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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND CIVIL DEFENSE OF TAIWAN: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Key words: Taiwan, disaster preparedness, civil defense.

Disaster preparedness, civil resilience, and civil defense are playing an increasingly significant role in social environment organizations, particularly during wars and natural disasters. Taiwan has taken Ukraine as a model for developing its civil defense model, which is applicable in particular conditions and situations in Taiwan. Initially, it is essential to clearly define the term “civil defense,” as used by the author in this article.

Civil defense, also known as civil protection, involves safeguarding a country's citizens–primarily non-combatants–from both natural and human-made disasters. It relies on emergency management principles, including prevention, mitigation, preparation, response, emergency evacuation, and recovery.

Particularly, the cautiousness rose after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In June 2024, the President of Taiwan (ROC), Lai Ching-te (賴清德), established the *Whole-of-Society Defense Resilience Committee* in response to a call from various social organizations, addressing existing disaster-related and security concerns. The committee's three main tasks are: 1) to serve as a platform for social participation, 2) to be a bridge for social communication, and 3) to be an engine for policy effectiveness, through which it aims to foster social consensus and put that into action. These tasks must be utilized in 5 main directions:

1. Civilian force training & utilization;
2. Strategic preparation & critical supply distribution;
3. Energy & critical infrastructure operations & maintenance;
4. Social welfare, medical care & evacuation facility readiness;
5. Information, transportation & financial network protection. [1]

However, as mentioned earlier, this initiative was a response to the calls of various social groups and includes not only war-related cases, but also serves as a mechanism for preserving sustainability during natural disasters, such as earthquakes and typhoons, which are very common in this region.

Nevertheless, before the establishment of this committee, Taiwan already had a group of NGOs that aimed to create a national resilience system. There were three main dimensions of their work:

(1) The "China factor-focused" group aligns with the 'pro-Taiwan' political spectrum and is concerned about the rising Chinese political and military threats to Taiwan, including organizations like *Kuma Academy*, *Taiwan Militia Association*, *Watchout*, and *Taiwan Hemlock Civil Defense*.

(2) The "all hazards approach" group emphasizes human security and disaster prevention, represented by groups such as *Forward Alliance* and *#WhatCivilDefense*.

(3) The "technical skills-oriented" group specializes in military-related skills, including handling airsoft guns, operating handheld radios, and wilderness survival, with members like *Polar Light*, *Camp 66*, *Special Tactical Armory*, and *National Defense Educational Training*. [4]

At the same time, these organizations represent only a Western-visible part of Taiwan's civil defense society, which also encompasses various clusters, including the Volunteer Firefighter Cluster, Religious Cluster, Veteran Cluster, Logistics Cluster, Social Welfare Cluster, Medical Cluster, Volunteer Cluster, Local Community Cluster, and Educational Cluster. [9] These organizations represent different social, political, and interest groups, which makes their integration into the government-led system even more challenging. However, they are the majority of all crisis-solving groups in Taiwan and the backbone of the disaster response and preparedness systems at the civilian and local levels.

All of these groups offer various training programs to the civilian population, which can enhance the general level of social preparedness and

resilience in the event of multiple scenarios; however, the scope of engagement among the civilian population is minimal.

Many groups still operate unaware of each other, with minimal cooperation. Grassroots organizations act independently of central authorities. Local volunteer groups focus on natural disaster response, not preparing for full-scale conflicts like anthropogenic disasters. Charity organizations like Tzu-chi are also essential in mobilizing volunteers and resources during emergencies. Following the destructive Typhoon Ragasa in Hualian County, on Taiwan's east coast, twenty thousand volunteers participated in the cleanup and rescue efforts. [6; 7]

Nevertheless, Taiwanese society demonstrates incredible mobilization potential and civil resilience in response to natural disasters; the situation might be different in the case of a possible conflict with China. According to the Release of the 2024 Fourth Wave of the "Taiwan National Defense Surveys" conducted by the Institute of National Defense Research, 69% of respondents are willing to join volunteer civil defense organizations or community defense activities, with Green camp supporters showing higher willingness (92%) compared to Blue, mostly KMT, camp supporters (47%). [3] However, the question is about the real amount and quality of mobilizational reserve in the case of a full-scale military conflict amid active informational and cognitive warfare from the PRC. Articles like "Young Taiwanese aren't so anti-China. That's a problem for the island's government" (2025) and "Experts sound alarm over low awareness of China threat among Taiwan's youth" (2024) directly speak about the highly possible polarization of society in the case of the conflict by the age groups. [2; 8] The conclusion questions the effectiveness of social mobilizations and whether certain groups will participate in civil defense efforts, especially in a full-scale cross-strait conflict.

The president of Taiwan has set a goal to achieve Whole-Of-Society Resilience and train 400,000 citizens to contribute to societal resilience in various scenarios. However, this ambitious aim requires substantial resources, as well as the time and willingness of the Taiwanese society. [5] It is itself a very desirable aim, because efficient crisis response in cases of both natural and anthropogenic origin disasters requires sufficient cooperation between cross-departmental and civilian structures. For example, the 2025 Han Kuang military Exercise is the first time civilians participate in these yearly drills.

In 2025, the agency under Taiwan's Ministry of Defense released an updated brochure aimed at boosting public understanding of behavior in potential crises. Compared to the 2023 edition, this new version places an explicit emphasis on wartime situations. It also includes information about recognizing disinformation and preparing go-bags, and encourages parents to share this information with their children. The first edition comprises 5,000 copies and is also available online. During late 2025 – first part of 2026 Taiwanese officials plan provide 10 million of copies among Taiwanese households.

Conclusion. Currently, Taiwan's civil defense and disaster preparedness systems are still in the stage of active development. The current government and the president of Taiwan have been establishing and implementing various initiatives to enhance social preparedness for different scenarios. At the same time, Taiwan has an almost autonomous system of civilian groups and organizations, whose visions of disaster preparedness and civil defense differ significantly from those of the governmental authorities and among themselves due to various political and other factors. This renders the development of a unified system particularly challenging, yet still achievable.

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CHINA'S "PRINCIPLED NEUTRALITY" AT THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

Key words: China, United Nations, principled neutrality, diplomacy, Russo-Ukrainian war.

This paper examines China's performance of "principled neutrality" in the United Nations during the Russo-Ukrainian war (covered period: 2014–2025). In Chinese diplomatic language, neutrality is expressed through formulas such as an "objective and impartial position" (客观公正立场), "fair and impartial" (公正), "not taking sides" (不选边站), "promoting peace and dialogue" (劝和促谈), and the "independent foreign policy of peace" (独立自主的和平外交政策). Using a "words and deeds" framework, the study traces how China's declared neutrality in speech contrasts with–or is selectively reinforced by–its observable behavior across UN organs. While China frames this stance as a principled commitment to the UN Charter and to peaceful dispute settlement, systematic analysis shows that neutrality functions less as a doctrine and more as a strategic performance shaped by China's political stakes, institutional preferences, and relational alignments.

A qualitative reading of Chinese speeches in the UN Security Council and General Assembly reveals that the linguistic repertoire used by Chinese representatives remains remarkably consistent across time, venues, and personalities. Actor nomination avoids naming Russia directly and instead relies on generic collectivities such as "all parties," "the relevant sides," and