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An Analysis of ASEAN-Taiwan Relations Under Taiwan's Two Latest Presidents From 2008 to 2019

Willis Wang¹

¹cw962@georgetown.edu

Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive and in-depth analysis between the five founding members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Taiwan from 2008 to 2019. The five founding countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. This paper answers the questions 'How have ASEAN-Taiwan relations evolved from 2008 to 2019?' and 'What evidence exists to support the claim that ASEAN-Taiwan relations have grown stronger politically, economically, and socio-culturally?' The finding reveals that, despite the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) One China Principle, ASEAN-Taiwan relations have now reached the strongest point politically, economically, and socio-culturally. This paper discusses the political, economic, and socio-cultural ties in each presidential term. The political aspects focus on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), Economic Cooperation Agreements (ECAs), and other government-to-government interactions. The economic aspects examine the increasing total trade between ASEAN-Taiwan relations. The socio-cultural ties scrutinise the growing educational and tourism ties between ASEAN and Taiwan. This paper concludes by providing policy advice to bolster their relations.

Keywords: Taiwan; ASEAN; Taiwan-ASEAN Relations; President Ma Ying-jeou; President Tsai Ing-wen; New South Bound Policy.

In terms of research methods, this paper adopts primarily qualitative research on addressing the political aspects of the relations and quantitative research on the economic and socio-cultural ties. This paper references both primary and secondary sources in all three aspects.



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Examples of primary sources referenced include speeches, databases, and newspapers published at the time. As a part of the research figures from government databases have been recreated to specifically highlight the evolving relations. Examples of secondary sources used include editorial pieces and journals. In terms of political ties, the paper primarily focuses on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), Economic Cooperation Agreements (ECAs), and other government-to-government interactions. The economic aspect of this article examines the total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan to showcase two points: Taiwan's economy has become more integrated with that of ASEAN and has the potential to expand more in the future. The socio-cultural ties concentrate on Taiwan's unique soft power of education and tourism, which has consistently and progressively attracted people from ASEAN. This move bolsters people-to-people ties.

This paper is divided into five parts. The introduction provides vital background information on ASEAN, Taiwan, and ASEAN-Taiwan relations from 1945 to 2008. Section II examines the political, economic, and socio-cultural ties of the relationship from 20 May 2008 to 20 May 2012, under President Ma Ying-jeou, when important political developments such as the Taiwan ASEAN Studies Center or TASC (台灣東南亞國家協會研究中心, *tai wan dong nan ya guo jia xie hui yan jiu zhong xin*) took place. Section III discusses the political, economic, and socio-cultural ties of ASEAN-Taiwan relations from 20 May 2012 to 20 May 2016. During this period, the re-elected pro-China Ma Administration and Singapore reached a historical milestone through their signing of the Agreement between Singapore and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu on Economic Partnership or ASTEP (臺星經濟夥伴協定, *tai xing jing ji huo ban xie ding*) in 2013. Section IV focuses on ASEAN-Taiwan relations from 20 May 2016 to 31 December 2019 when the pro-U.S. During this time, the Tsai Ing-wen Administration shifted the Ma Administration's economic strategy away from China and towards the ASEAN countries. On the whole, ASEAN-Taiwan relations under President Tsai grew very fast. Section V, the conclusion, analyse the

growing importance of the relationship between Taiwan and the five ASEAN nations by examining the areas of cooperation and tension and their prospects for the future.

The topic and research questions merit more attention for two main reasons. First, although ASEAN and Taiwan are regional partners with growing ties that benefit both sides, very little has been written on the ASEAN-Taiwan relationship so far. ASEAN is a valuable partner to Taiwan for Taiwan's engagement with the rest of the world as the People of the Republic of China or the PRC (中華人民共和國, *zhong huaren mingong he guo*) continue to marginalize Taiwan's international space. Second, both sides have much to gain from a more robust and vibrant relationship – Taiwan can reduce its economic dependence on China, whereas ASEAN can improve its relations with Taiwan through investments and trade. The scope of the paper pays special attention of ASEAN-Taiwan relations beginning in the year 2008 when President Ma took office. The ASEAN countries examined are the five founding members of ASEAN: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. ASEAN'S latest members, Brunei in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999, are not covered in the scope of this paper.

I. Introduction: Background Information on ASEAN, Taiwan, and ASEAN-Taiwan Relations, 1945– 20 May 2008.

ASEAN was formed on 8 August 1967, by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines for mainly economic and socio-cultural reasons, as seen in the stated reasons in the 1967 ASEAN Declaration. However, the unstated reason is security due to the fear of communism as reflected in the Vietnam War and to Britain's declaration that it would withdraw East of Suez by the early 1970s. Although ASEAN was anti-communist in orientation, its 'ASEAN Way', which comprises non-interference and low-key diplomacy, allow communist nations to join the organisation (Della-Giacoma, 2011: 28-29). ASEAN does not have military arrangements, and its members all had humble beginnings as former colonies except for Thailand. Because ASEAN began with weak states, it declared neutrality through its Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

(ZOPFAN) policy in 1971. This declaration was a strategic move because neutrality allowed the ASEAN countries to befriend other countries (Alagappa, 1991: 275). ASEAN held its first Summit on 24 February 1976, when it signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the ASEAN Concord, and the Agreement to set up a Central Secretariat in Jakarta. The Secretariat began with the Secretary General who served for two years, and it added a Deputy Secretary General in 1989 who served for three years. In 1992, the role of Secretary General was upgraded and he served for five years. The Secretary General is selected based on a rotation basis among the ASEAN member states (ASEAN, 1992).

ASEAN contributed immensely to the end of the Third Indo-China War, which lasted from 23 December 1978 to 23 October 1991. ASEAN was involved because of the following reasons; to reduce the influence of communism; to protect Thailand; to remind Vietnam of its own blatant violation of the ZOPFAN policy; and to regain stability as the battlefield was in ASEAN's backyard. ASEAN was being preoccupied with refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. Through constructive engagement, ASEAN also played a critical role by offering Vietnam membership in ASEAN if it withdrew its troops from Cambodia. Vietnam then withdrew its troops by 1989 and joined ASEAN on 28 July 1995. One of the common denominators that Vietnam and ASEAN shared upon Vietnam's entry into ASEAN was fear of China (Neu; Sokolsky; Rabasa, 2000:30). In 1994, ASEAN also established the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a form of preventive diplomacy. That year, the ARF was made up of the ASEAN members, the Dialogue Partners, and the foreign ministers from China, Russia, Vietnam, and Laos. Meanwhile, in 1997, ASEAN established the ASEAN Plus Three concept, which enabled the ASEAN countries to economically integrate with China, Japan, and South Korea.

Taiwan, formally known as the Republic of China or R.O.C. (中華民國, *zhong hua min guo*), is a de facto autonomous, independent state. An understanding of Taiwan's colonial past is essential to understand its transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Because the Dutch

Empire (1624-1662), the Spanish Empire (1626-2642), the Kingdom of Tungning (1662–1683), and the Qing Dynasty (1683–1895) colonized it before, the people of Taiwan had gradually become susceptible to diverse cultures. This point is critically important because the people of Taiwan had a long history of interacting with foreigners. Moreover, the Qing Dynasty of China, as the result of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, handed Taiwan to Japan (*BBC*, 2019). Later, on 25 October 1945, as a result of Japan's defeat in World War II, Japan handed Taiwan to the government of the Republic of China.

One of the most well-known historical events in Taiwan is the February 28 Incident in 1947. The event was a manifestation of the local Taiwanese people's anger toward the Kuomintang or KMT (國民黨, *guo min dang*). In response to the crowd's protest over the guards' brutality towards a widow, the KMT governor Chen Yi ordered military suppression (Harrison 2018: 313). Approximately 30,000 citizens died in that incident. This incident also led to the beginning of the White Terror, a period of time from 19 May 1949 to 15 July 1987 when Chiang Kai-shek declared martial law, actively and sometimes arbitrarily executed political dissidents who opposed the KMT. This tragic experience had a great impact on future civil societies where the Taiwanese people greatly value freedom and democracy.

In 1972, Chiang Kai-shek appointed his son, Chiang Ching-kuo, as Taiwan's premier. This installation of Chiang Ching-kuo marked the beginning of Taiwan's gradual transition from an authoritarian to a democratic state. In 1979, because the U.S. needed the PRC to deter the Soviet Union in the Cold War, the U.S. switched its longstanding diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing. In that same year, the U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which served as a foundation for U.S.-Taiwan relations (Chen, 1983: 66). In 1986, Chiang Ching-kuo initiated a series of political reforms, including freedom of speech and free press. Moreover, the Democratic Progressive Party (民進黨, *min jin dang*) the first opposition party with most of its leaders suffering

from the White Terror, was formed. Its constitution emphasized the protection of freedom of speech and self-determination (World Affairs, 1993: 135).

In 1996, unprecedentedly, voters in Taiwan were allowed to vote for a president. In the same year, China threatened the Taiwanese voters to vote for the KMT candidate by shooting missiles near the Taiwan Strait and called for a potential invasion against Taiwan. In response to China's aggression, U.S. Admiral Joseph Prueher ordered the *USS Independence* to safeguard Taiwan's electoral process (Elleman, 2019: 65). Ultimately, in 1996, the pro-independence Lee Teng-hui became the first president elected by the people (*ibid.*, 63).

As for ASEAN-Taiwan relations prior to 2008, several individual states of ASEAN have enjoyed ties since the late 1960s. For example, Thailand was the first to begin relations in 1969. That year, a Thai Overseas Chinese, Lin Guo-Chang, established the Mandarin Crown (中泰賓館, *zhong tai bin guan*) Hotel as a sign of friendship between the two countries (*China Times*, May 18, 2015). According to a former Premier Mao Chi-kuo of Taiwan, the Mandarin Crown was the second largest international-level hotel in Taiwan in the 1970s, and Mr. Lin's efforts to build the hotel stimulated Taiwan's tourism and increased job opportunities. The 1980s saw an influx of Taiwanese businessmen in Thailand. In 1992, the Thai-Taiwan Business Association or TTBA (泰國台灣商會聯合總會, *tai guo tai wan shang hui lian he zong hui*) was formed to promote trade in accordance with Thailand's domestic laws (Thai-Taiwan Business Association, Accessed 2020). The TTBA continued to serve the Taiwanese businessmen in Thailand and also provided a platform for Thai businessmen to invest in Taiwan.

The Philippines was the second ASEAN state to establish ties with Taiwan. The Philippines-Taiwan MOU on an Economic Corridor, signed in 2005, has been an effective tool in strengthening Philippines-Taiwan relations. Taiwanese goods that are manufactured in Subic Bay and the Clark Special Economic Zone enjoy a zero percent tariff (Dong, 2008). All Taiwanese goods in the Subic Bay and the Clark Special Economic Zone could enter the processing export

zone with zero tariffs (*ibid.*). Moreover, foreign companies only need to pay a 5% corporate income tax and they can enjoy preferential treatment of imported raw materials, equipment and export tax rebates (*ibid.*).

Malaysia was the third ASEAN state that established ties with Taiwan. Malaysia-Taiwan ties were primarily business-oriented. In 1993, Malaysia was included in the Agenda on Strengthening Investments in Southeast Asia (SEA) Region (加強對東南亞地區經貿工作綱領, *jia qiang dui dong nan ya di qu jing mao gong zuo gang ling*), proposed by the Taiwanese Minister of Economic Affairs Chiang Pin-kung. The Agenda also targeted Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and Brunei (Liang, 2016:4). In 1993, Minister Chiang also proposed the Go South Policy Talk (南進政策說帖, *nan jin zheng ceshuo tie*), which encouraged Taiwan to sign a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) with the ASEAN countries in order to protect Taiwanese businessmen from double taxation (*ibid.*). On 23 July 1996, Malaysia and Taiwan signed the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (Laws and Regulation Database of the Republic of China 1996). In 2005, Taiwan established the Taiwan External Trade Development Council or TAITRA (中華民國對外貿易發展協, *zhong hua min guo dui wai mao yifa zhan xie hui*) in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. First headquartered in Taipei in 1970, the TAITRA is a non-profit, government-funded trade organisation. Taiwan's use of non-profit organisations to reach out to the ASEAN countries reflects its low-key yet substantial diplomacy.

Singapore was the fourth ASEAN country to establish ties with Taiwan, particularly in the political and humanitarian fields. First, on 27 April 1993, Singapore volunteered to host a meeting between PRC's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits or ARATS (海峽兩岸關係協會, *hai xia liang an guanxi xie hui*) and Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation or SEF (海峽交流基金會, *hai xiajiao liuji jin hui*) (Leong, 2015). The meeting was of paramount political importance because the results of the meeting, the 1992 Consensus, became the KMT's party policy towards China. Singapore's humanitarian ties with Taiwan occurred on 21 September 1999, the date when

Taiwan suffered a powerful earthquake. Singapore immediately sent a rescue team of 38 personnel to help at Taiwan's emergency operation center (Taipei Association of Architects 2018, 32).

Indonesia was also interested in establishing trade ties with Taiwan and was the fifth ASEAN state to do so. For instance, since 1996, Indonesia enjoyed robust relations with Taiwan on foreign workers. Indeed, in terms of the numbers of foreign workers in productive and social welfare industries by nationality, the number of Indonesian workers in Taiwan continued to be the highest since 2008 with a total that year of 127,764 foreign workers, which represented 34.9% of the total foreign workers in Taiwan (Ministry of Labor of the Republic of China, 2019:1-2).

Figure I: ASEAN Foreign Workers by Nationality in Productive and Social Welfare Industries in Taiwan

Year	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam	4 countries combined in total	Others	Total	% of Foreign Workers from Indonesia
2008	127,764	80,636	75,584	81,060	365,057	3	365,060	34.9%
2009	139,404	72,077	61,432	78,093	351,006	10	351,016	39.7%
2010	156,332	77,538	65,742	80,030	379,642	11	379,653	41.1%
2011	175,409	82,841	71,763	95,643	425,656	4	425,660	41.2%
2012	191,127	86,786	67,611	100,050	445,574	5	445,579	42.8%

2013	213,234	89,024	61,709	125,162	489,129	5	489,134	43.5%
2014	229,491	111,533	59,933	150,632	551,589	7	551,596	41.6%
2015	236,526	123,058	58,372	169,981	587,937	3	587,940	40.2%
2016	245,180	135,797	58,869	184,920	624,766	2	624,768	39.2%
2017	258,084	148,786	61,176	208,095	676,141	1	676,142	38.1%
2018	268,576	154,209	60,764	223,300	706,849	1	706,850	37.9%

Source: Ministry of Labor of the ROC. Latest Update in Year 2019. Figure I was created by the author using figures from the Ministry of Labor for the year 2019. 'Others' comes from and is defined by foreign workers from Malaysia, Mongolia, and other countries. The original sources was the 'Table 12-3 Foreign Workers in Productive Industries and Social Welfare' (<http://statdb.mol.gov.tw/html/mon/c12030.pdf>). The original source did not provide a grand total of foreign workers in both productive and social welfare industries by individual nationality, so this author of this paper combined the numerical values from the two sectors and re-created the chart. The goal of reproducing this chart is to underscore the importance of a consistently high percentage of Indonesian foreign workers in Taiwan.

On the whole, the five founding ASEAN countries and Taiwan have enjoyed a close relationship. Two factors explain this closeness. First, geographical proximity provides an opportunity for the people of the ASEAN countries to interact with the people in Taiwan, which allows for exchanges in areas such as migrant workers, education, technology, and investments. Second, the nature of ASEAN's regional economic integration is complementary to Taiwan's economic structure. To Taiwan, ASEAN can serve as an alternative market because it possesses a competitive advantage due to its lower labor costs in the manufacturing sector. ASEAN can thus help balance Taiwan's unstable relationship with China.

II. ASEAN-Taiwan Relations During the First Ma Ying-jeou Administration from 20 May 2008 –20 May 2012.

Regarding the political relationship between ASEAN and Taiwan from 20 May 2008 to 20 May 2012, President Ma heavily factored China into the ASEAN-Taiwan calculus. For example, he prioritized the signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement or ECFA (海峽兩岸經濟合作架構協議, *hai xia liang an jing ji he zuo jia gou xie yi*) with China because he believed that only through friendlier cross-strait relations could Taiwan expand its international space, such as joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and ASEAN Plus Three model. The Ma Administration insisted that Taiwan could no longer wait to sign the ECFA with China because Japan and South Korea had already signed FTAs with China.

Meanwhile, a major step in Indonesia-Taiwan relations occurred on 20 August 2012 when the Taipei Economic and Trade Representative Office in Indonesia and the Indonesian Economic and Trade Representative Office in Taipei signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Morotai Joint Development Plan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China, 2012). Signed by the Indonesian Representative to Taiwan, Ahmad Syafri, and Taiwan's Trade Representative to Indonesia, Andrew Hsia, the Joint Development Plan covered a wide range of industrial development projects on Morotai Island, located in North Maluku, Northeast Indonesia, including fisheries processing, shipbuilding, transportation, hotels, and tourism. This island is 2,600 kilometers away from Taiwan and one-fifth the size of Taiwan. The governor of Morotai, Rosli Sibuya, said that the county government had been looking forward to the cooperation between Taiwan and Morotai. Sibuya said twice 'I hope that the cooperation between Morotai County and Taiwan can be as fast as possible' (Overseas Compatriot Affairs Council of the Republic of China, 2012).

Despite being pro-China, one of the Ma Administration's main achievements to further engage with ASEAN was the creation of the TASC in 2009. Similar to the formation of TAITRA, the TASC was founded under the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research or CIER (中華經濟研究院, *zhong hua jing ji yan jiu yuan*), a leading non-profit research economic institute in Taiwan

(Taiwan ASEAN Studies Center 2020). The TASC has the following objectives with regards to the international community. First, TASC creates opportunities to discuss ASEAN-related or regional economic development (*ibid.*). Second, TASC engages with dialogue partners, think tanks, governments, and private sectors on ASEAN-related issues (*ibid.*). Third, TASC aims to strengthen Taiwan's analytical skills in examining current and future economic development plans (*ibid.*). Fourth, TASC provides consultations on how to be more involved with the ASEAN countries (*ibid.*). Fifth, TASC expands Taiwan's modes and areas of cooperation with the ASEAN states (*ibid.*). Sixth, TASC advertises Taiwan's commitment to interact with ASEAN (*ibid.*). The TASC is strategic as it not only represents Taiwan's commitment to be a part of regional integration, but also more importantly the TASC is a product of Taiwan's low-key diplomacy given that most countries do not wish to irritate China by forming ties with Taiwan. In short, President Ma spent the first term building the foundations of ASEAN-Taiwan relations, where more concrete results will be seen in his second term.

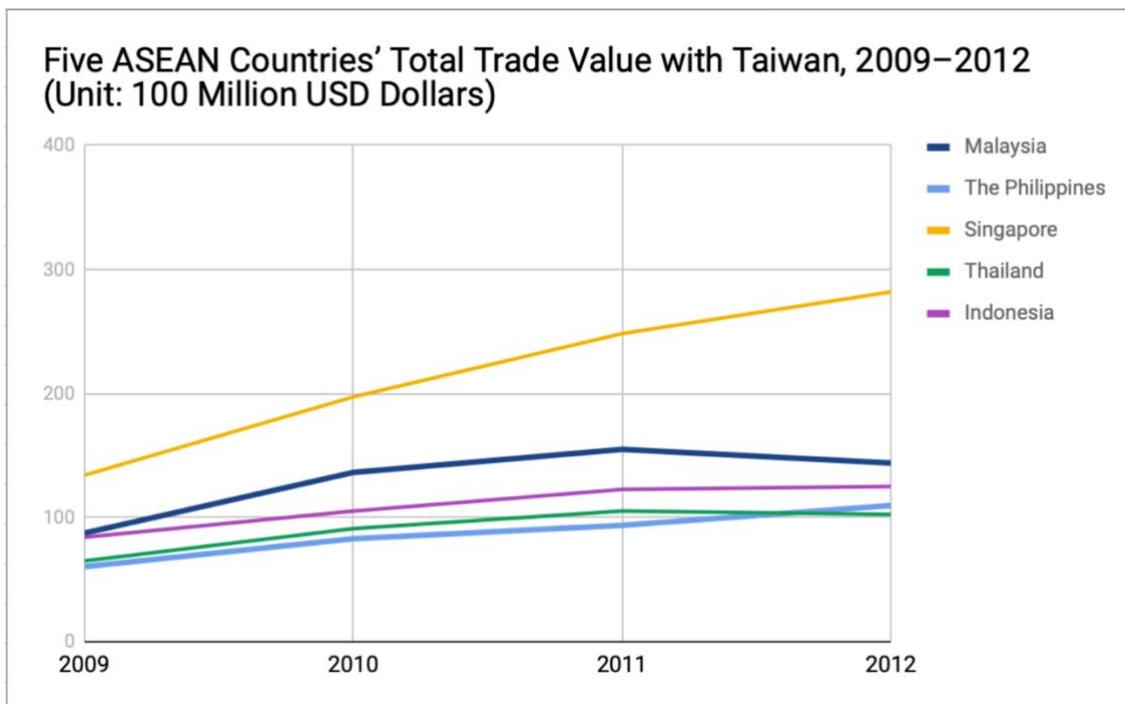
During the period 2009-2012, the trade relationship showed mixed progress. While Taiwan's total trade steadily increased, Taiwan consistently remained in last place among the Four Asian Tigers. In 2009, the total bilateral trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan was 48.165 billion USD with Taiwan in last place out of the Four Asian Tigers (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2010:37). The year 2010 saw a seemingly recovering global economy, yet Taiwan's trade with ASEAN did not improve significantly as Taiwan remained in last place with total trade at 68.07 billion USD (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2011:37). However, in terms of percentage growth relative to the previous year, Taiwan was ranked top with a 42.7% increase in trade (*ibid.*). In 2011, the global economic indicators predicted a lower economic recovery for the ASEAN countries due to floods in Thailand (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2012:9). Similar to the previous year, in 2011, Taiwan remained in last place with 80.56 billion USD, but Taiwan was ranked number one in terms of growth rate among the Four Asian Tigers (*ibid.*, 37). In 2012, the total trade of the five ASEAN countries with Taiwan reached approximately 76.35 billion USD but Taiwan continued to

remain in last place in comparison to the other Asian Tigers (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2013: 38).

Two observations can be made from the data above. First, although Taiwan remained in last place among the Four Asian Tigers, its growth rate in total trade consistently ranked number one. This means that Taiwan is a relatively emerging market for the five ASEAN countries, compared to the other three members of the Asian Tigers. Because Taiwan is an emerging market, Taiwan offers ample economic opportunities for the five ASEAN countries. Taiwan's market for ASEAN's goods has not yet become saturated.

Second, due to China's political influence, Taiwan could not participate in the ASEAN Plus Three model. Similarly, none of the ASEAN countries had diplomatic ties with Taiwan, making it difficult for Taiwan to establish state-to-state economic relations with the ASEAN countries. Moreover, as countries began to integrate economically through the Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) and the FTAs, trade within ASEAN and the ASEAN Plus N model became relatively much stronger than trade conducted by individual countries. As the years went by, Taiwan faced much stronger pressure as it remained isolated in the trade bloc.

Figure II: Five ASEAN Countries' Total Trade Value with Taiwan, 2009–2012 (Unit: 100 Million USD Dollars).



Note: Figure II was compiled by the author himself who used sources from the TASC, which derived the data on Taiwan’s total trade with respective ASEAN countries from years 2009 to 2012 from the Bureau of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Republic of China. This chart is important as it indicates Singapore as the top trading partner to Taiwan out of the five ASEAN countries, followed by Malaysia, Indonesia, and/or Thailand and the Philippines. Singapore’s strong economic strength was one of the reasons why Taiwan was eager to sign a FTA with it.

On the subject of socio-cultural ties under President Ma’s first term, ASEAN-Taiwan relations enjoyed great progress especially on the educational and culinary levels. In the education realm, because Taiwan’s education system was affordable and of excellent quality, the number of students from the five countries saw a yearly increase. Throughout this period, the majority of students came from Malaysia. The number of students from Malaysia were as followed: 6150 (2009), 7022 (2010), 8,235 (2011), and 9,490 (2012) (Ministry of Education of the Republic of China, 2020). Interestingly, during this period, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia ranked top, second, and third respectively (*ibid.*).

III. ASEAN-Taiwan Relations Under President Ma Ying-jeou’s Second Term, 20 May 2012–20 May 2016.

Regarding the political relationship from 20 May 2012–20 May 2016 under President Ma, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines established significant political ties with Taiwan. Even in the year 2020, Singapore is the only ASEAN country that has signed an Economic Cooperation Agreements (ECA), known as ASTEP, with Taiwan (International Enterprise Singapore, 2014). Signed on 7 November 2013, this agreement had great political implications because it was signed between two sovereign governments. The negotiation for ASTEP began in 2011 (*ibid.*). ASTEP primarily includes three aspects: trade in goods, services, and investments. ASTEP calls for more liberalized trade and does so through a gradual removal of up to 100% of tariffs. Approximately 97% of Singapore's current exports will qualify for immediate tariff-free treatment, while the remaining three percent will qualify in five, ten or fifteen years after ASTEP enters into force (Enterprise Singapore, 2018). ASTEP brought significant results between Taiwan and Singapore. According to the TAITRA, trade between the two countries from May 2014 to January 2015 saw a yearly increase of 5 percent to 22 billion USD. Singapore remains very important to Taiwan because its bilateral trade is the highest among all the ASEAN countries (Singapore Department of Statistics 2019).

In 2014, Indonesia requested Taiwan's help in establishing polling sites for Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan to vote for their president, vice-president, and members of the People's Consultative Assembly. According to Taiwan's Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics or DGBAS (行政院主計總處, *xing zheng yuanzhu jizongchu*), Indonesia ranked top in terms of sending its workers to Taiwan. Indonesian migrant workers have always been the largest group of foreign workers in Taiwan (Ministry of Labor of the Republic of China, 2019:1-2). In 2014, the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office to Taipei (IETO) and Taiwan worked to establish 34 polling stations in Taiwan for the Indonesian migrant workers to vote (*CNA*, April 7, 2014).

In 2015, Philippines and Taiwan signed the *Agreement Concerning the Facilitation of Cooperation on Law Enforcement in Fisheries Matters*, which calls emphasises bilateral measures

to avoid 'miscalculation and escalation' and 'the use of violence or unnecessary force' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China, 2015). The agreement came after the death of a Taiwanese fisherman. Known as the *Guang Da Xing No. 28 Incident* in May 2013, this occurred at an overlapping Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Taiwan and the Philippines where eight Philippine Coast Guard members unilaterally shot a defenceless Taiwanese fisherman with 7.62 mm caliber ammunition, generally used in machine guns (Ministry of Justice, 2013). The tragic incident ended when Chairman Amadeo R. Perez of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) came to Taiwan and formally apologised to the family of the dead fisherman and to the Taiwanese Government. The Chairman said that he came with the authorisation from Former Filipino President Benigno Aquino III, to offer 'deep regret and apology' (Guo, 2013).

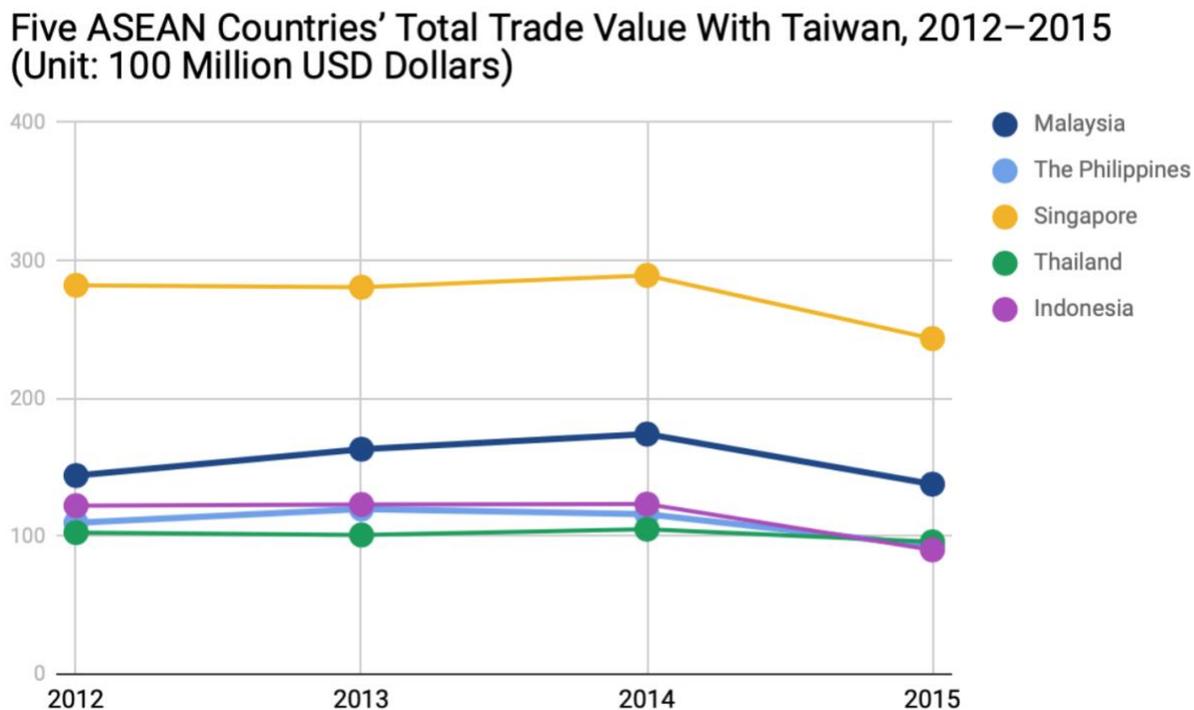
Meanwhile, ASEAN-Taiwan economic relations from 2012 to 2015 saw a period of remarkable economic achievements by Taiwan. As noted earlier in the previous section on economic ties from 2009 to 2012, Taiwan had always been in last place among the Asian Four Tigers. However, starting in 2013, the picture changed when the total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan reached 88.87 billion USD (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2014:38). This figure hence saw Taiwan surpassing Hong Kong, which became the last out of the four Tigers (*ibid.*). Moreover, Taiwan remained number one, with the best growth rate of 5.3% among the Four Asian Tigers (*ibid.*). That year also marked the first year of ASTEP, which led to its being monitored closely.

In 2014, the total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan reached 92.8 billion USD, reflecting a 4.4% growth that year (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2015:38). Taiwan's top three export products to ASEAN included electrical equipment (HS85), fossil fuels (HS27), and machinery appliances (HS84). Among the top 10 export products, only fossil fuels and steel declined 16.1% and 9.0%, respectively (*ibid.*, 26).

In 2015, due to China's slow economic growth and the increase in the price of raw materials, the total trade between the five ASEAN countries and the Asian Four Tigers decreased to 726

billion USD, a 7.1% decrease compared to the previous year (Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2016: 38). Taiwan then ranked number two in terms of growth rate while Singapore suffered the highest percentage decrease in growth rate compared to the other Four Asian Tigers (*ibid.*).

Figure III: Five ASEAN Countries’ Total Trade Value With Taiwan, 2012–2015 (Unit: 100 Million USD Dollars).



Source: Figure III was compiled by the author of this paper using data from 2012 –2015 from the TASC, which derived the data on Taiwan’s total trade with respective ASEAN countries from years 2012 to 2015 from the Bureau of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Republic of China. He created this chart because, starting from 2014, the Taiwan’s ASEAN Study Center no longer provided the annual data on the total with the five ASEAN countries.

As for socio-cultural ties from 2012–2015 under President Ma, the number of tourists from the five ASEAN countries to Taiwan fluctuated between 2012 to 2015. The Thai tourists numbered 97,712 in 2012, 104,138 in 2013, 104,812 in 2014, and 124,409 in 2015 (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2020). Malaysian tourists numbered 341,032 in 2012, 394,326 in 2013, 439,240 in 2014, and 431,481 in 2015(*ibid.*). As for Singapore tourists, there were 327,253 in 2012, 364,733 in 2013,

376,235 in 2014, and 393,037 in 2015 (*ibid.*). The number of tourists from the Philippines was 105,130 (2012), 99,698 (2013), 136,978 (2014), and 139,21 (2015) (*ibid.*). The number of tourists from Indonesia was 163,598 (2012), 171,299 (2013), 182,704 (2014), and 177,743 (2015) (*ibid.*). The ranking is as follows: Malaysia first, Singapore second, Indonesia third, the Philippines fourth, and Thailand fifth. Between 2012–2013, tourists from all five countries, except Singapore and the Philippines, increased. Between 2013–2014, tourists from Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia increased, while tourists from Thailand and Singapore decreased. From 2014–2015, the number of tourists from Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia increased. Philippines-Taiwan tourism trends during this period has shown a steep increase and later would surpass that of Thailand-Taiwan tourism starting from 2016. Overall, more Southeast Asian tourists came to Taiwan.

IV. ASEAN-Taiwan Relations Under the Tsai Ing-wen Administration, 20 May 2016– 2019

From 20 May 2016 to 2019, under President Tsai Ing-wen, ASEAN-Taiwan relations reached their strongest point ever on three levels: political, economic, and socio-cultural. Her presidency marked a new era: not only is she the first female president of Taiwan, but also she is the first minister of the Mainland Affairs Council or MAC (大陸委員會, *da lu wei yuan hui*) as well as the first female Chairwoman of the DPP (BBC, 2016). Unlike President Ma, who believed that peaceful cross-strait relations were more important than ASEAN-Taiwan relations, President Tsai put more emphasis on the relationship with ASEAN, demonstrating forward, creative thinking in Taiwan's foreign policy towards the ASEAN countries. The product—the New South Bound Policy or the NSP (新南向政策, *xin nan xiang zheng ce*) – is Taiwan's national economic and trade strategy that centers around the following. First, Taiwan's unique soft power, which covers technology, people, and culture, provides chances for Taiwan to develop heart-to-heart relations with other countries. Second, Taiwan and ASEAN can focus on integrating their supply chain in areas including information and communications technology (ICT), domestic-demand-driven industries, energy and petrochemicals, new agriculture, and financial services. Third, investing in

soft and hard infrastructure and making ties in different markets within the region are crucial to the cooperation with ASEAN. Fourth is promoting people-to-people ties through tourism (Office of the President of the Republic of China, 2016). The goal for the NSP is to reduce Taiwan's economic reliance on 'any single market' (Office of the President of the Republic of China, 2019). That 'any single market', while not explicitly stated, is generally understood as China.

To analyse this period from a political aspect, the strategic political logic of the NSP is straightforward: in response to China's tactic of marginalizing Taiwan's international space, Taiwan's use of soft power not only provides economic opportunities to the international community but also the international space that Taiwan itself needs. The effectiveness of creating such international space was perhaps best exemplified on 11–12 October 2017, when the Tsai Administration initiated the Yushan Forum: Asian Dialogue for Innovation and Progress (玉山論壇：亞洲進步與創新對話, *yu shan lun tan: ya zhou jin bu yu chuang xin dui hua*) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China 2017). Hosted by government-sponsored Taiwanese think tanks and NGOs, the Yushan Forum is a platform designed specifically for Taiwan and its Southeast Asian regional dialogue partners. In the 2017 Yushan Forum, a total of 800 scholars came to the event, including many former or current government officials from ASEAN. From the Philippines, the following attended: former Vice President Teofisto T. Guingona Jr.; former Vice President Jejomar Binay Sr.; and former Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay (Office of the President of the Republic of China 2017). From Indonesia, present were former Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs Rizal Ramli and Wahyu Utomo for the Coordination of Infrastructure and Regional Development of the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs (*ibid.*). From Thailand, former Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya joined (*ibid.*).

During the Tsai Administration, ties between Thailand and Taiwan also grew stronger. For instance, on 20 March 2018, during a conference named 'Taking off to New Heights' hosted by the Thai government, Thailand explicitly requested Taiwan to participate in Thailand's economic policy

named *Thailand 4.0* (Chen, 2018). Dr. Kobsak Pootrakool, Minister Attached to the Prime Minister's Office of Thailand, looked forward to incorporating Taiwan's food, electronics, biotechnology, agriculture, and other industrial technologies into *Thailand 4.0* (*ibid.*). Moreover, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak underscored the importance of Thailand-Taiwan cooperation and noted that Thailand 'learned a great amount of the manufacturing and agriculture techniques from Taiwan' (*ibid.*). On 22 August 2018, the Thai government delivered 100 million Baht to Parmode Vidtayasuk, CEO of Management System Certification Institute (MASCI), to work with Taiwan's textile industry firms (Chen, 2018). Interestingly, since the words 'Taiwan' and 'Thailand' sound similar, the name of the joint Thai-Taiwan project is especially called *MIT²* to stand for 'Made in Taiwan x Made in Thailand' (*ibid.*).

Under President Tsai's leadership, political ties between the Philippines and Taiwan also became stronger. On 4 March 2018, in the First East Asia Peace Forum, hosted by Taiwan's former Vice President Annette Lu in Taipei, the Deputy Speaker of the Philippines' House of Representatives the Honorable Arenas Rose Marie expressed her appreciation for Taiwan's contribution towards the international community (Lu, 2018). She said, "Taiwan has not been included by the ASEAN or the East Asia Summit dialogue. It is time to let stakeholders put down their prejudices, recognise Taiwan as a player in regional stability, and together promote peace and prosperity" (*ibid.*).

In terms of economic ties under President Tsai, the year 2016 saw a decline in the global import market due to a decrease in the price of oil and gas, which affected the supply chain production. The total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan was 64.99 billion USD (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2017: 27). As for bilateral trade, the most important ASEAN trade partner for Taiwan was Singapore. The rankings in terms of total trade amount were as followed: Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. Singapore-Taiwan trade reached 23.67 billion USD; Malaysia-Taiwan trade was 14.1 billion USD; Philippines-Taiwan trade reached

10.86 billion USD; Thailand-Taiwan trade reached 9.31 billion USD; Indonesia-Taiwan trade reached 7.05 billion USD (*ibid.*).

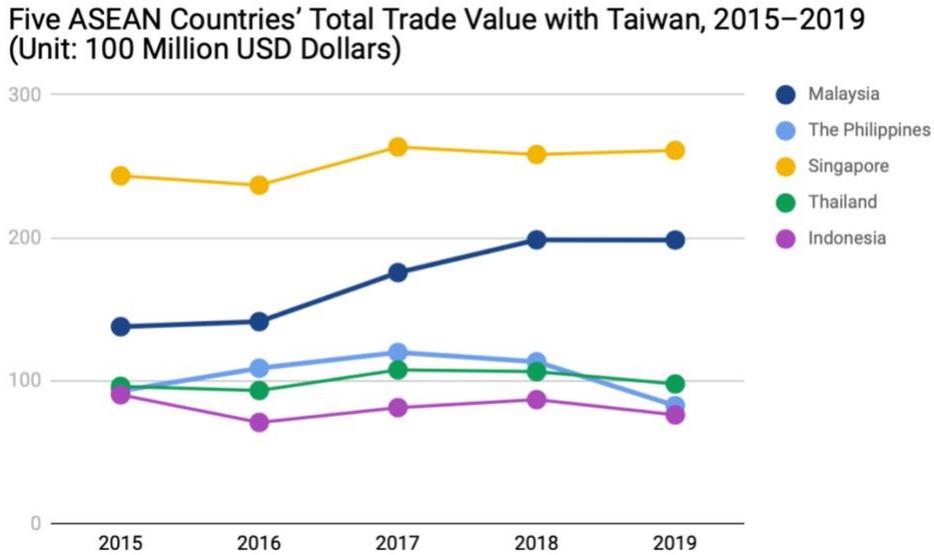
However, unlike the year 2016, the year 2017 saw a recovering economy. The total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan was 74.69 billion USD (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2018: 26). The rankings in terms of total trade amount are as followed: Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. Singapore-Taiwan trade reached 26.34 billion USD; Malaysia-Taiwan trade was 17.55 billion USD; Philippines-Taiwan trade reached 11.97 billion USD; Thailand-Taiwan trade reached 10.74 billion USD; Indonesia-Taiwan trade reached 8.09 billion USD (*ibid.*). The rankings remained the same; however, Thailand nearly surpassed the Philippines in trade as seen from Table III below.

In 2018, all five ASEAN countries had expanded their bilateral trade with Taiwan. The total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan was 76.65 billion USD (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2018). The rankings, which were the same compared to the previous two years, in terms of total trade amount are as followed: Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. Singapore-Taiwan trade reached 25.78 billion USD; Malaysia-Taiwan trade was 19.85 billion USD; Philippines-Taiwan trade reached 11.44 billion USD; Thailand-Taiwan trade reached 10.75 billion USD; Indonesia-Taiwan trade reached 8.83 billion USD (*ibid.*). Although the rankings remain the same, Thailand-Taiwan trade is a trend that may worth examining closely in the future.

The year 2019 marked a different year in rankings. In 2019, all five ASEAN countries decreased their bilateral trade with Taiwan. The total trade between the five ASEAN countries and Taiwan was 71.565 billion USD (TASC, 2020). The rankings were different compared to the previous three years: Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. For the very first time in the past two Taiwanese administrations, Thailand-Taiwan trade surpassed the Philippines-Taiwan trade. Singapore-Taiwan trade reached 26.109 billion USD; Malaysia-Taiwan trade was 19.838 billion USD; Thailand-Taiwan trade reached 9.767 billion USD; Philippines-Taiwan trade reached 8.247 billion; Indonesia-Taiwan trade reached 7.604 billion USD (*ibid.*). The

year 2019 is best marked by an enhanced trade relationship between Taiwan and Thailand, with other four founding ASEAN countries' trade statistics with Taiwan fluctuating.

Figure IV: Five ASEAN Countries' Total Trade Value with Taiwan, 2015–2018 (Unit: 100 Million USD Dollars).



Source: Figure IV was compiled by the author himself who used the sources from the Taiwan ASEAN Studies Center, which derived the data on Taiwan's total trade with respective ASEAN countries from years 2015 to 2019 from the Bureau of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Republic of China. Starting from 2014 onward, the TASC no longer provides data on the annual trade volume between respective ASEAN countries and Taiwan, so the author created this chart by adding all the monthly data of respective countries.

On socio-cultural ties in 2016–2019, in terms of tourism, the five countries saw a consistent, growing numbers of tourists, except for Malaysia which saw a slight decrease in the period 2017-2018 (Taiwan Tourism Bureau, 2020). The Database provides the following statistics. The number of tourists from Thailand was 195,640 in 2016, 292,534 in 2017, and 320,008 in 2018, and 413,926 in 2019 (*ibid.*). The number of tourists from Malaysia was 474,420 in 2016, 528,019 in 2017, 526,129 in 2018, and 537,692 in 2019 (*ibid.*). As for Singapore, the number of tourists from Singapore was 407,267 in 2016, 425,577 in 2017, 427,222 in 2018, and 460,635 in 2019 (*ibid.*).

In the case of the Philippines, the number of tourists was 172,475 in 2016, 290,784 in 2017, 419,105 in 2018, and 509,519 in 2019 (*ibid.*). The number of tourists from Indonesia was 188,720 in 2016, 189,631 in 2017, 210,985 in 2018, and 229,960 in 2019 (*ibid.*).

In terms of tourism, this period saw an unprecedented change in ranking. For the very first time, the Philippines surpassed Indonesia in the year 2015–2016, Thailand in 2017–2018, and Singapore in 2018–2019. As of this moment, the Philippines-Taiwan tourism trend has been one of the closest relations ever in history. Additionally, while Thailand-Taiwan tourism trend exceeds Indonesia starting from the year 2016. Surprisingly, beginning in year 2018, Singapore dropped to the third largest tourism country with Taiwan. Nevertheless, all five countries have shown an increase in tourism ties with Taiwan during this period. This increase is also reflected in President Tsai's NSP as tourism is the most direct way to promote Taiwan's soft power and to achieve 'people-to-people ties', as stated in the fourth point of NSP.

V. Conclusion

This section examines cooperation and tension in ASEAN-Taiwan relationship and the prospects for the future. Regarding cooperation, on the whole, ASEAN-Taiwan relations on the political, economic, and socio-cultural levels have improved over the years. Both ASEAN and Taiwan have flexible economic policy despite escalating cross-strait tensions. During the Ma Administration, perhaps the most notable achievement has been the signing of ASTEP with Singapore, the very first ASEAN country that signed an FTA with Taiwan. However, under President Tsai's NSP, Taiwan has expanded its trade with the five ASEAN countries from 2016-2019 as noted earlier, as well as increased its tourists from ASEAN. To complement with ASEAN's ZOPFAN, Taiwan's Yushan Forum provides a platform for Taiwan to advertise its NSP and initiate dialogue with its ASEAN dialogue partners, is precisely the kind of economic platform the ASEAN countries seek.

In terms of socio-cultural ties, the number of tourists between 2009 and 2019 showed an overall positive increase. The rankings from the periods 2009 and 2012 and 2012 and 2015 were

the same, with Malaysia consistently ranking first, Singapore second, Indonesia third, the Philippines fourth, and Thailand fifth. The period 2016–2019 saw slightly different rankings, with Malaysia ranked first, the Philippines ranked second, Singapore ranked third, Thailand ranked fourth, and Indonesia ranked fifth. The number of tourists is an important assessment of the NSP because tourists enhance person-to-person exchanges, as stated in the NSP. The Taiwanese do credits the NSP for the increase in tourists from the ASEAN countries.

As for tensions, the main root cause of tensions in ASEAN-Taiwan relations in the period 2009–2019 has been China's One China Principle, which forbids other nations to form official ties with Taiwan. This restriction has limited political cooperation from 2009 to 2015 because none of the ASEAN countries has diplomatic ties with Taiwan, as all do not dare to violate China's One China Principle. However, from 2016 onwards, as the international community became more aware of China's hegemonic ambition, some ASEAN countries have become more supportive of Taiwan. For instance, the Philippines' Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rose Marie, called in 2018 for Taiwan's participation in ASEAN. Many cabinet officials from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand also supported Taiwan's Yushan Forum by attending its meetings.

Regarding the prospects for ASEAN-Taiwan relations in the future, there are several important variables that will influence the relationship, namely leadership in ASEAN and in Taiwan, the strength of their economies, and the role of China. On the issue of leadership, at present Taiwan has good leadership under President Tsai. Taiwan's strengths lie in its pragmatic application of soft power. Countries are willing to engage with Taiwan because the core of the New South Bound Policy centers around people-people ties. Similar to ASEAN, Taiwan also uses low-key diplomacy in order to avoid enraging China. On its part, ASEAN also has good leadership on the whole, although there are problems on leadership in Myanmar and Cambodia.

In the meantime, Taiwan can improve its relations with ASEAN through promoting fluency in Southeast Asian languages among the Taiwanese public to foster better people-to-people

relations. At present, six out of 127 universities in Taiwan offer a department for Southeast Asian Studies. They include Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University; Taiwan Association of Southeast Asian Studies; Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), National Cheng Kung University; Center For Southeast Asian Studies, National Sun Yat-sen University; Center For Southeast Asian Studies, National Chi Nan University; and Graduate Institute of Asian Studies, Tamkang University. In other words, only four percent of universities in Taiwan offer such a program (TASC 2020). Given the expansion of NSP, the establishment of more departments for Southeast Asian languages remains vitally important. Likewise, ASEAN countries should encourage its people to visit Taiwan and experience its unique history and culture.

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