



With Soldiers Like These? Challenges of Conscription in China and Taiwan

by Zoltan Barany

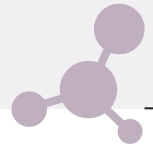
China and Taiwan have continued to conscript soldiers although their numbers (700,000 vs. 9,800) and proportion in their armed forces (about 35 per cent vs. 5 per cent) are quite different. In the People's Republic of China, the draft preserves the People's Liberation Army's access to the kind of STEM-skilled soldiers who are unlikely to volunteer and facilitates the monitoring of disaffected youths. Conscription reforms have reflected demographic changes, the requirements of mastering advanced weapons and the evolution of the strategic environment. Qualms about the quality of the PLA's conscripted soldiers suggest that a PLA invasion of Taiwan in 2027 or, indeed, in the rest of this decade, will be highly unlikely.

According to US intelligence, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Chairman of its Central Military Commission (CMC) and President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), has directed People's Liberation Army (PLA) generals to be "ready to invade Taiwan in 2027".¹ There has been much speculation in Washington and Taipei about the seriousness of Beijing's intention to make a decisive attack on Taiwan. In any event, Taiwanese military officials have identified that date as the motivation for improving their defences, increasing the number of their soldiers and advancing their training.² Conscripted personnel make up a significant proportion China's armed forces and a much smaller though growing part of the military of Taiwan (or the Republic of China Armed Forces). About 35 per cent (or 700,000 soldiers) of the approximately 2-million-strong PLA are conscripted.³ The corresponding figures for Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC) in 2025, after a major extension of conscription, are

¹ Robertson, Noah, "How DC Became Obsessed with a Potential 2027 Chinese Invasion of Taiwan", in *Defense News*, 7 May 2024, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2024/05/07/how-dc-became-obsessed-with-a-potential-2027-chinese-invasion-of-taiwan>.

² Chen, Christina, "Threat Perception in Taiwan: Trend and Implications", in *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2025), p. 187-202 at p. 199, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.18.3.2397>; "Explainer: Why Taiwan Is Simulating a 2027 Invasion?", in *BBC Monitoring*, 8 July 2025, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b0004770>.

³ Allen, Kenneth, "The Evolution of the PLA's Enlisted Force: Conscription and Recruitment (Part One)", in *China Brief*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (14 January 2022), p. 6-13 at p. 8, <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Read-the-1.14-Issue-in-PDF.pdf>.



Comparing the two militaries' conscripted contingents is critical because they serve different strategic purpose within the same conflict zone

4.57 per cent (or 9,839) of its approximately 215,000 active-duty force.⁴

Despite the massive size difference between the two militaries' conscripted contingents, comparing them is critical because they serve different strategic purpose within the same conflict zone. China employs a selective conscription regime as it calls up the types of conscripts – often those with STEM skills – who will not volunteer for the military. Taiwan, on the other hand, has implemented a universal conscription system that is more suitable for its small population. Conquering Taiwan would be a high-intensity and exceedingly complex operation; some experts have called it “the largest, most complex military operation in history” that would require massive manpower for beachhead consolidation, securing logistics, urban combat and occupying territory.⁵ While elite volunteer units may be expected to spearhead the initial invasion, the sheer scale of such a military action would necessitate using conscripts in the second wave of troops. The role of draftees in China's war plans is also critical for maintaining the momentum of the invasion of the ground.⁶

Although the draft was never abandoned in either China or Taiwan, both countries' conscription systems have gone through numerous major changes. Mandatory service periods were lengthened and shortened, youths with certain socioeconomic backgrounds and educational qualifications were disregarded and pursued, training quality and intensity was relaxed and then intensified. Both states' armed forces enlist volunteers, those who want to join the military, and thus are distinct from draftees who serve to fulfil their civic obligation. In this essay the focus is squarely on conscription and on conscripted soldiers.

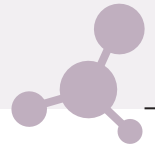
This essay centres around three contentions. First, as far as the conscripted component of its force is concerned, China's military cannot draft the kind of soldiers it wants to confidently pursue its strategic objectives. Second, after decades of lackadaisical training of its conscripted soldiers, the PRC's growing belligerence, and mounting doubts about the US coming to its aid, Taiwan has expanded the draft and improved the preparation of its military personnel to resist a potential invasion from across the Taiwan Strait. Finally, the inadequacies of PLA soldiers and the improvements in Taiwan's readiness for war are complemented by the instability in the PLA's very top ranks that has impacted the PLA's operational readiness.⁷

⁴ “Number of Conscripts in New Military Service Program up 41% in 2025”, in *Focus Taiwan*, 26 March 2025, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202503260010>.

⁵ Siebens, James et al., “Rethinking the Threat: Why China Is Unlikely to Invade Taiwan”, in *Stimson Center Reports*, 3 September 2025, <https://www.stimson.org/?p=110783>.

⁶ Blasko, Dennis J., “The PLA Army Amphibious Force: Missions, Organization, Capabilities, and Training”, in *CMSI China Maritime Reports*, No. 20 (April 2022), p. 1 and 6, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cmsi-maritime-reports/20>.

⁷ Thomas, Neil and Shengyu Wang, “Xi's Forever Purge”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 4 May 2026, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xis-forever-purge>; and McGregor, Richard,



The kind of people the PLA needs – STEM educated, politically reliable and physically fit young men – are not volunteering anywhere near in the numbers required

Therefore, this paper argues, the Chinese military will not invade Taiwan in 2027 or, indeed, even in the rest of this decade.

Following a brief examination of the two countries' conscription regimes with special attention to their recent reforms, the paper discusses shifting attitudes of Chinese and Taiwanese youths toward mandatory military service. After considering conscript training, the conclusion summarises the empirical support for the three arguments laid out above.

1. MANDATORY MILITARY SERVICE

With a virtually bottomless pool of potential volunteers to staff the enlisted ranks of China's two-million-strong military, the question of "why does the PRC bother with a hybrid system?" is inescapable.⁸ Several reasons explain the persistence of conscription in China. Chapter I Article 1 of the PRC's Military Service Law, enacted in accordance with the Constitution, mandates that "citizens perform military service [...] to guarantee the replenishment and reserve of troops, and to build up national defense and the military". Article 3 states that the PRC "implements a military service system that combines voluntary military service and compulsory military service, with voluntary military service as the mainstay".⁹ Another, more practical reason for the continuation of conscription is that the kind of people the PLA needs – STEM educated, politically reliable and physically fit young men – are not volunteering anywhere near in the numbers required.

Aside from military service being not just the obligation but the "sacred duty" of all citizens¹⁰ and the need to supply a large reserve force, conscription is also important as a part of modernisation, to preserve the CCP and the state's access to the kind of people it wants to have in the forces. Conscription has also been a form of social control, a way for the state to contain its citizens most prone to protest and resistance.¹¹ These points make clear why on 1 January 2025, the PLA commenced an intensified effort to enforce mandatory registration for all males age 18 and older. The CCP's messaging is further explained with its objective to watch over youths increasingly

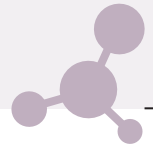
"Purging the Generals Confirms Xi's Absolute Power", in *Lowy Institute Commentaries*, 28 April 2026, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/node/41319>.

⁸ Fravel, M. Taylor, "China's 'World-Class Military' Ambitions: Origins and Implications", in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2020), p. 85-99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2020.1735850>.

⁹ Chapter I, Articles 1 and 3 in China National People's Congress, *Military Service Law of the People's Republic of China*, 20 August 2021, http://en.npc.gov.cn.cdurl.cn/2021-08/20/c_815291.htm.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter I, Article 2.

¹¹ Leander, Anna, "Drafting Community: Understanding the Fate of Conscription", in *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2004), p. 571-599, DOI 10.1177/0095327X0403000404.



The PLA's 700,000 conscripts are unevenly divided among the services with a heavier concentration in the ground troops

affected by China's growing unemployment rates and economic challenges.¹²

The PLA's 700,000 conscripts are unevenly divided among the services with a heavier concentration in the ground troops than in specialties requiring more advanced skills and technical knowledge, such as aviation and submarine corps.¹³ Every year, the PLA needs to draft about 350,000 to 400,000 soldiers: since the 2020 reforms at two different conscription drives. Some branches require conscripts to go through advanced training, but most report to their units after the three-month basic training which takes place in dedicated training bases.

The corresponding numbers in Taiwan are, of course, magnitudes smaller: in 2024 it conscripted 6,500 soldiers and 8,000 in 2025.¹⁴ Like the PRC, Taiwan also has a hybrid conscription system: volunteers make up about 75 per cent of soldiers, receive more advanced training and are placed with units that require higher skill levels. The problem is that in recent years the number of volunteers has continued to decline (although 2024 recruitment numbers were up by 2.8 per cent) which necessitates the expansion of conscription.¹⁵ In the 2024 draft cycle, the Ministry of National Defence projected 9,127 conscripts. Most of these (7,514 or 82.3 per cent) were assigned to the ROC Army while the other three branches (navy, air force and marine corps) received 1,613 (17.7 per cent) of the new soldiers.¹⁶

Seeing the vast disparities between these numbers, why does it not only "make sense" but is essential to compare the two countries' conscription systems? After all, aside from the large numerical differences both armed forces rely on a hybrid-recruitment system for their personnel. Still, the functions of the two draft systems are quite different. The PLA needs selective conscription to cherry pick the youths it wants from the large pool of registered potential draftees who would not voluntarily enlist, mainly owing to more attractive career alternatives outside of the armed forces. The role of Taiwan's universal conscription system, by contrast, is principally two-fold. First, the ROC military's manpower requirements dictate bringing into the armed forces all eligible young men to be able to effectively

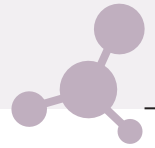
¹² Wang, Alina, "China Cracks Down on Youth with Mandatory Draft Registration, Sparking Outcry", in *Vision Times*, 16 December 2024, <https://www.visiontimes.com/?p=472188>.

¹³ Funaiole, Matthew P. and Brian Hart, "China's Military in 10 Charts", in *CSIS Commentaries*, 2 September 2025, <https://www.csis.org/node/118108>.

¹⁴ Wang, Joyu, "Taiwan's New Strategy: Make China Fear the Pain of an Invasion", in *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 May 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/taiwans-new-strategy-make-china-fear-the-pain-of-an-invasion-dfe28815>.

¹⁵ Fu, Hiro, "Taiwan Races to Scale Up Revamped Conscription Program Before 2027", in *The Diplomat*, 11 April 2025, <https://thediplomat.com/?p=286168>.

¹⁶ Dotson, John, "Taiwan Initiates Its New One-Year Military Conscription Program", in *Global Taiwan Briefs*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (7 February 2024), <https://globaltaiwan.org/?p=25283>.



Tense cross-Strait relations, doubts about US commitment to protect the island and the war in Ukraine have spurred Taiwan's recent defence reform

respond to the challenges in its deteriorating security environment. Secondly, after decades of taking a relaxed approach to national defence, Taipei must impress upon its population, its adversary across the Taiwan Strait, and its increasingly unpredictable ally across the Pacific Ocean, that it is committed to substantive defence reform.¹⁷ Expanding conscription is an important component of that reform.

2. REFORMING CONSCRIPTION

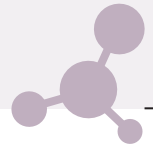
Tense cross-Strait relations, doubts about US commitment to protect the island and the war in Ukraine have spurred Taiwan's recent defence reform. President Tsai Ing-wen (2016-2024) put her political capital behind pushing these reforms, arguing that they were long overdue and deserved citizens' support. To strengthen Taiwan's defence posture, Tsai announced in December 2022 the extension of the conscription period from four to twelve months, starting in 2024. The Defence Ministry explained that the one-year training span "enables conscripts to undergo systematic and comprehensive military training, including enlistment, stationing, specialization, base training, and joint exercises – equipping them with essential combat skills and a firm resolve to defend the nation".¹⁸ Men are drafted at age 18 but college-bound youths may defer their service until after graduation. The number of conscripts is expected to increase because exemptions from serving in the armed forces have been made far more difficult than they were prior to the reforms.

The military force structure adumbrated by Tsai's government distinguishes between four categories of forces. The Main Battle Troops are composed of volunteer soldiers and are responsible for frontline security and directly engaging the enemy and acquiring skills to fulfil more specialised tasks. Conscripts comprise most of the Garrison Troops whose key responsibility is the protection of critical infrastructure and territorial defence both in the outer islands of Taiwan and close to their domicile. As garrison soldiers, conscripts will not be trained to master highly developed skills which they would be unable to maintain following their 12-month conscription period.¹⁹ The Civil Defence System is tasked with disaster relief, medical support and maintaining social order and is staffed with local government agencies (police and fire departments, medical

¹⁷ Kroenig, Matthew, "Taiwan Is Getting Serious about Self-Defense", in *Foreign Policy*, 23 May 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/23/taiwan-china-defense-war-military-us-geopolitics-alliances>.

¹⁸ Ripley, Will and Wayne Chang, "A Celebrity Draft-Dodging Scandal Lays Bare Problems with Taiwan's Crucial Reservist Force", in *CNN*, 21 June 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/21/china/taiwan-china-conscription-intl-hnk>.

¹⁹ Interview with former Minister of Defense, Andrew Nien-Dzu Yang, Taipei, 12 December 2024.



The 2021 Military Service Law facilitates the PLA's goal to attract technologically skilled personnel for the long-term

support personnel). Finally, the Reserve System, made up of former enlisted and drafted soldiers, supplements the combat and garrison forces as needed.²⁰

China updated its Military Service Law in August 2021 with enforcement of its provisions to start two months later. The new law facilitates the PLA's goal to attract technologically skilled personnel for the long-term to “boost the combat capability and modernization of the Chinese military”.²¹ It also reinforces the PLA's need for more educated draftees and eases their way into the non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps if they are willing to stay in the military following their compulsory service. In 2021 the CMC switched to a semi-annual conscription regime anticipating that it would distribute the infusion of draftees into the PLA more evenly and would make it less difficult to find the personnel with technical skills they seek. Although the regular call-up age is between ages 18 to 22, new regulations in 2022 relaxed age restrictions for highly qualified draftees and extended conscription age to 24 for four-year college graduates and up to 26 years for postgraduate students.²² The educational level of PLA conscripts has vastly improved in recent decades. Nearly all rank-and-file soldiers are now high-school graduates. The PLA's hope is that, once their mandatory service period is over, they would move on to the NCO corps or to officer training.

In April 2023 the CMC revised the Regulations for Conscription Work to reflect “Xi Jinping's thoughts on strengthening the military” – to attract the type of soldiers a world-class military needed.²³ The most important departure from past documents is the new chapter on “Wartime Conscription”. This section adjusts conscription requirements after the national defence mobilisation order is issued. It stipulates that “Servicepersons shall stop retiring from active service, and those on leave [...] shall immediately return to service”.²⁴ Furthermore, the updated service law intends to guarantee the wartime conscription of skilled soldiers; the authorities must prioritise recalling veterans, that is, recently discharged draftees

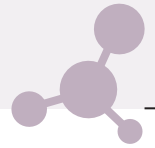
²⁰ Dotson, John, “Taiwan's ‘Military Force Restructuring Plan’ and the Extension of Conscripted Military Service”, in *Global Taiwan Briefs*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (8 February 2023), p. 4, <https://globaltaiwan.org/?p=20909>.

²¹ Liu, Xuanzun, “China's Amendment of the Military Service Law Highlights the Role of Non-Commissioned Officer”, in *Global Times*, 23 August 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1232170.shtml>.

²² Huang, Kristin, “PLA Recruitment Relaxes Age Limits, Focuses on STEM Skills”, in *South China Morning Post*, 13 August 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3188610/pla-recruitment-relaxes-age-limits-focuses-stem-skills>.

²³ Chapter I, Article 4 in China National People's Congress, *Military Service Law of the People's Republic of China*, cit. See also Corbett, Thomas and Peter W. Singer, “China's New Conscription Rules Reveal Concerns”, in *Defense One*, 8 June 2023, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2023/06/chinas-new-conscription-regulations-reveal-what-worries-pla/387292>.

²⁴ See Chapter VII, Article 44 of the 2021 Military Service Law.



China's amended military law specifies significant perquisites

who could rapidly form combat-ready units.

Holding on to capable draftees has been a long-standing problem in Taiwan as well, where most released soldiers usually have more appealing career options than the ROC armed forces. After fulfilling their service, Taiwanese conscripts are transferred to the reserves. Until recently reserve training and refresher courses were often derided as insufficient to maintain skills but in the last few years training has become more rigorous and purpose driven.²⁵ Within the framework of the military reforms, annual reserve training has increased from seven to fourteen days annually. Well over 90 per cent of reservists who are called up appear for training – they receive a per diem from the military, and their employers must accommodate them.²⁶ In July 2025, for instance, the Taiwanese armed forces conducted a ten-day around-the-clock live-fire exercise under realistic conditions in which 22,000 reservists back up regular troops.²⁷ According to a US official, “Taiwan is making good progress in enhancing the realism of training for reservists”.²⁸

3. BENEFITS, EVASION, PUNISHMENT

China's amended military law specifies significant perquisites. In 2026, first-year PLA conscripts receive a monthly allowance – about 1,000-1,200 renminbi (143-173 US dollars) and various additional payments depending on the particularities of their service. Second-year conscripts receive 1,200-1,300 renminbi (173-188 US dollars). Those who volunteer to serve in inhospitable or hardship areas such as Xinjiang or Tibet, earn a one-time disbursement of 10,000 renminbi (1,430 US dollars).²⁹ In addition, conscripts' families collect annual payments from their local governments for each of the two years of their sons' service and a separation payment once they are discharged. For conscripted college students who, following their service, return to complete their education, benefits may include reimbursement for tuition and repayment of loans. University educated conscripts are paid a one-time bonus of 4,000 renminbi (562 US dollars) while those with two- or three-year degrees get 2,000 renminbi (286 US dollars).³⁰

²⁵ Chung, Lawrence, “Taiwan Wants to Train an Effective Reserve Force. Will Live-Fire Drills Do the Job?”, in *South China Morning Post*, 7 February 2026, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3342711/taiwan-wants-train-effective-reserve-force-will-live-fire-drills-do-job>.

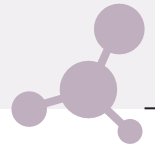
²⁶ Interview with General Gan-ming Han, Ret., Taipei, 9 December 2024.

²⁷ Bodeen, Christopher, “Taiwan Begins 10-Day Military Drills to Counter Chinese Threats”, in *AP News*, 10 July 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/10210ba9edc34137f4d48d313d268a06>.

²⁸ Ripley, Will and Wayne Chang, “A Celebrity Draft-Dodging Scandal...”, cit.

²⁹ Allen, Kenneth, “The Evolution of the PLA's Enlisted Force: Training (Part II)”, in *China Brief*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (11 February 2022), <https://jamestown.org/?p=91812>.

³⁰ Ibid.



Taiwan's new conscription scheme includes provisions to make compulsory military service more agreeable to draftees

Taiwan's new conscription scheme includes provisions to make compulsory military service more agreeable to draftees. Benefits include a 400 per cent increase in the monthly allotment of conscripts entering the service to 26,307 Taiwanese dollars or about 877 US dollars. This amount is similar to the minimum wage in the ROC. Experts believe that because much of the conscription period in the past was filled with miscellaneous non-military related tasks, a sense of wasted time was a more important reason to avoid military service than the travails of military life.³¹ Some youths protested the expanded conscription period because they considered it an disruption to education and job prospects.³² To counter these sentiments, the new decree includes the provision that the year of service in the armed forces will be credited in future civil service pensions and “a vague promise that the Ministry of Education [...] would study ways in which ‘the education[al] system can be more flexible in helping conscription-eligible men effectively use their time and transition into future careers’”.³³

According to a 2025 Taiwanese defence ministry statement, “Any attempt to evade conscription by any means should be condemned and subject to legal actions”.³⁴ Given the shortage of draftable youths and higher demand for them, the military has become more vigilant against those attempting to avoid military service, whose numbers, Ministry of Interior data show, increased from 309 in 2021 to 553 in 2023. More recently, Taiwanese young men have tried various tactics to fail the physical exam from overeating to raising their heartbeat with medication or outright bribing medical personnel. A recent celebrated case was that of the well-known actor, Darren Wang, who was accused of paying 3.6 million Taiwanese dollars (about 120,000 US dollars) for a fake hypertension diagnosis. Wang pleaded guilty to paying for forged documents, lost his court case and began his alternative military service in March 2025.³⁵

In the PRC, too, there have been numerous publicised cases of those selected for conscription to fake illnesses or to bribe the doctors conducting the physical examinations. Conversely, in economically depressed areas where youths see the military as an escape route from poverty, in some cases they pay recruiters to secure a spot in the PLA.³⁶ The 2021 Military Service Law's tone is harsher than that

³¹ Ripley, Will and Wayne Chang, “A Celebrity Draft-Dodging Scandal...”, cit.

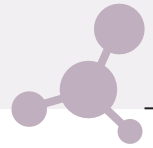
³² Tang, Shelby, “Boys Do Not Dream of War”, in *Global Taiwan Brief*, Vol. 9, No. 18 (18 September 2024), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2024/09/boys-do-not-dream-of-war>.

³³ Dotson, John, “Taiwan's ‘Military Force Restructuring Plan’...”, cit., p. 3.

³⁴ Quoted by Ripley, Will and Wayne Chang, “A Celebrity Draft-Dodging Scandal...”, cit.

³⁵ This paragraph is based on Ripley, Will and Wayne Chang, “A Celebrity Draft-Dodging Scandal...”, cit.

³⁶ Cheng, Sijin, “The Challenge of Conscription in an Era of Social Change”, in David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (eds), *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China. Swimming in a New Sea*, London/New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 235-254 at p. 244.



There is a clear correlation between the general health of the economy, the perception of threat from abroad and the conscripts' interest in their mandatory military service

of its predecessors: it emphasises the severe consequences faced by those who fail to fulfil their obligation to register. The April 2023 CMC document's Wartime Conscription chapter is also notable for its detailing of the penalties non-compliant conscripts can expect. Evading the conscription call, refusing to serve, corruption and dereliction of duty, and other related crimes incur punishments ranging from stiff fines and prohibition of resuming college education to being barred from going abroad and obtaining employment in the civil service or at a state-owned enterprise.³⁷ In an increasingly mobile society tracking down draft evaders is not an easy task. Still, those who are caught tend to pay a heavy price that is often widely publicised to deter other potential draft dodgers.³⁸

4. ATTITUDES REGARDING MILITARY SERVICE

In both China and Taiwan young men – especially educated and ambitious young men – have viewed conscription with far less enthusiasm than military authorities find desirable. There is a clear correlation between the general health of the economy, the perception of threat from abroad and the conscripts' interest in their mandatory military service. During economic booms enlistment is low along with conscripts' eagerness for entering the military; time in the military tends to be viewed as a wasted chance to take advantage of business and employment opportunities. Lately, Chinese authorities have ramped up their draft registration campaign during times of narrowing economic opportunity and high youth unemployment “as a tool to manage social unrest, crush dissent, and keep tabs on potential ‘troublemakers’”.³⁹

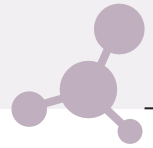
In recent years, however, as the threat from the mainland has intensified and the Tsai and Lai Ching-te (2024-) governments laid out a compelling case for more robust national defence, military service has been viewed by a growing number of conscripts as an important part of doing their duty as citizens of a peaceful democratic state bullied by a much larger authoritarian neighbour. Experts have noted that peer pressure to serve and thus prepare to protect the country has noticeably increased.⁴⁰ Beijing's concerted efforts to influence public opinion in Taiwan – cyberattacks, propaganda campaigns, the

³⁷ Interview with former Minister of Defense, Andrew Nien-Dzu Yang, Taipei, 12 December 2024.

³⁸ Zhang, Phoebe, “China Uses Carrots and Sticks to Boost Military Ranks and Discourage Dodgers”, in *South China Morning Post*, 18 May 2025, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3310772/china-uses-carrots-and-sticks-boost-military-ranks-and-discourage-dodgers>.

³⁹ Wang, Alina, “China Cracks Down on Youth with Mandatory Draft Registration”, cit.

⁴⁰ Interview with Col. Hui-Ming Tung, Taipei, 12 December 2024.



Beijing's concerted efforts to influence public opinion in Taiwan – cyberattacks, propaganda campaigns, the use of social media platforms – have backfired

use of social media platforms – have backfired.⁴¹

The proportion of Taiwan's residents who identify as "Taiwanese" rather than "Chinese" has been growing continuously as tracked by decades of public opinion polls. A survey organised by National Cheng-Chi University's Election Study Center in late 2021 found that 62.3 per cent of the respondents identified as Taiwanese, 31.7 per cent as Taiwanese/Chinese and only 2.8 per cent as Chinese.⁴² These numbers are remarkable because in 1992 only 17.6 per cent classified themselves as Taiwanese.⁴³ The substantial increase of those who identify as Taiwanese is important as it indicates that a growing proportion of Taiwanese residents would be likely to defend their island.

A number of recent polls have also confirmed Taiwanese citizens' approval of the extended conscription service: surveys conducted in 2023 and 2024 registered support for the measure in the 83 to 85 per cent range, with only slightly lower support (around 78 per cent) among military age respondents.⁴⁴ Similarly, studies have highlighted the growing willingness among Taiwanese to engage in or to die for the armed defence of their country. While in 2016 more than 80 per cent of Taiwanese believed that resistance in a potential conflict with China would be futile, six years later their proportion nearly halved to 43 per cent.⁴⁵ The perception of US disposition to come to the aid of Taiwan in a potential conflict with China further raises the proportion of Taiwanese who are ready to fight.⁴⁶

Concerns about the quality of conscripts beginning their military service have been publicised in both countries. The PLA has been clearly worried about the physical condition of its recruits. Chinese studies have traced the continuous decline of students' and draftees' physical fitness that has compromised their ability to satisfy the minimum standards the PLA requires. According to 2018 data in one major city, 52.98 per cent of the candidates for conscription were

⁴¹ Gordon, Philip H. and Ryan Hass, "Nobody Lost Taiwan", in *Foreign Affairs*, 22 September 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/taiwan/nobody-lost-taiwan>.

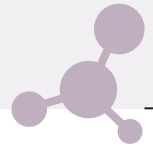
⁴² Wendler, John Ross, "Misleading a Pandemic: The Viral Effects of Chinese Propaganda and the Coronavirus", in *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 104 (2022), p. 32-39, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2884217>.

⁴³ Saunders, Phillip C., "Three Logics of Chinese Policy Toward Taiwan: An Analytic Framework", in Joel Wuthnow et al. (eds), *Crossing the Strait. China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan*, Washington, National Defense University Press, 2022, p. 35-63 at p. 54-55, <https://digitalcommons.ndu.edu/books-and-book-chapters/2>.

⁴⁴ Lee, Kuan-chen, "Now That It's a Reality, Does Taiwan Still Back Extended Military Conscription?", in *The Diplomat*, 28 March 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/?p=263737>.

⁴⁵ Wang, Austin and Nadia Eldemerdash, "National Identity, Willingness to Fight, and Collective Action", in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (2023), p. 745-759, DOI 10.1177/00223433221099058.

⁴⁶ Wu, Wen-Chin et al., "Taiwanese Public Opinion on the Chinese and US Military Presence in the Taiwan Strait", in *The China Quarterly*, No. 256 (2023), p. 1085-1098, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741023000218>.



Concerns about the quality of conscripts beginning their military service have been publicised in both countries

eliminated owing to poor eyesight, obesity and other conditions.⁴⁷ An official Chinese source claims that these outcomes are the result of “the people’s rising living standards, nutritional imbalance, and over-use of electronic products” along with heavy homework burdens and lack of time to exercise.⁴⁸ Remarkably, such poor rates of physical fitness were produced after authorities had repeatedly adjusted downward minimum standards in order to draft people with sought-after educational qualifications. In 2014, for instance, the Conscription Office of the Ministry of National Defence in its “Physical Examination Standards for Citizens Eligible for Enlistment” lowered minimum height for males from 162 centimetres to 160 centimetres, minimal weight from no more than 25 per cent over the standard weight to no more than 30 per cent over standard weight, while eyesight requirements were changed to allow the conscription of those with poorer vision than previously.⁴⁹

In 2025 the Taiwanese military also revised its standards to qualify for exemption from mandatory military service based on physical factors. For those seeking medical exemption, monitoring by military doctors was increased from one to three days. Under the new guidelines only those whose BMI is 45 or higher and those whose height is less than 144 centimetres can avoid conscription.⁵⁰ In recent years mental health issues have received more attention in both the PLA and the Taiwanese armed forces. A Taiwanese legislator called attention to the small number of licensed psychological counsellors available to conscripts, even though between 2016 and 2024 134 soldiers committed suicide.⁵¹

5. TRAINING

Basic training – eight weeks in the Taiwanese military, twelve in the PLA Navy, Air Force and Rocket Force but six months in the PLA Army that includes some specialty training – is similar in the two militaries although some changes have taken place in both during the past decade. In both armed forces basic training is now undertaken in dedicated training units and facilities after which draftees are

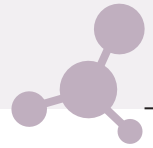
⁴⁷ Allen, Kenneth, “The Evolution of the PLA’s Enlisted Force: Conscription and Recruitment (Part One)”, cit., p. 9.

⁴⁸ Dapeng, Huang, “High Failure Rate of Conscription Physical Examination Requires Improvement of Chinese Adolescents’ Physical Fitness”, in *China Military Online*, 6 September 2018, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/4824309.html.

⁴⁹ Wang, Shumei, “The PLA and Student Recruits: Reforming China’s Conscription System”, in *ISDP Asia Papers*, January 2015, p. 12, <https://www.isdp.eu/?p=24601>.

⁵⁰ DeAeth, Duncan, “Taiwan Revises Exemption Standards for Military Conscription”, in *Taiwan News*, 14 December 2025, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6264692>.

⁵¹ Ko, Patrick, “Taiwan’s Military Reform Is Failing Where It Matters Most”, in *Defense News*, 13 June 2025, <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/2025/06/13/taiwans-military-reform-is-failing-where-it-matters-most>.



Basic training is similar in the two militaries although some changes have taken place in both during the past decade

transferred to their operational elements where they participate in specialised training. In both militaries draftees are organised into companies, about a hundred soldiers in each, further subdivided into platoons and squads just like in Soviet-type armies of old. In the PLA physical conditioning – including thrice-weekly five-kilometre runs – marching in formation, basic tactical movements, target shooting, and the like take up about two-thirds of the training time of the minimum of eight weeks.⁵²

Taiwan's defence ministry has vowed to overhaul the basic training regimen and make it more suitable for modern warfare. Besides physical conditioning, the ROC military boot camps are focused on imparting basic combat skills like “firing rifles in different positions, crawling forward in simulated scenarios filled with explosions”, hands-on training for CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive) threats, combat trauma rescue, “and providing emergency first aid”.⁵³ In the 6th week, draftees may take the specialty selection test based on the skills they have learned in the private sector. Those who have not participated in the specialty selection test are assigned a unit in a main or outer island garrison units in the 7th week. Conscripts first draw lots to decide the order of selection and then choose the service unit from the available alternatives. The armed forces endeavour to make the personnel in individual units diverse and assigns conscripts from different locations and socioeconomic backgrounds as feasible.⁵⁴

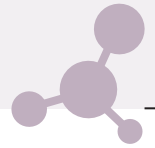
Conscript training in Taiwan for decades received little attention from military leaders; in terms of acquired skills; too much formalism and unrealistic training scenarios devalued the already short training period. Tsai vowed that “Future mandatory service training will refer to the training methods used in the United States and other advanced nations”.⁵⁵ The recent reforms in the ROC military explicitly target the conscripts' learning of practical, useful military skills and to minimise time spent on non-essential military tasks. The 2025 Quadrennial Defence Review of the Ministry of Defence devotes an entire section to “Conducting Realistic Training” and seeks to ramp up the intensity of training, enhance skill levels and “immediate combat-readiness capabilities”. Conscript training also prioritised the raising of “combat capacities for all units”. Following basic training, conscripts are stationed at units where they undergo more

⁵² Blasko, Dennis J., “PLA Conscript and Noncommissioned Officer Individual Training”, in Roy Kamphausen et al. (eds), *The “People” in the PLA. Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military*, Carlisle, Strategic Studies Institute, 2008, p. 99-137 at p. 107-108, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/91946/PLA_Recruitment_full.pdf.

⁵³ Lee, Kuan-chen, “Now That It's a Reality, Does Taiwan Still Back Extended Military Conscription?”, cit.

⁵⁴ Interview with MG Ko Yung-sen, via email, December 2024.

⁵⁵ Dotson, John, “Taiwan's ‘Military Force Restructuring Plan’...”, cit., p. 3.



specialised units where “they will learn to operate man-portable air-defense (MANPAD) systems, anti-armor weapons, and UAVs to build up combat readiness capabilities”.⁵⁶

There is little doubt that training in the PLA has become more intensive and pragmatic though even according to Chinese military sources many shortcomings remain from “training resources imbalance” and inadequate number of troops trained in high-tech operations, to ship maintenance (the cause for holding back promotions) and, more generally, the dire “shortage of talent”.⁵⁷ Recent large-scale exercises of the PLA Navy in the waters surrounding Taiwan demonstrate the advances the PLA has made in combat training but these operations employed professionals, not conscripts. Another major PLA weakness recently admitted by the PLA is the persisting difficulties with joint operational training and capabilities.⁵⁸ Moreover, although in more distinctive fields of warfare, like special operations, PLA forces appear to have improved greatly in recent years, doubts remain about the combat readiness of ordinary conscripts.⁵⁹

6. ASSESSMENT

Conscripted soldiers remain an integral part of the Chinese and Taiwanese armed forces. Although the two countries have maintained different conscription systems – selective in the PRC, universal in the ROC – the draft has undergone many changes in past decades in both reflecting their evolving international standings, ambitions and concerns. The particulars of conscription in the PLA have been driven by the PRC’s expanding strategic aspirations and influence. Taiwanese conscription policy, however, has primarily reflected Taipei’s relations with Beijing. Its recent reform and increasing attention to improved training has reflected the fact that the ROC has been on the receiving end of Chinese aggression. Taiwan’s perception of uncertain and unpredictable US willingness to come to its aid, has

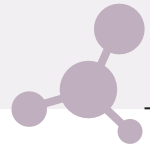
**Taiwanese
conscription policy
has primarily
reflected Taipei’s
relations with Beijing**

⁵⁶ Taiwan Ministry of National Defense, *2025 Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2025, p. 34, <https://www.mnd.gov.tw/en/InformationServices/QDR>.

⁵⁷ Huang, Kristin, “Chinese Military Short of Troops Trained in Hi-Tech Operations, PLA Daily Reveals in Rare Show of Candour”, in *South China Morning Post*, 2 January 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3205251/chinese-military-short-troops-trained-hi-tech-operations-pla-daily-reveals-rare-show-candour>.

⁵⁸ Dang, Yaun Yue, “China’s Military Mouthpiece Calls for ‘Deep Integration’ to Beat Joint Operation Weakness”, in *South China Morning Post*, 13 October 2025, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3328826/deep-integration-chinese-military-will-overcome-its-weaknesses-pla-mouthpiece>.

⁵⁹ Arostegui, Joshua, “Adapting to Future Wars. The Reorganization of the PLA Army’s Special Operations Forces and the Move Toward Professionalization”, in *China Military Studies Review*, Vol. 1 (25 September 2025), p. 43-61, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/China-Military-Studies-Review/CMSR-2025-Adapting-to-Future-Wars>.



also shaped its defence plans.

As Wang Shumei, a Senior Colonel of the PLA's Academy of Military Science opined, "[t]alent has traditionally always been the scarcest resource for the modernization of China's armed forces".⁶⁰ The PLA's personnel continue to be its Achilles' heel, a sizable chink in its armour. This assessment, meant for the officer corps, is just as valid for the PLA's conscript contingent. After more than 75 years of evolution and the intensive and extensive campaigns of the past decade-and-a-half, "The people of the PLA remain the weakest link of China's defense modernization effort".⁶¹ This vulnerability limits the utility of Beijing's state-of-the art weapons.

Both the PLA and the ROC military have consistently encountered challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers qualified for positions requiring technological sophistication. In terms of conscription, they both have the power to draft STEM-skilled youths who nonetheless continue to be reluctant and have little interest in staying in the armed forces beyond their mandatory service period. Therefore, their value for the armies remains limited. Taiwan now seems ready to adequately resource its national defence and its youths are more committed to defending their democracy than they have been for decades. Its upgraded conscription scheme is a big step in the right direction and an important component of its broader defence reform. The ROC armed forces' improved training regime has generated substantial momentum toward a more robust, prepared and competent military force that promises to ably serve the country's porcupine strategy.

Fourteen years into the Xi era, the PLA continues to bleed from several wounds. The most consequential of these is clearly the high command's widespread corruption and questionable loyalty to basic CCP principles. Especially troubling from the CCP's perspective is that the ever-growing group of disgraced generals has included those in charge of planning and leading a potential future invasion of Taiwan. It is highly doubtful that Xi's regime will venture to attack Taiwan by 2027, and indeed, in this decade, with a military force composed of unstable leadership and second-rate soldiers.

⁶⁰ Wang, Shumei, "The PLA and Student Recruits", cit., p. 18.

⁶¹ Mei, Shanshan et al., "People Win Wars: A 2022 Reality Check on PLA Enlisted Force and Related Matters", in *War on the Rocks*, 12 August 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/?p=27419>.



References

- Allen, Kenneth, "The Evolution of the PLA's Enlisted Force: Conscription and Recruitment (Part One)", in *China Brief*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (14 January 2022), p. 6-13, <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Read-the-1.14-Issue-in-PDF.pdf>
- Allen, Kenneth, "The Evolution of the PLA's Enlisted Force: Training (Part II)", in *China Brief*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (11 February 2022), <https://jamestown.org/?p=91812>
- Arostegui, Joshua, "Adapting to Future Wars. The Reorganization of the PLA Army's Special Operations Forces and the Move Toward Professionalization", in *China Military Studies Review*, Vol. 1 (25 September 2025), p. 43-61, <https://www.usmdu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/China-Military-Studies-Review/CMSR-2025-Adapting-to-Future-Wars>
- Blasko, Dennis J., "The PLA Army Amphibious Force: Missions, Organization, Capabilities, and Training", in *CMSI China Maritime Reports*, No. 20 (April 2022), <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cmsi-maritime-reports/20>
- Blasko, Dennis J., "PLA Conscript and Noncommissioned Officer Individual Training", in Roy Kamphausen et al. (eds), *The "People" in the PLA. Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military*, Carlisle, Strategic Studies Institute, 2008, p. 99-137, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/91946/PLA_Recruitment_full.pdf
- Bodeen, Christopher, "Taiwan Begins 10-Day Military Drills to Counter Chinese Threats", in *AP News*, 10 July 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/10210ba9edc34137f4d48d313d268a06>
- Chen, Christina, "Threat Perception in Taiwan: Trend and Implications", in *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2025), p. 187-202, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.18.3.2397>
- Cheng, Sijin, "The Challenge of Conscription in an Era of Social Change", in David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (eds), *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China. Swimming in a New Sea*, London/New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 235-254
- China National People's Congress, *Military Service Law of the People's Republic of China*, 20 August 2021, http://en.npc.gov.cn.cdurl.cn/2021-08/20/c_815291.htm
- Chung, Lawrence, "Taiwan Wants to Train an Effective Reserve Force. Will Live-Fire Drills Do the Job?", in *South China Morning Post*, 7 February 2026, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3342711/taiwan-wants-train-effective-reserve-force-will-live-fire-drills-do-job>
- Corbett, Thomas and Peter W. Singer, "China's New Conscription Rules Reveal Concerns", in *Defense One*, 8 June 2023, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2023/06/chinas-new-conscription-regulations-reveal-what-worries-pla/387292>
- Dang, Yaunyue, "China's Military Mouthpiece Calls for 'Deep Integration' to Beat Joint Operation Weakness", in *South China Morning Post*, 13 October 2025, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3328826/deep-integration-chinese-military-will-overcome-its-weaknesses-pla-mouthpiece>
- Dapeng, Huang, "High Failure Rate of Conscription Physical Examination Requires Improvement of Chinese Adolescents' Physical Fitness", in *China Military Online*, 6 September 2018, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/4824309.html
- DeAeth, Duncan, "Taiwan Revises Exemption Standards for Military Conscription", in *Taiwan News*, 14 December 2025, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6264692>
- Dotson, John, "Taiwan Initiates Its New One-Year Military Conscription Program", in *Global Taiwan Briefs*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (7 February 2024), <https://globaltaiwan.org/?p=25283>
- Dotson, John, "Taiwan's 'Military Force Restructuring Plan' and the Extension of Conscripted Military Service", in *Global Taiwan Briefs*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (8 February 2023), <https://globaltaiwan.org/?p=20909>
- Fravel, M. Taylor, "China's 'World-Class Military' Ambitions: Origins and Implications", in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2020), p. 85-99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2020.1735850>
- Fu, Hiro, "Taiwan Races to Scale Up Revamped Conscription Program Before 2027", in *The Diplomat*, 11 April 2025, <https://thediplomat.com/?p=286168>
- Funairole, Matthew P. and Brian Hart, "China's Military in 10 Charts", in *CSIS Commentaries*, 2 September 2025, <https://www.csis.org/node/118108>
- Gordon, Philip H. and Ryan Hass, "Nobody Lost Taiwan", in *Foreign Affairs*, 22 September 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/taiwan/nobody-lost-taiwan>
- Huang, Kristin, "Chinese Military Short of Troops Trained in Hi-Tech Operations, PLA Daily Reveals in Rare Show of Candour", in *South China Morning Post*, 2 January 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3205251/chinese-military-short-troops-trained-hi-tech-operations-pla-daily-reveals-rare-show-candour>



- Huang, Kristin, "PLA Recruitment Relaxes Age Limits, Focuses on STEM Skills", in *South China Morning Post*, 13 August 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3188610/pla-recruitment-relaxes-age-limits-focuses-stem-skills>
- Ko, Patrick, "Taiwan's Military Reform Is Failing Where It Matters Most", in *Defense News*, 13 June 2025, <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/2025/06/13/taiwans-military-reform-is-failing-where-it-matters-most>
- Kroenig, Matthew, "Taiwan Is Getting Serious about Self-Defense", in *Foreign Policy*, 23 May 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/23/taiwan-china-defense-war-military-us-geopolitics-alliances>
- Leander, Anna, "Drafting Community: Understanding the Fate of Conscription", in *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2004), p. 571-599, DOI 10.1177/0095327X0403000404
- Lee, Kuan-chen, "Now That It's a Reality, Does Taiwan Still Back Extended Military Conscription?", in *The Diplomat*, 28 March 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/?p=263737>
- Liu, Xuanzun, "China's Amendment of the Military Service Law Highlights the Role of Non-Commissioned Officer", in *Global Times*, 23 August 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1232170.shtml>
- McGregor, Richard, "Purging the Generals Confirms Xi's Absolute Power", in *Lowy Institute Commentaries*, 28 April 2026, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/node/41319>
- Mei, Shanshan et al., "People Win Wars: A 2022 Reality Check on PLA Enlisted Force and Related Matters", in *War on the Rocks*, 12 August 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/?p=27419>
- Ripley, Will and Wayne Chang, "A Celebrity Draft-Dodging Scandal Lays Bare Problems with Taiwan's Crucial Reservist Force", in *CNN*, 21 June 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/21/china/taiwan-china-conscription-intl-hnk>
- Robertson, Noah, "How DC Became Obsessed with a Potential 2027 Chinese Invasion of Taiwan", in *Defense News*, 7 May 2024, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2024/05/07/how-dc-became-obsessed-with-a-potential-2027-chinese-invasion-of-taiwan>
- Saunders, Phillip C., "Three Logics of Chinese Policy Toward Taiwan: An Analytic Framework", in Joel Wuthnow et al. (eds), *Crossing the Strait. China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan*, Washington, National Defense University Press, 2022, p. 35-63, <https://digitalcommons.ndu.edu/books-and-book-chapters/2>
- Siebens, James et al., "Rethinking the Threat: Why China Is Unlikely to Invade Taiwan", in *Stimson Center Reports*, 3 September 2025, <https://www.stimson.org/?p=110783>
- Taiwan Ministry of National Defense, *2025 Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2025, <https://www.mnd.gov.tw/en/InformationServices/QDR>
- Tang, Shelby, "Boys Do Not Dream of War", in *Global Taiwan Brief*, Vol. 9, No. 18 (18 September 2024), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2024/09/boys-do-not-dream-of-war>
- Thomas, Neil and Shengyu Wang, "Xi's Forever Purge", in *Foreign Affairs*, 4 May 2026, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xis-forever-purge>
- Wang, Alina, "China Cracks Down on Youth with Mandatory Draft Registration, Sparking Outcry", in *Vision Times*, 16 December 2024, <https://www.visiontimes.com/?p=472188>
- Wang, Austin and Nadia Eldemerdash, "National Identity, Willingness to Fight, and Collective Action", in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 60, No. 5 (2023), p. 745-759, DOI 10.1177/00223433221099058
- Wang, Joyu, "Taiwan's New Strategy: Make China Fear the Pain of an Invasion", in *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 May 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/taiwans-new-strategy-make-china-fear-the-pain-of-an-invasion-dfe28815>
- Wang, Shumei, "The PLA and Student Recruits: Reforming China's Conscription System", in *ISDP Asia Papers*, January 2015, <https://www.isdp.eu/?p=24601>
- Wendler, John Ross, "Misleading a Pandemic: The Viral Effects of Chinese Propaganda and the Coronavirus", in *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 104 (2022), p. 32-39, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2884217>
- Wu, Wen-Chin et al., "Taiwanese Public Opinion on the Chinese and US Military Presence in the Taiwan Strait", in *The China Quarterly*, No. 256 (2023), p. 1085-1098, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741023000218>
- Zhang, Phoebe, "China Uses Carrots and Sticks to Boost Military Ranks and Discourage Dodgers", in *South China Morning Post*, 18 May 2025, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3310772/china-uses-carrots-and-sticks-boost-military-ranks-and-discourage-dodgers>

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) is a private, independent non-profit think tank, founded in 1965 on the initiative of Altiero Spinelli. IAI seeks to promote awareness of international politics and to contribute to the advancement of European integration and multilateral cooperation. Its focus embraces topics of strategic relevance such as European integration, security and defence, international economics and global governance, energy, climate and Italian foreign policy; as well as the dynamics of cooperation and conflict in key geographical regions such as the Mediterranean and Middle East, Asia, Eurasia, Africa and the Americas. IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*AffarInternazionali*), two book series (*Trends and Perspectives in International Politics* and *IAI Research Studies*) and some papers' series related to IAI research projects (*Documenti IAI*, *IAI Papers*, etc.).

Via dei Montecatini, 17
I-00186 Rome, Italy
T +39 06 6976831
www.iai.it



Latest IAI Papers

Editor: **Riccardo Alcaro** (r.alcaro@iai.it)
ISSN 2610-9603 | ISBN 978-88-9368-401-9

- 26 | 04 Zoltan Barany, *With Soldiers Like These? Challenges of Conscription in China and Taiwan*
- 26 | 03 Ludovica Castelli and Ali Alkış, *Four Years of Nuclear Piracy: Zaporizhzhia and the Weaponisation of Civilian Nuclear Infrastructure*
- 26 | 02 Raffaella Bruno, *Rightsizing Taiwan's Strategic Value*
- 26 | 01 Aurelio Insisa, *What Lies Beneath: Hybrid Threats to Taiwan's Submarine Cables and the Contest in the Information Domain*
- 25 | 38 Tereza Novotná, *Beyond the Pivot: Expanding South Korea's Global Role and G7 Cooperation in a New Era*
- 25 | 37 Tarek Megerisi, *North Africa's Security Landscape and Its Mediterranean Impact*
- 25 | 36 Stephen J. Flanagan, *Shifting Dynamics in Transatlantic Relations: Implications for Mediterranean Security*
- 25 | 35 Irene Panozzo, *The Horn of Africa and the Mediterranean: Much Closer Than It Seems*
- 25 | 34 Julien Barnes-Dacey, *New (Dis)Orders in the Mediterranean: Regional Dynamics*
- 25 | 33 Luis Simón, *Europe's Strategic Transformation: Implications for the Mediterranean Region*