



## ***STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AGAINST THE “INVISIBLE WAR”: A FIRST TEST OF TAIWAN’S CIVIL DEFENSE HANDBOOK***

**BY CHRISTINA CHEN**

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Beijing characterizes Taiwan as an inseparable “renegade province”—a claim framed as [essential](#) to the territorial integrity of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the historical legitimacy of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since 2006, the PRC has [escalated](#) its hybrid warfare strategy, focusing on undermining Taiwanese society through disinformation campaigns. The danger of an “invisible war,” subtly creating division within Taiwan by fostering public distrust toward the government and among citizens, preventing unity against China, necessitates a strong response from government, civil society, and international community.

In light of this urgent situation, the Taiwanese government [announced](#) the Whole-of-Society Defense and Resilience (WOSR) Committee in June 2024 and has been bolstering civil defense ever since. The efforts demonstrate the Taiwanese government’s intentions to increase Taiwanese society’s preparedness against the Chinese threat—as the government and society become more involved in WOSR, the island can demonstrate its growing resolve, which in turn strengthens deterrence.

A big part of the WOSR is resilience against misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Education is crucial to improving determination because it makes it easier to quickly and accurately detect and disseminate information, which helps the public understand what needs to be done and what knowledge is needed in a crisis. Following this principle, the Ministry of National Defense has [announced](#) the release of new security guidelines in an updated new civil defense handbook (commonly known as the

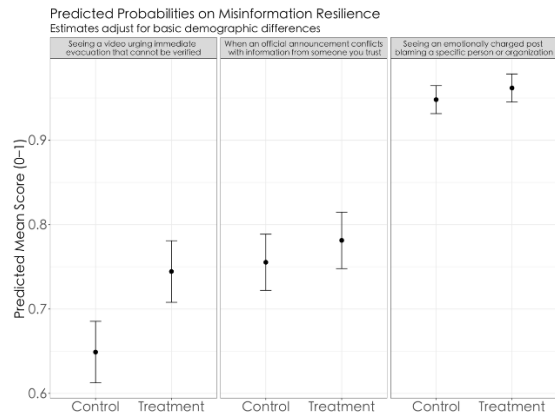
“Little Orange Book”). What is the effect of the recent WOSR effort in helping the Taiwanese public increase their resilience against Chinese misinformation or disinformation, mainly their ability to detect misinformation or disinformation and act calmly in the event of crisis?

To answer the above questions, this article analyzes [data](#) from a nationwide [online survey](#) conducted in Taiwan in November 2025, with a sample of approximately 1,200 adult respondents. The survey was commissioned by the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, with fieldwork implemented by the Electoral Study Center at National Chengchi University from Nov. 11-28. The survey incorporated an experimental design that varied the information respondents were exposed to before they answered questions about emergency preparedness, which helps examine whether such guidance shaped reported preparedness intentions.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. The treatment group read an accessible guide adapted from the civil defense handbook, which provided step-by-step instructions on household preparedness, emergency kits, and family contingency plans, while providing guidance on resilience against misinformation or disinformation by emphasizing the use of official information channels. Conversely, the control group read a neutral text on public art and urban design, devoid of any mention of risk or security. Following the reading, all respondents reported whether they would adopt specific preparedness behaviors in their daily lives. Three scenarios were provided in the experiment—immediate action under high uncertainty, conflicting information from official and trusted sources, and an emotionally charged blame narrative—each accompanied by four responses ranging from low to high resilience (coded 0–1).

A comparison of the results shows that respondents’ baseline resilience against misinformation and disinformation is relatively high (Figure 1). Across all three scenarios, the predicted probability that respondents in the control group would pause and verify information exceeds 0.6. Exposure to the civil defense handbook further increases this probability, though the magnitude of the effect varies by scenario. These findings suggest that many Taiwanese respondents already exhibit a cautious default response when confronted with potentially misleading information, even in the absence of targeted interventions. While further evidence is required, this pattern is broadly consistent with Taiwan’s ongoing efforts to strengthen societal resilience against misinformation or

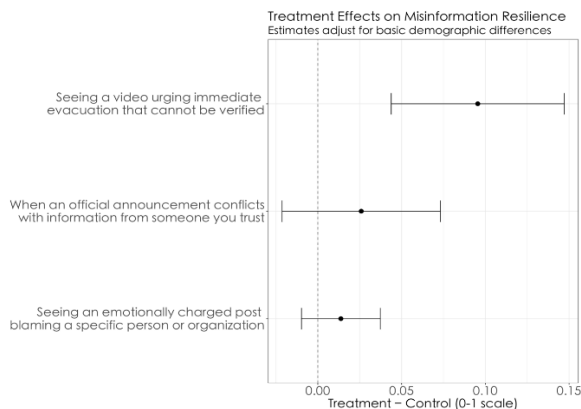
disinformation from China. Such efforts emphasize adaptability, public awareness, and cross-sector engagement.



**Figure 1. Predicted likelihood of resilience against misinformation or disinformation. (Source: Public Opinion Research Team, INDSR)**

Information intervention had an uneven effect on respondents’ resilience against misinformation and disinformation. Figure 2 reports the average difference in resilience between respondents who read excerpts from Taiwan’s civil defense handbook and those who read the control text, with values to the right of zero indicating higher resilience in the treatment group.

Exposure to the security guidelines was associated with a greater willingness to pause and verify information when messages called for immediate and drastic action under conditions of high uncertainty. By contrast, the same intervention was far less effective in shaping responses to misleading information that relied on familiar judgment cues—such as conflicting messages from trusted sources or emotionally charged blame narratives, which respondents may have already been inclined to view with skepticism. In these cases, limited treatment effects appear less a sign of the handbook’s failure than an indication that many respondents already have developed cautious and restrained responses to information can be cross-checked with familiar sources or is highly exaggerated.



**Figure 2. Effects of crisis preparedness information on intention to pause and verify. (Source: Public Opinion Research Team, INDSR)**

These findings carry important implications for Taiwan’s approach to enhance societal preparedness against misinformation or disinformation through WOSR program. Top-down communication, as exemplified by the distribution and promotion of civil defense handbook, is most effective when misinformation or disinformation demands immediate and drastic action under conditions of uncertainty. By contrast, the same intervention was far less effective in shaping responses to misinformation or disinformation when people can draw inference from trusted sources or previous experience with emotionally charged blame narratives. For policymakers, this suggests that government efforts to strengthen informational resilience are most effective when they provide clear and concrete guidance tailored to high-uncertainty situations. Rather than abstract warnings, practical instructions—such as how to verify questionable information, how to respond when internet connectivity is disrupted, or what types of information should not be further disseminated—can better support cautious decision-making during crises.

The findings from experimental design underscore the limits of top-down, handbook-based communication. When misinformation or disinformation does not demand immediate action, official guidance alone is often insufficient to shift behavior. In these situations, more decentralized approaches—such as working through trusted opinion leaders or community-based education—may be better suited to strengthen societal resilience by reinforcing people’s tendency to verify information.

The Pilot commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. Alternative viewpoints are always welcomed and encouraged. Please write to [rob@pacforum.org](mailto:rob@pacforum.org) for more information on how to contribute.