

3. Foreign Education

3.1 Types of Foreign Education

Foreign education is an overarching term, but there is no central management of foreign education in the ROC military. Rather, Taiwan has three major avenues to send military officers and cadets overseas for education: four-year undergraduate study, full-time graduate study at a civilian institution, and foreign professional military education (PME).

The ROC Military, Naval and Air Force Academies sends cadets or midshipmen to their American counterpart institutions, that is, to the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, or the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In general, the U.S. federal academies allow three Taiwanese students every four years, so that at any one time, there should be three cadets at one academy, each in a different year group. In addition, each of these ROC academies sponsors one student a year at two U.S. non-federal military schools, the Virginia Military Academy in Lexington, Virginia, and The Citadel, in Charleston, South Carolina. Also, the ROC Army sends two students per year to Norwich University, another state-run military school in Northfield, Vermont.⁹⁰ These three institutions, although run along military lines and offering the possibility of U.S. military commissions to U.S. citizens through the Reserve Officer Training Corps, are not part of the U.S. military in the same way as the federal military academies. (Because of these schools' non-federal nature, the opportunities for ROC cadets to study were not cut off during the period of stagnant military relations in the 1970s through the 90s.)

The cadet exchange program is an important part of Taiwan's overseas military education presence. In 2006, ten ROC cadets graduated from US schools. A Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) press release described the program thusly:

The military education exchanges offer a small, handpicked number of Taiwan cadets the opportunity to experience American military training firsthand and before taking up their commissions in Taiwan. Military education ties between the

⁹⁰ Subject (AFO54), interview with author, April 27, 2004.

two countries have intensified over the past several years.”⁹¹

An ROC officer described the program as “purely exchange” with the possibility that “in the future to have better friendly relations with American officers.”⁹²

A second route to overseas study is through Full-time Advanced Studies. Full-time Advanced Studies is government sponsorship to attend school without any other duties, includes both domestic and international options, and can be used to pursue master’s or doctoral degrees, or occasionally non-degree research opportunities at think tanks. Overseas study is only permitted if there is no comparable domestic degree-granting program, a policy which has reduced the number of overseas opportunities in recent years as the number and quality of domestic degree-granting programs has increased. Another recent change in personnel policy has been a strict interpretation about the academic specialty that officer students could pursue and its relation to their career fields. In other words, a maintenance officer must study a graduate subject related to maintenance, and likewise there is a focus on the utility of an educational program. As a personnel officer put it, “this is the spirit of ‘*wei yong er xun*.’ (為用而訓)”⁹³ Advanced study is based strictly on a military need for someone with a certain qualification. The purpose of study is therefore to fill a specific job, such as to become an undergraduate instructor at an academy, or become a professor at a graduate institution such as the National Defense University. Doctorates may be required for some academic positions, or to lead high-level analytical efforts at the MND-level.⁹⁴

Full-Time Advanced Studies opportunities are proportionately fewer than overseas military training or PME. A personnel officer estimated that perhaps 200 to 300 personnel receive training at a U.S. military base or school per year, but only about ten to twenty students go abroad for civilian graduate study per year, a difference due to the relatively high cost of graduate study.⁹⁵

The third option is foreign PME. Foreign professional military education options are varied and include schools in South Korea and some Latin American allies of Taiwan, although the bulk of the opportunities continue to be in the U.S. Because Taiwan purchases

⁹¹ Taipei Economic & Cultural Representative Office, “Taiwan cadets to graduate from elite American military schools, May 26, 2006,” <http://www.tecro.org/dev/contents/leads.php?ID=138>.

⁹² Subject (AFO54).

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

U.S. PME in a way analogous to purchasing weapons, through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program, some opportunities blur the line between PME and full-time academic study. Study at the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology, a U.S.-military established and funded graduate school, is not normally considered PME within the U.S. system, although it is purchased by Taiwan in the same way as study at Air Command & Staff College or Air War College. Students earn a master's degree within specified courses of study, but the funding method is through Taiwan's FMS funds instead of Full-Time Academic Studies.⁹⁶

The following table shows the PME options the U.S. makes available to Taiwan, as well as the number of planned attendance for each for fiscal years 2007 through 2009:

Table 2: Projections by Fiscal Year of U.S. PME Opportunities for Taiwan Officers

<u>SCHOOL</u>	Budget Year FY07	Planning Year FY08	Next Planning Year FY09
National Defense University <i>(Either the National War College or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces)</i>	1	1	1
APCSS (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies)	2~4	2~4	2~4
Army War College	1	1	1
Naval Command College	1	1	1
Air War College	1	1	1
Intermediate Level Education (Army Command & General Staff College)	1	1	1
Naval Staff College 5 ½ month course	1	1	1
Naval Staff College 10 month course	1	1	1
Air Command & Staff College	1	1	1
Marine Corps Command & Staff College	1	1	1
Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare Course	1	1	1

3.2 The Role of Education in Officer Development

Overall, what benefits does education for military officers confer? First, there is the benefit to abstract thinking. As one interviewee, speaking generally about education for military officers, put it:

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Education teaches you how to think, how to solve problems. The content ... it's a means for you to learn the way to think, whether you study chemistry, mathematics or sociology. It's a different content but it's basically about humanity and how you think. That training is more important than content. If you have the ability to think, to solve problem with right attitude, I think that's more important than whether you study chemistry or computers or whatever.⁹⁷

Writing about the ROC's need for military education, Liu Kuang-hua observes that education will help Taiwan cope with defense change:

It is generally agreed among defense professionals that the real basis for military buildup and the quality combat strength is not based on advanced weapon systems, but on defense talents. It is especially true for the ROC as the country is facing great changes in national security policies, defense systems, and force structures. Insofar as the ROC is concerned, military education that cultivates quality defense professionals is the infrastructure on which the ROC military downsizing policy is implemented and new generation force is built.⁹⁸

Liu therefore suggests that education will enable aspects of Taiwan's military reform, including downsizing and the building of the next-generation force. Liu continues with the assertion that education enables more than the accumulation of knowledge, but also develops analytical skill.

The purpose of military education is not only focused on cultivating talents of military skills and professional knowledge, but also on fostering in them the abilities of thinking, judgment, and implementation.⁹⁹

In other words, education is a key to personnel development. Indeed, the question is not that the ROC military rhetorically denies the importance of education. For instance, per the *2004 National Defense Report*, the ROC military has revised educational practices "to enhance the quality of its human resources, and to support defense modernization initiatives."¹⁰⁰ Necessary ingredients to reengineering the military educational system include defining "the

⁹⁷ Subject (AO61).

⁹⁸ Kuang-Hua Liu, "Tentative Proposals for the Reform of Strategic Education in the NDU, ROC," *Taiwan Defense Affairs* 5, No. 2 (Winter 2004/05): 6-7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ MND, 203.

war in the future, the requirements of human resources, the recruitment & retention strategies, and the professional development system.”¹⁰¹ The policy also makes explicit the importance placed on the relationship between military technology and education: “(t)he major thrust for the force development of the ROC Armed Forces is to effectively exploit and integrate the advantages of modern technologies—information and electronic technologies in particular.”¹⁰²

On the role of officers and education, the report says:

Since the officers of the ROC Armed Forces play a key role in operational command, morale maintenance, and unit training, the acquisition of high-quality junior officers is a task of very high priority. Therefore, the success of military academies, which aims at the cultivation of volunteer junior officers, will have long-term effects on the quality of the officer corps as well as the success of the future force development of the ROC Armed Forces.¹⁰³

Regarding continuing education, the report says:

Both officers and noncommissioned officers are encouraged to pursue master's degrees, but the officer corps is the primary target to be encouraged. Academic degrees will be awarded by military education institutions, civilian education institutions in a strategic partnership capacity with military education institutions, and the National Open University. There are 2,859 officers who have earned their master's degrees as yet.¹⁰⁴

However, the optimism of the report is not necessarily shared by all observers. With regards to the implementation of the advance degree program, Chung notes that “overworked officers, with virtually little or no time to spare for study, are finding it difficult to graduate from their degree programs due to frequent absences from the class ... [t]he aim of the ROCAF having more than half of its commissioned officers qualified with a Master’s degree, like those in world-class air forces elsewhere in the world is still something of a pipe dream.”¹⁰⁵ As will be shown, several interviewees are skeptical about the institutional value that military places on education.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 204.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 208.

¹⁰⁵ Cheng, 158.

Similarly, an American author contends against some of the assumptions behind the ROC's military education philosophy. Robert Vitas, comparing the value of civilian education to PME in the U.S. military education system, argues against a technological thrust in favor of humanities-focused education.

Professional military education—from West Point to the senior schools and war colleges—is not sufficient to develop officers cognitively able to deal with these new nonmilitary tasks without compromising military professionalism. The depth of insight and inquiry needed is best found in civilian liberal arts graduate education, in contrast to technical and scientific graduate degrees. Although traditionalists may contend that graduate school detracts from professionalism, such study enhances the profession and enables the officer to better carry out long-term military obligations.¹⁰⁶

Vitas also argues that part-time study is inferior to full-time graduate study at a civilian university because “[r]esearch-oriented civilian graduate education engenders a flexibility in thought supported by three pillars,” namely, a technical component that teaches scientific and management skills, a critical component that instills judgment about priorities and trade-offs, and an ability to assess the values and attitudes their nation wants them to hold.¹⁰⁷ He also addresses the same question at the heart of Taiwan's “*wei yong er xun*” policy, that of the specific relationship between approved, funded education and its potential use. Although American military education policy in general mirrors the Taiwanese policy, he notes that some “criticize the stipulation that civilian liberal arts graduate education be geared toward military requirements, claiming that policy overlooks the program's long-term value.”¹⁰⁸

The military's interests are served when the intellectual level of individual officers is raised. Such observers assert that civilian graduate education should be an integral part of officer education for all who academically qualify ... The officer returning to duty following graduate study brings with him a healthy skepticism of the norms and expectations of the military profession. This new attitude can make the military more progressive, dynamic and acceptable to the society it serves.

¹⁰⁶ Robert A. Vitas, “Civilian Graduate Education and the Professional Officer,” *Military Review* (Vol. 79, Issue 3, May/June 1999), 47.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

Officers with graduate liberal arts degrees tend to be less absolutist, less likely to have a myopic view of politics, have a deeper understanding of ends-means relationships in policy issues, be more open to society's socio-political values, have higher professional ideals and feel a greater commitment to their military careers.¹⁰⁹

Although he is writing about U.S. officers, the same observations could apply to Taiwanese military officers, whether they study in domestic or foreign civilian institutions; it stands to reason that officers returning to the relatively conservative culture of the military from a more liberal academic environment might have changed or strengthened attitudes towards democratization, openness, flexibility, and the like. At the very least, this argues for the benefits of some officers receiving civilian-based education (which Taiwan already does provide). This argument goes a little further, however, suggesting there are benefits to an “education for education’s sake” as well:

[T]here is also a need for depth of knowledge that can be gained only through advanced, research-oriented study. This is partially provided by the war colleges, senior schools and other institutions of professional military education (PME). But such education is not fully able to prepare an officer for his responsibilities as he advances in rank ... At best, such study is perceived as "nice to have," but not relevant to the combat arms. This attitude, though, ignores the benefits to both soldier and service.¹¹⁰

Overall, there are intellectual benefits for the individual in education. Another argument is that raising education levels increases the institutional level of professionalism. Writing in 2001, ROC General Sun Chin-ming addresses the question of the professionalism of the ROC officer corps. First, he notes discrepancies in the way the professionalism of the officer corps is viewed from inside and outside the ROC military. He cites a 1999 US Department of Defense report to the US Congress that asserts “the extent of professionalized troops in the ROC armed forces is pretty high,” but counters that the Chief of the General Staff at the time suggested that military efforts towards professionalism had been insufficient.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 52-53.

¹¹¹ Chin-ming Sun, “Taiwan: Toward a Higher Degree of Military Professionalism,” in *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Approaches*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2001), 61.

Gen Sun then points out that learning from foreigners has long been part of the history of ROC Armed Forces education. He points to the rebuilding period after the Nationalists' retreat to Taiwan.

To learn from the strengths of others, we even recruited retired Japanese and German generals and officers to introduce their military training lessons and teach us the operation of exercises. Later came the massive wave of U.S. military advisers. This group provided comprehensive and effective assistance to our armed forces in organizational establishment, development of doctrines, training, procurement of weapons and equipment, as well as recruitment.¹¹²

The modern ROC military therefore has a long and strong tradition of learning from foreign militaries, and the military exchange programs with the U.S. and other countries fall within this norm.

Sun also points out that a lack of professional knowledge has hurt the ROC military before. When the ROC retreated to Taiwan, many in the officer corps were college students who had been hastily trained, and “were deficient either in basic military knowledge or in specialized knowledge.”¹¹³ These under-educated officers “knew only how to follow orders and routine procedures in conducting combat missions and battlefield techniques” and “[a]s for tactics and strategy, they were almost blank.”¹¹⁴

Sun cites another obstacle to military professionalism: rigid thinking. Tight political control and oversight during the Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo periods magnified the social isolation and basic conservative outlook of the military, preventing engagement with outside forces, suggesting a basic contradiction or ambivalence to learning from foreigners, as well as a hostility to free intellectual inquiry:

[M]ilitary personnel dared not have any close contact with foreign military personnel for they could be labeled as conspirators. Most of the time, not even a newspaper or periodical was allowed to be read. Military education was based on rigid and doctrinaire materials.¹¹⁵

Officers were judged on their ability to memorize and recite lengthy passages from works

¹¹² Ibid., 64.

¹¹³ Ibid., 66.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 67.

such as Gen Chiang Wei-kuo's *The Field Strategy* and "guidelines for the ROC Armed Forces Commanders," and the results were a closed military society, rigid indoctrination and a lack of creativity.¹¹⁶

These arguments of course echo the conclusions of Swaine and others: that the ROC military is culturally conservative, resists change, hinders creativity and eschews flexibility. This makes it all the more interesting that Sun's recommendations to improve military professionalism include both improving education and adopting U.S. models. His first recommendation directly addresses the question of democratization: "Strengthen the democratic education of our personnel. Military officers in particular need to recognize the true meaning of democracy."¹¹⁷ He also explicitly calls for learning from the United States:

As everyone knows, the creed of the U.S. armed forces is devotion to country, duty and honor. Duty and honor do not change with time. Personnel with a sense of duty and honor will be able to fully exploit their potential and in turn fulfill their responsibilities ... We should cultivate the sense of honor and duty among our cadres and soldiers.¹¹⁸

Finally, he also calls for flexibility and less reliance on formality, arguing for a radical cultural change: "Overcome all the obstacles to professionalism by giving up undue formality and abandoning the practice of using doctrinaire materials. We need less stress on slogans and more on reality."¹¹⁹

Even more recently, Taiwan defense expert Michael M. Tsai also succinctly linked democratization and military education, writing that "the military education system must attach greater importance to professionalization, democratization, and life-long learning."¹²⁰ He credits the change in the political atmosphere with an improvement in Taiwan's international situation:

Democratization has altered the domestic political atmosphere and helped to break through the barriers separating Taiwan from the rest of the world. We should take this excellent opportunity to push the reformation of military education on to a new

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 73.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 74.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹²⁰ Michael M. Tsai, "The Importance of Military Education," *Taiwan Defense Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Summer 2003), 3.

and higher plane. (3)

Many of Gen Sun's recommendations to improve Taiwanese professionalism, including further democratization, developing greater flexibility and professionalism, and learning from the U.S, and Tsai's praise of democratization all fit into the overall framework of military reform elaborated above. If Sun and others call for more learning from the U.S., and the U.S. provides the bulk of foreign PME available to ROC officers, how does the U.S. approach to PME differ from the characteristics Sun puts forth?

In one important aspect, U.S. PME has for years stressed the concept of "jointness," an area that Swaine, Chase and others highlighted as a problem area for Taiwan's defense reforms. As is well known, the United States began to emphasize the importance of joint operations in the early 1980s, after the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act, which among many measures strengthening "jointness" in the U.S. military, tackled "the balance between service and joint educational needs" by introducing "Joint Specialty Officer (JSO) education, joint officer development goals, joint educational accreditation, and increased interaction among service colleges."¹²¹ Evaluating the effects of joint education, William Steele and Robert Kupiszewski note that:

One important reason for creating a joint culture is to shape new attitudes and perspectives ... Seminar discussions and college exercises now benefit from the ideas and opinions of officers of all services as well as the expertise of civilians and international officers. This has changed the way graduates think about the profession of arms, their sister services, and joint warfare.¹²²

Although conservatism and inertia probably characterize all militaries to some extent, and the U.S. is not immune to these forces, the U.S. PME philosophy seeks to emphasize innovation and change. In 2001, the then-Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Henry H. Shelton, argued that education was the key to military "transformation":

[T]ransformation is first and foremost an intellectual exercise, requiring the brightest minds actively brightest minds actively engaged in taking our armed forces to new and higher levels of effectiveness. Therefore, the road to transformation begins with a strong program of education and leader

¹²¹ William M. Steele and Robert Kupiszewski, "Joint Education: Where Do We Go From Here?" *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 3 (Winter 1993-1994), 64.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 66.

development. This will provide the underpinning for experimentation with new ideas, equipment, and doctrine that will lead to a transformed US military, fully prepared for emerging threats.¹²³

Shelton also notes that the effects of PME are meant to radiate out from individuals who receive the education: “PME programs spark creative, adaptive, and motivated leaders who, in turn, make the entire force more professional and stimulate intellectual development throughout the ranks.”¹²⁴ Likewise, Lieutenant General Ervin Rokke, the former head of the U.S. National Defense University, cites the role of PME in innovation and critical thinking:

PME institutions have a responsibility to expose ideas, new as well as old, to the critical light of academe ... PME institutions have a duty to be harbingers of change. Classes and seminars are common ways for disseminating innovative ideas.¹²⁵

This of course does not prove that U.S. PME succeeds uncritically in developing innovation, or that Taiwanese PME does not; it does however show the stated attitudes towards innovation and change that ROC officers will be exposed to in U.S. PME, and contrasts with the domestic and foreign criticism of the ROC military that it, in fact, has trouble embracing such attitudes even as leaders recognize their importance.

3.3 The Broader Context of U.S. Military Education Assistance

The U.S. provision of military education and training is not, of course, altruistic. Rather, U.S. sponsorship of training and education is a small part of a long-term national security strategy to reinforce international stability and U.S. influence. Education and training shape thinking, and the U.S. programs explicitly aim to expose foreign students to U.S. thinking, practices and mores both inside and outside the classroom. Such programs serve two sets of national interests: 1) “U.S security interests—promoting stability within and among allied and friendly states by improving their self-defense capabilities” and 2) “U.S. diplomatic interests—strengthening bonds of mutual understanding.”¹²⁶ The technical

¹²³ Henry H. Shelton, “Professional Education: The Key to Transformation,” *Parameters*, (Autumn 2001), <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/01autumn/Shelton.htm>.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Ervin J. Rokke, “Military Education for the New Age,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 9 (Autumn 1995), 22.

¹²⁶ John A. Cope, *International Military Education and Training: An Assessment*, McNair Paper no. 44 (October

military knowledge is one aspect, but the U.S. policy treats the opportunity for foreign study as a chance to inculcate a range of favorable attitudes and emotions in the foreign officer.

This section will rely heavily on John A. Cope's *International Military Education and Training: An Assessment*, a monograph published in 1995 by the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), a division of the U.S. National Defense University. The volume examines the results of an INSS study group that analyzed the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, and its results, extensively quoted herein, were based on interviews with U.S. government officials, workshops with the U.S. Departments of Defense and State, and surveys conducted with dozens of instructors and international graduates of the programs. Technically, IMET refers to the grant aid provided to states unable to afford such training, whereas wealthier states pay for such training under the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. Taiwan is a "graduate" of IMET, and now purchases training through FMS, although the distinction about funding sources is not relevant for this analysis.

The U.S. has a long history of wide-scale education of foreign officers. A U.S. Defense Security Assistance Agency estimate for the period between 1976 and 1994 suggests that under the IMET grant program, the U.S. provided over 98,000 students from 105 countries with education at over 150 military schools or installations.¹²⁷ Cope notes that the scale and scope of the U.S. effort to educate the military elites of other countries is perhaps unprecedented, and that "there is no comparable historical example of so many diverse sovereign states augmenting the professional development of their armed forces by entrusting so many potential national leaders to the education and training of another state."¹²⁸

The US military approach to foreign education includes three elements meant to work together: formal education in a military school, a parallel Department of Defense-managed "Information Program" designed to introduce students to U.S. life outside the classroom, and supplemental English instruction if needed. The Information Program, with a mission to transmit not just knowledge but American values, is possibly the most interesting element as it is "designed to assist foreign students to acquire an understanding of U.S. society, institutions, and values, including an awareness of U.S. efforts domestically to respect human

1995: Institute for National Strategic Studies), 23.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 12.

rights and the importance the United States places on the role of the armed forces in a democratic society.”¹²⁹ Variables, such as the length of training and the mindsets of the involved Americans and foreign students “make U.S. foreign military education and training inexact in structure, unpredictable in ultimate outcome, yet genuine in intention and far-reaching in possible results.”¹³⁰ The Information Program is voluntary for foreign officers, but participation “is strongly encouraged,” and its philosophy—“to really understand American life, you must participate in it”—is comparable to other U.S. funded programs such as the Fulbright Program.¹³¹

Another aspect of this U.S. military education is that it seeks to reinforce deliberate value transmission through language instruction. Since the “full effectiveness of U.S. military education and training ... rests on English competence,” the U.S. provides additional language instruction in settings such as the Defense Language Institute-English Language Center in San Antonio, Texas. Although subjects “such as civil-military relations and human rights are not taught *per se*,” they “are introduced as vehicles to develop English language proficiency through group discussion.”¹³² These aspects of the American military education experience for foreigners point to the importance the U.S. military places on transmitting values as well as technical knowledge. From the U.S. perspective, culture and language are as important as the classroom knowledge, and the aspects should work together in a synergy to reinforce one another.

3.4 Motivations for Receiving U.S. PME

On the opposite side of the equation, why do foreign countries want to receive U.S. PME? The IMET study finds national- and operational-level reasons. Leadership in newly democratic states, for instance, may want to solidify “a different political culture that emphasizes increased interaction with civilian authorities” and “to expose promising military officers to the professional education and practices associated with the U.S. democratic system.”¹³³ Military leadership may “have a similar objective in the face of internal

¹²⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 18.

¹³² Ibid., 20.

¹³³ Ibid., 14.

questioning of traditional military values, missions and organization.”

Aside from encouraging certain roles for civilian and military interaction, a country may have more operationally-oriented goals. There may “a desire to gain greater insight into U.S. military performance in combat and during humanitarian assistance operations” or “wish to become part of the global security community by association with the United States.”¹³⁴ The military education environment itself may be more positive than in one’s home country; some respondents to the IMET survey cited the relative academic freedom to examine alternative ways to solve operational and strategic problems, instead of relying on rote memorization of approved solutions.¹³⁵

The United States, as the hub and central destination of this international military education network, sees long-term benefits in providing these programs. The U.S. “considers these international officer graduates ... to be an important investment in U.S. security by virtue of the roles they will play in establishing or sustaining local and regional stability worldwide.”¹³⁶ Promising officers assigned to the U.S. program represent an investment by their government and military institutions in their country’s future security and defense, especially if they have the propensity to become “future key professionals” such as “presidential advisors, senior commanders, principal staff officers, educators, and trainers.”¹³⁷ The overall elite nature of students attending U.S. PME can be seen in graduates’ career success: for instance, at the time of the IMET study, 53% of international students (642 of 1219) from 77 countries who had studied in the U.S. Naval Command College had risen to general-officer rank; 19 percent of these officers have become chiefs of service, and at the U.S. Army War College, 54 percent of its foreign graduates (241 of 449) from 85 countries had attained general officer rank.¹³⁸ In other words, the U.S. knows that the officers other countries send will likely be among those countries’ future military leaders.

The related concepts of access and influence are other benefits the U.S. seeks. Although these programs offer “no guarantee of far reaching capacity to alter recipient institutional values or governmental behavior,” the respondents in Cope’s IMET study spoke

¹³⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹³⁸ Ibid. Note this is a generalization, and does not imply that the distribution of successful officers is spread evenly across all recipient countries.

of “access, rapport, and ease of communication, terms used by some synonymously with ‘influence.’”¹³⁹ U.S. respondents asserted that the U.S.-provided security assistance education and training “‘gives you access that you wouldn’t or couldn’t have without difficulty,’ that is ‘access at the senior ranks of host country military establishments.’”¹⁴⁰ Retired LTG William E. Odom calls these “the ‘subjective ties’ with future military and often political leaders in other states.”¹⁴¹ Providing military instruction to potential future foreign leaders is therefore an investment in such subjective ties as rapport, ease-of-access, and communication: there is no reason not to believe these rationales do not apply to the education of ROC officers as well.

Like all military investments, the value and utility of influencing such officers early in their careers cannot be predicted beforehand, and will most likely only be seen in unfortunate circumstances. Likewise, favorable feelings toward the U.S. may never be a consideration for a graduate until a situation calls for them, but “it is a factor, and personal exposure to U.S. society, institutions and values could be the decisive influence.”¹⁴² The possibility that such personal exposure may affect a potentially influential decision-maker is one reason the U.S. is willing to engage in such large-scale education for foreigners, even if clearly “a country’s own culture, political and institutional traditions are significant influences on the attitudes and conduct of military and civilian leaders.”¹⁴³

Beyond affecting attitudes, U.S.-provided military education establishes lines-of-communication with foreign military professionals that afford better, clearer communication in peacetime and in crisis. Professional and personal relationships built in these schools can be crucial during a crisis by providing “high-level, unofficial channels of communication that allow friends to interpret events from their perspectives and thereby improve the accuracy of reporting and depth of analysis.”¹⁴⁴

Influencing the practices and quality of foreign (presumably friendly) militaries is also a direct goal of U.S.-provided education, as these students often return home to become instructors, as is often the case in Taiwan. By becoming instructors or administrators of their home countries’ military education system, graduates may have the chance to implement

¹³⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴² Ibid., 27.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 28.

reforms; Cope cites examples of former U.S. students who influenced “doctrine, tactics, training, cooperative law enforcement at sea, refashioned organizations, doctrine, management systems, and, on occasion, decision making processes after the U.S. defense model.”¹⁴⁵ Junior officers and those with repeated exposure to US schooling are “profoundly” influenced “by issues of professional proficiency and personal values.”¹⁴⁶ Survey respondents referenced “[T]he striking difference between former international student officers and contemporaries who remained home” and how graduates could effect change under their span of control, because the units led by graduates “think and act different.”¹⁴⁷ These observations validate the theory that “professionalism can breed professionalism.”¹⁴⁸ And as will also be shown, there is evidence that at least some ROC officers experience the same kind of profound transformation in professional attitudes.

Through foreign education, the U.S. is also building a future corps of officers with whom the U.S. military can work in the future. Foreign officers in U.S. schools, especially PME, learn U.S. operational and tactical philosophies and approaches, the capabilities and limitations of U.S. weaponry, and gain hand’s-on experience working with American classmates in classroom or field exercises, “building mutual trust, effective communication in English, an understanding of interoperability, and familiarity with our military doctrine.”¹⁴⁹ Many countries logically employ their graduates as liaison officers, attaches, or as international affairs staff officers, because “[t]hey tend to have a working fluency with English, have maintained U.S. contacts, and share common professional education.”¹⁵⁰

The presence of foreign students also enhances the education of U.S. classmates: “instructors from several U.S. senior service and staff colleges maintain that U.S. students benefited significantly from contact with colleagues from other countries” because they bring “provocative non-U.S. perspectives, and varied professional expertise” into the classroom, providing a “counterweight to blind acceptance of U.S. military doctrine and cultural bias on

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 32. One interviewee pointed out that the same logic holds true in Taiwan, as the Republic of Korea military liaison assigned to Taiwan is a graduate of ROC PME, fluent in Chinese and a friend to his Taiwanese classmates.

national security issues.”¹⁵¹ In other words, contact with a different culture, even for the U.S. officers in a domestic setting, challenges their assumptions and broadens their understanding of problems. The dynamic of interacting with a foreign culture presumably holds true for ROC officers as well.

The U.S. education of foreign military officers is premised, to some extent, on the belief that education can contribute to changing cultures. Examining the full scope of this assumption is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the IMET study’s conclusion that U.S. PME helped support democratization in many countries is worth noting here. The IMET survey of PME graduates showed that “foreign students in the 1980s and 1990s gained an understanding of liberties enjoyed in [the U.S.] from experiences outside the professional education or technical courses they were attending,” and that it was this contact with American culture that stood out among the experiences they remembered, a fact reflected “time and time again in the responses to the INSS survey.”¹⁵²

In “Educating Foreign Officers,” Douglas Gibler and Tomislav Ruby go so far as to suggest that U.S. PME played a small part in Taiwan’s democratization, citing the role of U.S. PME graduates in reforming the Military Intelligence Bureau after the 1985 Henry Liu murder scandal, which involved senior officers and members of the bureau.¹⁵³ Certainly, the de-politicization of the ROC Armed Forces mirrors the professional ethic of the U.S. military, although the cause-and-effect relationship may be harder to prove.¹⁵⁴

Providing education to foreign officers also provides a platform to advertise U.S. hardware, and influence future military leaders’ purchasing recommendations.¹⁵⁵ While Taiwan’s diplomatic circumstances limit its options of arms suppliers, the preeminent position of the U.S. is certainly reinforced by the training and PME it provides to Taiwan.

How does this analysis relate to Taiwan? As the interviews with ROC officers will show, many of the elements Cope highlights hold true, albeit to differing degrees, for Taiwan as a recipient of foreign education as well as for the U.S. as a provider. Even though the U.S. is

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵² Ibid., 36.

¹⁵³ Douglas M. Gibler and Tomislav Z. Ruby, “Educating Foreign Officers,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 33, (Winter 2002-03), 123.

¹⁵⁴ Some officers interviewed for this research tentatively agreed that there may have been a connection between U.S. PME and democratization, but were not personally familiar with officers or accounts that could establish direct connections.

¹⁵⁵ Cope, 40.

the dominant partner in its defense relationship with Taiwan, the interest the U.S. shows in Taiwan's national security far outweighs its interest in less strategic countries such as small African or Latin American nations. For Taiwan, deepening ties with the U.S. is a defense imperative. Familiarity with U.S. culture should allow ROC officers to establish, and perhaps capitalize on, the same "rapport, access, and ease-of-communication" the U.S. finds valuable. If "building mutual trust" and establishing "effective communication in English, an understanding of interoperability, and familiarity with [U.S.] military doctrine," works to secure U.S. interests, the use of the word "mutual" implies a two-way street, so that it benefits the ROC as well. While proportionately reduced in scope because the ROC officers are a small minority within the American military education environment, the potential also exists to influence their American classmates as well, whether in explaining the subtleties of the ROC's history with the PRC, explicating a moral argument for the U.S. to aid a fellow democracy, or merely engendering warm personal feelings of friendship and goodwill. Considering that in-residence PME study represents a mark of distinction for American officers and is meant to prepare them for future leadership roles, the ROC officers are therefore working with the American officers most likely to attain general officer rank or other senior-level positions within such influential bodies as the Department of Defense, the National Security Council or, considering the examples of Generals Colin Powell and Michael Hayden, the State Department or the Central Intelligence Agency. The ultimate value of these investments can't be quantified, especially in the short-term, but certainly in worst-case scenarios wherein Taiwan has to appeal to the U.S. for direct military cooperation, the value of these relations might not merely be prudent, but could be priceless.

3.5 Returning to Taiwan: Benefits and Obstacles

Given the potential benefits enumerated above, such as deeper connections with the United States, the study of advanced military knowledge, and deepening professionalism, what situation do officers from Taiwan encounter when they return from overseas? What can they bring back? What obstacles do they face?

The most salient benefit to Taiwan is deepening connections with other countries, especially the United States. One interview subject placed the increased educational

opportunities in the United States against the historical background of defense cooperation between the two, as well as the decades-long interruption:

It's very helpful ... because we don't have connection with the United States. Before these ten years, we lost contact [for] almost twenty years, I think, without the new aircraft, the new weapon systems ... The last ten years we get lots of things from the United States. Since the beginning, our defense force, the Army, Navy, Air Force ... the systems, the training system, all from the United States. Fortunately, it's come back.¹⁵⁶

Just as from the U.S. perspective the potential for future connections with military leadership is a reason to provide education, the same logic holds true for Taiwan. The possibility of developing personnel connections with future U.S. leaders is one reason of many to send students to U.S. education, according to some returnees. As one officer with a doctorate put it:

I think that the security of Taiwan you cannot base on the force alone, or on the national power of Taiwan alone. It's always [good to] have a great connection with the United States and I think it's very important we can understand what the United States is thinking, and also this kind of friendship is very important and of great benefit. I mean, you never know, you go to there for school and your classmates ten, twenty years [later] who will become who, but maybe, just maybe, they can become a very important connection, and that's very important too.¹⁵⁷

Another put it in the context of serving as a potential link between militaries, and pointed out that there is no single reason to send students overseas, but rather a combination. This officer, a V.M.I. graduate, said:

For the future, maybe if some of our classmates are still in the military, maybe you can have very good communication links, maybe that's one purpose, maybe the second purpose ... for this year, there's still a lot of exchange programs going on, and there's some U.S. delegations coming to Taiwan, you can be the interpreters or communicators between our government and your government. I think that's very

¹⁵⁶ Subject (AFO66), interview with author, May 17, 2006.

¹⁵⁷ Subject (AO61), interview with author, April 18, 2006.

beneficial. There's no single purpose for the program. They like to see you do as many as you could ...to help both of us.¹⁵⁸

Undoubtedly, the foreign language skills developed are among the most direct benefits of foreign education. The practical effect of this is that returnees from the U.S. almost certainly become their units' resident "English expert," called upon to escort and brief foreign visitors, or aid their units in other tasks relating to English. Language proficiency is not the reason they were sent overseas, but its utility follows them through multiple assignments in their careers, sometimes more so than the subject matter they studied. As one respondent put it:

Usually, the unit, when they need people to use English, they will call us. For instance, when I was company commander, there was a group from Singapore, who wanted to observe our exercise. I was the one assigned to accompany them for a week even though I was a company commander. Later on I was a staff [officer] in Army Headquarters and one of my functions was to [work on] the Army-U.S. arms talk which required lots of English coordination. So, yes, [English is useful] because in the military there aren't that many people with that type of skill.

One respondent noted that because of his English skills, he still serves as the escorting officer for visitors as an additional duty. One of his visitors, a retired U.S. general officer, was surprised by his rank, since the visitor's previous escort in Singapore had been a captain (a difference of three ranks, representing probably ten to fifteen years of experience and seniority).¹⁵⁹ Although this respondent personally enjoys working with foreign visitors, it raises questions: is there a lack of other qualified officers? Is this the most efficient use of a colonel's time?

Furthermore, English ability may be a prerequisite for certain types of jobs, and therefore a possible key to opportunities not available to other officers. One respondent, working in a planning function for the MND, specifically referred to a minimum level of English capability in order to work in his office, because of the need to liaise with foreigners:

But we don't care much what specialty you're in. As long as you have foreign affairs, [whether] you studied command & staff or war college overseas, you have an MBA from Harvard, Double-E [electrical engineering] degree from MIT, it

¹⁵⁸ Subject (NO55), interview with author, May 9, 2006.

¹⁵⁹ Subject (AFO62), interview with author, April 21, 2006.

doesn't matter! As long as you speak English.¹⁶⁰

In these cases, the nature of the degree, and hence the reason why they went overseas earlier in their career is unimportant. This is in contrast to the official philosophy of “*wei yong er xun*” with its stress on the need for a subject-matter expert, not competence in a language.

Another returnee, with two overseas experiences including four years of undergraduate education at V.M.I., noted how his English ability had been a consistent advantage in his career. After he returned to the Navy, his superiors used his skills to brief important visitors, which became a factor in his selection to be an aide-de-camp to a senior Naval officer. The net result for him was at least two-fold: on the one hand, he had a reason to continuously improve his English, so as to accurately translate naval and military terms and concepts, and on the other hand, his roles exposed him to senior officers, their perspectives and discussions, and the accompanying strategic concepts, all of which broadened his perspective as a junior officer.¹⁶¹ Foreign education does have the potential, then, to open certain career doors.

Many of these officers cited foreign language fluency, especially in English, as a limitation in the ROC armed forces. One linked both the lack of English and the lack of educational backgrounds in subjects such as political science or international relations:

The problem is, we don't have enough officers who have the right educational background and also can speak fluent English. It's still difficult to combine these two together. And people like me, who have a security study background, and speak English ... there's not that many today. In the future, there will be more and more. It will be better.¹⁶²

Some basic observations are worth restating. Just as in Taiwanese society as a whole, with its profusion of English-language cram schools, English fluency is valuable in the military because it facilitates international communication. English will most likely be the medium for cooperation or exchange with foreign officials or military officers. Undoubtedly, the common language of any possible future cooperative effort with the U.S. military would be English. Of course, other foreign languages facilitate aspects of Taiwan's international defense cooperation, such as Spanish for exchanges with Latin American allies or French in connection with hardware such as the Mirage 2000. However, no other language approaches

¹⁶⁰ Subject (NOX3), interview with author, April 25, 2006.

¹⁶¹ Subject (NO55), interview with author, May 9, 2005.

¹⁶² Subject (NOX3).

English for primacy in international communication. For example, even one technical master's program in France open to Taiwanese officers offers the option to complete coursework in English; although one interviewee applying for this program intends to study French for daily interactions, he admits that he will choose English-language courses for his degree. The U.S. military for its part of course recognizes and reinforces the primacy of English through its IMET/FMS programs.

Besides linguistic fluency, overseas study aids in cultural fluency. Respondents cited understanding foreign cultures as another major benefit of study abroad. One respondent described the military value of understanding foreign cultures thusly:

[I]t's very important to know your friend or enemy. I don't think we as a military know enough about US military thinking or even PLA military thinking. I think there's a danger in our national security ... You need to understand how they think. If you don't understand how they think, then during a time of crisis, you're going to have a lot of miscommunication, lots of misperception, and that might lead to wrong action, wrong decision. I think this kind of interaction is very important, especially if we don't have formal link with the United States. You need this kind of link, such that you can understand.¹⁶³

Understanding a foreign culture is inherent in waging military operations, and the same respondent alluded to the U.S. "War on Terror" to illustrate this point.

To elaborate on the importance of the culture: for example, in the anti-terrorist campaign, I think the United States, with all its high technology and surveillance, you don't know how they [terrorists] think ... that's a major problem why you can't catch them with all your high-tech or surveillance. You don't have enough people that can speak their language, or understand how they think, their habit. That's what we call the human intelligence.¹⁶⁴

The requirement for understanding a foreign culture doesn't extend just to actual warfare, but even to negotiations with friendly nations:

And also, even if you want to negotiate with the United States, you need to understand how they think, how they behave. If most of your military personnel

¹⁶³ Subject (AO61).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

does not have that kind of understanding, it's not easy to have that kind of negotiation.¹⁶⁵

As elaborated earlier, one of the key lessons of the mid-90s missile crisis was that the U.S. and ROC militaries did not have a good understanding of each other's positions, and it's easy to see that lack of understanding could extend through several critical areas: arms negotiations, policy formulation, analysis of the potential threat, and warfighting philosophies are just some examples. Another returnee concurred with a similar argument about the need for developing officers who can interface with the U.S.:

I think it's extremely important, when we're dealing with the US, in terms of US-Taiwan military-to-military exchange, to have the right people to deal with things. For officers who have been studying in the United States, who get the command-and-staff or war college experience, or who have been studying for a PhD in the U.S., they understand more U.S. military culture than the officers who do not have this experience. Because you been in the United States, you understand more about U.S. interests, what U.S. really thinks about ... You can make the right decision, you can protect your own interest by understanding the US interest. You don't make confrontation. That's why we think when you want to establish certain relationships, you have to understand the other side more, then you can establish ... confidence.¹⁶⁶

This respondent, a senior officer who has studied international relations in a U.S. graduate school, went on to point out that under the realist tradition of international relations, the aim of foreign relations or foreign policy is to protect the country's interests. In his opinion, even domestic language training and interpreters could not compensate for a lack of officers with foreign experience:

We do not have enough people who understand international politics, but at least [if] you understand the culture, understand the language ... sometimes people say we don't need that, because we have very good interpreters, we send people to study interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, and we can use them as a medium ... but that's still not enough. There are always occasions where those

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Subject (NOX3).

interpreters can't translate the real meaning of what you want to say, of what you want to talk to the other side, and vice versa. It's better to have people who understand America, study there and understand their culture, to deal with, to [be] in charge of the military-to-military cooperation, to gain personal confidence and trust, and establish friendship. That will be [a] kind of multiplier, as far as the bilateral relations are concerned.¹⁶⁷

Although he stressed that foreign education should follow the precept of “*wei yong er xun*,” he also agreed that the ancillary benefits could be useful to national defense. In doing so, he pointed to the intertwined links between language, culture and understanding.

Most important is the purpose of why you go overseas. They don't pay you to study there for nothing. They need your degree, your specialty to contribute. But the side effect is also very important ... You learn culture, you learn people. You understand the culture, you understand the people. Which is very helpful for defense establishment, [for it] to use you ... your knowledge in the future, to deal with the foreign affairs, regardless of your specialties.¹⁶⁸

Cultural fluency is not gained inside a schoolhouse. Echoing the conclusions of the IMET study, the same respondent stressed that education can occur outside the formal classroom environment:

During the period of time you spend overseas, you learn a lot, other than what you learn in the classroom. That's very important as well. So I most of the time encourage [those who study overseas] not to spend all their time in the classroom, in the library. You have to get in touch with the local people, to see whatever you can see, that will be useful, not just for yourself, but when you get a higher position, it broadens your perspective, you understand more.¹⁶⁹

This opinion provides some validation about the efficacy of the U.S. emphasis on cultural immersion and exposure. This officer clearly believes that study in the foreign environment has worth beyond the subject matter studied, because the exposure to other cultures “broadens perspective.” Another respondent spoke about “living the American dream” while attending U.S. PME. He brought along his family, bought a house in the area, and sent his children to a

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

local school. The experience, he concluded, was what made his family the happiest during his nearly three-decade-long career.¹⁷⁰ Again, this points to two phenomena: first, the absorbing of American values that would no doubt please the architects of the IMET program, and second, an understanding of American culture that potentially would help the ROC in dealings with the U.S. as well.

3.6 Potential Benefits to ROC Military Reform

Language and cultural fluency are potential benefits from any of the three main types of overseas education (undergraduate study, civilian graduate study or PME) available to Taiwanese military officers. More specific to study in a U.S. military environment, which in this case could include the U.S. military colleges, is the potential to transmit professionalism and practical improvements learned from the U.S. military. In other words, these officers could potentially serve as the catalyst or transmission medium for different reforms suggested to Taiwan by the U.S. Department of Defense or foreign scholars.

An Air Force colonel respondent noted two changes in the ROC Air Force that he attributed to exposure to the U.S. military:

Drinking culture in Taiwan ... nowadays, we know it's not good for the next day's flight. You have to change this. You have to think about the flying safety. It's a big change here. [Also, m]ore and more the higher officers allow the young guys to speak out. In the old days, this was not allowed. You just follow the policy, not speak out ... I think it's very helpful, the foreign education.¹⁷¹

Another respondent cited vigorous attention to detail as a trait he learned in the U.S., and its relevance to improving the military in Taiwan:

We like to skip lots of steps when we do things, to show how smart we are and save time. We like to take shortcuts, for example. Sometimes you need to go straight and make things done. You don't skip steps. You need to follow the regulations or the laws. You don't take advantage of things.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Subject (AFO66).

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Subject (NO55).

Returnees can bring back knowledge or attitudes that support defense reform. Students from U.S. PME and military academies can bring back professional values such as a focus on “leadership,” especially a leadership style as practiced by the U.S. The above colonel praised the leadership education in the U.S. PME system, and talked about its applicability to Taiwan:

The leadership in the schools there, not just ACSC [Air Command and Staff College], even the Air War College, they keep on talking about leadership, but in Taiwan, after the academy, we think we already learn about leadership in the academy. I think in the United States it’s good, because different levels have different leadership. So back here, I try to perform that kind of leadership. Since I am a deputy [commander] nowadays, I can show them the leadership I learned from the United States. I also try to persuade my senior guys to take some leadership I learned from there. But like changing the culture, it takes time.¹⁷³

In this case, the colonel strongly endorses importing leadership styles from the U.S., and attempting to transmit those same attitudes throughout his organization. Similarly, another respondent referenced his leadership style in response to a question about lessons he had learned from the U.S.

When I was the commanding officer of a small ship, where the complement was only forty-one people, including me ... that was a very important chance for me to change the ship. If you are not a selfish commanding officer—but most commanding officers are—if you think for your crew, they will feel that. If you lead the ship the right way, they will pay you back.¹⁷⁴

This leadership style, often expressed in the U.S. military as the aphorism “take care of your people, and they will take care of you,” combined with his assertion that this style is different from the “selfish” outlook of other commanders, suggests both his debt to his American undergraduate and graduate education and a feeling that it is distinct in Taiwan. He went on to place leadership styles within the larger context of Taiwan’s national security. Because of universal conscription, many families in Taiwan have a personal experience with the military, and officers have the opportunity to create a positive experience for the conscripts. In doing so, they can influence the public debate about the military.

¹⁷³ Subject (AFO66).

¹⁷⁴ Subject (NO55).

Our crew is coming from the society, right? They only have less than two years of service in the Navy. When they finish their service, they will go back to the civilian world. They will have their [impressions], my commanding officer was pretty good, they still have hope for the Navy, so they think they can support the Navy or support the military. If they see that some officers are no good, they will lose their support of the military. Any one of them could change their family, and their family could change their friends.¹⁷⁵

Another potential outgrowth of education is the chance to directly affect Taiwan's national security while overseas. These officers may have the chance to represent Taiwan as self-described unofficial ambassadors. Participation in international forums, especially in think tanks or academic programs in disciplines such as international relations or security studies, may raise Taiwan's profile in certain academic and international circles, promoting greater understanding of Taiwan's international security situation, if the officer can overcome reticence and embrace that role. One respondent who has been overseas numerous times, including to education in the U.S. and England, put it this way:

Some of my colleagues, they went to overseas, they try to hide their real identity, they don't want to admit they're a military officer. I don't think that's right. I always say, I'm a lieutenant, a Navy lieutenant, I'm a Navy lieutenant commander, I'm a Navy captain, I study here and I also represent my country. I also explain to my friends, or whoever feels interest, our position, what's the cross-strait situation, what's our policy, to help our foreign friends understand the situation here. So that's also one of the reasons I strongly suggest the personnel department has to change the policy to provide more opportunities for officers to study overseas ... They're not just students, they're also diplomats. We don't have military attaché in UK, in a bunch of countries. To send officers to study overseas, we can serve some of the purpose to reach out together, especially to European countries to understand the situation.¹⁷⁶

Overseas study can even provide the opportunity for communication with mainland Chinese officials or officers in a so-called "Track 2" environment, although the willingness to engage

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Subject (NOX3).

may be one-sided. One respondent related his impressions about meeting PLA officers and other mainland Chinese officials overseas:

I like that. They just cannot argue with me, because I think we're on the right side of history. Democracy, and we're more righteous than them ... Their officers dare not contact with us. When I was in London, I tried to arrange a meeting with the [PRC's] deputy defense attaché. At the last minute, he called off the meeting. My friend told me, "Don't blame him. He has a promising future, but simply meeting with you could ruin that future."¹⁷⁷

Senior officers from Taiwan participating in the same forums as officers and officials from the PRC provide a direct contrast between the two political systems and advertise Taiwan's political democratization, definitely reinforcing the value of democratization to its national security in forums of defense and security professionals. Such venues would seem to provide a greater freedom for participation than is often available to officials from Taiwan; the caveat is that Taiwan must have a cadre of senior officers (probably colonel and above) who can argue Taiwan's strategic positions. One respondent referred to this national defense requirement to grow a corps of senior leaders who can communicate Taiwan's defense requirements in an international context with an anecdote about a senior officer course at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu:

When you list O-8 level [i.e. general or admiral] officers, the percentage that can speak English, represent our military there, and speak up and articulate our position and our policy, talk about military balance, talk about what mainland China is doing to us, the percentage is very, very low. If we don't have enough high-ranking officers who understand U.S., who have been educated in U.S., how can we deal with a situation like that? When the U.S. provides you an opportunity and you don't have the manpower to send someone, and the U.S. provides a platform to talk with thirty-five officers in this area, their high-ranking officers all be there, and you have an opportunity to speak out in that location, and you can't find the right guy to speak out there, that's really pathetic.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

At its loftiest, foreign education, especially in strategic education or think tanks, could conceivably be a tool approaching direct diplomacy, helping to strengthen relations or avert crises. Certainly this would seem to be the case for the quasi-military attaché positions in the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington, so foreign education would seem to be a strong method to develop officers capable of assuming these duties. One respondent spoke of the cost-effectiveness of diplomacy, especially “military diplomacy,” versus the acquisition of military hardware:

The first line of our defense is diplomacy. Military diplomacy. And it's cheaper than to fight war. Combat readiness is also important, but it's the last line of defense. How do you use the first line of defense? How do you force enough guys to do the diplomacy, to do the military-to-military defense and cooperation? ... Do you want your deterrence to focus on being internationalized, more and more people sympathize with your situation, or do you want to focus more on a combat ready force to deter war? I think military diplomacy to tell foreigners is much cheaper than to procure high-tech weapon systems, which is very expensive ... [W]e can rethink about allocating resources to get more on the military diplomacy side, to get more people qualified to deal with that, and provide incentives for those qualified to deal with foreign affairs to stay longer in the military.¹⁷⁹

Given the small number of officers who can go abroad yearly, the wide-scale practice of “military diplomacy” seems unlikely. However, given Taiwan’s lack of traditional diplomatic outlets, it is perhaps an idea worth more consideration. Moreover, the idea highlights the tension between truly developing a comprehensive, integrated national defense plan, and pursuing a “hardware-centric” policy.

3.7 Obstacles to Change

Overseas education will not solve all problems, however. Officers face many possible obstacles, including difficulty reintegrating into the ROC military culture, a conservative resistance to change, peer resentment and suspicion from superiors. One officer summed it up bluntly:

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

The environment is still not too favorable to those who study overseas. People do not want to hear, “the US does this, does that” or “the UK does this, does that.”¹⁸⁰

The relative expense of sending officers overseas for education makes an obvious target for critics; the cost is in effect two-fold, because not only are students outside the military manpower pool, but their education and associated costs (travel, cost-of-living allowances, etc.) obviously cost more than the domestic alternative.

Several respondents referenced an attitude, which they asserted as common in the armed forces’ culture, which views overseas education as often a waste, because the recipients will acquire a valuable foreign degree and then abandon a military career. There were different responses to this attitude. One respondent pointed out that quantitative assessments about the future value of officers with foreign experience were not a good way to measure the potential value:

You cannot expect 100% of people will contribute lots of value to the system. So if you can have 50%, or even 40%, then maybe it’s worthwhile. No investment is 100% returned.¹⁸¹

Other respondents urged a more holistic view about the overall value to Taiwan rather than focusing on specific utility to the military. One said:

If you send 100 officers overseas (to training or studies), they change their minds. I don’t want to see major changes, but rather minor changes. Maybe 90 of them will be out of service very soon, but that’s okay, because they will go back to the civilian world. They will change Taiwan’s society.¹⁸²

Another respondent, a senior Air Force colonel, made the same point. He contrasted the Taiwanese attitude to what he had seen in the U.S. while studying at the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology in the mid-1990s. An American officer classmate was taking advantage of a voluntary separation program meant to reduce active-duty personnel after the 1991 Gulf War, and this respondent wondered, how could the US government let his friend leave the military after its investment in him? His friend’s answer—“Even if I’m out of the military, I still work for the U.S.”—changed his mind, and led him to the insight that military spending money on education could be conceived as part of a broader context of national

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Subject (AO61).

¹⁸² Subject (NO55).

strengthening. It was “still service for the country,” and this led him to his next conclusion, which is also a running theme through the respondents’ answers: “You have to broaden your mind.” The nature of military investment also should discourage a narrow mentality: “If I train ten PhDs, [and] if only one would like to stay in the military, maybe he will be the key person to help the country.”¹⁸³

Alluding to the perception that institutional spending on foreign education is a “waste” if the recipients leave the military at the first opportunity, this returnee suggested that instead, the appeal of foreign education could even be turned into a recruiting tool:

I know the logic behind them is, the Air Force, Army or Navy spend so much money to send people study abroad, but most of them as long as they finish their service, they will ... get out of the military immediately. But my logic is, if I can create such environment, say, if people understand, okay, if I want to get good education and then later I can get out of the military and find a very good job outside, I have to join the military because they provide the best opportunity for me to study, I will get the best training, best experience in the military ... I think this is important. If I can create such environment, very good people will say, “yes, I want to join the military.”¹⁸⁴

Returnees can also interpret the policies governing their study abroad as a barrier to promotion, or a misallocation of the knowledge and skills they bring back. One respondent cited poor utilization as a reason many returnees might leave the military, contrasting this with the perception that such officers seek personal gain:

It’s also what kind of involvement, what kind of opportunity you give to these people. I think lots of people, as I said before, they want to pay back, they want to contribute. But the organization does not give them the opportunity, so they are frustrated and decide to left [sic.]. So it becomes a vicious cycle.¹⁸⁵

Another returnee echoed this view, and tied it to senior leader attitudes:

The Air Force doesn’t allocate people to a proper place, so they feel it’s useless. Also, the senior people don’t cherish that. [Returnees] would rather go out,

¹⁸³ Subject (AFO62).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Subject (AO61).

because they don't want to waste [their degree].¹⁸⁶

Another interviewee was actively disappointed about his follow-on assignment as an instructor in Taiwan's National Defense University instead of an MND-level planning job after his return from American PME:

To take those studies back to Taiwan, to school, it's not helpful. It's a different vision. America is a global power, but Taiwan, the only thing we care about is between the Taiwan Strait. Back here I had to [go] to the school as an instructor. For me, it's a kind of waste, because we learned different things. Back in Taiwan, I had to learn ... what they teach here.¹⁸⁷

For their part, officer students may perceive a different set of institutional standards, depending on their circumstances. One respondent cited the income discrepancy between those who study at U.S. PME and those who study in civilian universities, as he did. PME students were entitled to housing and cost-of-living subsidies, whereas civilian university students were not. The serving ROC liaison officer in D.C. told him this was since civilian institution students were getting a degree, they didn't "deserve" the housing and other allowances. The officer cited this as an example of how policy could create negative feelings, prompting a negative cycle. As a result, officers receive their overseas degree, serve the minimum time required to "pay back" the period of study, and then separate from the military, rationalizing this action with an attitude of "I don't owe you anything." In return, senior leaders see these officers as selfish; the officers then feel that senior leadership doesn't appreciate their accomplishments and knowledge.¹⁸⁸

These officers perceived the lack of senior level familiarity with foreign education as a definite impediment. For officers who pursue civilian PhDs, the relative lack of doctorate-holding general officers means they will lack role models; they will not have senior mentors who have pursued a similar path and still achieved promotion. Moreover, the time spent to pursue a PhD, especially overseas, will likely put officers in a disadvantageous position compared to their peers, because of the opportunity-cost of military experience during that time. As one put it:

[A] PhD typically ... did not benefit [a] career. PhD [holders are] usually missing

¹⁸⁶ Subject (AFO62).

¹⁸⁷ Subject (AFO66).

¹⁸⁸ Subject (AFO62).

certain jobs. At that time, [the] general mentality [is to not] like people with higher degree. They are not welcome in traditional military organization. [R]ecently because of lots of good people go overseas, come back and retire, [the attitude is] why spend money? Those people are not grateful. This is a problem.¹⁸⁹

Harkening back to General Sun's criticisms about anti-intellectualism in the ROC military, this V.M.I. graduate cited the ROC's military history as an obstacle, in that in the earlier eras, promotion came through practical distinction, and not higher learning.

You've got to have the hard work in the field to get promoted ... Most of the generals come from this path. They don't have this intellectual training, and they think they're doing well, so they don't value the intellectual power.¹⁹⁰

Anti-intellectualism coupled with conservatism are of course charges not limited to the ROC military. There is also the reality that within the relatively small general officer corps, it is unrealistic to assume there will be extensive overlap with those with extensive higher education. A related problem is not just that foreign education experience is scarce within the officer corps but also within the ranks of the high-level staff officers who advise generals:

Most of the decision makers don't have this kind of experience. In the past, those with this experience, it was not a plus in their career ... Most of the decision makers make their decisions because of the staff and the staff doesn't have this kind of experience, so those kinds of decisions reflect their view.¹⁹¹

At least two interviewees referred to a current of what could be called "outsourcing" or taking in civilians with doctorates instead of sending officers to get them. Both officers, one an overseas returnee and the other with job experience in the personnel system, suggested this attitude was misguided, because civilians don't understand or don't integrate well with the military system. Their premise is that officers will understand military culture and can work within it in ways that civilians would be unable to.¹⁹²

Another senior officer agreed that policy discontinuity had been a problem in the past, but asserted the problem has gotten better:

Most of the time it depends on high-ranking officials' attitude towards how to use

¹⁸⁹ Subject (AO61).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Subject (AFO62) and Subject (AFO54).

overseas-educated officers. Different commanders-in-chief, different chiefs of the general staff, different ministers of defense will generally have different situations. It's purely ... to attitude of high-ranking officials. This was ten, twenty years ago. But today, because we are more institutionalized ... *fazhizhua* (法制化)¹⁹³

Three interviewees, including the personnel officer, cited the individual influence that different Chiefs of the General Staff can have during their tenures. Whereas the personal attention of one top general can improve the situation and standing of officers who have received foreign education, his departure can similarly disrupt it. As one put it:

In certain periods, when you have good generals, and they have foreign experience, then it's much better. Like for example, Liu He Jian ... during his term he sent lots of people overseas to get education. But when he left, then it almost stopped. So it also depends on the leaders' experience.¹⁹⁴

In fairness, a basic consideration is that foreign education is no guarantee of being an effective officer. The problems returnees face should not obscure this simple fact. One V.M.I. graduate admitted as much:

I think it [the institutional attitude towards overseas education] varies, because there are some graduates who ... don't do their jobs well. At least for me, I hear lots of positive comments [about] me ... There's no single answer to this question. Someone will say, 'Hey ... this someone graduated from V.M.I., but he's not good, he's not like you. Or they'll tell him, why aren't you like [the interviewee]? So, it varies.'¹⁹⁵

He went on to criticize returning officers who complained about their situation too much:

This chance does not go to everyone in the military. I would say the attitude is very important. You don't just promote those people who go studying overseas. You promote those people whose attitude is the best, right? ... In general, it's the attitude.¹⁹⁶

Foreign education may appear prestigious, but there is no reason to assume that these students are inherently elite. The selection process for many programs is two-tiered, insofar as the first

¹⁹³ Subject (NOX3)

¹⁹⁴ Subject (AO61)

¹⁹⁵ Subject (NO55)

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

hurdle is an officer's language ability, only then followed by job performance. One senior Air Force officer described it thusly:

Every year it's become a system, a regular thing. Not every year has enough students. First, is the language level good enough to visit there? Second, is his occupation good enough to do advanced learning? Every year, I think, not just Air Force, every service works very hard to find out this kind of guy to visit there.¹⁹⁷

The cadet selection process, at least for the Air Force, is likewise a two-stage process, in which the first hurdle is demonstrating English proficiency, and only after the initial group of English-capable cadets is selected does their individual performance become a selection factor.¹⁹⁸

One former officer contrasted official policy praising the importance of education with the realities he sees as an instructor at a graduate institute in the military education system:

They will say human resources, people [are] important, but that doesn't reflect in their decision making. It doesn't reflect in their resource allocation. Somehow I fear that their mentality doesn't think that that is important.¹⁹⁹

According to this officer, the recent cuts in educational opportunities reveal the true relative value the military bureaucracy places on education in general:

Your decision reflects your value. So by this action, by this policy, you can tell what they value. Even the school here, before we have an acceptance rate of about twenty percent, this last year, the acceptance rate is about one-hundred percent because they cut down the people who can apply, [and] they also cut down the people we can accept, they say we don't need so many people. They have a new policy that says your job must be in this field. Also before, when you go to graduate study, the unit, they could hire another [person]. Right now they say, no, you cannot hire. That means that [because of] people who left to study for two years, then you have one [person] short. They don't want to let you go, because the unit already [doesn't] have enough resource to do the job. The military keeps shrinking, but the work does not get reduced ... Also, you must promise when [the

¹⁹⁷ Subject (AFO66)

¹⁹⁸ Subjects (AFC1) and (AFC2), interview with author, May 21, 2006.

¹⁹⁹ Subject (AO61).

student] comes back, you must promise he have a good job. What kind of unit is willing to do that?²⁰⁰

In other words, despite the rhetoric of promoting education, policy changes can undermine the stated goals. A senior Air Force colonel also bemoaned the emphasis on hardware and practical training over education:

[J]ust one landing gear of F-16 ... the money you spend for [a] landing gear, you can send ten, twenty officers to study overseas. Just a landing gear! But it seems that many senior people right now they think ... the aircraft is important, the training is important. But I think their view is very near-sighted. They don't understand if you want, say, if you want Air Force to have a very good future, you have to train your people.²⁰¹

Again, the tension between “software” and “hardware” becomes apparent. The returnees must also contend with their peers. In a highly competitive promotion system, some returnees' colleagues can resent the perceived “good life” that overseas students enjoyed and will resent that these officers also want to be promoted. One Navy returnee articulated it this way:

[T]he common expression in Taiwan [is], they think if you go abroad, if you go study overseas, you're getting the US dollars, you're enjoying a very good life there, so they think if you're getting so many benefits, why do you still want a promotion? Since the Navy, the country, is giving you so many, why do you want to take it all? That's a common expression among most of the officers in the military.²⁰²

A former Army officer confirmed the same phenomenon in the Army, citing the tension between those who stay behind and work, and those who go abroad and return wanting a command.²⁰³ The above Navy respondent also cited a highly subjective promotion system as another difficult system to navigate.

In this culture, ninety-nine people say you are good, one people say you are bad,

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Subject (AFO62).

²⁰² Subject (NO55).

²⁰³ Subject (AO61).

you're still out. ... It's not too hard to make someone say you're not that good.²⁰⁴

The result is that returnees from overseas education must learn tact in bringing their foreign expertise to bear.

People ask you all the time, what's the difference and how different does the United States do (it)? When you answer these questions you have to be very conservative. You don't just praise one country. If you praise what Taiwan does, that means you don't tell the truth. If you praise what the United States does, that means you're too for what the host country does. You have to be unbiased. What I like to say is, what we see is just the phenomena; there are lots of reasons that lead to this result, so you don't just judge the result. You have to study what caused the result.²⁰⁵

The returning officers encounter aspects of the same conservative military culture that frustrates Western analysts calling for defense reform. A senior Naval officer described the rationale military officers will offer for when confronted with a suggestion on changes to adopt:

They'll say "*guoqing bu tong*" (國情不同) or "*guojia qingkuang bu tong*" (國家情況不同). The thinking is that Taiwan's situation is different and you can't expect it to be the same.²⁰⁶

One respondent, speaking about officers who had studied at a U.S. military F-16 maintenance course, related how some older maintenance officers chose to retire rather than having to follow the instructions of younger officers who were trained overseas. He said that when he came back from that course, superiors and colleagues referred to "foreign officers" (those who had attended this training in America) and "native officers" (those who had not).²⁰⁷ Although this anecdote is about military training rather than education, the effect seems similar.

Whereas the IMET study emphasized the positive results some graduates enacted in their countries, the officers interviewed in this research pointed to the potential for change as much as actual improvements shown to date. The message seems to be that change is possible, but takes time. The officers who learn lessons overseas may have different knowledge and

²⁰⁴ Subject (NO55).

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Subject (NOX3).

²⁰⁷ Subject (AFO411), interview with the author, May 21, 2006.

ideas on how to change, but they must find ways to implement this knowledge without offending colleagues or superiors. As one Naval officer put it:

You always have something to change ... you can change *something* under your rank. But you don't change anything above your rank. That's what you have to recognize.²⁰⁸

Just because one has the opportunity doesn't mean that one will seize it. Even as those who have studied abroad rise in rank, they still face disincentives to making bold changes. An Air Force colonel with an operational background spoke about the pressures even well-intentioned senior officers face:

It's difficult to change a culture, an old system, especially if you are a pioneer ... But after these ten years ... many people, even the high rank officers, they also get the education from there, so they can take this, they can [make] the change. But even those guys, they have to take some risk to make the change. So some guys, the high-rank officers, they don't want to change because they don't think it's necessary or they don't want to take the risk to make this change. Probably they think, I just stay here for one year, I just take it safely ... it's not necessary for me to make a big change to make it better.²⁰⁹

An Air Force colonel also spoke about how as more people officers like him move through the system, they will be able to make changes, but only if they are promoted. He also specifically brings up the changes that the foreign visitors he chaperones hope to see:

I think there are more and more people like me, who have a background in study abroad. Now, we are ... in the middle of [a] military career ... I do believe we ... will sooner or later [be] in very important positions in the military. We think differently. The senior people right now, most of them, they don't have opportunity to study abroad, so they are more conservative. People like us, we are more open ... So, I do believe, sooner or later, when people like us, we [take] more important position, it will be much easier for us and for people like you to communicate with us. It will be easier. Now I always hear some foreign guests when they say, sometimes they say ... "[E]very time we meet some senior people

²⁰⁸ Subject (NO55).

²⁰⁹ Subject (AFO66).

in MND, we recommend they do this, do that, they say, “Yes! Yes! This is very important.” But after they left, the next year they came back, well, still the same thing ... Now we are in the middle, and most of the time we do what our boss tell us. If I stand a chance to get promote[d], to be a key person in the military, I do believe I will ... do something different. I will be more open, and if I am in the position I can decide how many scholarships [are] granted to the military, I will do as much as possible to offer it to those young officers to send them overseas.²¹⁰

Interestingly, this officer directly refers to the foreign pressure for reform, and suggests that it will indeed happen, and it will happen when foreign-educated officers become more widespread. Others also reflected this “biding their time” attitude; a mid-level officer echoed the same thoughts:

I wish I could change the senior people in the military, their mindset, it’s worth to keep the programs to send people overseas, not just for studying but for training.

I wish I could. Maybe I will, someday.²¹¹

Another officer, a pilot with extensive training and education experience in the United States, spoke about the growing maturity of those who wanted to enact change.

We’ve been complaining since 1997, since we started getting the F-16s. The first couple of classes of the pilots, they complained about a lot. I tell you, they complained about every little thing. But remember, this is our Air Force. Yes, you can complain about whether the regulation is right or wrong, and the leadership is good or bad. It’s still the Air Force. Unless you’re gonna jump off the bus, you’re gonna stick your butt on the bus and pray for a better driver. It took us a long time, this generation, to realize that they probably need to be more patient than the guy who jumped off the bus. One day... when they become the leadership, we can say, “that’s right!” and follow them and do it the good way.²¹²

In other words, the advocates for change must not lose patience, but must have confidence that they will be able to implement change, even if only slowly. This suggests that outside observers of Taiwan’s reforms may see the growth of effective internal military momentum for reform, as opposed to the primary motivating force being outside pressure.

²¹⁰ Subject (AFO62).

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Subject (AFO48), interview with the author, May 17, 2006.

3.8 Legislative Attention

The problems these officers face cannot strictly be proved just by their assertions. Statistically, their numbers are small compared to the overall officer population, and absent a detailed evaluation using internal military data, their observations are anecdotal and subjective. If the myriad variables to compare across career fields and military branches can be controlled for, an extensive statistical analysis may in fact disprove a possible bias against such officers, or reveal different promotion patterns for different officer situations. For instance, perhaps there is a higher promotion rate for operational officers who attend PME versus that of support officers who attend civilian education. However, anecdotes and subjective observations are not irrelevant, because perceptions are the truth for those who hold them, and will undoubtedly influence behavior. It is not unreasonable to assume an officer who perceives organizational hostility may choose to separate early from the military, or for a potential candidate to decide against overseas education for fear it may negatively affect his career. Perceptions therefore matter.

Of the nine officers with foreign education interviewed here, eight expressed sentiments qualifying how foreign education could negatively affect a career, or at least how it could be a double-edged sword. AO61 and AFO62 were fairly critical of the organizational value accorded to higher learning. NOX3 had a more balanced view weighing the institutional practices versus individual desires, suggesting that officers who pursue lengthy education such as a PhD had to accept that this option would place them behind their peers. NO55 also suggested that foreign education was an unpredictable element in an officer's career history, with equal chances to help or harm. AFO66 also criticized institutional policy regarding the use of returnees. Unsurprisingly, as mid-career officers AFO47, AFO48 and AFO59 were more guarded in assessing the overall effect of foreign education on their still incomplete careers, although they were cognizant of the same cultural pitfalls the other officers described. AFO410 was the most straightforward in asserting the positive career value of his experience, and as he is an instructor who sees his future in military education, this is understandable.

Although this group is small, in a sign that these perceptions are both widespread and believed to be true, this problem has attracted attention from within the Legislative Yuan. In an interview with the author, DPP Legislator Lee Wen-Chung explained his purpose in seeking a legal redress to the problem:

[T]hrough the law, we want to establish that when officers return from the overseas education to which we have sent them, they can have priority for promotion, and afterwards, in accordance with this law, there will be established a relatively detailed method to allow those officers ... to receive relatively good chances for transfer and promotion.²¹³

His reasoning for proposing changes directly invokes improving national defense, and the need for reform and modernization:

I want to make this change because first, we recognize that military affairs isn't just about buying weapons, but also requires software, and just as in C4ISR [command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance], people are more important, so we must train modernized military personnel. Because after Taiwan's relations with the US were broken—in fact because of Taiwan's foreign relations situation—Taiwan's military officers didn't have the opportunity to go to other countries and receive specialized training or military training.²¹⁴

Legislator Lee cites the same cultural forces within the military as other interviewees:

Within our military, the culture can also become an impediment, as their [i.e. those studying overseas] classmates and peers endure hardships in their units, [they think] “you got national money to go study, what makes you think you can come back and get promoted?” This is an obstacle, and secondly, so are superior officers, because of what I just spoke about, in those twenty years after Taiwan and the U.S. broke off relations, Taiwan's military was without any opportunity to go [abroad]. So, the majority of military personnel do not have overseas experience, and they don't appreciate those who have studied the latest skills and concepts and returned from abroad. Therefore, the whole military culture is disadvantageous towards those who have gone abroad and received training.²¹⁵

Legislator Lee notes that overseas education does not automatically mean an officer should be promoted, but instead suggests that at least, the playing field must be leveled.

²¹³ Lee Wen-Chung, interview with author, May 3, 2006. All translations by author.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Of course I am not saying if you went overseas and got a doctorate or got a master's then you of course are more excellent than other people, and therefore will become the greatest commander. This isn't my meaning, but we don't want [people] going overseas to get modern training, and then being unable to be promoted, for it to be disadvantageous to their promotion, so we just want to change this situation.²¹⁶

One practical change he wants to make is reforming how the scores for “promotion points” are calculated. Officers who have studied at command-and-staff school and senior-level, strategic PME can receive eighteen points towards promotion, but a civilian doctorate only yields one point, and a master's is only worth half a point, which he believes is inappropriate. Another proposal is to increase the funds for military education to a set level of 1.5% of the total defense budget, which would be about a three-fold increase over current levels. Although the increase is not specifically to fund more overseas education, as the majority will still be expended domestically, the number of overseas opportunities will jump as well. Lee points to the recent reduction of almost all overseas study opportunities, except for the cadet and PME programs, as proof that the overall defense budget needs to be increased.

Our genuine problem is, we don't spend enough on national defense, and the effort we've recently undertaken is to increase the national defense budget increase to 3% of GDP ... We will spend more money to buy weapons, but we want to request to take a set percentage and put it towards military education ... The rate of increase in funds for military education and training will be even higher than the rate of increase to buy weapons ...²¹⁷

Lee's emphasis on training reflects the “software versus hardware” concern that Swaine and others point out:

We spend billions to buy weapons, but we don't spend one one-hundredth of that to train our military officers. We recognize this is wrong ... I buy weapons, but maybe educational and training investments don't enjoy the same kind of

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

attention ... I feel only through this lies the road our national defense should walk,
that is, buy good weapons but we should also train people well.²¹⁸

Taken together, these threads should reassure critics in Taiwan and the U.S. that Taiwan's defense modernizations, although proceeding slowly, will find more internal proponents as time goes by. Within the ROC policy-making establishment, there is some definite recognition that education in general, and overseas education in particular, is an important component of developing a stronger military.

²¹⁸ Ibid.