

2022-2023 Taiwan (ROC) Defense Review

Executive Summary

The "2022-2023 Taiwan Defense Review" is an annual report on Taiwan's national defense and military affairs by the "Center for Peace and Security (CPAS)" affiliated with the Taipei School of Economics and Political Science Foundation. It is released mid-June each year with purpose of advancing recommendations for the reference and consideration by relevant government agencies in national defense policy making. The report is released yearly, and the research is based on government and public information, including annual budget requests, national defense reports, Quadrennial Defense Review, the Ministry of National Defense's Legislative Yuan report, government press releases and credible sources.

From 2022 to June 2023, China conducted two unprecedented coercive, military exercises targeting Taiwan. After the military exercise in August 2009, the military situation in the Taiwan Strait was completely changed. The subsequent routine and continuous naval and air intrusions gradually eroded the existed local superiority around the Taiwan air space and waters, creating a so-called "new normal" in the Taiwan Strait. In April 2023, the Eastern Theater Command of the People's liberation Army (PLA) again held a military exercise targeting Taiwan, performing "Combat Patrol around Taiwan Island" and "Keen Sword United" exercises. A large number of PLA aircrafts and warships gathered near Taiwan waters, including the newly commissioned Shandong Aircraft Carrier Battle Group (SD CBG), entering eastern Taiwan waters for the first time, and practicing aircraft take-off and landing and simulated attack drills. The People's Liberation Army's Combat Patrol Forces are aimed at restraining and attacking our naval and air forces, and the Keen Sword United Forces were aimed at performing long-range precision strikes. The Keen Sword Forces include ballistic missiles, long-range artillery rocket forces, SD CBG, etc., combined with the blockade and strike capabilities of the Combat Patrol Forces, to carry out strategic strikes on Taiwan proper, to gain sea and air superiority near Taiwan's air space and surrounding waters, and to prepare for further operations. These exercises could well become the prelude to any future Chinese military actions against Taiwan.

The two military exercises clearly reflect that China's intention and ability to use force against Taiwan are increasing by the day. The military exercises and the subsequent continuous naval and air harassments which forced Taiwan's naval and air forces to

remain at high alert and frequently respond to Chinese incursions, have caused significant wear on Taiwan's manpower and logistics, seriously eroded combat readiness. In addition, the two Chinese military exercises also indicated that "military operations other than war" or "military gray zone operations" have become regular behaviors of the PLA behavior around Taiwan. It is up to Beijing to choose between war or peace. Therefore, Taiwan, which has long regarded "deterrence" as its core defense concept and has been adapting to asymmetrical warfare concept for over a decade, needs to seriously rethink how can its legacy and asymmetric forces be effectively combined to optimize the use of resources. Taiwan must also consider how can its armed forces conduct denial operations in the homeland defense mission to ensure resolute defense. These are the main focus of this report's findings and recommendations.

Although the main theme of this report is defense strategy and asymmetric operations capability, it also covers other areas of national defense. The report is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is Defense Strategy, the second chapter is Asymmetric Capability, the third chapter is Joint Operational Capability, the fourth chapter is Cyber Operations, the fifth chapter is Reserve Capability, and the sixth chapter is Sovereign Defense Industry.

With respect to Defense Strategy, this report recommends that Taiwan employs the three elements of strategic planning, the operational logic of Ends, Ways, and Means, to create an operational mechanism that can more closely and realistically link national defense strategic planning and military operational planning, with the planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS). The Taiwan defense establishment should also adopt "top down" and "strategy to task" approaches, faithfully adhere to the guiding principles of force development: "Operational Concept, Equipment, Organization, and Training," and develop credible combat capabilities. In addition, in order to respond to changes in the military situation across the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan's armed forces should pragmatically review how to make the most economical and effective use of limited resources, so as to build an efficient defensive force. At the same time, in response to the challenge of its strategic depth being gradually compressed, Taiwan needs to review the operational strategy of using of the eastern sea and airspace as force preservation and dispersal/maneuver areas. Taiwan should even consider working with the US Seventh Fleet and the Fifth Air Force stationed in the first island chain, to develop an operational coordination plan to ensure the strategic sustainment of Taiwan and to maintain the sea lane of communication (SLOC) off Taiwan's eastern maritime zone. In addition, this report

also recommends that the relevant strategic documents of the Taiwan military be institutionalized and given sufficient legal basis and content requirements, in order to be sustainable and maintain consistency of strategy. At the same time, it is suggested that the strategic planning mechanism and related methodologies be included in the professional military education curriculum, so as to cultivate the talents for force planning of the armed forces and to enable the building of a consistent strategic concept throughout the defense establishment. Only so can the strategic concept remain current and adjust to the evolving situation.

In terms of asymmetrical capability, this report affirms that Taiwan's armed forces have gradually demonstrated a number of concrete results in the development of asymmetrical capabilities. However, recently the United States has gradually adjusted its arms sales policy towards Taiwan. In 2022, the arms procuring requirements of the procurement requests for the Navy's anti-submarine helicopters and the Air Force's airborne early warning aircraft were clearly rejected, which reflected that the Taiwan military and the US military still have different visions ideas on as to the development of asymmetric capabilities. Therefore, this report suggests that the Taiwan military should clearly define asymmetric capability, so as to ensure that the US and the Taiwan have share common, consistent thinking on regarding Taiwan's defense. Asymmetrical capability should not be only limited to attacking the enemy's strategic center of gravity, disrupting the enemy's combat tempo, and delaying the enemy's action. It should also include the concept of force planning of "building a large group of small, lethal things." In addition, this report also recommends that the Taiwan armed forces should establish a dedicated unit for the development of asymmetric capability and continue to study the asymmetric warfare related operations. Furthermore, a corresponding asymmetrical alternative must be proposed included as an option in the planning and review analysis for the acquisition of any new weapon system. We also recommend the creation of an opposing force unit with asymmetric capabilities, to regularly conduct adversarial training exercises with the legacy military forces, to review and to refine the tactics used by both the tactical actions of legacy forces and asymmetric forces. Finally, in response to the PLA's continued gray-zone military operations around Taiwan's vicinities, the armed forces should also start to adopt an asymmetrical combat mindset and work out how to deal with such threat, like "use small against big, fast against slow, land systems to deny the air and sea, or use unmanned systems to deny manned platforms" to deal with the long-term military harassment of the PLA and ensure that the Taiwan armed forces' combat readiness can be sustained for a long time.

In terms of joint capability, this report suggests that all sensors and shooters should be connected as soon as possible and a common operational picture established to facilitate unified command; at the same time, in terms of air and missile defense, a common tactical picture should be established so that the armed forces can effectively counter threats from the air. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the training of personnel at all levels of joint operations control centers, especially the members of the Joint Staffs, who would staff the various sub-centers of the Hengshan Joint Operation Command Center (JOCC) during wartime. These personnel should also receive suitable training and certifications for wartime duties whilst in peacetime, so as to gradually reduce the time of peacetime/wartime transition and eventually achieve to the goal of “zero time transition for the peace to the war status” as soon as possible.

In terms of cyber operations, this report recommends that Taiwan should realize that cyber operation is the main domain of warfare for the future, spanning the entire operational spectrum, and even before the outbreak of military conflict with China. In the cyber domain, the fight has already been engaged. It is also necessary to realize that cyber fighters are products of the digital age, and their recruitment, organization, training, and leadership need to be managed based on a different mindset. Unlike the regular forces, where more attention is on its external appearance, the cyber force, needs be focused more of the skill on the keyboard. This report recommends that the Taiwan armed forces should adapt to the current situation and change the management style and leadership culture of the cyber force, citing Israel’s Unit 8200 as an example, where the emphasis is not on the size of the cyber force, but only whether combat capability can be effectively exerted. We also recommend, enhanced coordination with private sectors, strengthening bilateral cooperation and mutual support, so that qualified civilian personnel could become a “cyber reserve force” in wartime.

In terms of reserves capability, the report affirms the many reforms of Taiwan has implemented with respect to the reserve forces and calls on the armed forces to realize that reserve is the main fighting force that reflects the determination of the whole people to defend against China militarily and deter China politically from using force. Taiwan government's decision in late 2022 to extend compulsory military service to one year, coupled with reforms of the reserve training system, is beneficial to solving the problem of reserve readiness, but current training capacity for reserve force remains inadequate. This report recommends strengthening the responsibilities and roles of local county and city level governments in reserve training; actively coordinating the implementation of regular and tactical training for reserve forces at

the local level; and eliminating the possibility of difficulties that may be encountered, or possible harassment inflicted on local people; also enabling local civilian leaders to have a certain understanding and awareness on the reserve training within their jurisdiction, which is not only beneficial to disaster relief preparations in peacetime, but also conducive to wartime preparations works. In addition, this report recommends that the armed forces should adopt the same organizational unit and individual training method as much as possible in the regular reserve training, instead of having different trainees with different troop leaders, so that it is easier to consolidate team spirit and training level of the reserve force as a whole.

In the area of sovereign defense industry, this report finds that the "Defense Industry Development Act" enacted in 2021 and its authorized regulations are very similar to the "MND Administrative Measures for the R&D, Manufacturing, and Maintenance between the National Defense Science and Technology Industry Institutions and Civilian Legal Entities" among the three regulations under the article 22 of the National Defense Act, which mandates the development of defense industry. This symptom has not only failed the good intentions of the "Defense Industry Development Act" legislation, but also causes redundancy or even waste of resources, which should be corrected as quickly as possible. In addition, the report also recommends making good use of the industrial cooperation program (ICP) mechanism. Whenever acquiring weapon systems and equipment, it is necessary to create a competitive environment and to get the best offsets from the bidders. At the same time, this report also suggests that the defense industry should not only be satisfied with the goal of providing the needs of Taiwan armed forces, but also should actively explore the international market, whether it is to become a part of the supply chain for international prime manufacturers or to be able to export complete self-made systems. Only then, can a deep-rooted foundation be established for the sovereign defense industry. In order to achieve this goal, the government must start as soon as possible to establish an export control mechanism that can be in line with international standards and build international trust. Sensitive technologies will not be allowed to fall into places where they should not be, and weapons systems will not be diverted to the wrong hands, so that more international support and assistance can be obtained, and the achievement can be reached with half the efforts.