly, if both sectors – civil and military – were to work independently from one another, they would be unlikely to cooperate in those areas that create understanding, trust and unison in purpose (see Gaub, 2016). One of the areas in which the military and civil sectors should further build a connection is education.¹⁵

If we want young men to accept to do compulsory military training, with the spirit of those who we would liken to the spirit of the soldier who freely volunteered to join the regular forces, then conscripts would need to *see themselves in* that which the Armed Forces provided as military education. One way of achieving this result would be to create a conscription programme that enables conscripts to *identify with* the substance of this form of education. Elaborating the point, if we can find the practical means of connecting the educational aspect of conscription to the substance of the individual's experience of education outside of the services, then we could anticipate that conscripts would be more inclined to commit to conscription with a volition similar to that demonstrated by enlisting soldiers, as conscription would offer added value to their career development. This result may not be achieved by all conscripts and furthermore, with some young men still yet to identify their career path.

In saying this, conscription also becomes a space in which there can be a wider reflection by the conscript on what their career path could be. However, this is only likely if there is this congruence in education across sectors – military and civil – with respect to how aptitudes in critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and leadership are further developed during conscription. The reason why critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and leadership development will produce the impetus to reflect has not merely to do with the fact that these activities employ our intellectual faculties. The production of this impetus also has to do with the fact that military training and military education, when done in the same setting, create a multidisciplinary learning environment that rounds out the conscripts' understanding of the role defense and security play in guaranteeing peace as Taiwan pursues its place in and engagement with the international community. This is a situation that new conscripts should intuit: the need to see themselves in the substance of the education that they are offered. This should not be surprising as it is a truism, even if from generation to generation, we have the tendency to have a blind spot to this fact (see Arendt, 1954). To support the interest and passion of young people in their careers and futures, we should ask, what

¹⁵ We can presume this connection already exists for reason that political warfare is taught in universities and secondary schools by teachers from the civil sector.

should this educational aspect of compulsory military training – this military education – look like? I will get to this question later in Section 6.

Will Generation Z conscripts respond positively to military education? As General Martin E. Dempsey (Dempsey, 2012), says in his white paper on Joint Education, “[e]nsuring relevancy in our delivery of Joint education requires us to fundamentally understand the experiences and perspectives of our students” (p. 4) – joint education here referring to “the cognitive capability to understand, receive, and clearly express intent, to take decisive initiative within intent, accept prudent risk, and build trust within the force” (p. 4); none of which can be achieved without critical thinking; critical thinking being that which enables the development of individual agency that facilitates decision-making and the capacity to assume responsibility. This need to fundamentally understand the experiences and perspectives of who, in this instance are conscripts, may seem antithetical to the ethos military training but this is exactly the point: military education is not military training. Military education requires engagement with the subjectivity of the individual conscript, something that is fundamental if we want critical thinking to benefit the decision-making during warfighting and the exercising of leadership among the less experienced soldiers.

The inclusion of military education in the new conscription programme will make conscripts (and young men who are soon to be conscripts) feel that they are recognised as whole individuals; that the experience of being formed as a soldier is one that engages not just what is trainable in them but also that which makes them individual; their capacity to think, contribute to new understanding, lead, problem-solve according to what experience has taught them. This being the case, conscripts are likely to respond more positively to a conscription programme that includes military education than one that does not include military education.

5. Generation Z: What they bring to the table

Over the next pages, I am going to make the argument for why the Armed Forces should engage with the experiences and perspectives of conscripts. However, first I need to reiterate the point that while military education is understood to have its place in officer training in other militaries – that is in the training of soldiers who were recruited or who volunteered for the Armed Forces – Taiwan does not include this form of preparation in the training of its regulars. Nevertheless, I would argue that the circumstances are such that the MND would do well to consider, as have other ministries of defence

(see, for example, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Israel and Switzerland, among others),¹⁶ the value of developing soldier decision-making capabilities and in particular leadership as a form of learning that should take place earlier in the soldier's professional trajectory – something that has long been established that can be achieved over a shorter period (see, for example, Mert & Şen, 2021).¹⁷ This is to say, a portion of the conscription programme could be allocated to military education, meaning the soldier's formation would involve earlier involvement in leadership development. Why not react now, while there is still time? As you will see in the following paragraphs, the Ministry's response to the geopolitical situation that Taiwan finds itself in and the innovation that this response involves may be much easier to implement than might initially be thought to be the case.

Conscripts from Generation Z might be the most self-driven, entrepreneurial and individually capable generation that the military has ever trained. Look at their values. According to sociologists who make it their business to understand this generation, Generation Z is characterised by the importance given to the following values “pragmatism”, “relevance”, “authenticity”, “flexibility”, and “non-hierarchical leadership” (De Witte, 2022). What is noticeable about these values is that not only do the first four speak to expectations that Generation Z conscripts are likely to have around how military training should perform in relation to what its mission should be – the preparation of soldiers with warfighting capabilities – but that all five values highlight what might make these conscripts an important military asset.

For instance, individuals from this generation are smart enough to know that long chains-of-command are not *pragmatic* in a conflict (Chien, 2023), and that decision-making on the ground by reservists is going to be indispensable to their role, indispensable to being effective; meaning they would understand they would need to learn how to contribute to decision-making from the beginning. Why? Because during a battle, things don't go to plan – soldiers need to think for themselves. Thinking for oneself can be the difference between life and death, and even then, there needs to be luck to survive. Generation Z's pragmatism should be the first sign that these conscripts are already thinking about what does and doesn't work, and therefore how they can implicate themselves more deeply in the preparation that their conscription experience supposes.

Likewise, this generation will be questioning the use of such practices as bayonet drills for both their limited utility and their value as a form of exercise. Conscripts will already understand that the formation of warfighting capacities will need to be achieved through forms of preparation that are of greater *relevance*. Conscripts will be bringing a critical faculty that presumes they have the capacity to

¹⁶ Sourced from ChatGPT, and fact-checked.

¹⁷ Mert and Şen's (2021) article describes, for instance, military education and the formation of Turkish officers during WWI; something that was achieved in 6 months.

put everything under review. This should not surprise anyone, least of all the Armed Forces, as this generation will have been preparing itself for conscription through, among other things, consuming YouTube videos on the war in Ukraine. This is not to say that their understanding of relevance as a value comes simply from videos that transmit current conflict. The importance given to conscript relevance has to do with critical engagement with the need for efficiency in struggles in the civil context that require resilience (Belote, 2006), which is to say there is a backstory and process of trial and error in the civil ambit that will serve them well in the military environment.

Key to the feedback from Captain Jimmy Chien's (Chien, 2023) research is the complaint that practical training cannot be conducted, as if it were, in the form of "a rehearsal for a play, rather than preparation for a military operation"; which is to say, it has to be conducted with the greatest possible *authenticity*. For example, marksmanship needs to be practiced using real bullets. Yes, the use of expensive weapons in practice involves the use of expensive ammunition and therefore, such an expense should be avoided if possible. However, there is no replacing live fire exercise: a soldier's confidence will be intrinsically tied to the confidence he has in his weapon (SAAB, 2022).¹⁸

Continuing, the Armed Forces can count on Generation Z's *flexibility* in that I would guess *any* approach to training would be embraced as long as it could be thought of as being of *pragmatic*, *relevant* and *authentic* value. To illustrate the point, because of the lack of housing, unaffordable rental prices, and low minimum wages and low salaries, some young people find themselves having to work in two or three jobs, as they struggle to develop their careers in an environment that is largely unsympathetic to their circumstances as a generation (Wu & Chen, 2017). It is through being pragmatic, relevant and authentic in this most challenging of situations in the civil world that this generation demonstrates its capacity to be flexible. If this value is recognised, it becomes an expression of character that will serve the Armed Forces too, not just the individual in civil life.

Finally, *non-hierarchical leadership*. Non-hierarchical leadership would seem to put Generation Z at odds with the way discipline is applied in the military and yet this value is crucial to the formation of the rounded well-formed individual who performs equally well both in the military and civil sectors. How on earth, you might ask, could non-hierarchical leadership work in a conscription environment? Simple. Military education presumes an environment of its own, one where, for instance, if the military is going to further develop the existing critical thinking of this generation of conscripts, it will need to adopt, in that context, a horizontal hierarchy for teaching and learning to work. This is to say, for leadership to be effective in teaching critical thinking, it will need to be non-hierarchical because

¹⁸ If it is thought that there are not the funds for live ammunition, then the funds need to be found. How does it look that the 14th strongest economy in the world cannot afford ammunition for training its troops, while at the time asking for foreign support?

only non-leadership actively listens in this context. There is nothing new here (see, for example, Bjornestad, Olson, & Weidauer, 2021). Understanding the value of active listening in the military context is merely a case of delineating military *education* from military *training* with a view to understanding what the requirements of learning are in military education – a point General Martin E. Dempsey (Dempsey, 2012) also makes. Understanding the learning outcome – for example, for critical thinking – leads to the intuition that the pedagogy should be that of the active listener. Without Socrates the teacher becoming a listener, the problem at hand would never have been uncovered and likewise his followers would never have become critical thinkers.

Another way to assess the positive relevance of Generation Z would be to begin by acknowledging that conscription is compulsory and, in as much as this generation of soldiers will be privileging exercising the values of pragmatism, relevance, authenticity, and flexibility, they will be prepared to accept the pedagogical style (hierarchical leadership) that comes with military training. This is to say that the need for order, respect, loyalty etc., that should come when soldiers are commanded to assimilate, follow, learn, etc., will be accepted as relevant, as long as the training activities themselves are practical and authentic. In other words, improvements in training practices will enable soldiers to accept that training needs to be conducted in the interests of its mission, through the creation of a soldier with traditional and core military values.

Reiterating, if each component of the conscription experience is treated according to the nature of how it needs to be engaged, then conscripts will act according to the requirements of each experience and curate their expectations to the nature of what is possible in each activity – be it training or education – and therefore what is appropriate. This delineation of military *training* and military *education* is merely a more advanced version of what the secondary school student experiences when the school curriculum compels them to do both scholastic subjects and physical education, or scholastic subjects and art, and performance. The secondary school student knows very well that physical education, for instance, demands that one give attention to its particular requirements for developing skills and knowledge pertaining to that domain of learning, just as they know very well that a scholastic subject has its own particular requirements if one is to fulfil the learning outcomes of whatever scholastic course it is. Young people, in being subjected to the requirements of the education system, have already embedded this capacity for flexibility. They have already proved themselves to be flexible. They are savvy. They can separate ideas and practices, and act according to the requirements of each without putting them in contest. As such, military *training* and military *education* can be run alongside each other as separate elements of military preparation, as pedagogies and as separate learning experiences. This is not to say that these pedagogies and forms of learning are alien to one another – they continue to have the same mission. They both aim to

optimise the individual soldier's potential; something neither can do alone if security and defence not only requires that the individual conscript act, as a soldier needs to act, but also as one who can think for himself.

6. Military education, purpose and urgency

We should first reiterate what was said earlier, that while military education in Taiwan is not a feature of the training of enlisted soldiers, a form of training that affords much more time than the 12-month conscription programme prescribes, this latter scenario nevertheless does not preclude the provision of military education. Once the need for both additional leadership in the Reserve Force and more generally the need for conscripts to fully engage with the new conscription programme are established, the strategic benefits can be clearly marked out, making the incorporation of military education into the new 12-month conscription programme something that is achievable. With innovation, it is not a question of whether something can be done, but a question of initiating implementation irrespective of the fact that the first version of what needs to be done remains as yet something less than perfect. There is no ideal place to start. More important is that one starts, implementing the first version of something that can always be improved. I will speak in more detail about the process of innovation in the next section.

An obstacle to taking a leap when initiating a new project in Taiwan is time. Taiwan is an idyllic place with a vibrant people and culture, with hard won but beautiful qualities, and yet just when it seems important to take a risk, it would seem equally easy to neglect the responsibility the sociocultural and political elements that have people thinking and acting together.

There will be various ways of examining how we should understand the question that *the current situation calls for relative urgency* when it comes to the development of human resources in the Armed Forces. The succinct way to address this question is to critically examine where the emphasis on deterrence is being placed and what is more, whether there is an imbalance that should be addressed. External on-the-ground criticism has clearly identified that the greater emphasis, in defense and security, has gone on weapons (Taipei Times, 2023). While weapons in the form of land-to-sea, land-to-air and air-to-air armaments are self-evidently an important feature of an effective first response, this logically cannot be done while neglecting the development of human resources, and yet this seems to be the case. It is understandable that weapons should get such emphasis because they have the capacity, if used effectively, to make a statement that gives cause to bring the conflict to a halt. However, the battle itself may be more difficult than might be commonly thought. If there exists strategic planning – and we assume there is – in anticipation that such a conflict might last

longer than an exchange of missiles such that it goes two or three weeks deep, then the *force multiplier* of the reserve brigades (in both number and quality) will be required. At this point, we are going to learn how prepared the Reserve Force is, especially if Taiwan's relatively small professional contingent has already suffered significant losses. Cutting to the chase, if we have an ideal of how the Reserve Force should look, in terms of capability, in this moment, then we need to reverse engineer this ideal and examine how far away the performance of conscription and reserve training currently are from meeting this ideal. It is in this examination that we will see the current imbalance between the number of weapons used, and the numbers and quality of men and women that will be needed, and what needs to be done in order to capacitate both the conscription programme and reserve training programme.

Moving to the question of what the content of a military education in the new conscription programme should look like, obviously this can't be a case of needing to reinvent the wheel. The design of any military education component should draw on proven programmes that effectively function in other military services; preferably from programmes of military partners.¹⁹ There are two issues here, one being the lack of clarity with which military education is spoken about in overseas military services, and the other being the need to make any military education component of conscription as culturally consistent as can possibly be done with Taiwan's unique special character.

In relation to the first, whether military education is taught to professional soldiers or conscripts is not the question, as military education is often spoken about as if it refers to military training (for example, as is done in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Israel and Switzerland, among others).²⁰ Thinking positively about this paradox, we should understand that military training and military education are organically related. In the warfighting situation, the outcomes of such training and education – and the human capital acquired in these two fields of learning – need to seamlessly feed into the same action, for the action itself to be effective; conflict being reliant, by definition, on instinct when there isn't time to think. This is to say, if military education is thought of in some services in the manner that we understand military training to be thought of in others, then instead of thinking that these services are theoretically confused about the purpose of their programme, we might benefit more from understanding how this fused learning is delineated in each individual cultural context. If we can't identify with a particular cultural example – the closest examples in Asia might be how military education is thought of and taught in South Korea and in Singapore – we would perhaps be best to engage with what we think is the sharpest articulation of what military education is, say for example,

¹⁹ So that in a conflict situation, they are as close as possible in military preparedness to speaking the same language.

²⁰ Sourced from ChatGPT, and fact-checked.

how military education is understood by the US Armed Forces, among others.²¹ This is only one example of how the problem might be approached.

With respect to the second issue that was previously raised – that of Taiwan’s cultural specificity – the task would seem to be to identify the *pedagogies* and *learning outcomes* that would make military education performative during conscription, by reading a set of commonly understood components of military education against (1), the values, characteristics and interests of Generation Z, and (2), the aspirations the MND has for its Reserve Force. For example, if it is generally understood that the exercises in problem-solving, adaptability, effective decision-making, risk assessment and mitigation, conflict resolution, effective communication, strategic planning, and continuous learning and improvement are those elements of learning that facilitate the development of critical thinking, then these elements should be read both against the values of pragmatism, relevance, authenticity, flexibility, and non-hierarchical leadership (De Witte, 2022) and furthermore, against the ideal that the Ministry has for what an optimally performing Reserve Force looks like (at a definable milestone in the conflict). In saying this, I don’t think, as a foreigner, I should be explaining to Taiwanese what its cultural specificity is. This is something that Taiwanese know better than anyone else.²² I would expect that a unique pedagogical style and set of learning outcomes would be the product of this above work, as it might be understood according to the criteria Taiwanese have for defining its own culture.

Putting aside the results that might be achieved in applying such a process of investigation as that outlined above, re the need to identify what a military education curriculum might look like as a key component of the Taiwan 12-month conscription programme, there are other points that should be highlighted.

Central to the discussion in this paper is the illusion that military education supposes an experience of *knowledge creation* that will benefit conscripts’ further studies and professional careers after they complete their conscription. This knowledge creation – something that occurs through engagement with the conscript curriculum content that serves both the further development of critical thinking and that which contributes to the development of leadership qualities – produces, on account of the social features of teacher/conscript relations during conscription, an experience of *knowledge transformation*. The importance of knowledge transformation in this context is that it benefits both

²¹ I think it is relevant to name the US Armed Forces here, as there are currently 200 US military trainers in Taiwan, assisting Taiwanese forces during training and recommending improvements. The implication is that these instructors will observe the new conscription programme in action. If their brief is to provide advice on improvements, then entering this conversation with the aspiration of introducing a more military education-oriented approach would be an opportunity not to be missed. (See <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4866003>)

²² On the question of identifying appropriate culturally specific pedagogies and teachers, I can add that the University of National Defense, Taipei, is well endowed with excellent teaching staff in the area of critical thinking – teachers who are evidently well capable of leading the implementation of military education in the new conscription programme.

the military and civil stakeholders. The military benefits from how military education transforms the conscript into a soldier who is someone who can contribute more as a reserve on account of his greater knowledge of the architecture of the battlefield, while the civil sector benefits because of how the knowledge transformation, in impacting the conscript's post-conscription studies and professional career, it disperses a new narrative across all sectors of society relating to the value added benefits of conscription.²³

To explain in greater detail, we might look at the relationship between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation* and how military education might enable the utility of these two concepts of motivation in the conscript's experience, through first understanding their role in the cyclic relationship and transformation that *explicit* and *tacit knowledge* naturally undergo. Intrinsic motivation in the context of military education refers to what the conscript brings to conscription that comes from their prior education and prior life experience. I would argue that, if there are to be benefits in military education, then these motivations need to be observed, listened to and understood if the military educator is to further enable the faculty for critical thinking that the conscript already has. This is the point that General Martin E. Dempsey (Dempsey, 2012) makes when he highlights the value of what is not known about the "experiences and perspectives" (p. 4) of what, in this context, we understand to be conscripts.

In further enabling the conscript's faculty for critical thinking, through appealing to the latter's existing causes for intrinsic motivation, the military educator facilitates the transformation of the conscript's tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge, by socially interacting with the conscript in relation to their intrinsic motivations (see Nonaka & Konno, 1998). How? Through bringing out the conscript's voice – through getting them to think in relation to the tasks at hand experiences in such a way that requires them to be critical of what they already know. Why does the military educator do this? Because to make decisions during a conflict might require one to go against everything one thought one already knew.

What about the conscripts' extrinsic motivations? Unless the conscript was to see himself as lacking in certain values (for example, courage) prior to conscription, that they could develop during conscription, then it might be very difficult to identify what their extrinsic motivations should be. What is clear is that the Government's provision of a longer and more meaningful conscription, and its commitment to raising conscripts' salaries, could not, by definition, provide cause for extrinsic motivations. Maybe they will ensure there is less resistance but the provision of the minimum, in

²³ How knowledge creation and knowledge transformation are thought of here, draws on Nonaka and Konno's (1998) work on the Japanese concept of *Ba*, meaning place and the cyclic relationship of tacit and explicit knowledge. Place in the context of this discussion refers to the space in which military education occurs.

terms of quality of delivery and payment these changes, cannot be considered equivalent to the cause for extrinsic motivation. There needs to be something more, and especially when conscription itself supposes the development of a capacity *to take life*, that, by implication supposes one needs *to risk one's own life*. The cause for extrinsic motivation needs to complement the significance of this sacrifice of commitment to what the rest of society regards as a duty to prepare to risk life. For there to be an extrinsic motivation, something needs to be given back in return for what the conscript himself gives up and is prepared to give up! As Major General Cyril Lloyd (Lloyd, 1948) of the British Army put it, “[i]n return for giving conscription to the armed forces, the nation has more or less exacted a promise that the year of National Service will be of positive gain to the individual” (p. 26).²⁴ The question is, what to do that would execute this promise and return something to conscripts for what they have gifted? As this is a decision that supposes the need for cultural specificity, the best I could do here is to suggest what might be done. What appears certain, given the evidence provided by military observers and research of overseas services is that military education during conscription has the potential – if well designed and well implemented – could achieve the execution of this promise that there should be some gesture of reciprocity. It may be difficult to see the intuitive purpose of such a transaction because the value of that which truly gives cause for extrinsic motivation has not only been lost to compulsory military service in Taiwan but also in many other countries.

Before I finish this aspect of my discussion, I want to return to the situation where there is no intrinsic motivation – that which the new conscript brings to conscription in the form of experience and perspectives. In this situation, why should the conscript be motivated? If conscripts do not receive a military education, we would be left to conclude that if they have understood the questions of *how* and *why* in relation to how these questions should be asked in the military ambit, then this cannot be because of their conscription experience but must signify an acquisition of knowledge that occurred despite the lack of a military education. There are always a few self-learners who continue to learn despite their circumstances. This said, shouldn't the military aspire to fostering the development of more self-learners, more life-long learners? Wouldn't this become force multiplier both in the event of conflict and to the benefit of civil-military relations?

²⁴ Major General Cyril Lloyd was, at the time of publication, Director, Army Education, British War Office (Major General Cyril Lloyd, 1948).

7. Innovation and enterprise

As has been signalled throughout the discussion, the 12-month conscription programme needs to be thought of as an innovation. Why? Although the Government's explanation is that there needs to be longer conscription period for reason of the growing military threat experienced in the Taiwan Strait, the re-establishment of the 12-month programme furthermore needs to be understood for its potential to address a range of associated issues, which if addressed, have the capacity to transform the typography of civil-military relations in Taiwan. I listed these issues in my introduction as including: (1) an opportunity to win over the implication of all young conscripts, (2) an opportunity to offer conscripts something that will benefit their careers after conscription, (3) an opportunity to change the societal narrative on the value of conscription, (4) an opportunity to create greater cooperation in civil-military relations, (5) an opportunity to treat the new 12-month conscription programme as an innovation, and (6) an opportunity for the new conscription programme to enhance the capacitation of the warfighting capabilities of the Reserve Force. All these opportunities are organically related features of what should comprise a single project – they need to be taken together and worked on ecologically such that their interests are governed by the purpose of an integrated design. In my discussion, I have engaged these issues through privileging the value of the idea that conscription can benefit conscripts' studies and careers after they have completed the conscription programme. Now I am going to provide a little more detail on how conscription could be thought of as an innovation.

My framing of the problematic that this discussion addresses the potential for the relations between the conscript in the new 12-month conscription programme, and the military officer who teaches military education to achieve a shift in civil-military relations towards greater cooperation between these sectors. To this end, I believe it is much more useful to think of the new conscription programme as an open and social innovation.

Open innovation and social innovation refer to two distinctive forms of innovation that are normally spoken about independently of one another. Here, I am bringing them together because they offer new ways of understanding the problem of the civil and military sectors needing to be more cooperative. Evidently the researcher cannot implement this innovation – he can only invite the relevant actors and others of mutual interest into the discussion.

Briefly, *open innovation* refers to recognition that responsibility for and effectiveness with respect to change cannot rely solely on an endogenous approach to innovation (see, Chesbrough, 2003) – where, for example, the military would be too self-reliant and therefore exclusionary of knowledge and actors who would not traditionally be called upon from the outside to affect the best solution. Open innovation when introducing military education to the subscription programme should therefore refer

to the use of an exogenous approach, where institution openly collaborates with new actors who traditionally might have otherwise been one's competitors.²⁵ If one fails to do this, when the best solution can only be found through the incorporation of outside knowledge and new actors, then the process involves a closed innovation process.

How do we diagnose whether the MND is using an open or close system of innovation when addressing defense and security challenges concerning the need for a greater capacity for military deterrence? Currently, we can observe that the MND is pursuing a more open approach to innovation when attempting to accelerate the acquisition of armaments: Taiwanese manufacturers of armaments are entering into collaborative international manufacturing relations, that are, by definition, open and exogenous in nature. On the other hand, while the development of human resources in the Armed Forces is becoming more exogenous, this development is way behind the progress being made in the joint-manufacturing of armaments. It is true that there are 200 US observers on the ground in Taiwan observing exercises etc. (Everington, 2023), and that this collaboration involves an open and exogenous approach. However, this innovation is only meaningful if the MND acts positively in response to the US observer reports.

The danger of not acting positively to implement change is that such an approach beds in a state of mental atrophy because the refusal to respond exogenously in an open domain will inevitably produce a culture of cognitive dissonance, where procrastination relating to the need to act is obfuscated, often leading to blame and responsibility for not taking the initiative being telegraphed to others (see Syed, 2016). The challenge for any military in the latter instance, like any institution whose status relies upon conservation of tradition, is that institutional practices will not be rejuvenated if those with oversight exclude relevant new knowledge and collaboration with actors who offer the greatest expertise in initiating and implementing change.

Supposing the need to treat the problematic of our discussion as one that requires both open and social innovation, furthermore, supposes the need for a description of their relationship. Open innovation as described above, identifies the ingredients that would be necessary if there is an aspiration to achieve significant change; that is, new knowledge and new actors, both of which must be brought in from the outside. I would understand that this new knowledge and these new actors would have neutral status with respect to their agency to implement change until they are bedded into the socio-political fabric of the institution. The task of social innovation would occur on several levels, as the process itself would have to include all actors who are operative in the aspects of the

²⁵ Of course, such collaboration excludes engagement with one's military rivals.

opportunity (see earlier list in this section) where the new conscription programme supposes to be an innovation.

Succinctly, the nature of the task of *social innovation* is one of listening and clarification, from which new actions proceed.²⁶ This means where there is a resistance to collaboration in the problematic discussed in this paper, there would need to be honest discussion concerning how to better fulfil the common mission that the civil and military sectors share; something that would need to be conditioned by the greater willingness of each actor to contribute to the process. Crucial to understanding social innovation in this context is to understand that it is something to be achieved over time, through employment of a process that progresses in iterations, meaning obstacles to greater connectivity and trust are to be expected.

As stated earlier, it is important to test the value of the idea in the domain of its application – both in conscription and reserve training – and to begin this process by acknowledging where the model is imperfect and where it can be improved. It is only through testing its value in the context of its application that its weaknesses can be understood. Of course, if military education is being implemented for the first time, problems of critical thinking, as understood in the paper, will require exploration of the activities that produce useful learning. Military teachers will need to be prepared to elicit critical thinking from conscripts through listening and facilitating greater understanding by making critical thinking relevant to the task of military training and the goal of becoming a competent conscript and reserve. In accordance with this line of thinking, military education could be introduced gradually. Furthermore, it could be used as a means for exploring the presence of leadership qualities in conscripts, with a view to creating training exercises that foster the development of leadership attributes in the Reserve Force.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations comprise a series of action points and suggestions for future research. Because I have engaged a broad ecology of actors, interests and related problems that might not normally be engaged in relation to such a research topic, I have attempted to only highlight the most important features of this ecology. My aim, in developing my explanation, has been to enable an organic engagement with the role conscription plays in defense and security and, by association, in civil-military relations. These highlighted features are organized according to a series of key

²⁶ My understanding of social innovation is primarily informed by Laville, J., Klein, J., and Moulaert, F. (2014), who demonstrate the clearest understanding of the role of expertise in enabling bottom-up agency in addressing social problems in large communities.

understandings that are implicit to that which should characterise a closer examination of this problematic, including: if you want peace, you must first prepare for war; Taiwan's right and agency to decide; that social cohesion in peace and war presumes open and social cooperation; that Generation Z has an intrinsic value that is unique to this cohort of conscripts, which must therefore be thought of as adding *new* value; Generation Z is a military asset if its character can be understood; the imperative of decision-making and leadership development from the lowest level; and civil-military relations as an open and social innovation process. These are the broad brushstrokes that formed my impetus to address the problematic described in this report. The following are my recommendations:

Military education during conscription. Military education is already recognised as indispensable human capital in the development of human resources in the military (Dempsey, 2012; Mert & Şen, 2021; Strand, 2023; Toronto, 2015, among others) – something that can be seen in the inclusion of military education in professional armed forces across the globe.²⁷ Failure to include military education in the new 12-month conscription programme would be a missed-opportunity for the Ministry of National Defense, in that this oversight would be tantamount to the latter not leveraging the already existing asset of critical thinking capabilities that university and secondary school students have and not further developing these capabilities such that they be curated to form of a military asset. This said, it is not for me to prescribe what would be the appropriate approach to take when introducing military education to conscription. Those involved in conscription design will need to act in the country's best interests. However, if there is no action, the danger is that Taiwan's major democratic partner will prescribe new initiatives that will involve even more discomfort, leaving Taiwan little scope to exercise its remaining agency. Here is the crux of the issue: if the task of survival does not exhaust its own capacity for agency, then a country's fate will be decided according to the symmetrical relationship it entertains with the power of the partner actor that will act in its own interests (see conclusion for more detail). I would recommend that the most valuable research that might be done in relation to the need to incorporate military education into conscription should involve a triangulated study in three areas of research: (1) the history of military education as conducted during conscription, (2) the latest curriculum developments in military education curriculum design, and (3) autobiographies and biographies of military leaders who have had an influence on military education.²⁸ While the value of the first two fields of literature may be obvious, the value of the latter may be less so. The contribution of the latter has to do with the value that military leaders bring understanding the intricacies of the decision-making processes relating to the

²⁷ Including in the PLA.

²⁸ This methodological framework draws on Joseph Schumpeter's ideas about how innovation should be researched (see Godin, 2008).

reasons why the inclusion of military education in conscription is so important. While this third field of literature could also be extended to include those who contributed to the development of military education in the professional armed forces, it should be noted that the value of this methodology is intrinsically tied to its delimitation to research done in just the three aforementioned fields.

Young men entering conscription are already decision-makers. This fact needs to be recognised and seen as a military asset to be leveraged to the benefit of the mission. Military education, through leadership development and participation in decision-making, is the substance that enables asymmetric warfare to be effective. The lower in the hierarchy that effective decisions can be made, the more enabled will be the autonomy with which asymmetric operations are accomplished. Taiwanese conscripts-to-be are watching the conflict in the Ukraine theatre and see that, in order to profit from surprise, the chain of command needs to have as few hierarchical links as possible. In reality, these chains of command operate across horizontal platforms. It won't help morale if reservists learn that their leadership capabilities are not recognised such that they cannot contribute to problem-solving in the field when the situation requires it. Therefore leadership development should begin as early as possible – i.e., during conscription.

The promise of a positive gain to the individual conscript needs to be made. Reiterating what was said earlier, Major General Cyril Lloyd of the British Army highlights an important point when he states that “[i]n return for *giving* conscription to the armed forces, the nation has more or less exacted a *promise* that the year of National Service *will be of positive gain to the individual*” (Lloyd, 1948, p, 26, italics added). The conscript, in any service in any country in any 12-month conscription programme, is *giving* a year of his life! Something needs to be *given back* to this individual. Furthermore *the promise to give back*, needs to be made upfront. I have proposed in this paper that military education could function as this *positive gain*: that if the conscript could deepen their appreciation of the value of critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving in the context of their military education during conscription, then they would have gained something that would add value upon their return to their studies or work. Some research needs to be done in this area – research that examines the cultural specificities of such a transaction, and how the promise of a positive gain to the individual benefits that individual's implication in both their studies and their professional career, not forgetting the positive gain this would be to the Reserve Force.

Exogenous and endogenous innovation. The typography of civil-military relations in Taiwan could be investigated with respect to how the “garrison state” mentality is influential in inhibiting more normative relations where “civilians can cooperate constructively with the armed forces as an equal partner while keeping them in check ... [in what is called] the normative ideal-type scenario” (Luckham, 1971 & Perlmutter, 1969, cited in Gaub, 2016, p. 10). One way of analysing this influence

would be to examine the reasons why the MND and the Armed Forces have become self-reliant in their over-privileging endogenous innovation, something that has an asymmetric cost in the form of the missed added value that their institutions would otherwise get from being more open and exogenous. The fact that there is already an interest in moving towards international manufacturing collaborations with partners in the military industry is a good thing (Liu, 2023b). However, when it comes to the capacity-building during conscription, in the layered defense that supports asymmetric engagement, one would hope that the MND assumes an open and exogenous attitude when engaging of US observer recommendations (see Everington, 2023; Liu, 2023a), and that military education is not only embraced in the Taiwan enlisted services but also in the conscription programme.²⁹ This development would support the expectations of the US with respect to the need to “reform and integrate the reserve forces” (Chin, 2023). One of the implications of a shift from being closed and endogenous to becoming more open and exogenous is that both the Ministry and the Armed Forces will need to become more experimental, which of course supposes that the capacity to be exogenous would need to be built. These developments and others presume the goal of attaining an effective shift in civil-military relations through “enhancing ... civilian control of its military” (Congress.gov, 2023; Liu, 2023b).

Time and urgency. Time is of the essence, given the potential for conflict in the Taiwan Strait. How can we know whether the Ministry of National Defense is acting with absolute urgency with respect to its need to establish effective deterrence such that a conflict in the Taiwan Strait can be avoided? The continued influence of a garrison state mentality, in the military sector, supposes a level of autonomy that would survive if the relevant State organs were not to do due diligence with respect to exercising responsibility on behalf of civil society for oversight of the former sector. It is not a question of the Ministry consciously slowing the process but there being no oversight that would insist on optimal performance – if there were, we would see it. The question is, how should we measure any lapse in effort to be urgent? What are the criteria according to which such a measurement could be made. Such criteria could be politically and culturally specific, although if Taiwan continues to value its democratic values of freedom, transparency and accountability, among others, it would seem that such an analysis should not be exclusive of engagement with the work being done in civil-military relations. The aim of such an analysis could be to identify where Taiwan would sit in a civil-military cooperation index table, with the purpose of understanding what issues needed to be addressed and

²⁹ It is worth noting that the US House and Senate armed services committees have proposed to put the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), for the 2024 fiscal year, before lawmakers in the two chambers of the US Congress in which it promotes “improving Taiwan’s joint warfare capabilities, and enhancing the nation’s professional military education” (Chin, 2023). Enhancing joint warfare capabilities obviously has implications for the role the Reserve Force plays and therefore the education that would need to occur during conscription.

how. Such an analysis, while drawing on current research civil-military relations, such as that of Kuehn and Croissant (2023), could triangulate analyses done on the following three questions: How often and for how long have problems relating to the minimums, concerning preparedness, gone unaddressed? What is the distance between foreign expectations with respect to defence preparedness and internal achievement? And how would the analyses of the above two questions enable greater cooperation between the civil and military sectors?

Ministry of Education. Any shift in civil-military relations towards greater cooperation supposes the development of a collaborative development of relations between the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Education, concerning a series of activities organically connected to the effectiveness of military education during subscription. Central to this collaboration should be how critical thinking is thought of during *pre-conscription education*, *military education during conscription* and *post-conscription professional and study enhancement*, and how these phases in the conscript's education serve the goal of military training and the aspiration the Ministry of National Defense has for the optimal performance of the Reserve Force in the event of a conflict. Such an enterprise requires the relevant actors in the civil and military sectors to coordinate their work so that this continuity of development can be achieved.

This cooperation might require the Ministry of Education, for example, to examine whether critical thinking is being optimally developed in the current regime of content delivery in secondary schools and universities, where education is assessment-driven (Yunshiu Chen, 2023, personal communication; Yu-chu Yeh, 2023, personal communication) at the expense of critical thinking. Such a recalibration of assessment driven education and critical thinking would seemingly need to be problematized in relation to how critical thinking proceeded on the basis of lower-level achievements, in, for example, civics education.³⁰ In relation to this question, it would seem poignant that research should be done on how professional development could be done with teachers who resist teaching critical thinking, on account of a preference for adhering to the delivery timetable for assessment. One might ask, for instance, is this latter approach assisting the Ministry's aspirations to improve its international ranking and hence does this approach attract more international students? It is thought here that the answer to both would be negative.

With respect to the implementation of military education – the middle phase in this history of the development of critical thinking – research could initially be done on how well the new 12-month conscription programme serves the ideal the Ministry of National Defense has for the optimal

³⁰ "Taiwanese [8 grade] students ranked first in civic knowledge in the 2022 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), according to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)" (Hsu & Hsiao, 2023).

preparedness of the Reserve Force. This would require the development and articulation of an ideal, in terms of preparedness of the reservist, as something that could be reverse-engineered and tested during reserve training. This research should explore how much the reservist's added value, in terms of human capital, is a product of professional development that has occurred during the reservist's career in the civil sector, and whether this development was adequately developed during conscription. Effective professional development is likely to identify the lack of military education during conscription, in that the critical thinking evident during reserve training could only be a consequence of education prior to conscription and learning that took place after conscription. If there had been military education during conscription, critical thinking and leadership development would have been enhanced, producing better results and greater preparedness.

With respect to conscripts' post-conscription higher education and professional experience, research could be done outside the reserve training experience to find out in what ways Generation Z conscripts benefitted their careers through participating in compulsory military training. If the Generation Z values of "pragmatism", "relevance", "authenticity", "flexibility", and "non-hierarchical leadership" (De Witte, 2022) are applied to meeting the challenges faced in work and life, then the impact of these will be able to be seen, as a development that has occurred despite conscription not involving a military education rather than because of it. Such an outcome supposes a missed opportunity for the Ministry of National Defense in enhancing the growth of these young men who did conscription, given that the experience of military education should have enhanced the individual's performance in work and life. Such an outcome should, despite it occurring in the civil sector, mean that there will be more quality reservists to choose from when forming the brigades that will make up the Reserve Forces. As Gomez (2023) puts it: "Taiwan desperately needs more capable reservists who can support the active-duty force and prevent military collapse as the active-duty force takes casualties". Simply, everything should be done to make this possible!

Kuma Academy.³¹ Kuma Academy is a non-profit civil defense organization that seeks, according to its Wikipedia page, "to decentralize civil defense" (Kuma Academy, 2023b). If the argument in this discussion is to provide the impetus for the transformation of civil-military relations in Taiwan, then such a transformation supposes the question, what can be learned from Kuma Academy's approach to training and education that would benefit the development of military education in the new 12-month conscription programme. More explicitly, greater cooperation between the civil and military sectors suggests that there should be a readiness in both Kuma Academy and the Ministry of National Defense to openly discuss how each organization would mutually benefit from the work of the other. If we

³¹ See Kuma Academy (2023a).

want to understand, for example, how military education needs to be combined with military training, then it would seem that the current 3000-person waiting list for Kuma Academy courses (Kuma Academy, 2023a) would suggest the relevancy and authenticity of Kuma Academy's programme has something to share with those who are going to manage the new conscription programme, which is yet to be proven for its popularity. Only through such a discussion can we prove the presence of coherence of social cohesion between the civil and military sectors. The development of such relations is an inevitable part of the innovation process that requires a commitment to exogenous thinking and an interest in supporting the common mission.

Political warfare.³² The curriculum design for military education in the new 12-month conscription programme would need to be read against the curriculum employed in political warfare education, so that, if military education is introduced to conscription, their distinctive curriculum purposes could be kept separate. In doing this, it might be found that a positive evaluation of military education in the new conscription programme would provide a mediation tool to assess the continued use or refocusing of political warfare education. Of course, it doesn't make sense to keep these two approaches completely separate in that political warfare educators might have a role to play in teaching critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and facilitating leadership development in the new 12-month conscription programme. This is to say, while these curricula should be kept separate this need not necessarily be the case with the teaching personnel. Education researchers might have something to contribute to this discussion, as educators in the secondary school and university sectors not only teach political warfare but also teach critical thinking related activities that could be included in military education in the new conscription programme. Lastly, I would reiterate that if the Ministry of National Defense is comfortable with teachers in the civil sector teaching political warfare, the Ministry could draw on this same teaching resource to teach military education in the conscription programme. Such an arrangement would add to the trust-building process that should come with the development of the new conscription programme.

Conclusion

The biggest problem making the argument for the need for military education as something that needs to happen during conscription – and not just during professional military training – is that this proposition upsets the traditional notion of where education should be done in the Taiwanese military. This is another way of saying that the biggest problem with embracing the need for military education during conscription is that it will be too difficult to implement change when change is

³² See Mariah Thornton's work on political warfare (Thornton, 2023).

needed. Excuses will be given, for this atrophy, that go along the following lines: that conscripts are too inexperienced or young for military education, that this structural change will be too disruptive to implement, that the military does not have the educators to teach critical thinking, that critical thinking and leadership development will be a challenge to facilitate the development of when conducted in parallel to military training, and yet numerous military systems in less urgency situations than that which Taiwan finds itself in have in both the past and present found ways to introduce military education and make it meaningful, not to say a contributing factor to the formation of reservists who have become both able life-long-learners and warfighting combatants. If we get passed the above listed examples of cognitive dissonance or excuses for not introducing military education, and understand that we need to react, then there are simply two issues to address.

One of these issues has to do with the idea that defense and security in Taiwan concerns the need for *internal optimal unity* between the civil and military sectors, which is to say without the optimal cooperation involving these two sectors, we can never say that we have done everything to ensure that we can deter a conflict, and failing this to survive the conflict. In other words, without optimal cooperation there will not be the social cohesion that is likely be the difference between an effective defense and a dysfunctional defense. We only need look at the situation in Ukraine to understand how military defense depends on social cohesion. As Kuma Academy (2023), put it on their website, “[t]he weakness and inaction of the rear is the greatest betrayal of the front-line soldiers”; the rear being understood here as all those who are positioned behind the professionally trained soldiers, meaning, among others, the reservists who received their training during conscription. Of course, there are numerous other layers to an effective defense.³³ However, the key here is that there is, (1) *adequate preparation* – something the military can provide if there is military education during conscription – and (2), that this adequate preparation has such *relevance* and *authenticity* that it can create social cohesion in the form of relations with both the civil community and with front-line soldiers.

The second issue has to do with the need for *external optimal unity* between all those involved internally with Taiwan’s deterrence and those foreign actors who are supporting Taiwan’s capacity to deter conflict. It would be timely to mention here that the US Congress has just passed the “National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024, which includes stipulations authorizing the US secretary of defense to establish a comprehensive training program for Taiwan” (Liu, 2023b). The NDAA bill (Congress.gov, 2023) will shortly be rubber-stamped by President Biden and passed into law. There are several significant statements in this bill that concern the challenge of ensuring Taiwan’s external optimal unity with the US. Essentially, these statements stipulate the influence the US should

³³ The MND names these layers as including the Active Force, Garrison Defense Force, Reserve Force and Civil Defense (MND, 2023).

have on the capacitation of Taiwan's military as a consequence of the US's capacity to provide international support and lead the defense of democratic world in the event of a conflict. For example, the "bill authorizes the [S]ecretary of [D]efense to set up a "comprehensive training, advising and institutional capacity-building program" (Congress.gov, 2023) for Taiwan's military" (Liu, 2023b). Here, comprehensive training could be taken to simply mean military training, in the sense that military training is understood in Taiwan today, but this is an American policy document and therefore the term training will refer to the meaning this terminology has in American military culture, which we might assume also refers to military education. The more important terminology here, however, is capacity building. The question might be, is a reservist a better soldier with or without a military education? This question would appear to be answered by the following statement. "The NDAA stipulates that the US should continue to support the development of "capable, ready and modern defense forces necessary for Taiwan to maintain sufficient defensive capabilities"" (Congress.gov, 2023, cited in Liu, 2023). Here the capacity to effectively defend Taiwan depends on having "modern defense forces". As such, the original question begets another: would military training during conscription, as it is recently understood in Taiwan, *be sufficient* for the Reserve Force, that conscription has created, to subsequently be called a modern defense force? It would seem this question can only be addressed if the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense understands what particular compromise will be necessary, in relation to its "comprehensive training, ... and institutional capacity-building program" (Congress.gov, 2023), for collaboration with its major democratic partner to work effectively. In order to have the layered defense that Taiwan needs – something, it is argued here that it can't have without military education at the lowest level (conscription) – Taiwan needs, in the understanding of the US Congress (Congress.gov, 2023), to "improve" ... "civilian control of the military". What will be achieved in this area will have to do with agreement between the civil and military sectors as to what their common mission is, and *how* and *why* they should cooperate to make this enterprise achievable.

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