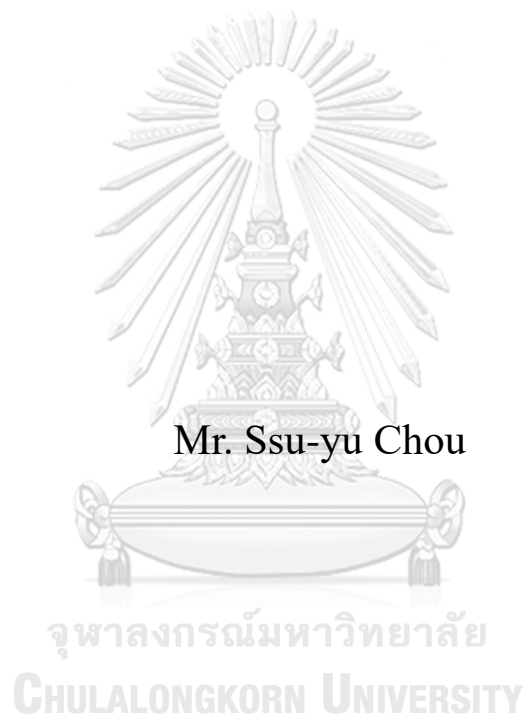


Taiwan as a Norm Entrepreneur: Advocating People-centred
Values in Southeast Asia



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies
Inter-Department of Southeast Asian Studies
GRADUATE SCHOOL
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2021
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ได้หวั่นในฐานะผู้ผลักดันขับเคลื่อนปทัสถาน (Norm Entrepreneur):

การส่งเสริมค่านิยมที่มีประชาชนเป็นศูนย์กลางในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา สหสาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา

บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2564

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Thesis Title Taiwan as a Norm Entrepreneur: Advocating
People-centred Values in Southeast Asia
By Mr. Ssu-yu Chou
Field of Study Southeast Asian Studies
Thesis Advisor Assistant Professor Pongphisoot Busbarat, Ph.D.

Accepted by the GRADUATE SCHOOL, Chulalongkorn University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Arts

..... Dean of the GRADUATE
SCHOOL
(Associate Professor YOOTTHANA CHUPPUNNARAT,
Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman
(Associate Professor Withaya Sucharithanarugse, Ph.D.)
..... Thesis Advisor
(Assistant Professor Pongphisoot Busbarat, Ph.D.)
..... External Examiner
(Associate Professor Sitthiphon Kruarattikan, Ph.D.)

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

ชื่อ-ยู จอ : ใต้หวันในฐานะผู้ผลักดันขับเคลื่อนปทัสถาน (Norm Entrepreneur):

การส่งเสริมค่านิยมที่มีประชาชนเป็นศูนย์กลางในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้. (Taiwan as a Norm Entrepreneur: Advocating People-centred Values in Southeast Asia)

อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : ผศ. ดร.พงศ์พิสุทธิ์ นุชบารัตน์

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างใต้หวันและเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ภายใต้การบริหารของประธานาธิบดีไช่ อิงเหวิน สมัยแรก (พ.ศ. 2559-2563) ซึ่งได้มีการออกนโยบายมุ่งใต้ใหม่ที่มุ่งเน้นคนเป็นศูนย์กลาง ผ่านการวิเคราะห์ว่าททกรรมทางการเมืองของใต้หวันและการสัมภาษณ์ผู้มีส่วนได้เสียในโครงการภายใต้ นโยบายนี้ งานวิจัยนี้ได้โต้แย้งว่าใต้หวันได้แสดงบทบาทเป็นผู้ผลักดันขับเคลื่อนปทัสถานในการวางกรอบแนวคิดริเริ่มและโน้มน้าวให้ประเทศกลุ่มเป้าหมายร่วมมือในประเด็นการพัฒนาต่าง ๆ เพื่อความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีของผู้คนในภูมิภาคนี้ ในทางกลับกัน การปรับภาพลักษณ์ที่มุ่งเน้นให้คนเป็นศูนย์กลางถูกคาดหวังเพื่อใช้ในการสร้างความชอบธรรมและการทำให้ความร่วมมือในระดับที่ไม่ใช่ภาครัฐหรือระดับกึ่งภาครัฐกับใต้หวันเป็นเรื่องปกติ โดยปราศจากการละเมิดนโยบายจีนเดียว เนื่องจากนโยบายดังกล่าวมุ่งเน้นที่จะสร้างหุ้นส่วนทางสังคมและเศรษฐกิจเป็นหลัก อย่างไรก็ตาม ข้อมูลการสัมภาษณ์แสดงให้เห็นว่านโยบายดังกล่าวมีส่วนสำคัญในการสร้างภาพลักษณ์ในเชิงบวก การยอมรับ และการรับรู้การคงอยู่ของใต้หวันในภูมิภาคนี้ แต่ก็ยังประสบกับข้อจำกัดในการส่งผลไปยังความสัมพันธ์ในระดับภาครัฐ สิ่งนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงการมีอำนาจของประเศจีนในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ งานวิจัยนี้ได้แนะนำเพิ่มเติมว่ารัฐบาลของไช่ อิงเหวิน จำเป็นที่จะต้องปรับเปลี่ยนวาระของนโยบายมุ่งใต้ใหม่ที่มุ่งเน้นคนเป็นศูนย์กลาง ซึ่งจะทำให้ใต้หวันมีความสำคัญมากขึ้นและช่วยในการเสริมสร้างความสัมพันธ์ระดับทวิภาคีด้านสังคมและเศรษฐกิจในภูมิภาคนี้ เพื่อที่จะนำไปสู่การทลายการกีดกันที่อาจจะเกิดขึ้นจากประเศจีน

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สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา

ปีการศึกษา 2564

ลายมือชื่อนิติ
ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก

ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก

6288033420 : MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORD: Taiwan, ASEAN, Norm Entrepreneur, Constructivism, New Southbound Policy

Ssu-yu Chou : Taiwan as a Norm Entrepreneur: Advocating People-centred Values in Southeast Asia. Advisor: Asst. Prof. Pongphisoot Busbarat, Ph.D.

This research looks at the relations between Taiwan and Southeast Asia under President Tsai Ing-wen's first term (2016-2020) as her administration launched the people-centred New Southbound policy by analysing Taiwan's political discourse and interviewing shareholders in the policy projects. It argues that Taiwan acts as a norm entrepreneur framing its initiative and persuading targeted countries to join hands in development matters for people's well-being in the region. In turn, the people-centred rebranding is expected to justify and normalise cooperation at non- and semi-governmental levels with Taiwan without violating the one-China policy since the policy mainly aims to forge socio-economic partnerships. However, the interview data showed that the policy contributes to Taiwan's positive image, visibility and presence in the region but still faces limitations in spilling over the cooperative relations to the governmental level, confirming China's dominance in Southeast Asia. Given this situation, this research further suggests that the Tsai administration needs to recalibrate the New Southbound policy's people-centred agendas, making Taiwan more relevant in the region.

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Student's

Signature

Academic Year: 2021

Advisor's

Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my advisor's, Paul, company and support along the 2-year long thesis journey. Also, I would like to thank the committee chairman, Ajarn Withaya Sucharithanarugse, and external examiner, Ajarn Sitthiphon Kruarattikan's, for insightful comments and suggestions for thesis revising. More importantly, I wish to acknowledge all the kind help and conversations with anonymous interviewees, completing the final puzzle of the idea. Without your sharing, this thesis is not going to happen. Last but not least, I appreciate C's companionship and support along the way of my studies in Thailand. It's an unexpected journey full of surprises, although good and bad.

Ssu-yu Chou

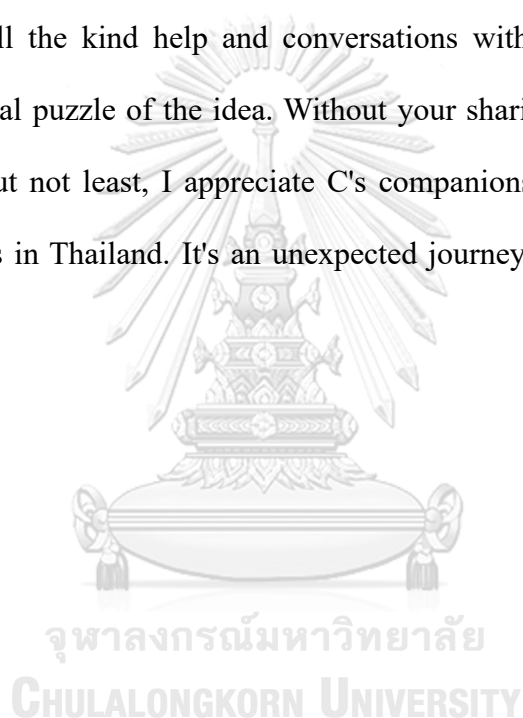


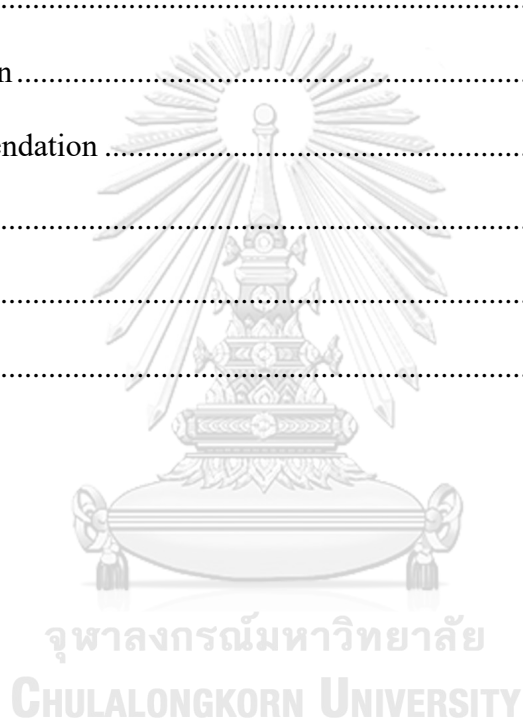
TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT (THAI)	iii
ABSTRACT (ENGLISH).....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
List of tables.....	x
List of figures.....	xi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Rationale	4
1.3 Research Questions.....	7
1.4 Hypothesis.....	7
1.5 Conceptual Framework.....	8
1.5.1 Norm and Norm Entrepreneur	9
1.5.2 People-centred Approach versus China Factor	11
1.5.3 Taiwan's Ideal Path for Regional Participation and Integration.....	12
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Political Economy.....	17
2.2 China Factor.....	25
2.3 Regional Strategy for Asia	33
2.4 People-centered Agendas	40

2.5 Identifying the gap	46
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	48
3.1 Research Methods	48
3.1.1 Discourse Analysis	48
3.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews	49
3.2 Data Collection and Limitation.....	50
3.2.1 Data from Official Documents.....	50
3.2.2 Data from Political Remarks.....	51
3.2.3 Data from Interviews	52
3.2.4 Limitation.....	52
CHAPTER IV TAIWAN'S PREVIOUS SOUTHWARD ENGAGEMENTS	54
4.1 Lee Teng-hui's "Go South" Policy (1994-1996 and 1997-1999).....	55
4.1.1 Pragmatic Diplomacy.....	55
4.1.2 Unvafaroable Investment Environment at Home	57
4.1.3 Response to Regional Integration	58
4.1.4 Economic Interdependence as a Threat	59
4.1.5 Implementation and Outcomes of "Go South"	62
4.2 Chen Shui-bian's Reboot of "Go South" (2002-2008).....	67
4.2.1 Chen's Rhetoric on "Go South".....	69
4.2.2 Chen's cross-Strait economic policy	70
4.3 Ma Ying-jeou's Viable Diplomacy (2008-2016).....	73
4.4 Analysis: Lee's success, Chen's failure, and Ma's sacrifice	76
CHAPTER V TAIWAN AS A NORM ENTREPRENEUR.....	80
5.1 New Southbound Policy Development.....	81

5.1.1 Policy Rationale	82
5.1.2 Policy Structure.....	84
5.2 People-centred Agendas.....	86
5.2.1 Five Flagship Programmes	89
5.2.2 People-centred Implications.....	90
5.3 Taiwan's Norm Entrepreneurship: Framing and Persuading.....	93
5.3.1 Norm Entrepreneur	95
5.3.2 Framing	97
5.3.3 Persuasion with Tangible Gains.....	102
5.3.4 Learn from the previous failure of “selling democracy” for Pragmatism	104
5.3.5 Channel for Voicing People-centred Values.....	105
5.4 ASEAN’s People-centred and People-oriented Community.....	107
5.4.1 Crisis Prompts Change, CSOs provides Discourse and External Influence	107
5.4.2 People-oriented and people-centred discourse in Community Building	112
5.4.3 Conflicting Ideas: Human Security and ASEAN Ways	114
5.5 People-centred Approach to Regaionlisation.....	117
CHAPTER VI A PEOPLE-CENTRED POLICY: INTERPRETATIONS, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES	121
6.1 Open-ended Interpretations.....	124
6.1.1 People-to-people Links	129
6.1.2 Talent Cultivation.....	132
6.1.3 People-centred Development.....	134

6.2 People-centred Practices: Both a Norm and an Approach	141
6.3 Challenges for NSP: External, Internal and Dilemma for an Awkward Democracy	145
6.3.1 China Factor	147
6.3.2 Number Trap	151
6.3.3 An Awkward Democracy Promoting People-centred Values	154
CHAPTER VII	157
7.1 Discussion	157
7.2 Recommendation	158
REFERENCES	162
APPENDIX	187
VITA	190



List of tables

Page

Table 1: Executive Governmental Body of Five Flagship Programmes & Three Potential Areas	128
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List of figures

	Page
Figure 1 China Factor versus New Southbound Policy	12
Figure 2 Taiwan’s Regional Integration via People-centred Approach	13
Figure 3 Taiwan’s FDI to China and ASEAN (1991-2000).....	60
Figure 4: Taiwan’s FDI to China and ASEAN (2001-2010).....	71
Figure 5: People at Center of New Southbound Policy	85
Figure 6: Correlations between Problem, Value, Behaviour, and Identity in Taiwan’s Norm Entrepreneurship	94
Figure 7: Taiwan & ASEAN bilateral FDI flows (2017-2020).....	122
Figure 8: Taiwan & ASEAN Trade Statistic	122

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This research focuses on relations between Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China, ROC) and Southeast Asia under the New Southbound Policy (NSP), the signature foreign policy initiated by President Tsai Ing-wen (since 2016-now), designated to strengthen Taiwan's ties with 10 ASEAN states, six states in South Asia, Australia, and New Zealand across the Indo-Pacific region. The NSP aims to facilitate investment, trade, technology, cultural connectivity via resource, talent, and market sharing with target countries, creating the "new model of mutual benefits and win-win situation" (Executive Yuan, 2016a). The policy flags the third wave of Taiwan's southward engagements with a people-centred rebranding, distinguishing itself from the former "Go South" attempts in which political economy played a central role during the mid-1990s and early 2000s. It should be noted that accentuating the "people" aspect does not mean dismissing the political economy; instead, the economic and social dimensions are equally essential to ensure Taiwan's visibility and presence in the region.

On the one hand, from a geoeconomic perspective, Taiwan attempts to decrease the economic overreliance on China through diversifying trade and investment portfolios. On the other hand, strategically, the NSP is also denoted as Taiwan's "regional strategy for Asia (Office of the President, 2017)" via multiple partnerships in people-centred development. Like other previous Taiwan's foreign policy initiatives, the NSP also intends to ease the island's long-term diplomatic hardship,

political isolation and economic marginalisation at the regional and global level caused by China's pressure (Ku, 2017, 2019; Huang, 2018, 2019). The people-centred rebranding has several implications. First, the "people" turn in Taiwan's strategy attempts to adopt a low-profile, non-, and semi-official approach to develop ties with New Southbound partners without provocation that China might misconstrue as a "*de jure* independence" move, which may lead to warfare across Taiwan Strait jeopardising regional security. Secondly, the rebrand also enables Taiwan to frame development issues that need to deal with in the region and further legitimise the cooperation with Taiwan. Thirdly, the ambiguity of a people-centred policy leaves flexibility and possibility for Taiwan and targeted countries to cooperate. Finally, the people-centred word choice echoes with ASEAN's Community building motto and the same shared terminology and normative thinking allow Taiwan to play a proactive role in advocacy, at least from Taipei's perspective.

This thesis argues that Taiwan acts as a norm entrepreneur, advocating people-centred values under the NSP. According to Oxford English Dictionary, values mean "beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life." The explanation of values is very general, suggesting the boundary of appropriateness or oughtness is based on actual interaction given a particular context. In the case of Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship, the people-centred values have two normative implications. First, the people-centred values in the regional development interconnect the United Nations' development agendas, such as human security in the 1990s, Millennial Development Goals (MDGs) in the 2000s, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since 2015. The second one is related to the "norm" that Taiwan is cultivating

in the region. After framing NSP as a development-oriented policy, it legitimises Taiwan's regional participation due to no geopolitical agendas hidden in the policy. In a way, Taiwan attempts to normalise the socio-economic partnerships or cultivate a collaborative culture with New Southbound counterparts for serving the purpose of regional integration based on a "sense of economic community," (Office of the President, 2016) one of the end goals in the policy.

The "sense of community" building demonstrates Taiwan's proposal for a shared future and vision, and the NSP is the island's commitment to regional development for peace, stability, and prosperity. On the other, to fulfil the region's needs and strengthen its sense of inclusiveness and community (Office of the President, 2017), the NSP reflects Taiwan's determination. Its political discourse also implies Taiwan's self-identification as an indispensable, essential and responsible partner who is willing and capable of participating in regional development by experience-exporting and resource-sharing with a people-centred approach. Taipei believes that an active Taiwan serves the interests of all stakeholders in the region, even China.

In fact, Taiwan never excludes the possibility of cooperating with China under the NSP, which can demonstrate the "paradigm model" of regional cooperation across the Strait from Taiwan's policy discourse. The island further states that the NSP is a complementary, not competing agenda with other countries' regional initiatives (suggesting China's Belt and Road Initiative, BRI) in regional integration and development (Office of the President, 2016, 2017a). This narrative suggests that Taiwan has no intention to make targeted countries choose a side between the two,

placing them in the "either-or" dilemma. Due to the pervasive one-China policy and its contentious statehood, Taiwan has no diplomatic ties with all New Southbound countries, and it further limits its participation in top-down state-centric regionalism, especially in ASEAN-led regional dialogues. Thus, the people-centred policy also indicates an alternative approach for bottom-up regionalisation. The people-to-people mechanisms in cooperative domains, such as agriculture, technology, education, and public health, are expected to deepen and broaden bilateral and multilateral networks between Taiwan and target countries. In this sense, the NSP is a steppingstone for Taiwan's regional participation and integration, and the policy is also the key to Taiwan's visibility and presence.

1.2 Rationale

When it comes to Taiwan and Southeast Asia relations under the NSP, most studies centre on the political economy aspect or overly emphasise the China factor in determining the doomed failure of Taiwan's efforts for regional participation and integration. The former scholarship lacks comprehensiveness, missing the people or social dimension in the analysis, and the latter dismisses Taiwan's agency to the extent that China entirely dictates the island's international space. Thus, this research adopts the norm entrepreneur theory from constructivism to modify the "over-emphasis" inclination on the China factor in Taiwan's diplomacy. Still, it should clarify that this attempt does not suggest that China cannot constrain Taiwan's autonomy in external relations since the people-centred rebranding is right employed to dilute the political side of the policy with aims to circumvent any action that might antagonise China. The approach shows that China is still a prominent variable in

Taiwan's foreign policy decision making. In short, this thesis attempts to provide a balancing argument to reclaim the island's agency against the neighbouring great power.

Apart from the agency, this research also explores how ideational factors, namely the people-centred values and norm advocacy, interplay in the Taiwan and Southeast Asia relations that two mainstream international theories, neorealism and neoliberalism (institutional liberalism), may lack explanatory power. In the analysis, the author juxtaposes the ideational powers (e.g., values, norms, interest, and identity) with material capacities (e.g., military and economy). Compared to China's enormous material powers, Taiwan's offer seems unattractive and plain-looking. Thus, promoting value-based interactions is a viable way to bridge the gap between Taiwan and New Southbound partners. For instance, the NSP itself reveals the normative narratives that Taiwan can contribute to the region, and all stakeholders should work together to build a people-centred community pursuing the common good of all people. As President Tsai Ing-wen concluded with the mutual-aid and reciprocal exchange concept, "Taiwan can help Asia, and Asia can help Taiwan" (Office of the President, 2018), it is believed that the normative discourse shapes and frames bilateral and multilateral relations and facilitate the island's regional standing.

Since constructivism is interested in "understanding how the material, subjective and intersubjective worlds interact in the social construction of reality" and "how individual agents socially construct these structures in the first place (Adler, 1997: 330; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001)," it is fitting to analyse Taiwan's norm

entrepreneurship under the NSP, and the motives of a norm entrepreneur cannot be complete without reference to "empathy, altruism, ideational commitment (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998)." In the case of Taiwan, the norm may not be about empathy or altruism but refers to the appropriate people-centred development as **an ideational commitment** and further normalising Taiwan's role in regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Moreover, according to previous norm research, norms provide agent states with knowledge of their interests and identities (Katzenstein, 1997; Finnemore, 1996, 1998; Wendt, 1999). As such, Taiwan, implementing a value-based people-centred policy, tries to foster a shared identity (i.e., a sense of economic community) with its southern neighbours at the same time.

This research further elaborates on the framing and persuasion strategy to achieve norm formation and diffusion with discourse analysis for further entrepreneurship details. First, Taiwan frames the NSP as a people-centred, socio-economic, development-oriented, and apolitical regional initiative. In a sense, the NSP turns to be a proactive initiative to shape the targeted countries' perception of appropriate people-centred cooperation and Taiwan's essential role in regional development. Second, as for persuasion, Taiwan needs the actual evidence proving its commitment to the region and the gains of cooperating with Taiwan. By leveraging its capital, technology, human resource, experience, and technical know-how, Taiwan has firmly practised the new mutual benefits models and win-win situations under the NSP, laying the foundation for regional participation and integration.

Notwithstanding, persuasion is not a one-way street, and the reaction and feedback from New Southbound counterparts matter and directly evaluate Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship. Even though Taiwan has promoted a "sense of economic community" based on mutual benefits and win-win cooperation, it does not guarantee that New Southbound countries will respond without question and hesitation, especially under the circumstance that everyone adheres to the one-China policy. Thus, the perceptions with particular focus on ASEAN five states (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) towards Taiwan's role in regional development are addressed in the research as well. One of the puzzles is to clarify whether Taiwan can develop a collaborative culture normalising socio-economic cooperation based on people-centred values is generally accepted and reinforced.

1.3 Research Questions

This research addresses the two following questions:

1. How does Taiwan frame people-centred development under the New Southbound Policy, facilitating the island's regional participation and integration?
2. What is the feedback, reaction, and perception from participants (Taiwanese & ASEAN citizens) in the New Southbound Policy projects towards Taiwan?

1.4 Hypothesis

Taiwan attempts to advocate people-centred cooperation and development under the New Southbound policy. By accumulating exchange and interaction, both sides can identify common interests and shared values in development that ought to go beyond politics for the sake of all stakeholders. This advocacy helps reconstruct New Southbound countries' perceptions of the island as an essential partner and further facilitate its regional participation and integration with a cordial posture.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Following the logic of constructivism, this research contends that ideas enjoy causal forces in changing actors' behavior, interpretation of interests and identities (Wendt, 1999) and constructing their social relations (Wendt, 1992). It is argued that Taiwan's people-centred rebranding equals norm entrepreneurship for values-based development and normalisation for socio-economic cooperation. As a result, the central task is to conceptualise the people-centred values' causal effect on Taiwan and Southeast Asia relations. Alternatively, whether the people-centred rebranding can facilitate Taiwan's regional participation and integration, balancing diplomatic hardship from the China factor, needs to be assessed in the research.

This research comprises three main parts:

1. First, to contextualise Taiwan's previous "Go South" efforts as a mainly political economy-oriented approach. (**Chapter 4**)
2. Second, to identify Taiwan's people-centred policy reorientation and rebranding as norm entrepreneurship by examining the New Southbound Policy discourse. (**Chapter 5**).

3. Third, to probe into the stakeholders' people-centred practice and how the exchange and interaction alter participants' perceptions toward Taiwan based on interviews. (Chapter 6)

1.5.1 Norm and Norm Entrepreneur

Norms involve the standards of "appropriate" or "proper" behaviour among a group of actors with a given identity. Norms, by definition, embody a quality of "oughtness" and shared moral assessment. They also provide jurisdictions for action and leave an extensive trail of communication among the actors (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 891-892), demonstrating the feature of mutual socialisation. Besides, according to Finnemore and Sikkink (2001: 392), "the most important ideational factors are widely shared, and intersubjective beliefs, which are not reducible to individuals; and these shared beliefs construct the interests of purposive actors." This thesis argues that people-centred development is a general normative idea that underscores sustainable growth in the region with inclusiveness and co-prosperity, implying **Taiwan's participation without political precondition**, namely the one-China dispute. Taiwan contends that regional development should accentuate the well-being of all people and outweigh political calculation, and the island attempts to persuade the targeted countries under the NSP to accept this normative thinking.

According to Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink's research (1998: 895), a norm's "life cycle" includes three phases: norm **emergence**, norm "**cascade**," (termed by Cass Sunstein, 1996) and norm **internalisation**. Norm entrepreneurs initiate the first stage and stepping into the second stage lies in a "tipping point", at which "a

critical mass of relevant" actors accept the norm, although Finnemore and Sikkink did not clarify the exact required number as the threshold. As for the last stage, norms obtain a "taken-for-granted" status without public debate. In the case of Taiwan and Southeast Asia relations, Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship is currently **at the starting point of "norm emergence," still advocating the people-centred development and justifying the island's role in regional affairs** since the launch of NSP. To step into stage two (cascade), Taiwan's primary mission is to argue, persuade, and convince more New Southbound partners to conduct the people-centred cooperation.

However, norm formation and diffusion are seldom one-way street. Most of the time, norms are obeyed not because they are "enforced" but because they are "legitimate" (Florini, 1996: 364), but Amitav Acharya (2004: 242-244) indicates that the mainstream norm research treats norms as "moral cosmopolitanism", implying the cosmopolitan and universal features with moral essence. Accordingly, any resistance to cosmopolitan norms is illegitimate. However, Acharya reminds us to look at how the "norm takers" make sense of the norm and further modify it as the process of "norm localisation (Acharya, 2004, 2009)" in ways that we only know what is appropriate or legitimate by reference to the judgements of a specific community (i.e., a critical mass of relevant actors in Finnemore and Sikkink research) owing to the "shared" and "intersubjective" characters of norms. **Here, Taiwan is the norm entrepreneur who attempts to change other actors' mindsets by promoting people-centred development.** The norm formation and diffusion in the region lie in the exchange and interaction process so that both sides can arrive at the same understanding of "appropriateness. " Practically, **the New Southbound Policy serves**

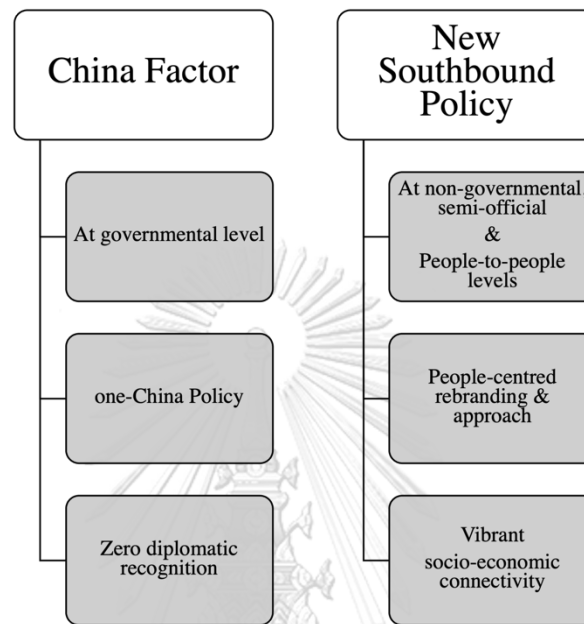
as the policy tool that encourages the Taiwan-Southeast Asia collaborations and envisages a shared future (a sense of economic community proposed by Taiwan) in the region with peace, stability, and prosperity.

1.5.2 People-centred Approach versus China Factor

In this research, people-centred is conceptualised as a (1) **rebranding and framing** strategy containing (2) **normative values** corresponding to UN's development agendas, such as human security, MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), and SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). In practice, it can also be an (3) **approach to strengthen the socio-economic ties** between Taiwan and Southeast Asia. More importantly, the people-centred approach should be put in the context of regional and world geopolitics. Namely, the China factor plays a significant role in stifling Taiwan's international space at every corner, from private sectors to International Non-governmental and Governmental Organizations, in ways that simply obstruct Taiwan's membership or meaningful participation or rename Taiwan as "a province of China," downgrading the island's sovereignty. This research thus conceptualises **China factor as a constraining or disabling structure** for Taiwan in a general sense that highly limits Taiwan's remaining choices in diplomacy and autonomy exercising its sovereign power, especially at the governmental level. Consequently, it is fair to regard the people-centred rebranding, values advocacy, and approach as the counterbalancing strategy to negate Taiwan's diplomatic hardship. Since China's dominance in Southeast Asia highly restricts government-to-government channels, it is reasonable to reinforce people-to-people

ties and cultivate socio-economic relations with New Southbound partners at non- and semi-governmental levels (see *Figure 1*).

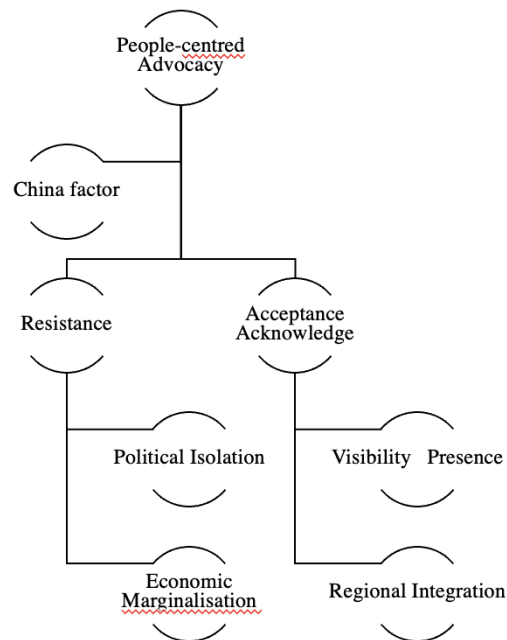
Figure 1 China Factor versus New Southbound Policy



1.5.3 Taiwan's Ideal Path for Regional Participation and Integration

Theoretically, apart from direct coercion or sanction, norm entrepreneurs at least employ framing (Sikkink, 1998; Keck & Sikkink, 1999), persuasion (Payne, 2001), and socialisation (Finnemore & Hollis, 2016) via deliberate interactive communication. The latest (i.e., socialisation) mainly occurs in international/regional regimes and organisations "socialising" their member states to adhere to certain rules or norms. By contrast, Taiwan mainly conducts framing and persuasion as a political and economic entity on the global stage because the island barely has an international platform to voice itself. It is argued that Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship in the region to facilitate its regional participation and integration in the research. (See *Figure 2*)

Figure 2 Taiwan's Regional Integration via People-centred Approach



Taiwan's advocacy involves framing a desirable people-centred development with peace, stability, and prosperity as a shared future on the one hand. On the other, Taiwan continues persuading targeted countries with its commitments to the region, demonstrated by policy implementation. As the New Southbound Policy brings mutual benefits and win-win situations for cooperation into reality, Taiwan expects the collaborative culture to spill over region-wide and multiple areas. However, no one can overlook the China factor interplaying in Taiwan and Southeast Asia relations at any levels (e.g., non-governmental, semi-governmental, and governmental). China's dominance, especially in Southeast Asia, may lead to two possible outcomes according to *Figure 2*. First, stakeholders at all levels "**Resist**" the people-centred development advocacy due to the one-China policy, and Taiwan remains political

isolated and economic marginalised in top-down state-centric regionalism led by ASEAN.

In contrast, the second route shows that targeted countries accept or acknowledge the ongoing cooperation between two sides at non-governmental and semi-governmental levels. At non- and semi-governmental levels, **participants espouse the people-centred development concept and related programmes** initiated by Taiwan, as shown in the findings from the interviews. However, the feasible scenario for governmental officials in Southeast Asia is that they acknowledge the existing socio-economic cooperation between two sides without publicising or severing it, keeping low-profile as usual so that host countries will not violate one-China policy or touch upon sensitive cross-Strait politics. The "**Acceptance and Acknowledgement**" can, in turn, enhance Taiwan's regional visibility, presence and, at the same time, reinforce integration in terms of bottom-up regionalisation as Alan Yang (2018) describe "soft regionalism."

When it comes to Taiwan and Southeast Asia relations, the reasons why states, institutions, or even individuals "**resist**" or "**accept**" the normative interaction and normalisation for socio-economic cooperation lie in two main factors. They include:

1. First, how much foreign policy autonomy does the state holds and how close its relations with China at the governmental level?

2. Second, how far can China reach out in civic institutions and influence the decision-making for cooperating with Taiwan at non- and semi-governmental levels?

The first question is answered by the pervasive one-China policy in Southeast Asia, but the second needs further probe into the actual practices of the people-centred cooperation. So far, Taiwan remains vibrant socio-economic relations with Southeast Asia owing to its soft power advantages in education, agriculture, technology, and public health. Those development-oriented areas enjoy legitimacy for cooperation that China has little space to interfere in since they are all about people's well-being and capacity-building in the region.

Notwithstanding, Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship and regional integration is not a one-directional relationship between norm makers and takers. Instead, to an extent, the relationship is a reciprocal socialisation process that Taiwan and ASEAN states both learn from each other and change their corresponding behaviour afterwards since the New Southbound Policy is an evolving and self-modification policy that the Taiwanese government reviews, reevaluate, and rearrange every year. For example, in the beginning, the Policy is described as Taiwan's external economic strategy, and later it was added the development-oriented dimensions to fit its people-centred rebranding and meet the need of the people in the region. As for the two-way socialising, the first direction is that Taiwan attempts to socialise its New Southbound partners to accept the people-centred development norm and normalisation for

cooperation in line with the island's main concerns, namely regional participation, and integration. The second direction is the regional integration that Taiwan has been learning and socialised to be a part of the regional community through these actual interactions. In a way, reciprocal socialisation can strengthen the people-centred norms and contribute to mutual understanding and trust between two sides, gradually stepping into stage two of the norm "life cycle" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), building up a "sense of community" with shared future in the long run.



CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces the development of the New Southbound Policy (NSP) since 2016. Current policy analysis on NSP centres on four main aspects: First, Political economy (including economic relations); second, people-centred collaborations with targeted countries at an operational level; and third, NSP's potential convergence with other regional powers (i.e., the United States, Japan, and India) at the strategic geopolitical or geoeconomic level. Among the perspectives above, the fourth one, the development of the cross-strait relations, or the China factor on Taiwan's external relations, is unavoidable to be considered to examine the policy's success or failure.

The following section is structured as follows: political economy, China factor, the NSP as a regional strategy, and the last one, people-centred agendas.



2.1 Political Economy

One group of NSP study pays attention to Taiwan's political-economic strategy in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Australia, and New Zealand mainly because the NSP was first introduced as an **external economic strategy**. It may lead to the oversimplification of NSP and over-emphasis on "numbers" in terms of trade, investment, and signs of economic agreements. However, the economy has been considered a security issue in Taipei. Arguing that the NSP is not merely an economic policy, Lee

Jyun-yi (2019) instead suggest that we should locate the policy at the strategic level and view it as Taiwan's foreign and security policy with the times to aims to reduce Taiwan's economic reliance on the Chinese market to counter the danger of China's "using economics to promote unification strategy." Similarly, according to Roy Chun Lee and Gordon Sun (2019), the NSP's long-term goal, forging the "sense of the economic community," is about trade and economic interests and securing Taiwan's economic, social, and political autonomy.

As for pure economic relations, Hsu Tsun-tzu (2017) maintains that Taiwan's previous southward investment in the 1990s has contributed to the interconnected trade and investment flows between Taiwan and Southeast Asia, forming deep economic interdependence and "de facto integration". However, given the economic interconnectedness between the two sides, Hsu advises that the Taiwanese government still needs to consider a revised strategy to develop the ECAs (Economic Cooperation Agreements) and FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) that will help the Taiwanese business community better engage in the region and improve competitiveness in the long term. Otherwise, Hsu warns that Taiwanese businesses may face substantial challenges from Taiwan's exclusion from regional trade agreements (i.e., Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, RCEP; Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans- Pacific Partnership, CPTPP).

With the same economic focus, Chang Chau-chyun, Ma Li-yen, Chen Ling-chun, Lee Shu-hung, and Lin Jai-yi (Chang et al., 2019) recognise the importance for Taiwan to forge closer economic ties with individual NSP targeted countries along the

supply and value chains by sharing its experience on technology innovation, industry cluster development and talent cultivation. They further contend that economic cooperation should concentrate on four main aspects: industry, market, system, and capacity building. In the long run, they hold optimistic views that the cooperation will accelerate Southeast Asia's industrial transformation and extend the potential market for Taiwan, achieving the so-called win-win models.

Regarding general economic relations between Taiwan and ASEAN under the US- China trade war, Roy Chun Lee, and Gordon Sun (Lee and Sun, 2019) also found out that the Taiwan-ASEAN economic relations are improving, but the increase has been incremental and gradual. Although China remains the single most significant economic partner for Taiwan, the trade war (during the Trump administration) has provided new impetus (Lee & Sun, 2019: 102-103) to accelerate Taiwanese businesses' "Going South" relocation (migration) from China to Southeast Asia and India. Even though the US and China may reach agreements in the future, the incentive to reconfigure the current supply network remains valid and robust. In addition, according to their research, the historical investment pattern indicates that Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand will be critical partners in NSP.

In contrast, Liew Chii-tong and Tang Tuck-cheong (2019) look specifically at the international trade numbers between Taiwan and ASEAN from 1989 to 2017. From an international trade perspective, their research shows that Taiwan's macroeconomic policies have been effective in the long run since Taiwan's exports to and imports from the 6 ASEAN (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore,

Thailand, and Vietnam) states are moving together (Liew and Tang term it as "**co-integrated**"). Non- cointegration is instead found for Lao PDR, Myanmar, and the Philippines. However, why do some states (ASEAN-6) enjoy co-integration while others (particularly the Philippines, Lao PDR, and Myanmar) do not? They argue that ASEAN states with co- integration between exports and imports mostly have high GDP per capita and high openness to trade, the two critical determinants of trade. In contrast, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and the Philippines have been ranked low in these two indicators. Therefore, they (Liew & Tang, 2019: 355) further suggest that Taiwan and these countries must improve their trade practices or policies such as reducing tariff rates, non-tariff measures (NTMs), and bilateral trade negotiations.

Regarding bilateral relations, **Taiwan-Singapore**, and **Taiwan-Malaysia** relations are the most discussed cases (Yeoh, Le, & Yemo, 2018; Hsieh, 2019a, 2019b; Abdul Rahim & Suyatno, 2021) because they have Chinese ethnicity with shared cultural ties. For example, Ainatul Fathiyah Abdul Rahim and Suyatno Laqiqi (2021: 1608) contend that the NSP has provided a more expansive room for partnership, especially in technology transfer, tourism, and education between Taiwan and Malaysia. In contrast, Kok-kheng Yeoh, Chang Le and Zhang Yemo (2018) focus on the contributing factors of Taiwanese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Malaysia, including market and resource-seeking. They argue that Malaysia has the advantage of political stability, open markets, and a similar culture among its ethnic Chinese community with that of Taiwan. These factors help attract Taiwan's investments in the retail, food, education, and texture sectors. However, according to their research, Malaysia is not the most popular destination for foreign investment

from Taiwan due to its relatively higher labour costs and smaller market than other ASEAN states. At the same time, for Malaysia, Taiwan's enterprises, facing competition from Japan, South Korea, and the United States, may have less advantage in high-tech industries that Malaysia needs to upgrade its economy.

When it comes to Taiwan-Singapore relations, it is necessary to mention their former leaders' interpersonal relationship (e.g., Taiwan's Chiang family and former President Lee Teng-hui and Singapore's founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan-yew), making the two states' interaction unique and explaining the existing military and economic cooperation. Pasha Hsieh (2019a: 90-91) argues that the long-standing bilateral cooperation was built on high-level official exchanges (primarily heads of states or other high-level officials) and led to Singapore's critical role in cross-Strait negotiations, especially the first-ever summit between leaders of China and Taiwan in Singapore in 2015. Hsieh contends that Taiwan and Singapore's both struggles for recognition demonstrated their eagerness to **form distinct national identities from Mainland China** and further promoted the claims for sovereign state status in global politics and international law by conducting bilateral cooperation.

As for **Taiwan-Thailand** relations under the NSP, Sanyarat Meesuwan (2018) argues that whether NSP will achieve its objective depends on the current geopolitics in Asia, particularly the US-China relations and their principal allies regarding the **South and East China Seas** and the **Korean Peninsula** issues. As one of the NSP targeted countries, Thailand is "in dire need of boosting the national economy while laying sustainable internal security and political structure for the foreseeable future"

(Meesuwan, 2018). Therefore, it seems logical that Thailand would choose to respond positively to the economic aspect of Taiwan's NSP while maintaining a "non-intervention position" when it comes to the politics of Beijing-Taipei ties.

Regarding the **South China Sea** disputes in Asia-Pacific, Kelan Lu (2019) explores whether the pacifying effect of FDI on territorial disputes between adversarial dyads is conditional upon the dyads' experience of military cooperation. Lu claims that bilateral FDI flows between adversarial dyads have pacifying effects on their territorial disputes. In addition, military cooperation in the past also strengthens the pacifying effect of bilateral FDI. Consequently, Lu implies that if Taiwan plans to use FDI flows as a pacifying tool in dealing with the territorial disputes in the SCS, based on history, it is a much more effective tool to use upon China than upon other claimants because mainland China and Taiwan respectively fought against the same enemy, South Vietnam, over the Paracel Islands back to 1974.

However, this thesis author disagrees with Lu's view since the cooperative scenario on SCS issues is unlikely to occur due to the stalemate of current cross-Strait relations. Cooperation in the past does not guarantee harmonious relations in the present, especially when China never renounces the use of force in Taiwan for unification. Moreover, Taiwan's attitude towards the SCS issue has also evolved. Nowadays, the Tsai administration's policy on SCS is based on **Four Principles and Five Actions** that are distinct from China's historical territorial claims (the Nine-dash line). The four principles include peaceful settlement of disputes following UNCLOS (The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), the inclusion of Taiwan in

multilateral mechanisms, freedom of navigation and oversight, and the setting aside of difference to promote joint development. At the same time, the five actions involve (1) to safeguard the rights and safety of Taiwan's fishermen, (2) to enhance multilateral dialogue with other relevant parties, (3) to invite international scholars to Itu Aba Island (Taiwan calls it Taiping Island) to conduct scientific research, (4) to develop the island into a base for providing humanitarian aid and supplies, and (5) to encourage more local talents to study maritime law.

In a sense, Taipei has come to regard the SCS as a shared resource, at least to a certain extent. As Reymund Botin Flores and Rachel Mary Anne Basas (2019: 913) single out that the recent NSP and Taipei's position on SCS issues have sent a credible message to other SCS claimants that even though Taiwan is not able to be a formal party to UNCLOS due to its exclusion in United Nations, the island is willing to provide public goods and cooperate with other claimants to peacefully manage the disputes through marine conversation programs, humanitarian assistance, and joint development. Compared to China's recent assertiveness in SCS, Huynh Tam Sang (2018) likewise maintains that Taiwan can take advantage of China's assertiveness in SCS to "play a managerial role in promoting regional norms and economic cooperation." As a vibrant democracy, Taiwan can learn from other middle powers, such as Canada and Australia, to contribute to peace and stability regarding regional disputes to achieve its strategic targets.

Apart from trade and investment, Alexander Tan, Karl Ho and Cal Clark pay their attention to Taiwan's survival in terms of the political economy while facing

China's expansive influence. They (Tan et al., 2020: 1) contend that Taiwan's experience not only provides reference data for other small states like "**canary in the mines**" but can also be a stimulator of synergetic strategies to broker new possibilities under the regional hegemon. For example, it is argued that Taiwan can exercise "**smart power**" by using creative diplomacy and economic power to create and strengthen a web of complex interdependence in the region. Taiwan should project itself as a responsible regional/global citizen and development partner rather than just a singular and one-dimensional focus on business, economy or "making a quick buck" (Tan et al., 2020: 22). An example of this would be for Taiwan to coordinate, co-fund, and co-manage regional development and aid projects with several leading players in the region (Tan et al., 2020: 17-20). This research agrees with their viewpoint that Taiwan needs to rebrand its image and pursue shared interests in the region. One of the NSP's long-term objectives is to "forge a sense of economic community" with Southbound partners. The "community" notion comprises various dimensions that do not merely involve state-centric regionalism, if possible, for Taiwan, given its controversial and contentious statehood, but instead emphasises the societal aspects of shared interests, beliefs, norms, and even identities.

So far, scholars recognise that Taiwan's economic power has contributed to its regional presence in Southeast Asia, at least economically. Moreover, it is also agreed that Taiwan needs a more diverse strategy to ensure its survival in the region. In this sense, Taiwan needs to frame its ASEAN policy and pursue shared interests in the region. The design of the NSP also showcases the reorientation from the traditional political economy to a more diverse approach focusing on people's well-being and

Taiwan's economic transformation in regionalisation. However, when discussing Taiwan's regional presence and participation, it is imperative to examine China's role in the island's international and regional space struggles. Taiwanese scholars, experts, analysts, and mass media tend to term it the "**China factor**, referring to China's oppression on the island's international stance in general.

2.2 China Factor

Due to China's pressure, political isolation and economic marginalisation are two primary challenges for Taiwan's diplomacy (Ku, 2017, 2019). Taiwan has dramatically experienced diplomatic isolation since 1971 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) has replaced Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC) in the United Nations. Now (till 2021), Taiwan only has 15 diplomatic allies (14 countries plus Vatican Holy See) left, theoretically challenging Taiwan's sovereign state claim. Regarding Taiwan-ASEAN relations, Taiwan has zero diplomatic partners in Southeast Asia given the pervasively endorsed one-China policy in the region, which hinders the implementation of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy at the governmental level.

Current research on China's influence on Taiwan's southward engagements can be categorised into two groups. Pessimists maintain that China's attitude determines Taiwan's southward engagement since China holds dominant influence over Southeast Asia, the principal targeted region of the NSP. In contrast, optimists believe that people- to-people connections, distinct from conventional government-to-government

diplomacy, can reinforce existing socio-economic networks in a world of globalisation. It is fair to say that both groups make their points from opposite perspectives. (i.e., top- down regionalism versus bottom-up regionalisation).

Apart from China's oppression, it should be noted that the China factor is not merely about China's influence on the success or failure of NSP. In a way that China's behaviour also drives Taiwan's counterbalance reaction, scholars once argue that Taiwan's economic over-reliance on China can also be a "**pushing factor**" driving Taiwan away from China due to national security concerns. Rachel Sun (2017: 83) portrays that Taiwan's active encouragement of economic engagement with ASEAN is crucial for the island's **hedging strategy** to secure its security and autonomy. Rachel Sun's other research with Shang-Yung Yen (2018: 196-201) further refines the argument by stating that a "**multi-tiered, omni-directional hedging strategy**" has shaped Taiwan's regional economic integration under China's rise. For example, at the operational level, Taiwan has promoted economic cooperation (economic pragmatism) with ASEAN states, such as the bilateral trade and investment agreements and forging a network of engagements (direct engagement) with ASEAN at government-to- government, party-to-party, and people-to-people levels to build up mutual trust. Meanwhile, other than **economic pragmatism** and **direct engagement**, Taiwan also adopts **hard** and **soft balancing**. The "hard" part means pursuing policy convergence with other regional actors' powers to deter China's assertiveness, while the "soft" aims to reinvigorate and diversify Taiwan's economy with other regional actors under the NSP.

Strategically, Alan Yang (2016) also holds that the NSP is essentially a **hedging policy** since China's dominance might negatively influence Taiwan's engagement in Southeast Asia in the region. The decision to lean towards the US alliances or hedging by **risk diversification** is derived from Taiwan's foreign policy has changed from pro- China to pro-US after President Tsai Ing-wen took the office (from 2016-now). Yang argues that the hedging may be closer to reality because **Taiwan's economy is still dependent on the Chinese market, but China's security is seriously threatened**, which does not rule out the possibility of unification by force. Once again, it appears that China's growing hostility and parsimonious stance over Taiwan's international participation and standing has pushed Taiwan to pursue a more autonomous and less vulnerable posture through NSP. Naturally, Taiwan tends to side with other like- minded countries concerned about China's assertiveness, especially the US and Japan.



Regarding Taiwan's hardship in developing relations with ASEAN, Samuel Ku (2017, 2019) points out that the challenges of being excluded from state-centric economic regionalism have become more severe when ASEAN states have actively engaged in mega economic integration frameworks. For example, the ASEAN Plus One (China), Three (China, Japan, and South Korea) and Six (China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India). Although Taiwan has gone beyond traditional government-to-government diplomacy by driving a thriving political economy since the 1990s, Ku suggests the Taiwanese government cannot avoid that

the Asian giant, namely China, has influence over the international community. However, given the diplomatic hardship in Southeast Asia, Ku believes that shared democratic values, such as Taiwan's democratic achievements, can contribute to its presence in the region because Asia has demonstrated tremendous democratisation since the late 1980s, such as the Muslim country of **Indonesia**, the Catholic state of **the Philippines**, and Buddhist nations **South Korea**. Therefore, He further adds that "Despite its isolation, Taiwan's democratic transformation makes it a role model in the region. China and its leaders will also have to consider these factors in the years to come."

Other scholars (Chao, 2016; Minh, 2019; Chen, 2020) compare Taiwan's NSP and China's Belt and Road initiatives (BRI) and conclude that Taiwan should not compete with China since it may cause a "**zero-sum**" outcome. Therefore, Taiwan needs to cultivate the appealing soft power under the NSP instead. As Wen-Chin Chao (2016) suggests, given China's dominance over Southeast Asia, Taiwan should make full use of its advantages over China, such as humanities, culture, and education, to develop long-standing relationships with ASEAN and South Asian countries. By underpinning **Taiwan's intention to not compete with China**, it may increase NSP targeted countries' acceptance of Taiwan's proposals. Tran Thu Minh (2019) holds a similar view of exploiting Taiwan's soft power. Minh states that in the context of China's BRI focusing on building "**hard**" infrastructure, NSP has the advantage to form a "**soft**" connection in the humanities, culture, and education sectors with targeted countries. Alike, Tae-Jun Lee (2019) highlights that Taiwan

should practice true **human-oriented philosophy** of sharing, including improving humanities and education with NSP targeted states, rather than merely conducting economic exchanges.

Due to Taiwan's limited material power compared to China's, it is rational that ASEAN states regard NSP's human resource educational programs will never rival the BRI's infrastructure plans. However, Chien-fu Chen (2020) indicates that after the waves of **broken windows effects** (due to China's **debt diplomacy**) caused by Malaysia, Trump's Indo-pacific strategy, and US-China trade war, the scenario has gradually changed the current political, economic, and military equilibrium status in Indo-pacific region. Chen predicts two possible scenarios for developing the NSP during the second term of President Tsai Ing-wen (2020-2024). First, the Tsai will use the soft power of freedom, democracy, and culture to counter China's rise. Thus, the future of the cross-Strait relations might fall to a "freezing point" and be forced into a position to join the US side with its allies of democratic countries. Secondly, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the world will highly recognise Taiwan's medical, public health, anti-epidemic, and vaccine R&D (Research and Development) industries that Taiwan can use to enhance its regional presence and participation.

Whether the China factor determines Taiwan's international space is still debatable based on various viewpoints. While optimists believe Taiwan can project its

soft power via the NSP, pessimists tend to link Taiwan's diplomacy with China's attitude and argue that only when cross-Strait relations become cordial can Taiwan participate in regional/international affairs. In terms of the NSP's effectiveness, Kwei-bo Huang (2018: 61-63, 2019) is concerned about the obstruction from China since the hegemon has been exercising a tremendous political and economic influence on Southeast and South Asia via the **BRI** and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (**AIIB**). Huang also claims it is very likely that Southeast and South Asian states may scruple about the possible consequences for engaging the NSP projects that China would interpret as official connections and, therefore, violations of **one-China principle** (from PRC's viewpoint), such as signing ECAs, or high-level officials visits. Thus, to deal with the deadlock, Huang (2018: 48) suggests that given the **historical** and **ethnic root**, **geographic proximity** and the vast **economic and trade opportunities** presented by China, Taiwan should work on its relations with China at the same time to form a **non- mutually exclusive** areas where Taiwan, the NSP targeted countries, and China can reach a **win-win-win situation** (3-wins).



Taiwan's soft power has been praised and recognised for a long time. Nevertheless, for some scholars, the critical question is that **can soft power reverse Taiwan's vulnerability?** Describing Taiwan as a vibrant democracy with significant economic and cultural capital, Ngeow Chow Bing (2017: 121-122) maintains that the NSP will help enhance Taiwan's soft power and increase the island's presence in Southeast Asia but cannot counterbalance China-Taiwan (cross-Strait) economic integration. Based on his argument, it means that NSP's aim to decrease Taiwan's

economic reliance is doomed to fail. However, other scholars believe that the socio-economic connections at non-governmental levels can be secured via NSP. Huynh Tam Sang (2018) notes that Taiwan's strategy aims primarily at bi-directional economic cooperation and regional development without provoking China. Accordingly, a **mutual presence** (i.e., ASEAN states in Taiwan & Taiwan in ASEAN states) with increased ASEAN states' economic and cultural presence in Taiwan is perceivable. Since the NSP is to forge economic and social linkages, He claims that Taiwan's pivot to Southeast Asia is expected to win both sides' support from the government and society. The participation of Taiwan's civic forces would contribute to the region in general (Huynh, 2018: 108). This thesis also maintains that the private (i.e., transnational enterprises) and social ties (i.e., civil society connections or organisations) can be vibrant in Taiwan-ASEAN relations, especially in a capitalist and globalised community with various non-state actors joining hands.

Taiwan-ASEAN relations are nuanced under the one-China policy. In terms of ASEAN **non-recognition** practices towards Taiwan, Pasha Hsieh (2019b) argues that the conclusion of several bilateral trade and investment pacts has galvanised various patterns of recognising Taiwan's **treaty-making capacity** and its **legitimacy in governmental cooperation**. Despite the lack of diplomatic relations with Taiwan, ASEAN's intense economic ties with Taiwan have, in turn, enhanced the island's identity and status. Hsieh (2019a: 18-19) further adds that Taiwan's previous southward pivots enhance **the recognition of Taiwan from an IR perspective** and **consolidate the regional supply chain**. At the same time, by conducting these

agreements, ASEAN governments have displayed the autonomy of their foreign policy without succumbing to Beijing's pressure. Hsieh further suggests the NSP can be a new model for foreign aid and a new approach distinct from China's debt diplomacy. However, given China's influence over Southeast Asia, his argument still shifts to rapprochement between Taiwan and China by concluding that "**Taiwan[ese] government should be reminded that the extent of the NSP will develop in tandem with cross-strait relations.**" From a Vietnamese perspective, Tu Lai (2019) also indicates that how far Hanoi and Taipei can go will "**depend largely on the resilience of Vietnam's policy and the determination of the Tsai administration to move away from China and Beijing's political pressure in a dynamic and changing region.**" It proves that China plays a significant role in Taiwan-ASEAN relations.

Admittedly, this thesis agrees that the negative impact of China on the implementation of the NSP could be devastating. Nevertheless, to evaluate the policy's effectiveness, it is necessary to review its objectives. The NSP's rationale is to reduce the economic overdependence on China and build up comprehensive socio-economic relations with the Southbound partners, **not to pursue diplomatic recognition** from ASEAN states. Moreover, Taiwan has denoted that the NSP is not competing with other countries' regional initiatives (e.g., Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, also known RCEP, China's BRI, India's Act East policy, and Japan's Freedom Corridor), but a complementary and inclusive policy opens space for working with other regional powers (Tsai, 2017). In short, the NSP seeks to cooperate

rather than compete. In addition, over-emphasis on China factor cannot advance our understanding of Taiwan's external relations but only simplify it. The simplified inclination may conclude that Taiwan has no diplomacy or Taiwan's international space can only be granted by China, which is invalid and against common sense. Denny Roy (2017) also argues that this viewpoint (I categorise as pessimists) overstates China's power, lacks evidence, and fails to appreciate Taiwan's room for manoeuvre.

2.3 Regional Strategy for Asia

President Tsai Ing-wen stated that the NSP is Taiwan's new "**Regional Strategy for Asia**" to "**redefine Taiwan's role in the region**" (Tsai, 2017) at the Yushan Forum, a Taiwan-initiated transnational policy platform. When it comes to geostrategy, the NSP aims to connect Taiwan with the South and relocate Taiwan's strategic role in the broader Asian region. Taiwan has also sought convergence with other like-minded regional powers' initiatives, especially the US and Japan, to keep a certain distance from China's orbit. Scholars argue that the NSP's implementation transforms the island's economic and political security positions from a geopolitical perspective. It is a rational analysis since the current ruling party DPP's (from 2016-now) foreign policy tends to counterbalance China's intention of unification. In contrast, the Chinese Nationalist Party KMT's (also known as Kuomintang) stance is more fervent to China, **prioritising the cross-strait relations** as the primary external relations. In addition, China is sceptical of DPP's NSP that Beijing criticises the policy's hidden agenda is to enhance Taiwan's geopolitical landscape in the region,

which is not one hundred per cent wrong since Taiwan's economic development (to forge a sense of economic community under the NSP) is also related to its national security and political autonomy.

Different from the KMT's diplomatic thinking of "China is the centre of gravity, neighbouring countries are peripheral," Wen-chin Chao (2016: 85) indicates that the DPP's primary focus is to "get rid of the China-oriented foreign policy" and consequently reduce China's economic and political influence to increase Taiwan's international dynamics. In short, President Tsai and the DPP represent the willingness to adopt a more confrontational approach to deal with cross-Strait relations. Thus, it is reasonable that Taiwan chooses to "Go South" or "Go Out" (towards the whole of Asia) rather than merely "Go West" (towards China) to ease China's continuous pressure. Therefore, Chao maintains that the NSP is used to construct the diplomatic strategy of "**from the world toward China**," making the United States, Japan, and ASEAN the alternative centres of Taiwan's foreign relations.

Alan Yang (2018: 2) has a similar argument that the NSP is a matter of "**breaking free from the constraints of its relationship with China**" and related to regional integration in Asia. Nevertheless, Yang goes beyond the geostrategic analysis focusing on Taiwan's mindset towards the foreign policy reorientation. He states that the transformation of Taiwan's mentality from "**Taiwanese Asia**" (台灣的亞洲) to "**Asian Taiwan**" (亞洲的台灣) implies that the island has changed its Taiwan-centric

mindset, becoming aware of itself as **part of the Asian community**. In addition, Alan Yang's previous research also works on self-identification by suggesting that Taiwan should uphold the geo-factors in engaging with Southeast Asia. In a sense, raising the geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geosocial importance of the NSP will grant Taiwan a new regional identity—an **Asian identity**.

Chairman of the Prospect Foundation (ROC, Taiwan), former Foreign Minister (during President Chen Shui-bain administration, 2004-2006), Chen Tan-sun (2018), indicates the convergence of Taiwan's NSP and India's Act East policy. In his argument, Taiwan is geographically situated at the centre of India's Act East initiative, while India is one of the most critical states in Taiwan's NSP. He states, "when Taiwan moves south and India acts east, where do our paths intersect? We meet with our ASEAN friends in Southeast Asia" (Chen, 2018: 4). He further takes Indonesia's "Global Maritime Axis" policy as an example of cooperation between Taiwan and India by saying that President Joko Widodo's vision aims to strengthen Indonesia's maritime presence and improve inter-island connectivity. Taiwan has responded to Indonesian policies by facilitating cooperation among our shipbuilding industries. As India strives to build its ocean-based economy and increase its maritime activities in the region, it provides opportunities for cooperation. The former Foreign Minister Chen (2018: 5) thus concludes that the NSP is an inclusive policy that maintains a complementary relationship with other regional initiatives— including India's joint initiative with Japan, the Freedom Corridor – Taiwan is open to exploring new cooperation networks other regional stakeholders.

Viewing China's political hostility as a factor **pushing Taiwan away** or **causing Taiwan to side with other regional powers**, Lindsay Black (2019: 246-248) argues that China's antagonistic stance toward the NSP does nothing but "push Taiwan into the hands of Japan, China's regional rivalry, for realising the NSP." Along with the same viewpoints, David Scott (2019) further concludes that Taiwan has been adopting an **"explicit" Indo-Pacific strategy** for its own sake to achieve greater security vis-a-vis China and the NSP is one of Taiwan's foreign policy tools. Scott (2019: 29) further explains that **"PRC emerges as the clear driver behind Taiwan's Indo-Pacific pivot."** Taiwan's strategic narrative under DPP is being an **"Indo-Pacific Democracy"** as a weapon to reshape its international or regional space that China is otherwise dominating. In his argument, Taiwan tends to join the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) group, and this policy shift can be seen as an apparent attempt to align with other countries (e.g., US, Japan, together with a degree of unofficial political support from Australia and India) that are balancing China. However, Scott also indicates that the concept of Taiwan joining the "quad" is still far to realise since any move that Taiwan involves in a formal security mechanism is the **red line** of PRC, which may invoke military reactions.

As the traditional security provider (although without a formal security treaty), the US also matters while examining Taiwan's NSP. Most of Taiwan's foreign policies have taken great powers' reactions into account to a certain extent. For example, Ping-kuei Chen (2019) argues that the people-centred NSP is a **"moderate" foreign**

policy without provoking China that positively improves US-Taiwan relations.

Apart from former President Lee Teng-hui's "Pragmatic diplomacy," Chen Shui-bian's "Pro- independent policies," and Ma Ying-jeou's "Diplomatic Truce, Tsai Ing-wen's NSP upholds **non-political, low-profile, moderate** and **non-provocative** features that signal Taiwan's commitment to be a **self-restraint partner** in dealing with the cross- Strait relations and regional stability. The peace and stability in Taiwan Strait coincide with US interests in East Asia. In other words, Taiwan's NSP serves the interests of the US and makes the Americans are willing to strengthen its support for Taiwan while China increased coercive security threat over the island. China's assertiveness may delegitimise its intervention in the NSP's projects and programs.

Since China-Taiwan relations may be the flashpoint in the East Asian region, both sides' policy transformation has been the foci among Chinese experts and academic communities in the US. In Washington DC, the bipartisan foreign policy think tank, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), published two reports regarding Taiwan's NSP. The first report is "The New Southbound Policy: Deepening Taiwan's Regional Integration" (Glaser et al., 2018), and the second one is named "Charting Convergence: Exploring the Intersection of the US Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and Taiwan's New Southbound Policy" (Glaser et al., 2019). Both policy analysis reports explore Taiwan's presence across the Indo-Pacific region and its potential cooperation among the US, NSP targeted countries, and Taiwan.

Because Taiwan's "democracy and free society are a beacon of liberal values in the region, while its economic development model has been admired and studied for decades by nations in Asia and beyond," Bonnie Glaser, Scott Kennedy, Derek Mitchell, and Matthew Funaiole (2018) suggests that US should engage with Japan, Australia, and India, the other members of the "quad," in support of the NSP. CSIS's policy recommendations demonstrate Taiwan's strategic location and symbolic importance as a vibrant democracy sharing the same values as the US. It should be noted that Taiwanese officials' discourse on the NSP's strategic position had changed from traditional **Asia-Pacific** to **Indo-Pacific** that coincides with the US's further pivot to Asia (From the Obama administration "rebalance" or "pivot to Asia" to "Free and Open Indo-Pacific"). Russell Hsiao and Marzia Borsoi-Kelly (2019) also maintain the convergence between the NSP and FOIP, stating that "[both] are based on the idea of promoting a network of partners based on the shared values of freedom and openness." President Tsai also declared in 2019 that her government is committed to partnering in the US vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) 40th- anniversary friendship reception (Tsai, 2019). In addition, the US Department of Defense's June 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report names Taiwan as one of the "**reliable, capable, and natural partners of the United States**" in the region (USDD, 2019: 30).

Given the liberal, rules-based international order endorsement between two fronts, CSIS further details the potential areas for US-Taiwan cooperation supporting the NSP in 2019. Bonnie Glaser, Matthew Funaiole, and Hunter Marston (2019)

maintain that Washington and Taipei should work together on regional **infrastructure** projects in **agriculture, environmental protection, and clean energy** to promote sustainable development in Southeast Asia. Moreover, The US and Taiwan should promote their overlapping agendas in the region by expanding third-party participation in existing initiatives, such as the Global Cooperation Training Framework (GCTF) in regional connectivity, renewable energy, and other non-political issues, such as women empowerment (political participation) in Asia, which can accelerate Taiwan's meaningful participation in global affairs. In the sensitive security areas, they (Glaser et al., 2019: 34) even recommend that the US and Japan could coordinate with Taiwan in their ongoing programs to bolster maritime domain awareness and security in Southeast Asian and Pacific Island nations by coordination on the provision of equipment and training.

The launch of NSP does append new dimensions for US-China-Taiwan Triangle relations research. Jiann-fa Yan (2018) argues that Taiwan may play an **unsinkable aircraft carrier** for the US and its allies in checking China's expansion in the Asia-Pacific region and the beacon for China's democratisation. The Tsai administration's strong commitment to maintaining the status quo, promoting democracy, and transforming economic structures will help reaffirm US-led allies safeguarding regional peace, prosperity, and democracy. Both Tsai's **status quo** policy in cross-strait relations and the NSP match the US's Indo-Pacific strategy and its interests in general. This research holds that the US-China-Taiwan triangle relations should remain "strategic ambiguous" for now without crossing any red lines, such as

unification by force (US's red line), Taiwan's *de jure* independence (China's red line). Under the strategic ambiguity, Taiwan can navigate potential challenges, reinforcing its security and autonomy. In this sense, the NSP is one of the building blocks for the island's future development and socio-economic integration in the region.

In addition, the success or failure of the NSP also lies in how ASEAN states view China, Taiwan, and cross-Strait relations, respectively. Jyun-yi Lee (2019) argues that the SCS issue and the rise of China may not necessarily be a common concern for ASEAN. Lee points out that the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam, which have overlapping sovereign disputes with China, still, maintain relatively cordial relations with China because of economic incentives. Thus, **emphasising China's threat is not a good strategy for Taiwan** to forge potential ties with ASEAN. Accordingly, Lee (2019: 55-56) suggests that Taiwan seeks security cooperation with its neighbours through capacity-building and less politically sensitive projects. In terms of commonalities in security areas, Taiwan should brand itself as a case to test the concept of "rules-based order." He further adds that if China attacks Taiwan without any provocation (i.e., declaration of *de jure* independence), China is not a responsible rising power as it claims; and if the US allows the unification by force to happen, then "rules-based order" is "nothing more than hot air".

2.4 People-centered Agendas

China has been cultivating Southeast and South Asian states through the BRI initiative since 2014 (initiated in 2013), leading to China's political and economic dominance in the region. Taiwan finds it is challenging to participate in state-centric regionalism due to the one-China policy, and its material powers cannot compete with China anymore. Also, other than a policy that economically competes with other initiatives such as China's BRI, the US's Indo-Pacific or India's Act East, Nadia Gisela Radulovich (2020) argues that the NSP is a complementary strategy policy without prominent geostrategic and geopolitical characters. Instead, Taiwan seeks to participate more actively and integrate with the region through commercial (economic) and cultural (social) ties without disturbing the current power balance. This thesis conceptualise the juxtaposing of social and economic aspects as the policy shift from previous profit-driven mentality in the 1990s.

The NSP reflects Taiwan's **policy reorientation** towards Southeast Asia from a traditional **political economy** to a normative **people-centred** approach. Theoretically, at least two parallel patterns concerning regional integration: top-down and state-led regionalism and bottom-up and demand-driven regionalisation (Jones, 2020). The NSP adopts the latter approach to forge socio-economic connectivity with its southbound partners. Bonnie Glaser, Scott Kennedy, Derek Mitchell, and Matthew Funaiolo (2018: 1-18) suggest that focusing on civic and people-to-people ties rather than government- to-government relations allow Taiwan to avoid the "minefields" posed by its ambiguous sovereignty. They also point out that **at the heart of the NSP is a desire to weave Taiwan into a "people-centred community" of nations that**

span the Indo-Pacific region with Taiwan's advantageous soft power, universities and research institutions, its experience in advanced manufacturing as part of the global supply chain, and social safety net. The people-to-people connections are intended to realise the twin goals of strengthening Taiwan's integration with the region and facilitating its economic diversification. Moreover, interpersonal exchanges are essential for Taiwan to leverage its soft power vis-a-vis China to have a free and open society. (Glaser et al., 2018: 28).

Alan Yang's (2016) analysis concludes that the NSP must enhance the "Southeast Asian network in Taiwan" and the "Taiwanese network in Southeast Asia" (mutual presence) simultaneously for strengthening the positive image of shared prosperity and social interests between Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Yang (2016: 38-41) maintains that the NSP is a roadmap for Taiwan's engagement in the multi-level and multi-facet process of ASEAN-led regional integration. The NSP's goals to forge a sense of community stress ASEAN as the primary focus. Yang (2017) further urges the Taiwanese government to relocate its role in the ASEAN-led community and regional network; to reinvent community awareness and mutual benefits through the joint efforts of Taiwan and the target countries; to reinvigorate Taiwan's partnerships with regional stakeholders, and to link the NSP with the government's domestic reform agenda that aims to enhance social engineering and institutional reform in Taiwan. By implementing his 4R (**Relocation, Reinvention, Reinvigoration, and Reform**) propositions, Taiwan's foreign policy can fully

transform from a "profit-centred" to a "people-oriented" rationale that considers the practical needs and actions of the region and localities simultaneously.

Regarding Taiwan's regional integration, Alan Yang (2018) adopts Andrew Hurrell's (1995) concept of "**soft regionalism**," which elaborate how civic forces create intricate linkages between societies and build transnational communities to construct the NSP. Arguing that the NSP signifies Taiwan's socialisation in Asia, Yang (2018) suggests "bring society back in" by highlighting the role and capacity of transnational actors and the micro-process of networks in making regional society. In his study, he provides two examples to explain what social linkages are. The first one is the **socialisation of Taiwanese businessmen in Southeast Asia** through interaction-based learning; the second is the **Southeast Asian immigrants** (or Taiwanese society names them as **New Residents** 新住民) in Taiwan. These micro-process networks within the people-to-people connection at institutional, social, and personal levels can facilitate interaction-based learning in different areas and the socialisation of Taiwan in regional integration. To sum up, the people-centred NSP is the starting point of Taiwan's socialisation into the ASEAN-led regional community.

Existing research demonstrates that Taiwan's efforts in regional participation, integration, and socialisation via NSP. The further question is that how can Taiwan facilitate the process? Alan Yang and Jeremy Chiang (2019a) contend that the NSP as Taiwan should uphold **human values**, such as equal economic rights, social welfare,

and political rights that ensure the sustainability of human survival, to be the main objectives. They (2019a: 75-82) shows how the NSP responds to overall human values by developing social connectivity between Taiwan and its neighbours in Southeast Asia. Yang and Chiang further indicate that the NSP's purpose is to reinforce Taiwan's **warm power** (in contrast to China's sharp power), contributing to Asia's economic integration and social stability. In their opinion, the NSP promotes regional identity and human values shared by Taiwan and the region, rather than merely exporting the so-called "Taiwan-model" to neighbouring countries. Yang and Chiang (2019a: 79-82) also indicate that in defence of regional and global values, Taiwan's NSP has at least three significant features: **material sharing, capacity upgrading, and identity making** in the region. It appears that Yang and Chiang grant Taiwan a moral high ground in contributing to regional development. Following the same rationale, this research further maintains that Taiwan attempts to promote people-centred development based on the "models of mutual benefits and win-win cooperation" to achieve regional peace, prosperity, and stability.



However, Ping-Kuei Chen (2019) doubts whether the NSP's agenda, forging economic ties and bridging civil societies, can contribute to Taiwan's external relations. Chen asserts that for those who have high hope that the NSP will facilitate Taiwan's participation in regional affairs or quickly expand bilateral economic exchanges, the NSP may be a disappointment. Nevertheless, Chen also acknowledges that for those who eye on **civil society development** and **public diplomacy**, the NSP may have a prominent achievement. Once again, Chen singles out the opposite angles

to evaluate the policy. Thus, it is necessary to revisit the NSP's end goals: to forge a sense of economic community and establish mechanisms for wide-ranging negotiation and dialogue; form a consensus for cooperation. Among the policy guidelines, promotion, and work plans, Taiwan does not prioritise diplomatic recognition. Moreover, the people-centred approach indicates that Taiwan focuses more on non-official or semi-official contacts.

Since forging people-to-people connections is the critical mission, scholars also explore Taiwan's NGOs and migrants' roles in the policy (Wu & Kung, 2016; Wang et al., 2017). Kun-lu Wu and I-chun Kung (2016) urge the Taiwanese government to change the harsh control of immigration by discarding the bondages of ethnicity and nationality and assuring **basic human rights for all** (including migrant workers and marriage migrants). Wu and Kung believe that without improving the Southeast Asian migrants' situation, the deficiency in Taiwan's protection of human rights will be exposed, which will be self-destructive and diminish the human dimension of the NSP. They maintain that only when Taiwanese share a consensus that Taiwan is an **immigrant society** where every individual (including citizens and immigrants) can enjoy equal rights can our participation in **international civil society** expand with fruitful results.

As for the roles of Taiwanese NGOs in Southeast Asia, Rebecca Wang, Nina Kao, Jay Hung, and Shih-shen Chien (2017) indicate the Taiwanese government

fails to provide sufficient legislative cooperation and financial support for Taiwanese NGOs because of lack of formal diplomatic allies in Southeast Asia. They (Wang et al., 2017: 108) emphasise that Taiwan should recognise **NGOs as an essential means of spreading the values of Taiwanese civil society** and draw on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a core concept of cross-sectoral "**smart diplomacy**" by letting go of traditional international aid programme and reallocating current resources adopting a more inclusive international development cooperation. In other words, they believe Taiwan's global development strategy must break out of the traditional "nation- to-nation" diplomatic mould and open to connect with global civil society organisations, to promote "people-based" diplomacy. In this regard, Taiwanese NGOs operation in Southeast Asia is compatible with the NSP's people-centred approach, and it is imperative to grant NGOs' role in the policy.

2.5 Identifying the gap

After reviewing the four aspects from current NSP research, we can see that NSP is Taiwan's response to the dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region with a bottom-up approach. Current research also shows the policy reorientation from the previous profit- driven (the mid-1990s and early 2000s) to people-centred rationale (2016-now). However, there is little research on the theoretical explanation of Taiwan's role under the NSP. In this regard, this research argues that Taiwan acts as a norm entrepreneur advocating people-centred values in Southeast Asia under the NSP. However, it raises additional puzzles that need to be tackled: How does Taiwan perceive its role in the region by framing the policy as people-centred? What do the

people-centred values mean to Taiwan? Furthermore, what are New Southbound stakeholders' reactions to Taiwan's people-centred policy? This research adopts a constructivist lens to answer those questions by looking at the NSP political discourse and NSP participants' responses to Taiwan's offer.



CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This research applies two qualitative approaches, namely **discourse analysis** (DA) and **semi-structured interview**, to present Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship for people-centred values in Southeast Asia. It contains two main parts. The primary focus is to identify the normative features concerning development in the New Southbound Policy (NSP) that denotes Taiwan's policy reorientation from profit-driven to people-centred (Yang, 2016) that places "people" at the core of the policy and how does Taiwan capitalise on the people-centred rebranding to advance its regional participation and integration. This research maintains that Taiwan's norm advocacy and policy transformation can be identified by examining the political narratives. Nevertheless, it is expected to see a gap between ideal policy design and actual practice. It further leads to the second part of this study that attempts to probe how those policy enforcers, participants, or stakeholders perceive and accomplish the people-centred policy and view Taiwan's role in regional development. The response can be regarded as the "output" of Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship under the NSP, revealing the unnoticed details in policy implementation for further policy implication.

3.1 Research Methods

3.1.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis, or discourse studies, is a research method to analyse what has been **written** and **said** in a historical, cultural, social, and political context. A discourse maintains "a degree of regularity" in social relations to produce

"preconditions for action" (Neumann, 2008: 62). Although discourse cannot wholly determine action, we can still recognise **the correlations between words and deeds** as Jennifer Milliken (1999: 229) points out that discourse holds "productivity" to define subjects and their authority to speak and act, further producing knowledgeable practices. The main task here is to explain Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship behaviour by reviewing the political narratives regarding the NSP. In practice, political discourses are "goal-oriented" (Elena and Olga, 2019: 143-144) with the speakers, audience, and specific pursuits. It is also a social interaction process in which specific values, beliefs, norms, habits, or political thinking are communicated to acquire a particular shared vision at domestic, regional, or global levels.

3.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer only prepares a few pre-determined questions while not planning the rest. Thus, it combines both benefits of structured and unstructured interviews. On the one hand, it does not constrain interviewees' responses with a set of fixed questions. On the other, it also allows the interviewer to follow up on the relevant topics spontaneously (See interview guidelines in *Appendix I*). As Louise Barriball and Alison While (1994: 330) indicate, it is suited for "the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers." Other than official narratives that frame and persuade people- centred cooperation and development, it is imperative to look at the perceptions of the **policy enforcers, participants, and stakeholders** in the policy projects. Their responses are first-hand observations, evaluations, reactions of

Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship and the island's regional outreach efforts based on their actual experiences.

3.2 Data Collection and Limitation

3.2.1 Data from Official Documents

The contents for discourse analysis generally include **spoken language** and **written language** in use. They may refer to any communication behaviour (e.g., talks and texts), such as a speech, debate, interview, policy document, posts on websites, emails between officials (van Dijk, 1997; Jackson, 2005: 17). More broadly and go beyond merely political languages, discourses can also refer to any talk or text that is "either about a political subject or which is politically motivated" (Wilson, 2015).

This study selects several official policy documents from 2016 to 2020 (President Tsai Ing-wen's First Term) as analysis content. They include three central policy frameworks:

1. *The Guideline for New Southbound Policy* (Office of the President, 2016),
2. *New Southbound Policy Promotion Plan* (Executive Yuan, 2016a), and
3. *New Southbound Policy Work Plan* (Executive Yuan, 2016b).

Those primary documents build up the policy structure by clarifying the short, medium, and long-term objectives and further implementation. We can treat those three policy papers as the most crucial guidance for NSP.

In addition, for external communication purposes, the Taiwanese government published several English-written policy reports that introduce and record the success of selective NSP collaborations between Taiwan and targeted states in the south. Other than direct promotion purposes, by looking at how those "success stories" are narrated, we can sense how Taiwan represents its role in regional development.

Those reports include:

1. *An Introductory Guide to Taiwan's New Southbound Policy* (Hsu et al., 2017),
2. *Progress and Prospect—Taiwan's New Southbound Policy* (Cheung et al., 2018),
3. *Moving the Vision Forward—Taiwan's New Southbound Policy* (Cheung, 2019), and
4. *The New Southbound Policy —A Practical Approach Moving Full Steam Ahead ver. 2017, 2018, and 2019* (OTNs, 2017, 2018, & 2019).

3.2.2 Data from Political Remarks

Other than "texts," this study also looks at "talks" with a particular focus on President Tsai Ing-wen's political statements on the NSP from 2016 to 2020. Tsai gave political remarks regarding the NSP in academic or business settings, such as symposiums, conferences, policy and business forums, or meetings in the Office of President. All the political speeches are well-recorded on the official website of the Office of President ROC, Taiwan (<https://www.president.gov.tw/>). Moreover, the criterion of those remarks being selected is whether the speeches occurred with a

specific audience: guests from NSP-targeted countries. Accordingly, those states can serve the communication purpose of promoting Taiwan and NSP in regional affairs.

3.2.3 Data from Interviews

This study interviewed 17 respondents (See *Appendix 2*) related to NSP cooperative agendas, including 11 Taiwanese and 7 ASEAN citizens (Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand). Their professions and occupations are diverse with expertise, such as a diplomat, governmental official, member of parliament, doctor, a researcher from a think tank and NGOs, university professors or lecturers, and students. They supervise or participate in various NSP programmes regarding agriculture, public health, environmental protection, technology transfer, fellowship, and scholarship. Each interview time ranges from shortest 30 minutes to longest nearly 2 hours. In addition, all the interviews were anonymous, on the one hand, to encourage respondents to express their thoughts freely, and, on the other, protect the privacy making sure any personal information will not be disclosed.

3.2.4 Limitation

In this thesis, the discourse analysis can shed light on how Taiwan portrays itself as a normative actor advocating a people-centred cooperation to deal with regional development challenges and further legitimise its role in the region. Taiwan's behaviour under NSP can be explained as the island's struggle for acceptance since it has faced a constraining external environment imposed by China for a long time. However, ASEAN stakeholders' (including enforcers and participants) opinions towards NSP, this thesis faces its limits due to **insufficient interviewee number** that

may lack of comprehensiveness. It is mainly because the NSP has plenty of projects across various areas so that a comprehensive overall survey is challenging to conduct. Nevertheless, although their opinions cannot represent ASEAN people, their responses can still serve the first-hand feedback and reaction of Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship. In this regard, the findings of this research can provide some insights into policy implications.



CHAPTER IV TAIWAN'S PREVIOUS SOUTHWARD ENGAGEMENTS

Taiwanese businessmen have been "going south (Nan Xiang)" since the late 1980s. The private sectors took the lead to invest in Southeast Asia based on economic considerations. Those profit-seeking pioneers are mostly the small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—the driving force of Taiwan's economic growth—pursuing commercial opportunities in Southeast Asia. Apart from Southeast Asia, China has also been another popular capital flow (FDI) destination for Taiwanese businesses (*Tai Shang* 台商) during the same period due to China's "Reform and Opening-up" policy (since 1978). However, in the 1990s, as the cross-strait economic relations warmed up, "going west (Xi Xiang 西向)" had gradually replaced "going south." The trending evolved to a certain point concerning the policymakers in Taipei that increasing economic interdependence may threaten the island's national security. Thus, President Lee Teng-hui (1988-2000) launched the first "Go South" policy in 1994 with the aim of risk diversification by calling for Taiwanese businesses to shift their investment to Southeast Asia instead. The **political economy** came into play in Taiwan-China- Southeast Asia triangle relations. In this sense, the Lee administration also **leveraged Taiwan's economic clout to retain regional status economically and politically with results** (Lin, 1999), such as high-level officials visit, signing investment agreements, and establishing Taiwanese representative offices in Southeast Asia. Later, President Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008) followed the same strategy and rationale, announcing to reboot the "Go South" policy in 2002 but failed because of China's appealing market and its increasing influence over Southeast Asia. When President Ma Ying-jeou (2008- 2016) took office, he chose a different approach to manage Taiwan's external relations by reaching a

rapprochement with China first and then looking for a possible breakthrough in Taiwan-ASEAN relations. During the Ma period, Taiwan successfully signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Singapore, the first and only EPA between Taiwan and Southeast Asia states, until 2020.

4.1 Lee Teng-hui's "Go South" Policy (1994-1996 and 1997-1999)

The "Go South" policy was implemented by the KMT regime under President Lee Teng-hui in 1994. There were two phases of "Go South, " including the first period between 1994 to 1996 and the second period right after the Asian Financial Crisis between 1997 to 1999. In general, the rationale behind "Go South" was multifaceted that was inclusive of (1) new mindset of Taiwan's foreign policy—the adoption of **Pragmatic Diplomacy**, (2) **unfavourable investment environment** in the island, or to be specific, soaring production cost in Taiwan, (3) response to **the trend of regional economic integration**, and (4) **increasing economic interdependence** across Taiwan Strait. Among the four main factors, the last one was the primary concern in Taipei.

4.1.1 Pragmatic Diplomacy

Firstly, the "Go South" demonstrates Taiwan's new external strategy, Pragmatic Diplomacy, under the Lee administration since 1988. The core spirit of Pragmatic Diplomacy is to focus on the "substantial interests" in formal and informal relations rather than being entangled by the "name" issue or argument regarding who is the legitimate Chinese government (democratic ROC versus communist PRC). Lee believed that as long as the pragmatic approach can guarantee dignity and equality,

Taiwan should actively join the international arena and use its growing economic clout rather than be solely concerned with names or forms of participation (Jing, 2016: 5). Compared to the Chiang regime's determined ideology, it was a **flexible turn** in diplomacy, going beyond the disputes of China's lawful and legitimate representative between the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The dispute had ended in 1971 when PRC had replaced ROC's seat in United Nations (UNs). Taiwan has faced dramatical political isolation although most countries shifted diplomatic recognition from ROC to PRC before 1971. Pragmatic Diplomacy was often praised for its **flexibility**. However, it is also fair to say that the turn was necessary and needed to **liberate Taiwan from ideological conflicts with mainland China.**

Given the background, Taiwan's economic power had become the policy tool to reap political gains under the "Go South" policy. Regarding Taiwan's economic clout in the 1990s, it is unavoidable to mention the so-called "Taiwan Miracle," which refers to rapid industrialisation and economic growth during the latter half of the twentieth century. Taiwan has successfully transformed itself into a **Newly Industrialized Economic (NIEs)** in the later 1980s, becoming one of the "Four Asian Tigers," alongside Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. With an incredible amount of capital, Taiwan was one of Southeast Asia's significant investors during the 1990s. Investment extended Taiwan's national power and strengthened its economic diplomacy (Peng, 1997: 646). In a nutshell, as Murray Rubinstein (1999: 462) bluntly indicates, "at the heart of this foreign policy was the realisation of the simple truth that money talked." Between the late 1980s to 1990s, Taiwan successfully formed

informal or quasi-formal relationships with ASEAN states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines and Singapore.

4.1.2 Unvafarable Investment Environment at Home

Secondly, the increase of **production costs** also played a role in the outflow of capital from Taiwan to Southeast Asia and later China. Taiwanese business's investment tendency was about **resource and market-seeking** logic, which were related to the economic structural changes in the island. Those changes included the soaring land cost, increased wage levels (labour cost) associated with currency (the New Taiwan dollars) appreciation, and environmental protectionism (Chu et al., 1999: 78-81) in civil society. As an economy highly relied on exports, Taiwan relocated its production base overseas, enjoying lower production costs to maintain competitiveness. Southeast Asia and China, with **cheap labour force** and **raw materials**, were promising solutions. Taiwanese businesses had already begun to venture into Southeast Asia in the mid-1980s due to **geographic proximity** and **economic complementarity** before the "Go South" policy. The policy's official announcement affirmed a well-established and already existing commercial practice (Chan, 1996: 97-98). As a foreign economic policy, the "Go South" was more "reactive" to the existing economic exchanges between Taiwan and Southeast Asia than a "catalyst" of them (Dent 2003: 268) since businesses are mostly sensitive profit-seeking animals.

Looking at the political discourse from the policy report entitled *Nan Jing* (Southward 南進 or 南向) published by the Minister of Economic Affairs (MOEA)

in 1993, there were five objectives of the policy: (1) to help local industries to move their production base to Southeast Asia where the cost of labour is cheaper; (2) to make use of some Southeast Asian countries as a replacement for Hong Kong as an "intermediary stop" for trade with China after 1997 (Handover of Hong Kong from the UK to China); (3) to combine Taiwan's development expertise and the resources of Southeast Asia to expand bilateral trade and to strengthen Taiwan's local industries; (4) to maintain Taiwan's economic growth by building production bases in Southeast Asia in preparation for Vietnam's entry to ASEAN and the development of the ASEAN Free Trade Area; and (5) to improve substantive commercial relations with the ASEAN five and Vietnam to enhance Taiwan's position in the region's security system (Gazette of Legislative Yuan, 1994, cited in Chan, 1996: 99). It featured the "Go South" political economy nature treating the policy as a **policy tool** further to reinforcing Taiwan and Southeast Asia's economic integration and semi-official relations with significant capital flows (FDI).

4.1.3 Response to Regional Integration

Since the 1990s, the countries in the Asia Pacific region had undergone a process of economic development, their economic interdependence and degree of division of labour were becoming deeper. At that time, ASEAN had managed to form an economic bloc by signing FTAs with other regional powers. The third rationale behind the "Go South" also responded to the regional integration trending based on the official narratives above-mentioned. As one of the leading roles of economic development in the Asia Pacific, it was reasonable for the island to look toward Southeast Asia to focus on its economic and diplomatic efforts (Peng, 1997: 647).

The policy seemed to be an **economic strategy** about relocating the production base, maintaining Taiwan's economic growth, forging economic ties with Southeast Asian countries, and preparing for the FTAs. However, the rationale behind the "Go South" was **mixed with both political and economic considerations**. With expected regional economic integration under the "Go South, " Taiwan's leaders were looking forward to reducing Taiwan's political and economic risks overreliance on the Chinese market. It is fair to say that among all the factors motivating the invention of the "Go South," but the **China factor** played more role in the policy.

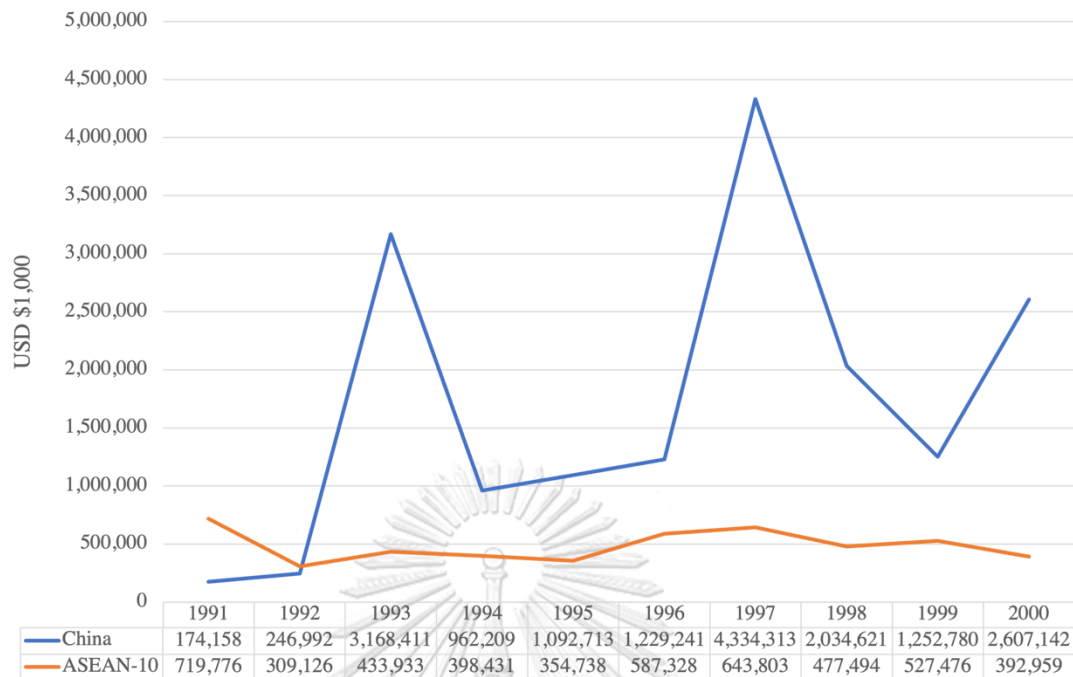
4.1.4 Economic Interdependence as a Threat

Fourthly, the increasing cross-Strait economic interdependence has been perceived as a threat to Taiwan's national interest. The "Go South" was devised as a counterbalancing strategy to cool down the integration process. During the late 1980s to the early 1990s, China had been another hot investment location for Taiwan's vibrant capital flows other than Southeast Asia. In 1998, China announced the "Regulations for Encouraging Taiwan Compatriots to Invest in the Mainland," offering investment incentives. Later, in 1990, Taiwan declared "Regulations Governing Indirect Investment and Technical Cooperation in Mainland China Area," officially allowing Taiwanese businesses to invest westward from 1991. The permission was not unconditional. According to the regulations, only investment and

technical cooperation that **will not affect national security** and economic development can be allowed.

China's huge market and potential middle-class population, cheaper labour force, abundant raw materials attracted Taiwanese businesses to relocate their production bases. Moreover, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic affinity explain the ease of doing business in China despite the apparent difference in regulatory and property rights regimes (McBeath, 1999: 116). Unsurprisingly, China had become the primary beneficiary of Taiwan's outflow investment while also emerging as Taiwan's fastest-growing export market (Peng, 1997: 640). (See *Figure 3*) The seemingly unstoppable deeper economic integration bothered Taipei, and the once perceived threat became concrete. Whenever the cross-Strait relations deteriorate, Taipei must worry about Beijing's potential of economic sanctions to endanger Taiwan's economic development (Lin, 1999: 89) and national security.

Figure 3 Taiwan's FDI to China and ASEAN (1991-2000)



Source: Investment Commission, Ministry of Economic Affairs, ROC (Taiwan).

https://www.moeaic.gov.tw/business_category.view?lang=en&seq=3 &

<https://data.gov.tw/dataset/98779>

Due to the complexity across the Strait, it is necessary to place "China" as one intervening factor explaining Taiwan's moves and subsequent policy changes. In 1996, other than "Go South" encouraging businesses to diversify investment to counterbalance the "magnet effect" (磁吸效應) of the Chinese economy (Yang & Hsiao 2016: 217), the Lee administration further placed a cap (*No Haste, Be Patient* policy 戒急用忍) on high-technology and infrastructure investment in China. It prohibited the ultimate investment amount, not exceeding \$50 million US dollar. It again demonstrates the sensitivity of economic integration with China and Taiwan's vulnerability towards a rising Chinese economy from the perspective of policymakers.

To sum up, as Peng Shin-yi (1997: 643) indicates that Taiwan's concern with its increasing dependence on China revolved around "security and domestic issues. "

Peng maintains that "Taiwan's has been confronted with the ever-changing dynamics of the Taiwan-China relationship, which had led Taiwan to assess the security implications as well as economic implications of the relationship." In line with the similar argument, "the security and political implications of an inextricable but asymmetric economic linkage between Taiwan and China frightened Taiwan's leadership," asserted by Gerald McBeath's (1999: 123).

4.1.5 Implementation and Outcomes of "Go South"

The Lee administration implemented various executive orders to secure Taiwan's economic and political interests. The "*Guideline on Enhancing Economic Ties and Trade Relations with Southeast Asia*" (加強對東南亞地區經貿合作綱領) was commenced in March 1994. The primary investment and economic cooperation targets were Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The first "Guideline" was due in December 1996. To expand the whole "Go South" projects, the government announced another executive called the "*Guideline on Enhancing Economic and Trade Relations with Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand*" (加強對東南亞及紐澳地區經貿工作綱領) with the full coverage of all Southeast Asian countries plus Australia and New Zealand in 1997. Next year, Taipei announced a follow-up policy of "Concrete Measures on Plan of Action of Enhancing Southeast Asian Economic and Trade Cooperation." It showed Taiwan's political will to engage ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and the committed governmental support of Taiwanese enterprises affected by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. In line with the Taiwan government's policy, state-owned enterprises emerged as transnational actors and began investing in Southeast Asia aside from the previous

pioneering SMEs. Alongside the investment, the “Go South” policy also triggered an upsurge in trade between Taiwan and the region.

In retrospect, Lee's "Go South" efforts earned relative success to a certain extent. There were two main achievements, economic and political, for the concrete results from the policy. First, Gerald Chan (1996: 96) shows that Taiwan's trade and investment had increasingly intertwined with Southeast Asia. Taiwanese businesses have forged "closer economic ties" with ASEAN, contributing to the island's further engagements in regional grouping and trade integration given China's pressure (Yang and Hsiao, 2016: 226). From an economic standpoint, in the early 1990s, Taiwan became a significant source of investment (FDI) in Southeast Asia: ranked first in Vietnam, second in Malaysia (behind Japan), third in Indonesia (behind Japan and Hong Kong), fourth in Thailand (behind Japan, Hong Kong and the USA), fifth in the Philippines and thirteenth in Singapore. After the initial "Go South" in 1994, investment in this region gradually increased until a slight drop in 1998 due to the Asian financial crisis (An & Yeh, 2020: 4).

Second, the reciprocal economic relations prompted some Southeast Asian states to sign economic agreements, such as bilateral investment protection and promotion agreements (BIAs), double taxation avoidance agreements (DTAAs), and temporary goods agreements. For instance, Taiwan had successfully signed investment protection and promotion agreements with Indonesia (1990), the Philippines (1992), Malaysia (1993), Vietnam (1993), and Thailand (1996). Taiwan also signed the double taxation avoidance agreements with Indonesia (1995), Malaysia (1996),

Vietnam (1998), and Thailand (1999). These agreements secure Taiwanese businesses' rights and facilitate investment flows. Meanwhile, the capacity of signing agreements also proves Taiwan's sovereignty or recognise the Taiwanese government's legal, financial, and monetary system (Chen, 2002: 84).

Thirdly, with significant economic influence, the Lee administration promoted the status of Taiwan's representative offices in the region and their regional counterparts in Taipei. Before "Go South," Taiwan had to adopt obscure and informal names, such as the "Chinese Chamber of Commerce, " the "Far East Trade Office, " the "Far East Travel and Trade Centre, " and the "Pacific Economic and Cultural Center" for the *de facto* representative offices in the 1970s and 1980s due to one-China policy. Vice versa, for Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, they instead used the name of "Indonesian Chamber of Commerce," the "Thai Airways International Ltd. Office, " the "Malaysian Airline Taipei Branch," and the "Asian Exchange Center, Inc." to conduct visas and other counsellor services, without using any formal names.

However, since the improvement of bilateral relations between Taiwan and Southeast Asia, some ASEAN counties gradually approved the "rename" of Taiwanese representative offices, mostly changing to the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. " Likewise, the names of offices representing ASEAN countries in Taiwan also changed to the "Indonesian Economic and Trade Office (1995)," the "Malaysian Friendship and Trade Centre (1998)," the "Manila Economic and Cultural Office (1989)," the "Thailand Trade and Economic Office (1992)," and the "Singapore

Trade Office (1990)." For the case of Vietnam, it signed a representative office establishment agreement with Taiwan in June 1992, allowing Taiwan to set up the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Office" in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in November of the same year. The following year, in July 1993, Vietnam established a representative office in Taipei under the name "Vietnam Economic and Cultural Office." Although those changes did not use "Taiwan" directly, they still signalled the reciprocal relations between Taiwan and ASEAN states respectively since "Taipei" refers to the capital of Taiwan.

Lastly, another indicator of the cordial relations between Taiwan and Southeast Asia was the reciprocal high-level official visits. During Chiang Ching-kuo's tenure, only two high-level Taiwanese officials were held in ASEAN countries: Premier Sun Yun-suan's visit to Indonesia in 1981 and Premier Yu Kuo-hwa's visit to Singapore in 1987. Lee's Pragmatic Diplomacy also had achieved an unprecedented number of reciprocal visits from high-level officials in Southeast Asia (Jing, 2016: 12). Under Lee administration, Taiwanese officials travelled much more frequently to Southeast Asia. Besides Lee's personal first visit to Singapore in 1989, Lee also made ice-breaking visits to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand in 1994. Lee's visits in Southeast Asia were called "vacation diplomacy," which used tourist visas to meet ASEAN's foreign leaders and discuss the trading and investment connections and offers of technological assistance. Lee's premiers also travelled more to ASEAN countries:

1. Hau Pei-tsun visited Singapore in 1990.

2. Lien Chan travelled to Singapore and Malaysia in 1993.
3. Vincent Siew visited Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia in 1998.

Reciprocally, the high-level officials from Southeast Asia also visited Taiwan in the 1990s, including the prime ministers from Singapore and Malaysia, the vice president from the Philippines, and vice prime ministers from Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia (Chen, 2002: 84). Specifically, former Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok-tong and Senior Minister Lee Kuan-yew, then Malaysia Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir, and then Vice President of the Philippines Fidel Ramos did pay visits to Taiwan during the same period (Ku, 2009: 89) thanks to Taiwan's FDI flows in the region.

Taiwan's pragmatic diplomacy combined with "Go South" had sustained Taipei to consolidate relations with Southeast Asian states without formal diplomatic ties at the right timing. Alan Yang and Michael Hsiao (2016: 218) maintain that Taiwan's southern turn success was partial because Southeast Asia had undergone the state-building process during the 1990s. They argue that "while striving for independence and national development, most of the new regimes required foreign investments and economic inputs from major economies to boost economic growth and legitimise their ruling." However, the morning sun never lasts a day. The 1997 Asian Economic Crisis was a setback for Taiwanese businesses' southward engagement. Owing to the trading relations with the US and China primarily protecting Taiwan from the regional crisis, Taiwan fared better than all other neighbouring states in the south. It was clear to

many of Taiwan's investors that China was a more secure place to invest than Southeast Asia since then (McBeth, 1999: 133). As a result, in the second phase of the "Go South" efforts, Taiwan's southward investment was unsuccessful since fewer Taiwanese enterprises invested in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, even though after 1997, China attracted most Taiwanese enterprises to invest in China, it did not mean there was no investment in Southeast Asia. There has developed complex investment links and production networks at the industry and firm levels among each of the "dyad" (Taiwan- China, Taiwan-Southeast Asia, China- Southeast Asia) in a broad regional triangular economic structure (Chen, 1996: 467).

4.2 Chen Shui-bian's Reboot of "Go South" (2002-2008)

When it comes to Taiwan's survival in Southeast Asia, Taipei tends to place political economy strategy first, and soft power comes second since the island's economic clout had been proved effective in expanding its influence during the 1990s. President Lee's successor President Chen Shui-bian from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), attempted to reintroduce the "Go South" policy in 2002, but, in retrospect, it ended up being in vain as Taiwanese enterprises continued to put their money in the Chinese basket. Irrespective of the Chen administration's pledge to "Go South" again, Taiwan's investment in Southeast Asia between 2002 and 2006 did not reach pre-Asian financial crisis levels (Jing, 2016: 57). For Taiwanese businesses, China outweighed Southeast Asia based on simple profits calculation and investment convenience.

In addition, Southeast Asia's responses to Chen's reboot "Go South" appeared to be less welcoming than Lee's tenure due to political reasons, namely the increasing influence and pressure from China. DPP's political stance and ideology about Taiwan's status explains the tension, and the pro-independence party adopted a confrontational standpoint toward Beijing, which had caused concerns from Southeast Asia. In general, the Chen administration adopted a more aggressive diplomatic approach vis-à-vis China, a tactic commonly translated as "scorched-earth diplomacy," competing for diplomatic allies through diplomatic offensives with economic incentives. The provoking approach toward China further deteriorated Taiwan's relations with Southeast Asia, the main targets of "Go South," that these states were reluctant to be dragged in any possible crisis across the Taiwan Strait.

One of the indicators was the decreasing visits of high-level officials. During the 1990s, Taiwan had frequent exchanges with its Southeast Asian counterparts, with several visits from high-level government officials, such as President Lee Teng-hui's visits to three Southeast Asian countries (the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand) in the name of "vacation diplomacy" in 1994. In contrast, during Chen's tenure, these exchanges were significantly reduced. The most frustrating incident was when the former vice-President Annet Lu paid an unexpected and high-profile visit to Indonesia, hoping to meet Indonesia officials before her "vacation" in 2002. The Indonesian government publicly announced that Taiwan was an integral part of the PRC under Beijing's pressure. Concerned about China's attitude, it is understandable that ASEAN countries were unwilling to touch upon political ties with the Chen administration. Chen's diplomatic achievements in the region were not as remarkable as Lee

Teng-hui's (Jing, 2016: 31). The incident also coincides with the period when China's regional influence, in general, outpaced Taiwan's economic power, which made the replicating "Go South" doomed to fail.

4.2.1 Chen's Rhetoric on "Go South"

Chen shared the same strategic logic with Lee's. That is — to avert Taiwan's economic over-dependence on China and retain influence in Southeast Asia. During Chen's speech at the annual Asia Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce (ASTCC) meeting—an English name established in 1993 to promote and exchange business in Asia—he announced to resume the "Go South" policy. Like his predecessor, he underpinned that Taiwan should strengthen economic ties with Southeast Asia to reduce its economic dependence on China, which would weaken Taiwan's bargaining power to negotiate with China. Chen warned Taiwanese businessmen not to "hold any illusions about China" and stated that "with the government's backing, Taiwanese enterprises should look to Southeast Asia's potential instead of seeing China as the only market in the world. (Taipei Times, 2004)."

Afterwards, the Chen administration announced that Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Vietnam are the targeted destinations for Taiwanese investment. By pushing large enterprises, such as China Steel, Formosa Plastics Group, Uni-President and Pou-Chen Group to Vietnam, the Taiwanese government desired to engage Southeast Asian markets and governments (Yang and Hsiao, 2016: 221) once again. At that time, the Chen administration mainly focused on strengthening the investment support system for Taiwan businesses by establishing

assessment mechanisms, facilitating industry investments, and providing training for returning employees (Glaser et al., 2018: 8).

4.2.2 Chen's cross-Strait economic policy

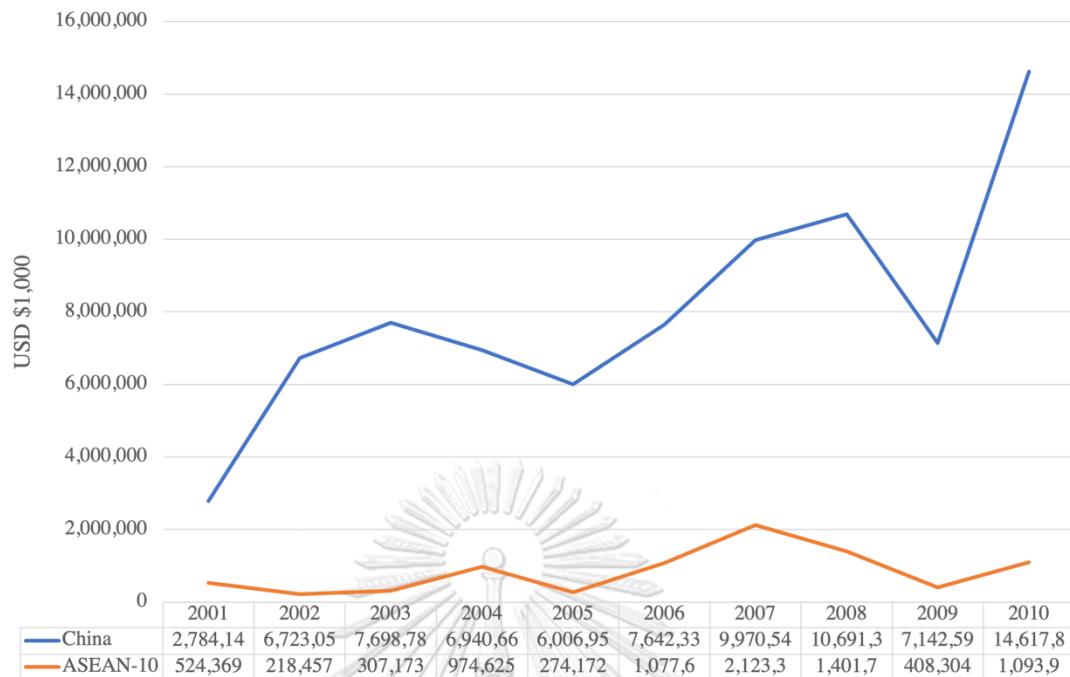
Lee and Chen both were alert of China's "magnet effect" that may hollow out Taiwan's economy. The term "magnet effect" adopted by the Taiwanese political and academic community describes the protectionist thinking that Beijing exploits China's enormous population, land, and market and provides incentives to induce capital, industries, and human capital out of Taiwan to mainland China. That was also why the Lee administration had placed regulations on high-technology and infrastructure investment in China in 1996. However, even though Chen was aware of China's threat, the implemented policy went opposite. Chen's wrong move—to cancel some regulations on Taiwanese investment in China—had striking exacerbated the over-concentration phenomenon.

Unlike Lee's "No Haste, Be Patient," Chen administration had implemented the "Active Opening, Effective Management" (積極開放，有效管理) approach to deal with westward investment by lifting the previous regulations in 2000. The policy responded to the calls for open from industries, the preparation for participation in World Trade Organisation (WTO), and business competitiveness in a globalised economic order. For Chen, China is always a threat. However, no matter what, opening or regulating Taiwanese investment, Beijing would continue to use its economic clout to finish the political reunification agenda. Under this situation, Taiwan needed to nurture an environment favourable for domestic and foreign

investment in Taiwan to maintain its competitive edge over China and preserve its *de facto* independence reality by upgrading its industrial structure, particularly in the high-end information technology industries (Wang, 2002: 138-139). It was logical for enterprises to move the uncompetitive "sunsetting industries" to China.

Notwithstanding, it turned out that the Chinese economy's appeal proved too strong for Taiwanese business. Later, in 2006, the cross-Strait economic policy changed to "Active Management, Effective Opening." (積極管理，有效開放) The policy aims to go beyond the dichotomy between "opening up" and "regulating" to deal with economic relations across the Strait. According to the political discourse, the government will develop and manage the cross-Strait economic relations based on Taiwan's autonomy preservation and national interests. Chen's cross-Strait economic policy had swung back to cautiousness once again. Unfortunately, the policy change failed to slow down cross-Strait integration. By the 2000s growth of FDI outflows into China has significantly outpaced FDI outflows into Southeast Asia. (See *Figure 4*) This period marks an obvious turning point of Taiwanese investment flows shifting from the South to the west. China replaced Southeast Asia and has become the most popular destination for Taiwan enterprises seeking to establish overseas operations (Hsu, 2017).

Figure 4: Taiwan's FDI to China and ASEAN (2001-2010)



Source: Investment Commission, Ministry of Economic Affairs, ROC (Taiwan).

https://www.moeaic.gov.tw/business_category.view?lang=en&seq=3 &

<https://data.gov.tw/dataset/98779>

In the 2000s, China and Taiwan both joined the WTO, respectively. China has started another round of liberalising reforms that eventually propelled the country to become the most considerable global trading power (Ngeow, 2017: 115-116). As a result, Taiwanese enterprises further poured investments into China. The Chen administration's efforts to diversify the investment portfolio in Southeast Asia turned out to be a disappointment. In addition, Taiwan's economic influence waned, and the 1997 Asian financial crisis was the watershed where China's economic influence gradually surpassed Taiwan (Ku, 2017: 250). China was generating its capital from the "Reform and Opening-up" (改革開放) policy and sending financial aid to affected Southeast Asian economies. It further strengthened its status and influence as an "economic giant" and became a dominating power in the region. Politically, China has actively engaged with Southeast Asia in different platforms and mechanisms since the

late 1990s. Ku (2017: 251-255) argues that there were three elements of China's strategies to bring Southeast Asia under its dominance, including getting more involved in regional political affairs (e.g., signing the **Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia**, making it the first ASEAN dialogue partner); resolving security issues with Southeast Asian countries (e.g., signing a **Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea**); establishing a new mechanism over regional affairs (e.g., **Boao Forum** for Asia). During the same period, most ASEAN states established strong economic and political ties with China. The highly endorsed one-China policy, therefore, highly limits Taiwan's leeway to conduct diplomacy until today.

4.3 Ma Ying-jeou's Viable Diplomacy (2008-2016)

During President Ma Ying-jeou's two tenures from 2008 to 2016, the KMT government never officially and openly adopted any "Go South" strategy. The Ma government had set cross-Strait relations' rehabilitation as his priority in Taiwan's external relations. Instead of competing with China, Ma called for a "truce" to end Chen's "scorched-earth" diplomacy. Both Taiwan and China attempted to lure each other's diplomatic allies to switch diplomatic recognition with money during Chen's presidency. Ma's *modus vivendi* flexible diplomacy that sought peace with China directly contrasts with the aggressive approach adopted by Chen (Ku, 2009: 94). For the Ma administration, **reconciliation is better than confrontation**, and cooperation especially in economic aspects should replace competition while dealing with cross-Strait relations.

According to the KMT government's discourse, **warm-up the cross-Strait relations** could be **the steppingstone for Taiwan to participate in regional and global affairs**. Moreover, as long as China lessens diplomatic hostility toward Taiwan, Taiwan has more space to manoeuvre engagement with Southeast Asia and other regions. To some extent, it was believed that the reciprocal development across the Taiwan Strait had eased the concern among Southeast Asian states regarding regional security and stability. In a sense, the cross-Strait peace and stability was an integral element of Ma's southward engagement policy toward Southeast Asia (Jing, 2016: 83). At the 41st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Singapore on July 21, 2008, Foreign Ministers of the ten ASEAN countries issued a joint communique, stating, **"We welcomed the positive development in relations across the Taiwan Strait.** We expressed our hope that cross-Strait relations would continue to improve (ASEAN, 2008)."

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

The Ma administration believed that once Taiwan and China could conclude economic agreements for further integration, the island would be eligible to reach bilateral economic agreements with ASEAN states later. Some analysts and scholars even had wrong expectations that Taiwan may join the multilateral activities in the region, such as an **observer** in ASEAN (Ku, 2009: 95). Unfortunately, it did not happen. Notwithstanding, in retrospect, the scenario of signing the economic agreement had come true, although only one ASEAN country, Singapore, signed an economic pact with Taiwan. After Taiwan and China signed the Economic

Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010, Taiwan and Singapore signed the Agreement between Singapore and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu on Economic Partnership (ASTEP) in 2013. It is the first and only FTA-like agreement that Taiwan signed with the ASEAN states (till 2020). Meanwhile, Taipei and New Zealand signed the Agreement between New Zealand and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu on Economic Cooperation (ANZTEC) in 2013 as well.

It is necessary to mention that the signing of FTAs implies that each party is a sovereign political entity. In the past, China had been aggressively opposed to any country signing similar agreements with Taiwan. In this sense, both ASTEP and ANZTEC could be regarded as Ma's breakthroughs in signing economic cooperation pact with Asia-Pacific countries. Apart from the two economic agreements, Ma's tangible achievements in Southeast Asia included the opening the first-ever representative office, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, in Myanmar in 2016, establishing the Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Surabaya, Indonesia in December 2015, setting up the semi-official Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) office in Yangon, Myanmar in 2013. Moreover, the Ma administration also facilitated ministerial-level consultation talks with ASEAN states, although most kept extremely low-profile and unpublicised (Jing, 2016: 41-42).

However, domestic critics may argue that those breakthroughs mostly hinged on China's tacit grant. Considering China's political clout and economic incentives, no single ASEAN state may offend China's "core interest" on Taiwan issue. During Ma's tenure, Taiwan appeared to make impressive strides in improving Taiwan-ASEAN relations on the surface. Nevertheless, the unspoken truth is that the "granting" based on China's decision may gradually evolve into a regional "custom" sabotaging Taiwan's autonomy and sovereignty instead. It reinforces the impression that Taiwan is under China's control. In the end, Taiwan's international leeway would be locked into the "one-China" framework. As some scholars explain, Ma's conciliatory approach "solicited Beijing's tacit permission" for international space and "the political connotation behind the diplomatic truce is the key determinant of Taiwan's international space will be Beijing" (Hsiao et al., 2020: 665-666).

4.4 Analysis: Lee's success, Chen's failure, and Ma's sacrifice

Taiwan's previous southward engagements spanned over decades under three Presidents' tenures that have contributed to substantial economic relations between Taiwan and ASEAN countries respectively to some degree despite no official diplomatic relations being established. Various approaches contributed to different outcomes from the 1990s to 2016. In general, President Lee and Chen's diplomatic reasoning was "Taiwan-centric" that stressed Taiwan's sovereignty and autonomy to conduct external relations. However, the significant divergence between the two was their approaches to expanding Taiwan's international space. Lee's pragmatic diplomacy underpinned practical and substantial considerations without disputing the "name" issue. On the contrary, Chen tended to manage Taiwan's external relations

aggressively due to his political ideology of Taiwanese identity. One of his political agendas was to join the UNs under Taiwan's name (KMT insists on maintaining the name of Republic of China), which was regarded as a provocative move to China and damaged the cross- Strait relations.

Other than Taiwan's agency in diplomacy, the external environment also matters. Both Lee and Chen implemented "Go South," but they encountered different periods of China's rising. In the 1990s, Taiwan's economic power could still compete with the awakening giant. However, at the turn of the 21-st century, China's economic influence had surpassed Taiwan, so the political economy strategy was highly restrained during Chen's tenure. Jing (2016: 28) suggests "while similar pressures from China were not always effective in blocking high-level visits between Taiwan and ASEAN during the 1990s, Beijing's growing regional influence effectively limited Taipei's international maneuverability, reducing the island's diplomatic opportunities in ASEAN countries."

As for Ma, his diplomatic guideline was called "viable diplomacy" or "diplomatic truce" seeking rapprochement with China while expanding Taiwan's international space. The term "viable" also implies the criticism from KMT that Chen's diplomacy is a "dead end." In a sense, the Ma administration viewed Taiwan's global space as positively related to the stability of the cross-Strait relations. He believes that viable diplomacy could raise Taiwan's visibility and argued that "as a trade-driven economy, Taiwan must create a peaceful environment that allows its foreign relations to grow fruitfully (Executive Yuan, 2015)." Although it is debatable whether viable diplomacy was effective since the opposition party DPP criticised Mas strategy reinforced the

false impression that "Taiwan is part of China" among intentional society or "Taiwan falls into China's trap about sovereignty dispute" by kowtowing to Beijing.

To sum up, the logic behind the "Go South" policy from the 1990s to 2008 was "money can buy friends." No normative discourse existed in the bilateral relations, and it proved to be extremely unstable since the investment source is replaceable. ASEAN states see Taiwanese importance in terms of investment, but they could not neglect a rising China. As long as there is another patron, Taiwan would undoubtedly lose its importance and status in the region. Understandably, ASEAN states attempt to avoid controversy regarding the cross-Strait relations that eventually imposed a cap on Taiwan-ASEAN states relations' normalisation.

The Ma administration's focus was to evade the shadow of China's existing dominance had become his diplomacy priority through cooperating with the Dragon first. Southeast Asia was merely one of his diplomatic objectives. However, the spill-over effect of the peaceful cross-Strait relations contributed to the improvement of Taiwan-ASEAN relations consequently. Besides signing an economic agreement, Ma made a "private trip" to pay his last respects to the Singaporean leader and founding Father Lee Kuan-yew in 2015. It can also be seen as one example of high-level official visits.

Political or diplomatic isolation and economic marginalisation will always be the main tasks Taiwan's leaders need to cope with. In the past, Taiwan's survival was primarily due to China's previous political and economic weaknesses. However, as

China has become a robust political economy, Taiwan has no equal material powers. It has been confirmed that Taiwan's traditional political economy is no longer effective in dealing with Southeast Asia. Another approach—closer integration with China and seeking China's goodwill for Taiwan's international space—also has limitations and undermines Taiwan's autonomy and sovereignty.

The island's survival in Southeast Asia depends on whether Taipei could manoeuvre creatively to avoid politically sensitive landmines of the "one-China" issue. It should be noted that Taiwan's previous southward engagement was not all trivial; it has already laid the foundation for further reinforcing Taiwan-ASEAN relations in the socio-economic dimension. President Tsai Ing-wen (2016-now) has initiated a new grand Southeast Asia policy called "New Southbound Policy (NSP)," emphasising the "people-centred" approach to interweaving Taiwan into this region's economic and social fabric. Whether the NSP is effective still waits to be seen, but it denotes a policy reorientation of new diplomatic thinking more value-based and normative. How Taiwan attempts to cultivate normative relations with Southeast Asia will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V TAIWAN AS A NORM ENTREPRENEUR

Taiwan has actively engaged with Southeast Asia economically since the 1990s, mainly corresponding to President Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian's tenures. Their administration launched the first and second waves of "Go South" efforts. During President Ma Ing-jeou's two terms, Taiwan did not suspend exchange and interaction with Southeast Asia. Still, the Ma administration placed the cross-Strait relations beyond Southeast Asia without a tailored foreign policy for the region. Since President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, her administration devised the third wave of "Go South" with a people-centred approach juxtaposing substantial social and economic relations enhancement without triggering sensitive cross-Strait politics. The "people-centred" rebranding strategy demonstrates the first policy reorientation and second the desirable norm formation, normalisation of socio-economic exchanges and interaction at non- and semi-official levels, which Taiwan attempts to develop in all stakeholders' interests, even including China from Taipei's perspective. The "human" or "people" aspect has been singled out as a new approach in Taiwan's southward engagement nowadays. Taiwan's Tsai administration's "people-centred" policy discourse is thus the starting point of this research.

It is argued that Taiwan acts as a "norm entrepreneur", advocating the people-centred values to facilitate its participation in the Indo-Pacific. Consequently, the island has a shot to negate the longstanding diplomatic hardship, namely the political isolation and economic marginalisation, from the one-China policy. How does Taiwan frame the regional development issues under the people-centred NSP? How do the policy framing and rebranding 80ormalize the relations between Taiwan

and ASEAN? What does people-centred development mean to the ASEAN community? These are the primary questions addressed in this Chapter. This Chapter is divided into five sections: Firstly, the policy introduction explains its rationale from the previous “Go South”. Section two begins with the people-centred agendas in the policy and their implications for regional development. Thirdly, it addresses Taiwan’s norm entrepreneurship to normalize the bilateral ties with people-centred discourse. Section four looks at the people-centred discourse in regional normative structure with a particular focus on ASEAN community-building. The last section provides policy analysis, illustrating how Taiwan navigates sensitive cross-Strait politics to forge socio-economic connectivity, securing its visibility, presence, and survival in the region.

5.1 New Southbound Policy Development

The NSP was first brought to light on 22nd September 2015 by DPP chairperson and Presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen at a diplomatic reception, making the 29-year establishment of DPP. Regarding the brand-new foreign policy, Tsai underscored that the policy would highlight "diverse and multifaceted partnerships" and build up the non-governmental people-to-people exchanges in agriculture, education and academia with Southeast Asia and India; trade and investment is only one dimension of cooperative agendas (DPP, 2015; Translated by the author). After Tsai and her party later won the 2016 Presidential and Legislature elections, it headed a more "cosmopolitan Taiwan free from Chinese influence" (Rowen and Rowen, 2017) with a more outward-looking foreign policy to engage in the world and regional affairs. Tsai's outward-looking posture is a readjustment from Ma's overly pro-China stance

in external relations, and the NSP is one of Tsai's regional strategies (Office of the President, 2016; Jing, 2018) to integrate Taiwan into an ASEAN-led community in Asia. In other words, the policy is the stepping stone to reinforce the island's presence in the region with a people-centred approach and to recalibrate Taiwan's role in Asia and readjust the island's overheated relations with China.

5.1.1 Policy Rationale

Both "Go South" and "New Southbound" aim to balance China's influence on Taiwan, especially economically and politically. However, the latter signifies a policy reorientation distinct from Taiwan's previous southward engagement, which is regarded as a "hedging strategy", viewing Southeast Asia merely as "a subordinate to cross-Strait relations" and treating this area as "a strategic alternative to the Chinese market (Yang, 2016: 35)." In contrast, the NSP is more strategic and more comprehensive than Go South by "embodying a concerted effort to more effectively integrate Taiwan into the region by cultivating interpersonal connections across the region (Glaser et al., 2018)." Simply put, the rationale transformation is from former profit-centred to people-oriented (Wu & Kung, 2016; Alan, 2017) or from political economy consideration to a more comprehensive partnership formation. While the economic aspect—trade and investment—remains essential to the policy, the Tsai administration's new proposition situates the social dimension, or the people-centred agendas, as equally fundamental to nurture extensive relations with New Southbound neighbours given the lack of diplomatic recognition.

Apart from the rationale and approach difference, the NSP's geographical coverage is also broader than Go South by adding Australia, New Zealand, and South Asia in the master plan. The NSP targets 18 countries, including 10 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), six South Asia states (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan), Australia, and New Zealand. In practice, each Ministry and agency under the Executive Yuan design priority states with their resources and projects, primarily focusing on Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and India. What does Taiwan attempt to achieve in Indo-Pacific with a people-centred policy? According to the policy Guidelines (Office of the President, 2016), the very first official document, Taiwan endeavours to forge a “sense of economic community” and establish “mechanisms for wide-ranging negotiation and dialogue; form a consensus for cooperation” in the region. It is a visionary but also an imprecise end goal. However, the phrasing adopted by Taiwan—a sense of (economic) community rather than a “community” itself—mirrors the acknowledgement and reality of Taiwan's limited connectivity and integration in the constructing community. Thus, the NSP is simply Taiwan's efforts to link the region. On the surface, the NSP is mainly discerned as a foreign economic policy with the same rationale as the previous Go South to reduce Taiwan's economic over-reliance on China in most scholars and experts' eyes (Huang, 2018, 2019). It is true, yet partially. In practice, besides political economy calculations, the NSP seeks to leverage Taiwan's cultural, educational, technological, agricultural, and economic assets while managing relative stable cross-Strait relations with China. At the heart of

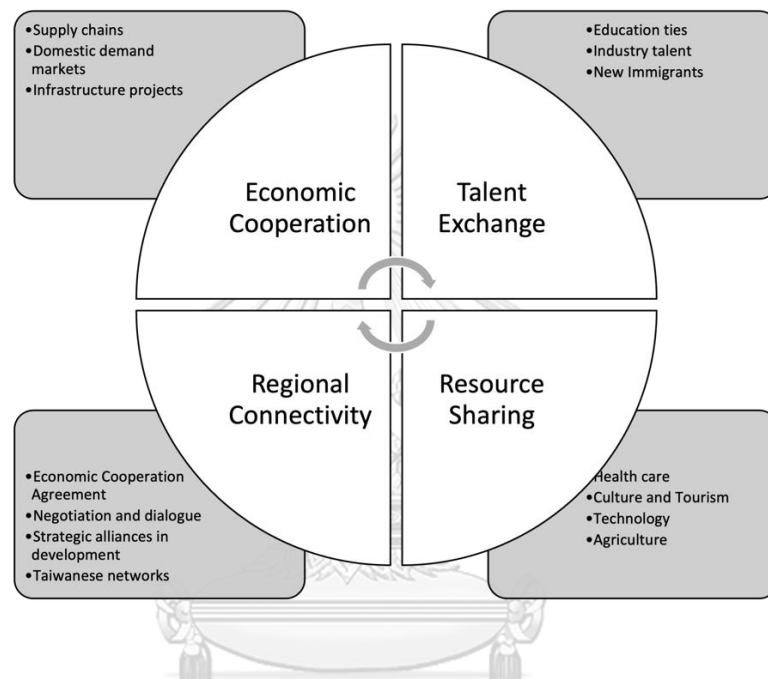
the NSP is a desire to weave Taiwan into a “people-centred” community of nations that spans the Indo-Pacific region (Glaser et al., 2018: 10).

5.1.2 Policy Structure

Once the Guidelines was published, setting up the policy's general direction and principle, the Executive Yuan was responsible for the policy implementation. Under the Yuan, the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTNs), led by Minister without Portfolio John Deng, is appointed for policy coordination. For further operations, the Executive Yuan announced the New Southbound Policy Promotion Plan in September 2016, which lays out four tasks: prompting economic cooperation, conducting talent exchanges, sharing resources, and exploring regional links (Executive Yuan, 2016a). Economic cooperation includes integrating supply chains, expanding domestic demand markets, and infrastructure projects with targeted countries. Talent exchanges refer to educational links with scholarship, cultivation of industry talents, and new immigrants from Southeast Asia. Resources sharing aims to capitalise on Taiwan's soft power in health care, culture, tourism, technology, agriculture to expand bilateral cooperation. The Regional links comprise overall regional integration in trade and investment, open dialogue and negotiations, reallocating foreign aid resources in regional development, and an overseas Taiwanese database and exchange platform establishment for further connectivity. In December 2016, the Executive Yuan additionally approved the more detailed New Southbound Policy Implementation Plan, which contained 18 policy goals, 15 concrete projects, and 48 initiatives, planned to launch on 1st January 2017 (Executive Yuan, 2016b). After the three primary policy documents (Guideline, Promotion Plan, and Implementation Plan)

were published, the initial structural configuration of the NSP was built. In general, the NSP is Taiwan's external economic strategy putting the "people" rather than purely "number" at the core nexus. (Figure 5)

Figure 5: People at Center of New Southbound Policy



After the initial policy implementation phase from 2016, the Tsai administration moreover tapped into Taiwan's advantageous areas to reinforce the "new cooperative models of mutual benefits and win-win situation" by proclaiming the launch of five flagship projects in August 2017. The political discourse pays more attention to development issues and promotes the benefits of cooperating with Taiwan. The five programmes include (1) regional agriculture development, (2) medical and public health cooperation, (3) industrial talent development, (4) industrial innovation and cooperation, and (5) the NSP forum and youth exchange platform, plus three potential prospective areas— (1) cross-border e-commerce, (2) tourism, and (3) infrastructure (OTNs, 2017). The programmes manifest Taiwan's soft power and commitments to

regional development issues by presenting Taiwan as "a force for good." Alan Yang (2018) explains that the shifting mentality from "Taiwanese Asia" to "Asian Taiwan" reveals how Taiwan's successive southward engagement initiatives have mingled into the socialisation process in the region. Yang (ibid.) further states that "the shift from an interested-oriented to a people-centred ideal... [i]s helping Taiwan cast off its role as an outlying island in Asia." Subsequently, Taiwan is willing to shoulder more responsibility in regional development as Taiwan favours self-identifying as a "contributor and member" in Asia in the policy discourse.

5.2 People-centred Agendas

Literature on the concept of "people-centred" has various dimensions in IR, including security, governance, development, and community-building (Indriastuti, 2020; Glas and Balogun, 2020; Korten, 1984; Martel, 2020), but the common ground is that "people" become the chief research subject and referent (Newman, 2001; Jones, 2014) which is a substantial focus-shift from the conventional state-centric scope to people-centric in academia after the Cold War. The paradigm shift from "state" to "people", especially in security research, was marked when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published the 1994 Human Development Report, arguing securing "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" for all people while discussing global insecurity (UNDP, 1994). Human security inherently interconnects with the people-centred concept. To a certain extent, human security, people-centred values, or approach can be viewed as "norms", providing guidance for agents to review the scope of security that goes beyond the protection of sovereignty and territory and take economic and social dimensions into reckoning while devising

policies to achieve the goals of comprehensive safety, livelihood, well-being, and the dignity of the people in general term.

Even though the debates on the theoretical definition and practical application are still ongoing due to the ambiguity of human security, some states have adopted the concept as their core value for foreign policy, such as Canada and Japan (Acharya, 2001; Katsumata, 2006; Tan, 2010; Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony, 2014). By contrast, the term is barely mentioned in Taiwan's foreign policy discourse, although written in Article Five of the International Cooperation Development Act passed in 2010. The Act mandates MoFA to direct and coordinate Taiwan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Humanitarian Assistance with diplomatic allies, like-minded states, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), and Non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In Article Five, the goals involve "ensuring human security, maintaining peace, democracy, human rights, humanitarianism, sustainable development, and other universal values." However, the human security discussion merely remained in the Taiwanese academic community to explore Taiwan's potential to safeguard human security by "highlighting the people-centred, rather than nation-focused, safeguards of safety, liberty, and equity (Chan, 2010)," not grabbing much attention from policymakers in Taipei. Those recommendations had never blended into Taiwan's foreign policy during the Ma administration (2008-2016) since the central theme was rapprochement with China by social and economic integration for further political dialogues.

Not until the Tsai administration, Taiwan incorporates a people-centred dimension into its foreign policy. The materialisation of the people-centred values is manifested in the launch of the five programmes in the NSP. In the beginning, the NSP has redefined Taiwan's future role in regional development by self-branding as an innovator, a sharer, and a provider of services in an economic sense (Office of the President, 2016). Later on, the five flagship programmes mark normative connotations in development issues. Since then, the official discourses have underscored the needs of partner countries, the development and well-being of the people, and most importantly formation of a sense of community. (Hsu et al., 2017: 30) This transformation is a watershed that uplifts the importance of other areas to the same degree as "investment and trade," making the NSP a real comprehensive strategy for Taiwan's outreach and reverberating with the policy's people-centred rebranding. By doing so, Taiwan can leverage its soft power to contribute to regional development and draw attention and acceptance from the New Southbound partners. In addition, soft power also characterises Taiwan's advantages with appeals, marking the alternative developmental model distinct from China's Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI).

As President Tsai elaborates,

"I wish to emphasise that the NSP and China's BRI are two completely different models. Taiwan enjoys immense soft power capabilities from our private enterprises, as well as our ongoing work in healthcare, education, human resource development, technological innovation, agriculture and disaster preparedness. This cannot be replaced or blocked by either money

or politics. ...[I]t is not about competing with China, but about emphasising Taiwan's own advantages and promoting mutually beneficial development as a member of the regional community (Office of President, 2017a)."

The "people" focus is underlined as a "soft" structure to distinguish between NSP and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), emphasising regional "hard" infrastructure (Hsu et al., 2017).

5.2.1 Five Flagship Programmes

As for the concrete projects for the five flagship programmes, the Regional Agriculture aims to promote the exports of Taiwan's agricultural materials, production supplies and technologies, increase local farmers' revenues with Taiwan's experiences, cultivate international agricultural expertise by bilateral technical exchanges and training, enhance regional food security by facilitating the establishment of crucial production bases in the region. Medical and Public Health Cooperation conducts talent training, capacity building, two-way cooperation, supply chain, and regional market connectivity for medical products and establishes a regional epidemic prevention and control network. Industrial Talent Development attempts to combine short- and long-term talent cultivation and vocational training that enables Taiwan's colleges and universities to establish substantial educational exchanges and communication with partner countries, developing a shared vision for regional economic prosperity.

Industrial Innovation and Cooperation establishes Asia-Pacific industrial supply chain partnerships, promotes export system integration, aids small and medium

enterprises (SMEs), and boosts the image of Taiwanese industries. Finally, the Policy Forum and Youth Exchange Platform is about the foundation of the “Yusham Forum” to promote the exchange of ideas, the gathering of talent for innovation and progress in regional development. By bringing together prominent leaders, thinkers, organisers, and innovators from the region and beyond, the Forum can foster initiatives for regional cooperation, particularly in cultivating human resources through increased connectivity (OTNs, 2017). The flagship programmes centre on people’s capability-building, empowerment, and inclusive participation for transnational socio-economic cooperation and development, noting the people-centred features.

5.2.2 People-centred Implications

The linkage between Taiwan's people-centred agendas and human security or people-centred development is discernible. In contrast with the protection from the top-down states, Taiwan's people-centred agendas under the NSP framework echoed with the empowerment and bottom-up course of human security, which "underscores the role of people as actors and participants (UNDP, 1994; Commission on Human Security, 2003; UNGA 2012)." The agricultural, medical, public health and technology cooperation, for example, aims to improve New Southbound counterparts' (people-to-people or institution-to-institution) skills, meet the real needs of local neighbourhoods, and facilitate the bidirectional exchanges and mutual understandings.

1. Regarding health security, Taiwan has initiated the "One Country, One Center" program since 2018, tasking 7 Taiwanese hospitals coordinating medical cooperation in Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, the

Philippines, India and Myanmar (Myanmar joining in 2019). The centre will provide medical training for locals, establish culturally sensitive healthcare environments, promote pharmaceutical and health-related industrial supply chains, build a regional disease prevention network (Cheung et al, 2018; Cheung, 2019). For instance, Changhua Christian Hospital has helped Thailand set up an intelligent medical system following the Thailand 4.0 economic model and donated equipment to the Bangkok Christian Hospital and Overbrook Hospital in 2018 (Cheung, 2019: 23).

2. Concerning food security, the early target of the NSP was to export technology, improve the skills and lives of local farmers, and promote green and sustainable practices. For example, In 2018, Taiwan signed an agreement with Indonesia to establish an agricultural demonstration farm in Indonesia, where Taiwanese professionals will provide technical training to local farmers while helping with local collaboration and improving irrigation infrastructure. Over the past few years, those Centers have achieved the goals of "solving mutual problems, creating mutual benefits and promoting high-level talent exchanges" set up by the Taiwanese government (Cheung et al., 2018: 6). Similar bilateral cooperation also occurs in the Philippines and Vietnam with various targets and crops or plants.
3. As for environmental security, Taiwan's National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) sent a group of environmental engineers to advance local communities' access (Laguna de Bay in the Philippines, the second-largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia) to clean, safe and sustainable water. In 2017, NCKU established the Taiwan-Philippines Joint Water Quality

Research and Innovation Center and Mapúa University (MU) in the Philippines, bringing experts from state-run Taiwan Water Corp and environmental consultancies in touch with their Philippine counterparts. The following year, four Taiwanese companies donated a mobile laboratory trailer with water testing equipment worth NT\$1.3 million to the centre (Cheung, 2019).

Three projects mentioned above are selected to demonstrate how Taiwan applies people-centred values and approach to regional development, denoting the policy as "vision-oriented and forward-looking (Cheung, 2019: 5)." As Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang (2018) contend that the people-centred agendas are not solely concerned with the interests of political or social elites but places greater attention on the development needs of the people and civil society in Southeast Asia and represents Taiwan's response to the core value of a people-centred ASEAN Community. In a way, the five flagship programmes substantiate Taiwan's motion a "sense of economic community" in the NSP with a more concrete course compared to its initial phase in 2016 to early 2017. The people-centred spirit also resonates with a repeated diplomatic slogan, "Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping," as the island has donated medical equipment during the Covid-19 global pandemic. Both convey the same message: Taiwan can contribute to the region and the world.

Alan Yang and Jeremy Chiang (2019a: 76) adopt another terminology—human values—to portray Taiwan's people-centred approach to regional development. Alan and Chiang argue that human values "embody universal values such as equal economic rights, social welfare and political rights that ensure the sustainability of

human survival." To a certain extent, those social, economic, and political rights fall primarily within the ambit of human security. Linked normative discourse regards people as the starting point or referent for security. Taiwan's NSP acquires the same approach by rebranding its policy as "people-centred" and underscoring the socio-economic aspect, hoping to normalise the bilateral cooperation with its counterparts. Once again, Taiwan wants to be "a force for good" in regional development, but the reality of political isolation and economically marginalisation prevents the island from contributing more further. Hence, Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship advocates the people-centred values under the NSP and shows its commitments to the region to bolster its participation and integration.

5.3 Taiwan's Norm Entrepreneurship: Framing and Persuading

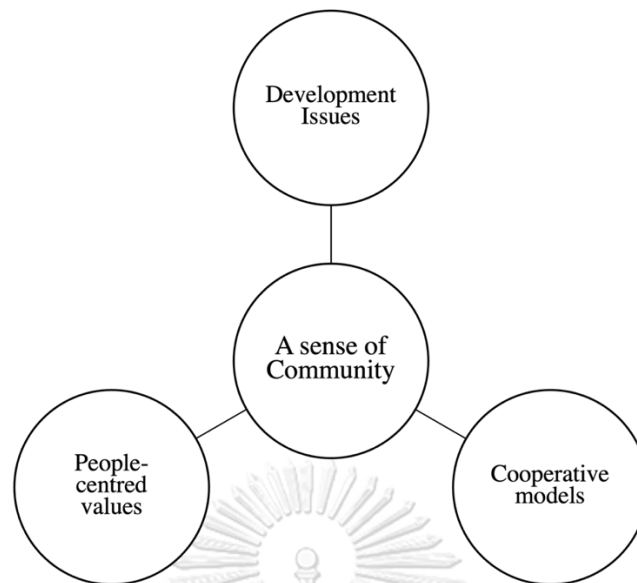
Before elaborating on Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship, defining what counts as a norm is necessary. The general agreement defines a norm as "a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998)." Another classic definition of norms was credited to Cass Sunstein (1996)—"[n]orms to be social attitudes of approval and disapproval, specifying what ought to be done and what ought not to be done." In other concise definitions, "norms are standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations. (Krasner, 1982)" In a general term, a norm is simply regarding appropriate behaviour (or scholar also indicates the prohibiting certain behaviorour as a norm, see Nadelmann, 1990)

In addition, the appropriateness of a norm "provide[s] guidance and solutions to problems by directing actors to act in specified ways (Kratochiwil, 1989b)." In short, oughtness leads to an agent's action in a given context. Michelle Jurkovich (2020: 694) infers three essential elements of a norm, including a moral sense of "oughtness", a defined actor "of a given identity", and a specific "behaviour" expected of that given actor. From another perspective, a norm can also be "problem-solving" under a specific circumstance (see Kratochiwil 1989a; Robert, 2019; Risse, 2000). According to Carla Winston's, a norm's conceptual structure comprises problem, value, and behaviour. A norm presupposes a problem needs to be addressed and include a value judgement that may or may not carry moral weight. More importantly, the "[p]roblem inhibits the full enjoyment of a value and necessitates corrective behaviour (Winston, 2018: 640)."

Based on current literature, a norm is associated with four crucial aspects: problem, value, behaviour, and identity. In the case of Taiwan-Southeast Asia relations, the four refers to

1. Problem: Development demands in the region;
2. Value: People-centred;
3. Behaviour: Diverse and inclusive partnerships; and
4. Identity: A sense of economic identity (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Correlations between Problem, Value, Behaviour, and Identity in Taiwan's Norm Entrepreneurship



Norms seldom arise in a vacuum, and most of the time, they evolve from prior existing ideas and normative structure. For instance, the people-centred development concept has its origin in human security. In brief, Taiwan aspires to forge a "norm" that is people-centred and, at the same time, normalises the island's exchange, interaction, and cooperation with its New Southbound counterparts in regional development in order to relieve the diplomatic hardship. In a way, the norm is the core functioning element forging a "sense of economic community."

5.3.1 Norm Entrepreneur

When it comes to the definition of a norm entrepreneur, it refers to people interested in changing social norms (Sustein, 1996: 909) or promoting norm change by challenging the standard of appropriate behaviour (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Norm entrepreneur is not necessarily an individual. The previous norm research has explored how social movement activists, NGOs, transnational advocacy networks (TANs) (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Sikkink, 1998; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Price,

1998; True and Mintrom, 2001; Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002), international, regional or interstate organisations (Checkel, 2001; Joachim, 2003; Park, 2006; Kleibrink, 2011; Allison-Reumann, 2017), countries (Ingebritsen, 2002; Fuentes-Julio, 2020) and even religious institutions (Stoeckl, 2016) can be norm entrepreneurs in changing norms at regional or international levels. Following the same arguments, Taiwan, as a political entity or economy with the agency, can meet the standards of a norm entrepreneur.

A norm entrepreneur is an actor unsatisfied with the current norm or context, seeking to (re)frame the issue, articulate the norm, and organise support from other actors (Finnemore and Hollis, 2016). Accordingly, the following question goes to what norm or context Taiwan is unsatisfied with? The short and direct answer is the political isolation and economic marginalisation caused by China's pressure, especially at the governmental level. The central theme of Taiwan's diplomacy is to maintain its sovereignty and autonomy on the global stage, which China resorts to every means to eliminate. In general perception, Taiwan is not considered a sovereign state by the UNs, and most countries, as Wu Rwei-ren (2014) accurately explains with a metaphor—a "pariah" being rejected by the Westphalian nation-state system. Taiwan's diplomacy is a long-term struggle for confirmation, approval, and acceptance, not to mention official diplomatic recognition.

As China attempts to eradicate Taiwan's presence in every corner, the NSP is a new endeavour to reposition and relocate its role and posture with a people-centred approach in regional affairs, accentuating the island's sovereignty, autonomy, and

subjectivity. In this sense, the norm Taiwan is cultivating suggests the exchange and interaction "normalisation" with New Southbound partners at a non-political dimension. Therefore, the norm ought to be people-centred, focusing on socio-economic aspects. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that "normalisation" here does not mean establishing formal diplomatic relations; instead, it refers to socio-economic connections enhancement and breaking free from the total blockage from the pervasive one-China policy in the region.

However, so far, Taiwan's advocacy for a people-centred approach to advance regional development is still in the first phase of norm formation—"norm emergence" of the "life cycle" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), not yet to the tipping point of the second phase—"norm cascade" as a certain number of states accept the norm. When the bilateral cooperation cases reach a point that Taiwan's counterparts will not self-censor or ponder subsequences from China, the norm can be viewed as a "cascade." The last phase is "norm internalization." Theoretically, it occurs when targeted partners see the cooperation with Taiwan as a "natural" or "normal" thing.

5.3.2 Framing

The NSP's long-term goal is to forge a "sense of (economic) community", and the vision entails extra ambitious ends: the pursuit for peace, stability, and prosperity (Tsai, 2016c). In general, the people-centred rebranding is thus a framing strategy to define the appropriate behaviour in bilateral or multilateral relations. Taiwan's discourse begins with Taiwan's role in the region and ends with what Taiwan can contribute to the region to legitimise the NSP. Before concluding that

people-centred cooperation and development is a desirable norm, Taiwan must identify the region's problems or issues.

According to the remarks made by President Tsai, we can find that Taiwan views itself and the NSP as one of the answers to regional development and the island states stress the importance of bilateral or multilateral collaboration in the region. As President Tsai (2016c) points out that

“[C]hallenges that confront the region confront Taiwan as well. These challenges include: to consolidate freedom and democracy, to make our economies more competitive and innovative, but at the same time more sustainable and inclusive, and to resolve disputes through dialogue so that peace can prevail. These changes and challenges require that Taiwan redefine its role in Asia’s development so that we can advance the interest of our country and also that of the region as a whole.”

Tsai (2017b) further states that

“[R]apid economic, social, and political changes in the region are bringing a host of new opportunities and challenges. What has worked in the past may no longer work for the future. As a result, Taiwan must play an even more active and prominent role in order to participate in the future of the region.”

Moreover, Tsai (2018b) once maintains that

“And this region is standing at a historical juncture. The growing tensions between global trading powers (referring US-China trade wars) are also

presenting us with unprecedented challenges of this century. Coupled with the growing demand for inclusive growth and sustainable development in the world, we need more cooperation between Indo-Pacific societies to take collective actions and shape our future together.”

In 2019, Tsai (2019) suggested that

“...[w]e are a region in transition. We are faced with the difficult task of securing a safe, prosperous, sustainable world for future generations. And no country can achieve this alone. Taiwan is willing and able to participate more actively in regional partnerships. And contributions that can make the world a better place should never be subject to political pressure or blocked by unilateral coercion. China’s efforts to isolate Taiwan have done nothing but hinder regional prosperity and stability.”

Last year, Tsai (2020) pointed out that

“...[C]ountries in the Indo-Pacific region and Taiwan are complementary in many ways, and Taiwan is willing and able to collaborate with our Asian partners. Therefore, since taking office, I have been proactively promoting the New Southbound Policy in the spirit of 'Taiwan helps Asia, and Asia helps Taiwan.' ...The New Southbound Policy is Taiwan's regional strategy for Asia. Its goals and ideals coincide with those of the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" and India's Act East Policy. Working together, these initiatives can achieve mutual benefits with complementary economic and social successes.”

The China factor, demonstrated by the pervasive one-China policy, plays a significant role in constraining Taiwan's visibility and presence in the region. Accordingly, Tsai's discourse attempts to downplay and minimalise the cross-Strait politics with foci on socio-economic cooperation. The contents of China in her public speech regarding the NSP only include two points: the great power competition causes uncertainty, and any political attempt (implicitly referring to China) preventing Taiwan from experience-sharing and contributing against the collective interests in the region (see Tsai, 2019; 2020). The people-centred rebranding and discourse, as a framing strategy, is formulated to encourage bilateral or multilateral cooperation with New Southbound partners. It is also argued that the people-centred discourse is designed to normalise socio-economic exchange and interaction with especially ASEAN states in which they share the same concept in people-oriented and people-centred Community-building.

In general, the China factor, demonstrated by the pervasive one-China policy in the region, and the NSP, adopting a people-centred approach, have various outcomes. The former's influence is limited at the governmental level, whereas the latter advance the non-governmental, semi-governmental and people-to-people connections. Overall, the NSP appears to navigate possible difficulties given the one-China dispute, and therefore Taiwan avoids either provoking languages or competition framing, such as BRI versus NSP, while mentioning China in the discourse.

For example, in the annual policy documents—Progress and Prospect (Cheung et al., 2018) and Moving the Vision Forward (Cheung, 2019), the official discourse

highlights that the NSP initiative does not seek to advance Taiwan's geopolitical stature but aims to play a proactive role in the region through multifaceted cooperation, with mutual benefit and prosperity being the key. The official policy discourses are centred on regional development issues and attempt to link peace, stability, and prosperity to Taiwan's regional role. To be specific, the people-centred NSP is one of the solutions to a shared future in Asia. In constructivist research, framing the issues is the fundamental block for norm-building in as much as framing provides "a singular interpretation of a particular situation and then indicate appropriate behaviour for that context (Payne, 2001: 42)." In the context of NSP, the discourse implies a threefold argument:

1. Challenging development problems or issues need to be tackled.
2. Taiwan can play an essential role in solving those issues.
3. The cooperation and collaboration with Taiwan are legitimate without violating the one-China policy.

Regarding Taiwan's entrepreneurship, framing the issues (of regional development) is the initial phase only. When the problem-solution relationship is established, it enters the communicative process under the existing normative environment. Under this situation, normative people-centred cooperation has to contest existing ones (Florini, 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), and it may invoke conflicts resulting from actors' interpretations in a given context (Winner, 2004, 2007a, 2007b). Here, the current context is the sensitiveness of cooperation with Taiwan. In this sense, Taiwan's main task is to normalise the socio-economic interaction by persuading the targeted countries that "engagement with Taiwan is

appropriate and it does not equal either diplomatic recognition or violating one-China policy."

5.3.3 Persuasion with Tangible Gains

After elucidating how Taiwan frames the people-centred policy in contributing to regional development, it is also critical to examine how the island persuades the New Southbound partners to accept the normative beliefs and behaviour, namely the people-centred cooperation and development. Norm entrepreneurs draw on various means to construct the norm and create support for it, including incentives, persuasion, socialisation (Finnemore and Hollis, 2016: 445), and coercion (Kratochwil, 1989). Behavioural change can be achieved by incentives or coercion. However, the two strategies are mostly great power's privileges who holds massive material powers. Another key to behavioural change is persuasion or socialisation that a norm entrepreneur is also attempting to highlight and modify other actors' perception of the overall social context by "[g]etting actors reflexively to consider their conduct in the context of prevailing social circumstances, and to accept that other forms of behaviour are more appropriate." (Wight, 2016: 78).

Therefore, to achieve the exchange and interaction normalisation, how Taiwan persuades other Southbound partners to accept the people-centred values and approach matters. Constructivists claim that cognitive structures give meaning to the material world (Adler, 1997). As a norm entrepreneur, Taiwan needs to devote significant attention to constructing a "suitable cognitive frame" in order to persuade targeted states(actors) to embrace the normative ideas they promote (Payne, 2001:

43-44). Since Taiwan is merely a middle power with inadequate material capabilities compared to China and the US, it mainly engages in norm persuasion with tangible gains from cooperation with Taiwan. The communication process is simply "persuading by doing." As for socialisation, it refers to the "[p]rocess by which newcomers become incorporated into organised patterns of social interaction (Finnemore and Hollis, 2016: 450)." By definition, it should be Taiwan being socialised into the ASEAN-led regionalism, but, in reality, there is no official communicative channel between Taiwan and ASEAN at the governmental level. Thus, Taiwan is excluded from state-centric regionalism in the region. Even though being excluded from formal dialogue, Taiwan still acknowledges pre-existing norms, namely the ASEAN ways, such as consensus decision-making, non-interference, protection of sovereignty, and informal diplomacy.

Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship is not about altering any prior beliefs in ASEAN-led. Instead, Taiwan strives to promote the benefits of cooperating with Taiwan by invoking the shared people-centred beliefs in development to the whole region since ASEAN merely endorses the concept in the internal Community-building. It should be noted that the people-centred development that Taiwan advocates centred chiefly on the issues of "freedom from want (empowerment)" rather than "freedom from fear (protection)" inasmuch as ASEAN's fundamental concerns on the humanitarian invention from external forces which conflicts with the pre-existing norm—the ASEAN ways. For Taiwan, an island state with limited structural power, it is reasonable to seek commonalities rather than conflicts. In Taiwan-Southeast Asia

relations, the common grounds are socio-economic development by experience and resource sharing and capability building of the people and communities.

5.3.4 Learn from the previous failure of “selling democracy” for Pragmatism

Taiwan had incorporated the "freedom from fear" into its foreign policy before by "turning Taiwan into Asia's most democratic state while at the same time sharing global responsibility to protect and promote human rights internationally (Schafferer, 2020)" or "sell[ing]" Taiwan's democratic achievements (Rawnsley, 2003) as to gain political standing in the international community during the Chen Shui-bian administration. For example, Taiwan even launched its international organisation in 2005—the Democratic Pacific Union—to consolidate democratic values and increase the number of states in the region that share Taiwan's democratic achievement experiences (Larus, 2006). Chen had tried to exploit democratic assets for foreign policy, but these efforts seem to have few audiences in Asia with limited success. It appears that Asian and Pacific states care more about stability and development. Chen's pro-independence, de-sinicisation political ideology and proactive diplomatic strategy irritating China, further destabilising the cross-Strait relations, and even regional stability was the primary concern in the region. The downturn of cross-Strait relations was regarded as a threat to regional security (Copper, 2006), putting Taiwan in a more politically isolated position and even making Taiwan a "troublemaker."

Therefore, when Chen's successor, President Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016), came to power, his rapprochement approach with Beijing would earn appraisal from the international community for maintaining the cross-Strait peace and consequent

regional security in Asia. Taiwan's failure to utilise its democracy coincided with the paradigm shift in Asia as China has become an economic, political, and military power, providing a non-Western development path. By contrast, the United States has become a relatively less prominent player (Schafferer, 2020) in the region, especially among ASEAN. The once-predominant liberal and democratic values lost their attractiveness consequently. Liberal world order and democratic political system may only echo with few democracies of Taiwan's Southbound partners, such as India, Australia, and New Zealand.

Learnt from the previous mistakes, the Tsai administration has adopted a more flexible and practical approach to building up relations with the South by stressing the regional socio-economic development under the NSP. Regarding regional concern—the stability of cross-Strait relations, Taiwan keeps accentuating that the NSP has no hidden political agendas, no aims to compete with China's BRI and even once mentioned the possibility of cooperating with China in the region. According to the Guidelines, it states that "...[t]wo sides each have different resources and advantages. By working together, we can multiply our strengths... the New Southbound Policy and cross-Strait relations can be mutually reinforcing undertakings, and two sides can together set a model for regional cooperation (Office of the President, 2016)." Indeed, compared to BRI's infrastructure masterplans, Taiwan's people-centred projects are about people and soft power, supporting tourism, education, public health, technology, SMEs, and agriculture, contributing to regional prosperity differently.

5.3.5 Channel for Voicing People-centred Values

Apart from reasoning, persuasion also relies on clear international communications. For international advocacy, Taiwan has established a transnational platform—Yushan Forum—promoting dialogues on bilateral and regional collaboration in agriculture, healthcare, education, technology, disaster prevention and SMEs. A special think tank Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF) was established as the Forum's main administrator, which has become a regular event for regional dialogue since 2017. The Forum is one of the five flagship programmes to deepen the partnerships between Taiwan and other Asian countries, and the TAEF is also Taiwan's first governmental-sponsored think tank eyes on Southeast Asia.

The themes of the Forum covered various dimensions and issues, such as “Fostering Economic and Social Connectivity with Southeast Asia and South Asia” in 2017, “Working Together for Regional Prosperity” in 2018, “Deepening Progressive Partnerships in Asia” in 2019, and “Forging a Resilient Future Together” in 2020. These issues are prioritised as part of the process of shaping a consolidated regional community in Asia (Hsiao & Yang, 2018). As Peter Haas (1992) found, knowledge-based experts-epistemic communities' networks can articulate the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems, helping states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient issues points for negotiation. The Yushan Forum enjoys a similar function by gathering present and former governmental officials, think tanks, NGOs, enterprises, and civil society to discuss the potential regional partnerships. We can also view it as a platform for Taiwan to communicate the people-centred values in regional development and nurture a sense of economic community.

At first, those people-centred ideas may only remain in academic and civil society communities, but those ideas may have a chance to spill over to governmental levels. Still, Hass also points out that expert-epistemic communities can “[h]elp states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient points for negotiation.”

5.4 ASEAN’s People-centred and People-oriented Community

While Taiwan advocates people-centred development and promotes socio-economic partnerships, exploring whether its audience shares the same understanding of the concept is needed. As the people-centred rebranding is tailored for ASEAN states, Taipei holds a higher possibility to forge a sense of community and normative interaction with common terminology. Thus, how the people-centred norm is involved in ASEAN's Community-building is addressed in this section.

5.4.1 Crisis Prompts Change, CSOs provides Discourse and External Influence

ASEAN has been considered a state-centric grouping of nation-states since its foundation in 1967. However, after the Cold War and the incapability to deal with multiple NTS issues, ASEAN leaders have re-evaluated its relevance (Martel, 2017; Natalegawa, 2018) to its people. Traditional realist state-centric security and even comprehensive security (including human, economic and environmental dimensions) concepts are no longer adequate for the modern world's challenges. In general, crises and calls for organisational reform from the bottom-up civil society organisations

(CSOs) have contributed to ASEAN's progression accommodating the human security concept and people-oriented or people-centred proposition.

Among all the contributors to ASEAN's incremental evolution to a more people-oriented and people-centred community, the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 was the first trigger, wake-up call or "tipping point" (Caballero-Anthony, 2004), prompting ASEAN to review the definition of security and which approach it can adopt to make ASEAN matter and to handle the potential up-coming challenges. Ironically, ASEAN had already noticed the threats of NTS issues that mostly overlap with human security areas before the Crisis but still failed to manoeuvre through. As Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony (2017: 208) point out, "comprehensive security may no longer be adequate to meet emerging challenges like the 1997 financial crisis certainly led to some soul-searching in the policy communities in the region." The Crisis caused currencies depreciation, collapse of stock markets, unemployment, poverty and living standard downturn of people and even a political upheaval (e.g. Resignation of Indonesian President Suharto and Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh) in Southeast Asia. The fallout and interconnectedness of the Crisis proved that transnational problems were causing suffering, posing severe economic, social, and political menaces to every member state. Moreover, it further delegitimised the states' role of being the sole provider of security to its citizens was damaged since it was no longer capable of delivering continuous economic growth and sustaining living standards (Cheeppensook, 2012: 189). Apart from the 1997 Financial Crisis, several NTS issues accelerated the discourse change on ASEAN's security, such as the 2002–2004 SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak,

the 2003–2004 avian flu outbreak, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and the cyclone Nargis in 2008.

The severe consequences of the 1997 economic Crisis directly propelled ASEAN leaders to issue a joint statement known as ASEAN Vision 2020 in December 1997, which endorsed human security-related (but not directly used the term human security) issues such as drugs, human trafficking, nuclear weapons, human resource development, poverty alleviation, food security. It further suggests that ASEAN should be "governed with the consent and greater participation of the people with its focus on the welfare and dignity of the human person and the good of the community (ASEAN, 1997)." The wording "greater participation of the people" implied that ASEAN leaders have been aware of the state-centric approach's ineptitude, marking the possible turn to a people-centric one. It is the first time that ASEAN publicly endorsed a phrase like "dignity of the human person" in its joint declaration, equaling "a move away from the concept of comprehensive security (Cheeppensook, 2012: 190)." Even though whether ASEAN transforms itself from a state-centric to a people-centric community remains to be seen, those crises have pushed leaders to rethink, review, redefine what security is and how can ASEAN matter to its people.

Other than crises, Caballero-Anthony (2004: 158) maintains that CSOs have played that pivotal role in framing human security through their transnational work in promoting human rights and human development in ASEAN. CSOs networks are commonly referred to as the track-three approach for community building for ASEAN. Alexander Chandra (2009: 52) suggests that civil society's search for alternative

regionalism in ASEAN has grown significantly since APA (ASEAN People's Assembly, later become ASEAN Civil Society) was launched in 2000. APA itself was relatively successful in gathering various civil society groups across the region to discuss ASEAN-related matters. Moreover, the so-called ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) and the Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA) Working Group (WG) on ASEAN are examples of such newer fora and networks, respectively. Another instance for civil society engagement with ASEAN is the ASEAN People's Forum (APF) and the ASEAN-led ASEAN Social Forum (ASF).

Indeed, Civil society had actively encouraged ASEAN to issue an ASEAN Charter in 2007, and the subsequently established ASEAN human rights mechanism—ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2009. Alexander Chandra uses the term "alternative regionalism", referring to the process that non-state actors (NGOs or civil society in general) enjoy more participation in regional integration or community building in shaping ASEAN's policy orientation or policy-making process (Chandra, 2009). The process shows the possibility of redefining the scope of security beyond conventional and comprehensive security to multifaceted aspects concerning the people's basic needs. The interaction between ASEAN officials and CSOs denotes the progression and evolution of ASEAN's concept towards security.

Aside from Crises and CSO-driven factors, Howe and Park (2017) identify the third catalyst—the influence of Japanese development aid (Japan's human security diplomacy practices). It is believed that Japan has been pushing the conceptualisation

and application of human security at the regional (Asia-Pacific) and global level by acting as the most significant contributor to the human security-related institutions and practices of the United Nations (Katsumata, 2006; Lam, 2006; Tan, 2010; Gómez and Saito, 2012). Howe and Park (2017: 12) argue that "in response to the considerable influence of the Japanese government's promotion of human security, and with significant Japanese support, ASEAN has embedded 'freedom from want' into the ongoing changes in the region in the course of promoting a people-centred approach." They (ibid., 2017: 2) view the ASEAN terminology people-oriented, and people-centred applied to cope with certain types of threat, such as disaster, poverty, environmental issues, transnational diseases, transnational crimes, human trafficking, which are resonant with the main issues of human security as "a segue to the human security dimensions of contemporary global humanitarianism."

The human security norm was first taken up in the ASEAN official statement in 2004 when the Vientiane Plan of Action was issued to fulfil the blueprint of ASEAN Vision 2020 (Cheeppensook, 2012: 192). For example, The Vientiane Plan aspires to achieve ASEAN socio-cultural community, to "lift the quality of life of its peoples, sustainably use natural resources and strengthen its cultural identity towards a people-centred ASEAN." It further states that "the roadmap for the Community focuses on four strategic thrusts to support other ASEAN Community goals (Security and Economic pillars)." According to the roadmap, the focal points lie in four strategic onsets to support other ASEAN Community goals:

1. Strong and functional systems of social protection that address poverty, equity and health impacts of economic growth

2. Promoting environmental sustainability and sustainable natural resource management that meets current and future needs
3. Social governance that manages impacts of economic integration
4. And the preservation and promotion of the region's cultural heritage and cultural identity (ASEAN, 2004: 16).

5.4.2 People-oriented and people-centred discourse in Community Building

ASEAN has incrementally self-transformed from an overtly state-centric to a more people-oriented and people-centred Community, at least in terms of political discourse. Thus, the point is that do the human security concept, a people-oriented or people-centred norm, take roots in the ASEAN community, or they are it merely political lip-service? Howe and Park (2017: 2) contend that "the state-centric, non-interference ASEAN Way has been evolving towards the embrace of human security perspectives to an unprecedented degree" based on the adoption of the ASEAN Chapter to ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and the invigoration of civil society movements. Adopting people-oriented or people-centred in ASEAN's official document is regarded as the alternative endorsement of human security. Stéphanie Martel (2017) holds a similar perspective that the determination to tackle the NTS issues is increasingly portrayed as a manifestation of ASEAN's aim to become a people-oriented, people-centred community and an implicit overture to human nature security. Besides, Hernandez and Kraft (2012) indicate that ASEAN's emphasis on NTS is being portrayed as an implicit recognition of human security or an intermediary step towards its explicit recognition. Same as Mine, Gómez and Muto's (2018)'s research, they contend that human security norm diffusion in East Asia

(ASEAN plus three) is achieved as the constituent elements of human security (freedom from fear, want, and to live in dignity) have been accepted more or less in all parts in the region, even though the term is not officially used. This scholarship contends that the region develops their human security norms with their interpretations due to norm localisation when local contexts modify the original features of norms (Acharya, 2004, 2009, 2013). ASEAN has "implicitly" incorporated the human security norm into the Community building process by adopting alternative wordings, such as people-oriented people-centred.

By contrast, Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony (2014: 210-212) argue that as far as human security in its security practices, for some reasons, ASEAN still has a long way to go. They further list four main reasons: (1) much work needs to be done to ensure the economic security of its population of 600 million due to the development gap within ASEAN; (2) there continue to be several communities that suffer acute insecurities, including displacement; (3) multiple insecurities faced by people on the move, such as the thousands of migrant workers that are vulnerable and in need of protection from human rights abuses and violence and (4) there are the complex human insecurities brought on by the increasingly frequent natural disasters such as cyclones and earthquakes. Besides, William Jones (2014) also take the failure of dealing with cross-border (from Indonesia to Malaysia and Singapore) haze pollution management within ASEAN as evidence that "human security as an idea that never came." He demonstrates that economic interests, both private and public in logging and palm oil production in Indonesia, are why nothing substantial has been done to

stop haze pollution and, thus, regional interests are and will be sacrificed for national interests (Jones, 2014: 617-618).

5.4.3 Conflicting Ideas: Human Security and ASEAN Ways

The transnational NTS issues have challenged the region, and cooperation from different stakeholders (not merely nation-states) is needed to tackle these challenges. However, the ASEAN Way, especially the non-interference principle, manifests a solid state-centric tendency of ASEAN. State's dominance in priorities, values, interests, and necessities must be addressed first to achieve human security. Otherwise, to a certain extent, the ASEAN Ways limits the applicability of human security in Southeast Asia (Nishikawa, 2009: 230). It is reasonable to argue that the terminology change from human security to the people-centred community is still far from the norm acceptance or cascade (Sunstein, 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998).

The prior normative structure—ASEAN Ways, especially the non-interference principle—hamper the realisation of the people-centred Community building in practices. After the 1997 Crisis, moderate forms of regional intervention in Southeast Asia have been brought up to deal with NTS or human security-related issues, such as "constructive intervention" proposed by Anwar Ibrahim (for the internal conflicts in Cambodia) and "flexible engagement" initiated by Surin Pitman (for the fallout of the Financial Crisis and political repression of citizens in Myanmar). However, the ASEAN leaders rejected the two proposals without surprise due to their concerns about state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Amitav Acharya (2001: 459) once concludes that "the mildest form of humanitarian intervention appears to enjoy little

constituency" in the Asia Pacific region. There seems to be a never-ending norm clash between the full embracement of human security and the "non-interference principle of ASEAN Ways due to the ASEAN leaders' concern on the connotation of humanitarian intervention behind the human security despite the significant difference between Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and human security.

Nishikawas (2009) clearly distinguish the two concepts by claiming that human security requires all the people in the society to re-evaluate and identify "what the threats are" and consider the countermeasures to address the problems while "R2P does not require such a reassessment since it addresses security problems from the perspective of state failure." In this sense, although R2P does not need reassessment from the people, it further implies that "who can define state failure" or "from whose perspective" may be the main conflicting point since the former practices of R2P mainly were initiated by Western states judging others.

Scholars (Acharya, 2001; Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony, 2014: 201-202) identify Canadian and Japanese main human security approaches. The former emphasises "freedom from fear" to reduce conflicts, prevent mass atrocities, and protect people from physical threats to their safety and well-being. By contrast, the latter stresses "freedom from want" that comprehensively covers all the menaces that threaten human beings' survival, daily life, and dignity and strengthen all efforts to confront those threats (Obuchi, 1998, cited by Caballero-Anthony 2014). ASEAN states have been bothered by tarnished records of human rights violations that some tend to defend themselves by arguing those issues like internal or domestic affairs

under the umbrella of respect for sovereignty. Understandably, ASEAN's reluctance to incorporate the "freedom from fear" into its people-centred Community or human security practices since the ineptitude to deal with internal conflict may be seen as a state failure. Under this situation, ASEAN tends to stress the "freedom from want," which leaders are more comfortable with the less controversial "Japanese approach" focusing on basic human needs, development and NTS issues.

Nevertheless, disagreeing with the stand viewing the Canadian and Japanese approaches as a familiar schism between "Western liberalism" and "Asian values" as "misleading," Amitav Acharya (2001) maintains that two approaches are mutually exclusive but as complementary or mutually reinforcing and evolving understandings of a complex and larger paradigm of human security. He (2001: 450) further insists that "[t]he tolerance of human rights violations (freedom from fear, **added by author**) for the sake of economic development or social stability (freedom from want, **added by author**) has no place in the human security paradigm." In contrast, Indriastuti (2020: 179-180) legitimises the tendency that ASEAN ignores the "freedom from fear" by arguing it is the ASEAN version of people-centred security, which focuses on freedom from want and to live in indignity, governed by the state. It is a hybrid of ASEAN Ways and human security. However, it again proves ASEAN's strong state-centric tendency, and the people-oriented or people-centred Community is still at the fledgling stage.

Will ASEAN fully accept both aspects of human security remain to be seen, but the (counter)discourses on security among the states, scholars and civil society have

contributed to a gradual recognition of human security-related issues from the leaders. In general, the people-centred norm is still in the making in the Asia Pacific, and it has initiated by Japan's human security diplomacy (Ikbal, 2018) and later incorporated by ASEAN as people-oriented and people-centred for Community building. However, research shows that the people-oriented and centred community is still in the making. Now, Taiwan has also rebranded its southern policy as people-centred, appending another piece in the normative structure. The island has found common grounds, the existing “un-cascading” human security or people-centred development norm, with all actors in the region aiming to forge a shared future in which Taiwan can play a role.

5.5 People-centred Approach to Regaionlisation

Taiwan's people-centred foreign policy implies two aspects: (1) the normative nature interconnected with human security and (2) the bottom-up people-to-people linkages to reinforce Taiwan's connectivity with the Southbound states. It is believed that the accumulated people-to-people partnerships have interwoven Taiwan into the Southbound states in terms of socio-economic fabrics. In the meantime, they also contribute to regional community awareness and identity (Hsiao & Yang, 2018). Due to Taiwan's contentious statehood and pervasive one-China policy in the region, the forward official relations between Taiwan and Southbound states are highly constraint since no single country dare act against China. For sure, the challenge is how to balance the potential benefits of NSP projects and the possible detrimental impact on relations with China for Taiwan's Southbound partners.

From another perspective, since Taiwan has no role in state-centric regionalisation, the people-centred and bottom-up approach becomes the primary means to enhance the island's connectivity with the region. Even though Beijing does not openly oppose Taiwan's attempts to boost unofficial economic and social ties with Southbound states, it has kept hindering Taipei's efforts to conclude the economic pacts of an official nature. China factor is always the main obstacle for Taiwan's international space. Since President Tsai Ing-wen came to power in 2016, China has strongly discouraged any country from negotiating an FTA with Taiwan (Glaser et al., 2019: 17). In the face of China's pressure, it appears that Taiwan has a chance to ensure its survival by moving forward with the NSP as the Philippines and India had signed a new bilateral investment agreement (BIA) respectively in 2017 and 2018. It appears that Taiwan can still ensure its survival in the South by moving the NSP forward.

Circumventing possible political hardship and pressure, Taiwan has adopted a people-centred approach to realise regional integration. Through the bottom-up approach (Klecha-Tylec 2017)—civil forces as the main engine—can forge transnational linkages between societies and, in turn, advance a regional community. It is also what Andrew Hurrell termed "soft regionalism" or "regionalisation." In his definition, "[r]egionalization refers to the growth of social integration within a region and to often an undirected process of social and economic integration...[R]egionalization can also involve increasing flows of people, the development of multiple channels and complex social networks by which ideas,

political attitudes and ways of thinking spread from one area to another and the creation of a transnational regional civil society (Hurrell 1995: 334)."

The transnational connectivity is the catalyst for regional integration, preventing the island state from further political isolation and economic marginalisation. Taiwan has identified the importance and value of advancing regionalisation since implementing the NSP, reaffirming its regional integration determination. Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang (2018) had proved three suggestions to forge regional linkages with ASEAN:

1. to formally declare Taiwan's respect for ASEAN Centrality and its willingness to participate in ASEAN-led regional integration.
2. to elevate geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-social importance of the NSP to grant Taiwan a new regional identity of being part of Southeast Asia; and
3. to further implement the NSP through a multi-sectoral framework and synergetic arrangement.

Forging a sense of economic community with shared people-centred values and further normalising the socio-economic exchange and interaction is a long-haul task for Taiwan. The implementation of NSP is merely the commencement. Taiwan once attempted to visualise its vision of a "cosmopolitan island-state" with a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society during Chen Shui-bian's presidency (Schafferer, 2020) but with limited success. Following the same thinking, The NSP needs to embrace increasing immigration and openness levels to the outside world by crafting a new narrative that sees Taiwan as part of Southeast Asia just as much as the Greater China

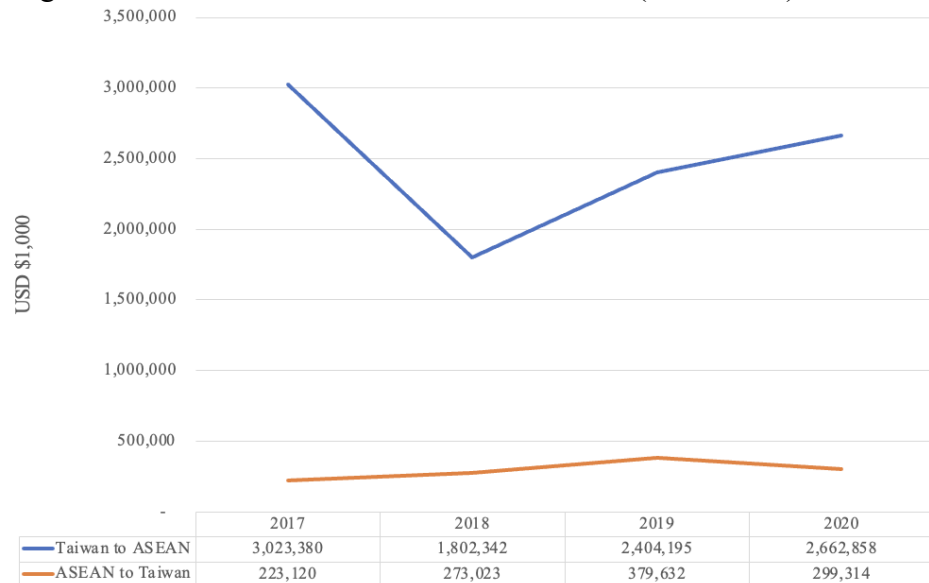
area (Brown and Sageman, 2019). Under the presidency of Tsai, Taiwan has launched another identity transformation process as "Asian Taiwan"(Yang, 2016, 2017)—more aware of its responsibility mixed with its eagerness to participate in the region. In summary, on the one hand, the NSP demonstrates Taiwan's self-identification as a regional contributor, and on the other, it also enhances Taiwan's socio-economic connectivity with the region.



CHAPTER VI A PEOPLE-CENTRED POLICY: INTERPRETATIONS, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES

The New Southbound Policy (NSP) has been launched for five years (2016-2020) since President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016. As the Tsai administration's **signature foreign policy**, Taiwan has nurtured socio-economic ties with 18 targeted countries since then. According to the "**New Southbound Policy 5-year Overall Review**" report published by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in April 2021, it concludes that the NSP helps Taiwan to find a "more advantageous strategic position. (找到更有利的戰略位置)" In addition, the MoFA indicated that the policy has gradually created the "cooperative models of mutual benefits and win-win situation" between Taiwan and New Southbound partner countries (MoFA, 2021). However, the main opposition party KMT still criticises the NSP as a failure because it has not reduced Taiwan's economic dependence on China (including Hong Kong and Macao), Taiwan's top trading partner since 2007 (around 40 per cent of Taiwan's global exports). It is reasonable to say that **NSP does fail to reverse Taiwan's reliance on a single market** since China still accounts for 40 per cent of Taiwan's global exports since 2016, and the number spikes to 43.9 per cent in 2020, according to the statistics from the Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade. **It also proves that the New Southbound countries' combined markets cannot replace the significance of the Chinese one.** If we look at the investment and trade statistics between Taiwan and ASEAN states (*Figure 7 & 8*), it can jump to the conclusion that the **NSP has a minor contribution from a macroeconomic perspective**, since the number remains stable without a significant spike in Tsai's first term (2016-2020).

Figure 7: Taiwan & ASEAN bilateral FDI flows (2017-2020)

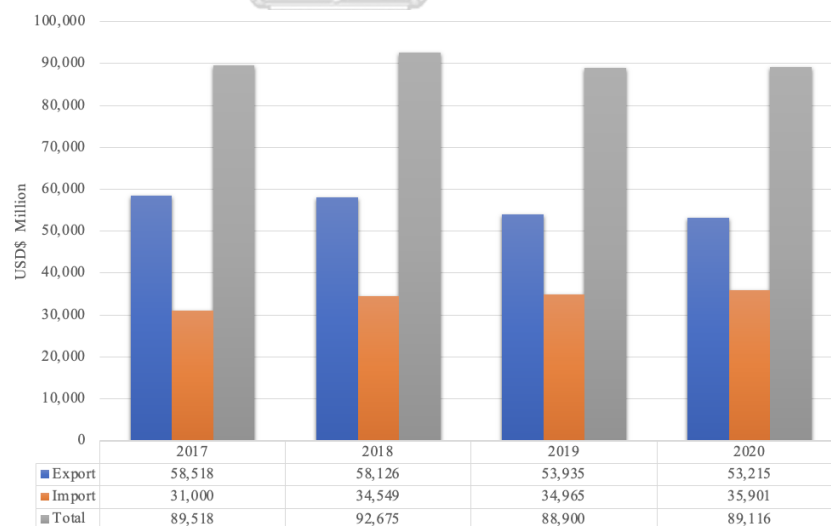


Source: Investment Commission, Ministry of Economic Affairs, ROC (Taiwan).

<https://data.gov.tw/dataset/98779>

<https://data.gov.tw/dataset/98776>

Figure 8: Taiwan & ASEAN Trade Statistic



Source: Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, ROC (Taiwan).

<https://www.trade.gov.tw/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeID=1375&pid=516535>

However, the economy is only one side of stories. Responding to KMT, Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang (2021) wrote an op-ed piece on Taiwan's Liberty Times, defending that the criticisms neglect the policy's strategic objectives in Asia and

further deepen the mutual assistance spirit. From their perspectives, those misperceptions narrow the policy as merely economic relations between Taiwan and targeted countries and view it as an alternative to cross-Strait relations. Hence, those short-sighted conclusions are not fair enough. This research agrees with Hsiao and Yang's viewpoints that "numbers" cannot impartially reflect the NSP's achievements, especially socio-economic connections and "a sense of economic community" building. With a people-centred approach, the policy has incrementally facilitated Taiwan's regional integration at non- and semi-governmental levels that usually occur under the radar due to the "sensitivity" of cooperation with Taiwan. **This chapter draws on policy discourse and interview data to support the core argument that the people-centred relations consolidate Taiwan's regional visibility and presence in the region.** It further found out that **Taiwan's people-centred policy involve multiple interpretations of people-centred values among various practices and practitioners.** As for potential hurdles for Taiwan to move forward, the NSP faces the principal external (China) and internal (policy misperception in the island, especially among normal Taiwanese) challenges. Subsequently, the Tsai administration must clearly articulate the people-centred development vision for effectiveness and viability in her remaining presidential term. Furthermore, as a democracy promoting people-centred values in Southeast Asia, Taiwan somehow ignores the region's democratisation setbacks or human rights issues (such as the coup in Myanmar in 2021 and student movements in Thailand since 2020), failing the expectations from the civil society that Taiwan could be a democratic role model by experience-sharing or exporting. Taiwan's voiceless is resulted from the acknowledgement of ASEAN ways, especially the non-interference principle.

However, it may still shadow its people-centred norm entrepreneurship in the end from a Southeast Asian perspective.

6.1 Open-ended Interpretations

"The NSP is a crucial part of Taiwan's economic and trade strategy" (Office of President, 2016) is the opening sentence of the *Guidelines*. Understandably, people tend to stress (if not mainly focus) the economic sides of the policy since the Tsai administration perceived this way in the beginning. However, the NSP has been reviewed, modified, and tailored yearly to further facilitate cooperation with New Southbound partner countries and respond to geopolitical dynamics by repositioning Taiwan's strategic posture in Indo-Pacific. This thesis focused on Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship by advocating and framing the people-centred values in Southeast Asia. Yet, **the people-centred concept is open for interpretation** in Taiwanese government agencies. Although the Tsai administration rebrands the NSP as a people-centred policy, **there is no fixed official guidance of what it means and how to implement it**. To answer the implications of people-centred, firstly, it is imperative to trace back the genealogy of term in the political discourse among various governmental bodies. Secondly, those policy practitioners' (re)interpretations are essential for understanding Taiwan's norm entrepreneur since they relate to actual policy implementation.

According to the *Guidelines*, the very first notion close to people-centred is the "people-to-people links" that centre on "tourism" and "culture" (Office the President,

2016) that improves mutual understandings and trust. In the *Promotion Plan*, the government lists four main pillars: promoting **economic collaboration, conducting talent exchange, sharing resources, and forging regional links**. The "people" aspect is placed under the "Conduct talent exchange" with "a focus on people, deepen bilateral exchange and cultivation of young scholars, students and industry professionals" (Executive Yuan, 2016a). Besides tourism and culture, the additional dimension expands to resource sharing and talent cultivation with partner countries. In the following *Implementation Plan*, the government further consolidate the direction of talent exchanges "under the guiding principle of people-centred, bilateral, diversified exchanges" (Executive Yuan, 2016b).

In the initial phase, the people-centred merely involves narrow ideas, inclusive of tourism, cultural, and talent exchanges based on the three-policy guidance (e.g., *Guidelines, Promotion Plan, and Implementation Plan*). However, the normative features on development issues have been introduced as Taiwan launched the **Five Flagship Programmes** in late 2017. They include:

1. Regional agricultural development
2. Medical and public health cooperation
3. Industrial talent development
4. Industrial innovation and collaboration
5. The NSP forum and youth exchange program

Since then, the discourses have shifted towards normative development issues as the policy reports have underscored the needs of partner countries, the development and well-being of the people, and most importantly formation of a sense of

community (Hsu et al., 2017: 30). This transformation is a watershed that uplifts the importance of other areas to the same extent as initial "economics and trade," making the NSP a comprehensive strategy for Taiwan's outreach and reverberating with the policy's people-centred rebranding. Moreover, **the development "turn" also makes Taiwan's role more relevant to its partnership.** Thus, Taiwan's people-centred development entrepreneurship can be identified. Moreover, the "people" focus is underscored as a "soft" structure to distinguish between NSP and China's BRI, emphasising regional "hard" infrastructure (Hsu et al., 2017). In Taiwan's political discourse, the NSP and BRI are not conflicting rather complementary because the two initiatives have a different focus even though the targeted countries are mostly overlapping.

This research maintains that the development of people-centred values is not simply linear but broadened and deepened in terms of dimension. Each dimension, such as **people-to-people links** and **talent cultivation**, also serve the greater **development** purpose. In a way, it is an inherently dynamic process in which "actors extend or amend their meaning as circumstances evolve" (Finnemore & Hollis, 2016: 427-428) in terms of norm formation. The insights lie in norms hardly remain fixed and unchanged. Instead, the content of a norm is substantiated by actual practices in a particular context. When it comes to the practices of a people-centred policy, the "Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs)" (Yang & Chiang, 2019b) is the key to understanding the multifaceted explanations of people-centred values under the NSP. The policy is a national master plan with **"teamwork"** combining the efforts from the public and private sectors. The relation between norms and action is more

complex since actors are not static units with fixed dispositions, so norms are not stable with unambiguous meanings vice versa (Hofferberth & Weber, 2015: 85). Accordingly, the people-centred development norm is inevitably open-ended. The picture includes multiple actors, such as the central government and local administrations, the legislature, political parties, industrial players, academic institutes, non-governmental organisations, and civil society (Hsu et al., 2017: 30). They are the implementors of Taiwan's people-centred policy.

Learnt from Hemdrik Huelss's (2017) research that norm research needs to explore how an abstract norm is conducted and constructed its substance in the process of **operationalisation**. It is imperative to pay attention to how they put people-centred into practice **from a micro-perspective**. To a certain extent, it is also fair to say that the people-centred development norm is still in the making based on diverse policy practices and practitioners to echo the values.

To answer, "**what do the people-centred values mean to Taiwan?**" the first step is to single out "**who is in charge?**" Secondly, **how do actors represent, interpret, and even simplify the people-centred agendas?** Even though the Office of Trade and Negotiations (OTNs) under the Executive Yuan is the central coordinator, each Ministry, government agency, or government-affiliated institution has its projects under the policy framework. Take the Five Flagship Programmes as examples. The Council of Agriculture (CoA) initiated the "Regional Agricultural Development." At the same time, the Department of Health and Welfare (MoHW) is responsible for "Medical and Public Health Cooperation and the Development of

Industrial Chains." In addition, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Labour (MoL) are in charge of the "Industrial Talent Development," and the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA) supervises the "Industrial Innovation and Cooperation." Last, The Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF) directs the "New Southbound Policy Forum and Youth Exchange Platform."

Moreover, apart from the Five flagship programmes, the Tsai administration also lists three potential cooperation areas, such as "Cross-border e-Commerce", "Tourism," and "Infrastructure." Under the Executive Yuan, the MoEA, Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MoTC), and the Public Construction Commission managed those mentioned above projects, respectively (See *Table 1*). In practice, each Ministry or agency initially outlined the Five Flagship Programmes and Three Potential Areas under their purview with the instruction of the *Guidelines, Promotion Plan, and Implementation Plan*. Then, they further discussed the policy details with the coordinator OTNs for review. Last, those governmental bodies reported their projects to the Executive Yuan for further implementation after being approved. Each Ministry or agency enjoys autonomy conducting the policy to a certain extent, and they make their senses of "what does people-centred mean." (See *Table 1*)

Table 1: Executive Governmental Body of Five Flagship Programmes & Three Potential Areas

Five Flagship Programmes	
1. Regional Agriculture Development	Council of Agriculture
2. Medical and Public Cooperation & 1 Country 1 Centre (1C1C)	Ministry of Health and Welfare
3. Industrial Talent Development	Ministry of Education & Ministry of Labour
4. Industrial Innovation and Cooperation	Ministry of Economic Affairs
5. Policy Forum & Youth Exchange Platform (Yushan Forum)	Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation
Three Potential Areas	
1. Cross-border e-Commerce	Ministry of Economic Affairs
2. Tourism	Ministry of Transportation and Communication
3. Ministry of Economic Affairs	Public Construction Commission

As this article argues above, the development of people-centred norms in the policy has broadened and deepened in terms of dimension, not simply linear. These people-centred practices are developed by each Ministry or agency's **bureaucratic departmentalism** with their policy tools and resources. Here, departmentalism is a neutral term that each government agency has equal and relatively independent autonomy to conduct the people-centred policy in their ways. Under the NSP's framework, this policy design can be regarded as a "**division of labour**" (Office of President, 2016) with one coordinator OTNs to serve the objectives written in the Guidelines. With a certain degree of autonomy, each government body's interpretations of the people-centred values and subsequent actions are a combined "**organism**" under the umbrella of people-centred values. Thus, the NSP's people-centred norm is inevitably open-ended. In general, there are at least three interrelated and intercrossed aspects of people-centred values, including people-to-people connections, human resources cultivation, and people-centred development.

6.1.1 People-to-people Links

First, the very initial concept of people-centred policy is people-to-people links demonstrated in the Guidelines indicating that "[t]ravel and tourism are at the core of people-to-people ties, and a catalyst for intercultural exchange and fusion" (Office of President, 2016). The Tsai administration maintains that since tourism is one channel for "bringing people closer together," it can give partner countries a "better understanding and first-hand experience of Taiwan's culture, history, ecology, natural environment, and hospitality" (OTNs, 2017: 16; OTNs, 2018: 10; OTNs, 2019: 22). In the first beginning, the people-centric spirit meant two-way exchanges in narrowed areas, such as tourism and culture. However, as the policy expands its scope, the Tsai administration sees "interpersonal connections and mutual understanding" as the key to building long-term friendships (Cheung, 2019: 7) in other fields such as education, medical, technology, SMEs, and agriculture with Taiwan's soft power.

The Tsai administration believes that people-to-people exchanges can foster "closer multilateral friendships or co-prosperity" (Hsu et al., 2017: 4). The relation between interpersonal connections and bilateral cooperation is also a virtuous cycle. In a way, cooperation may lead to essential interpersonal interactions and two-way exchanges. **Those New Southbound "friends" can be the gates or windows for Taiwan to improve its regional visibility and presence with new projects, and those projects continue to cultivate other interpersonal partnerships and so on so forth.** As for the examples that people-to-people links lead to Taiwan's presence, one Thai university lecturer who finished her Master and Ph D. in Taiwan and received

the Taiwan fellowship in 2019 described herself as an **"influencer"** in her university. She has added Taiwan in her lectures and promoted Taiwan based on her former experiences living in Taiwan. In addition, she even arranged field trips to Taiwan a few times before the global Covid-19 pandemic. In a way, she does help enhance Taiwan's visibility and presence in Thailand. Another respondent, a Malaysian Member of Parliament (MP), who finished a bachelor's degree in Taiwan, shares the same view. After being elected, she plays the role of a communication bridge between her party members and Taiwanese authority. However, it does not mean that she has chosen a side between Taiwan and China, and she remains relatively cordial in relations with the Chinese regime.

In short, in the political discourse, the people-to-people exchanges, and relations are the foundation for improving intergovernmental relations. One respondent, a senior diplomat from Taiwan's MoFA, being asked that **"Whether the NSP's people-to- people strategy or public diplomacy can contribute to formal diplomacy?"** The informant did not directly say "yes" or "no" with a short and affirmed answer, and instead, he responded as followed diplomatically. **"In the end, the voices of the people will be heard in the government or among decision-makers. They (governmental officials) will know the vibrant exchange and cooperation at the people-to-people level."** (Answered in Chinese, Translated by the author). Theoretically, people-to- people relations can warm up intergovernmental relations, but further evidence is needed for a unique case like Taiwan. So far, there is a scarce "public" endorsement of cooperating with Taiwan at

the governmental level in the region, although the people-centred cooperation is vibrant to a certain extent. There is still a gap between the people-to-people and government-to-government relations that needs efforts to b

6.1.2 Talent Cultivation

Second, the two-way exchange strategy demonstrates Taiwan's people-centred practices in the talent cultivation pillar. According to *Implementation Plan*, the NSP "[i]s not geared toward a unilateral employment of foreign workers, but rather the bilateral fostering of talent, thereby enhancing the complementarities and cooperation of human resources" (Executive Yuan, 2017b) between Taiwan and New Southbound partners. The most direct instance is education cooperation through academic (master or doctoral degree) and job training (vocational skills and high-tech) programs at Taiwanese colleges and universities. Other than talent cultivation for industrial needs and economic purposes, the MoE also eyes the children of immigrants from Southeast Asia and South Asia (or second-generation immigrants). The Ministry treats them as bridges connecting two sides. Therefore, it encourages them to participate in such activities as returning to their roots, gaining international work experience or scholastic exchanges with subsidies (OTNs, 2017: 8; Hsu, 2017: 6; Cheung, 2019: 10). The policy design once again overlaps the "people-to-people links" within the people-centred NSP. Taiwan's MoE claimed that the educational collaboration allows Taiwan to cultivate top-quality talent for business and industry and enhance people-to-people interactions while helping Taiwan's colleges and universities forge links with their counterparts (Hsu et al., 2017: 12-14).

The goal of talent cultivation is to build up rich pools of talent, serving industrial development in both Taiwan and its New Southbound Policy partners (OTNs, 2018: 8- 10) that can develop a "shared vision for regional economic prosperity" (OTNs, 2017: 8). One informant, a Taiwanese professor who specialises in environmental engineering, described that "It's all about cultivating high-quality technical talents." She continued, "Just like we (she and her peers) pursued my studies in the United States in the past and brought back what we had learnt to Taiwan. After graduation, people who choose to stay can become industrial human capital in the States, while people who come back can apply and contribute knowledge in Taiwan. Taiwan is pretty much playing the same role as the United States did."

Besides the educational sector, human resources cultivation can also be identified in the resource sharing pillar, especially in public health, agriculture, and technology, not merely the educational sector. For example, Taiwan has offered medical personnel training, such as nursing and surgery techniques, to partner countries. In agriculture, Taiwan also provides training for farmers from the partner countries to introduce Taiwanese farming systems and methods to their home countries (Hsu et al., 2017: 18- 20). Combined with talent cultivation and resource sharing, Taiwan can contribute to regional development in various areas if the island has concrete and tangible visions. Moreover, the two-way exchanges can also expose and improve Taiwan's professional image in the region. In medical cooperation, one interviewee who had been a resident doctor in Taiwan stated that "before the exchange programme, she had little knowledge of Taiwan's medical quality and

expertise." After experiences learning in Taiwan, she also encourages her medical juniors to attend similar programmes, improving their skills.

6.1.3 People-centred Development

Third, the scope of people-centred practices has moved from people-to-people links and human resources cultivation to broader development issues. Taiwan's political discourse also links the NSP to "fulfil the needs of New Southbound Policy partner countries and contribute to the development and well-being of people across the region, as well as foster a sense of community" (Hsu et al., 2017: 30). Taiwan juxtaposes the NSP's end of forging "a sense of (economic) community" with regional development in the political discourse, and the NSP is the means to achieve Taiwan's vision. President Tsai Ing-wen once reaffirmed the NSP is a "vision-oriented and forward-looking policy" (cited by Cheung, 2019: 3) for Taiwan to play an active role in the region. In general, the NSP emphasises a people-centred development agenda that firmly links Taiwan with Asian society through bidirectional exchange and cooperation (Hsiao, 2019).

As the author argued earlier, it is a strategic communication that resonated with the enthusiasm that Taiwan wants to play a part in the "repertoire" to cope with the political isolation and economic marginalisation. Thus, the Taiwanese government repeatedly stresses that the island is "committed to building close partnerships with these countries, ensuring the welfare of all people, and demonstrating to partner countries in the region that Taiwan is willing to share, innovate, and serve." More importantly, Taiwan invokes a highly recognised global development agenda from

UNs to implement NSP by stating that "Taiwan and its partner countries can work together to achieve related Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and build up a sense of community" (OTNs, 2018: 7). Taiwan attempts to prove that the people-centred NSP is compatible with the UNs' development plan, even though the island is not a member of the international organisation. Targeting the leading regional organisation ASEAN in Southeast Asia, Alan Yang (2016: 44) further claim points out that "Taiwan needs to shoulder more responsibilities of Southeast Asian development by conducting the New Southbound Policy in the process of the ASEAN Community."

Taiwan's original proposal of a sense of economic community means the links in "economic and trade relations, science and technology, and culture; share resources, talent, and markets" to create a new cooperation model that seeks mutual benefits and win-win situations (Office of President, 2016). Although the community proposal contains broad areas, the economic aspect still strongly dominates the policy orientation, corresponding to the fact that the OTNs have been appointed central coordinator in the policy framework. In this regard, introducing the Five Flagship Programmes has altered the orientation (but not enough) by stressing Taiwan's roles in regional development. The discourse shift is mainly demonstrated in cooperation in **public health**, agriculture, and **transnational Youth Forum**, in which stakeholders have represented and reinterpreted the people-centred values in their practices.

People-centred Practices in Regional Agricultural Development

According to the "Regional Agricultural Development" programme, the CoA aims to help New Southbound partner countries "replicate and expand upon Taiwan's development experience and model" to improve agricultural management and raise farmers' incomes. In a way, the Council also views Taiwan's agriculture technology (e.g., green, and sustainable practices or smart agriculture) as a source of soft power that can be exported to partner countries for combating climate change and other environmental changes (Cheung et al., 2018; OTNs, 2018). All in all, the programme's goals are to increase agricultural produce, achieve food security, facilitate rural development, and improve farmers' livelihoods (OTNs, 2017: 5; 2018: 5). Besides farmers' livelihoods, the terms "shared agricultural prosperity" and "sustainable development" are articulated in different policy reports (OTNs, 2018; Cheung et al., 2018; OTNs, 2019). The Council's people-centred practices thus are echoed with SDGs-2 "Zero Hunger" vowed to "end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture." As for the practices of people-centred values, one Taiwanese project manager from Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) based in Chiangmai, Thailand, stating that the point is to consider the host country's actual needs. All agricultural technology cooperation should be tailored for the needs of people, and meanwhile, a "sense of ownership" matters for Taiwan's counterparts. She maintains that the bilateral agriculture cooperation with Thailand **is not a charity of merely giving; instead, it should be an equal partnership.** That is also the way to cultivate mutual trust.

According to one CoA official who is in charge of international agricultural affairs, one of the ways to achieve the Council's vision is through Demonstration Farm projects (now operating in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam). In the projects, implanting human resources and agricultural capability-building is at the core of CoA's people-centred practices. First, Taiwan's agricultural technology cooperation, technical guidance, and vocational training can improve local farmers' production and build partnerships. In turn, as long as New Southbound partner countries' agricultural production grows, it further secures regional food security since Taiwan is a net food importer. Secondly, bilateral agricultural cooperation can connect the regional markets for farming products and other farming equipment. From Taiwan's perspective, it is a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship by expanding its regional market in New Southbound partner countries.

People-centred Practices in Medical and Public Health Cooperation

MoHW capitalises on Taiwan's medical achievements for its Flagship Programme, such as a comprehensive medical system, public health, and epidemic prevention network, developed pharmaceutical and medical equipment industry, and a world-known national health insurance system. Located in a perfect geographical position in the Asia-Pacific, Taiwan as "a member of this community," hopes to share its medical resources and experience. The Ministry claims that the programme will facilitate establishing a "regional epidemic prevention and control network" and protect the "health and well-being of the people" in New Southbound Policy partner countries (OTNs, 2017: 5-7). Its vision resonated with SDGs-2 Good Health and

Well-being that all countries need aim to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

The major initiative is named "**1 Country 1 Center (1C1C) Project** (一國一中心)," covering four key dimensions: medical personnel training as capacity building through two-way cooperation, supply chain connectivity, regional market connectivity, and the ultimate regional epidemic prevention and control network (OTNs, 2018: 6). Later, the collaboration areas expanded into six, including "medical personnel training, healthcare bridge building, healthcare consultation for Taiwan expatriates, creation of friendly healthcare environments, surveys of medical regulations and conditions, and information integration (OTNs, 2019: 8)." In the **1C1C project** implementation, selected medical centre (public or private hospitals) in Taiwan is assigned by the MoHW as the coordination centre for cooperation with local hospitals in the targeted partner country. So far (till 2020), Taiwan has established hospital-to-hospital partnerships in eight countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, Thailand, Myanmar, and India.

As for the people-centred values practices, one CEO of Overseas Medical Mission Center of a Taiwanese private hospital said that the preliminary investigation on locals' needs matters. To her understandings, although the people-centred is an ambiguous concept, all sub-project designs under the 1C1C should start from "people" or be based on the "Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)." The point is how to operate the details and explain the connections between the policy and vague concepts. Another dermatologist with several experiences of overseas free medical missions

stressed the "education" aspect of medical personnel capability building in the **1C1C Project**. For him, Taiwan's regular overseas free medical treatment mission can earn a good reputation of humanity among international society. Still, it is a one-time mission without long-term effects for local people. Thus, he believes that Taiwan's people-centred practices should more focus on medical personnel training and know-how sharing in ways that "I teach my students medical skills, and my students go back home to help their people." Once again, Taiwan's people-centred practices combine people-to-people links (teacher-student relations), human resource cultivation (medical personnel training), and regional development (SDGs-2 Good Health and Well-being).

People-centred Practices in Policy Forum and Youth Exchange Platform

The civilian but government-affiliated Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF) was established to serve the purpose of holding the transnational policy and youth platform, namely the **Yushan Forum**, centred on Taiwan's NSP. The Forum aims to foster the "exchange of ideas, talent gathering, and technology application for innovation and progress across the Asia-Pacific." (OTNs, 2017: 12) Besides the annual Forum, the TAEF also cultivates three significant fields, including cooperation between think tanks, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and young leaders, to "consolidate a sense of regional community in Asia and establish long-term cooperative partnerships." Therefore, the Forum is regarded as Taiwan's "**Forum Diplomacy**" in ways that Taiwan "[n]ot only wants to showcase soft power but build more regional or international platforms, which may assist in embedding Taiwan within mega-regional or international networks of collaboration" to deal with "the

limitations of Cross-Strait relations and Beijing's political and diplomatic coercion" (Yang, Chiang & Liu, 2018).

The Yushan Forum's uniqueness has earned international attention. According to a policy report, the distinctiveness of the Forum lies in the foci on "non-traditional social development issues." In contrast, most major Asian regional forums pay more attention to military, political, economic, security, and other traditional diplomatic issues. Based on the discourse, the "social" dimension had been singled out that Taiwan can contribute to the region. Specifically, the report further points out the potential collaboration in agriculture, healthcare, education, technology, disaster prevention and rescue, SMEs, and civil society development (OTNs, 2018: 14; OTNs, 2019: 16). The topics of the Forum are all about socio-economic issues, such as "Asian Dialogue for Innovation and Progress" in 2017, "Working Together for Regional Prosperity" in 2018, "Deepening Progressive Partnerships in Asia" in 2019, and "Forging a Resilient Future Together" in 2020. Private sectors and civil society lead the dialogues in the Forum but with government participation (OTNs, 2019: 16) to realise the people-centred values. Moreover, the TAEF has been ranked "the best new think tank" in 2018, 2019, 2020, respectively, in the "Global Go To Think Tank Index Report" published by the University of Pennsylvania, US. Not merely a platform promoting Taiwan's NSP and people-centred values, the TAEF and Yushan Forum can further serve as channels for norm advocacy since the Forum brings the think tanks, academics, policymakers, and civil society representatives altogether.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that other than the signature flagship programmes and three potential areas, Taiwan also launched other sub-projects in various fields echoed with UN's SDGs agendas, including science and technology, environmental protection, and disaster preparedness. Name a few. Regarding the environmental security or SDGs-6 Clean Water and Sanitation, Taiwan's National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) sent a group of engineers to advance local communities' access (Laguna de Bay in the Philippines, the second-largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia) to clean, safe, and sustainable water. In 2017, NCKU established the Taiwan- Philippines Joint Water Quality Research and Innovation Center and Mapúa University (MU) in the Philippines, bringing experts from state-run Taiwan Water Corporation and environmental consultancies in touch with their Philippine counterparts. The following year, four Taiwanese companies donated a mobile laboratory trailer with water testing equipment worth NT\$1.3 million to the centre (Cheung, 2019). One Filipino Environmental Engineering Professor reaffirmed that the bilateral technology cooperation in water quality survey and purification between Taiwan and the Philippines could realise the SDGs-6 in the interview.

6.2 People-centred Practices: Both a Norm and an Approach

Taiwan, formally known as ROC, had 67 diplomatic allies in 1967; it only has 14 diplomatic allies since 2019 (Nicaragua broke ties with ROC in 2021) due to the pressure imposed by the PRC and its intensifying assertiveness in eliminating Taiwan's international status. Taiwan's bizarre and controversial statehood highly constrains its policy options with countries with no official diplomatic ties, and the 18 New Southbound partner countries are some of them. Moreover, as a disabling

external environment for Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship, China highly hinders to build up relations with partner countries. Therefore, the NSP is designed to cope with the diplomatic challenges through "focus[ing] on developing people-centred relations and other pragmatic strategies (Hsiao, Yang & Hsiao, 2020: 667)." People-centred is not merely normative guidance for regional development placing the people's needs and well-being as the core concerns, but also Taiwan's practical approaches to improving regional integration facilitating its economic diversification (Glaser et al., 2018: 1-2) via various non-political programmes and projects at a people-to-people level. Further, as the research mentioned earlier, the people-centred rebranding also expands Taiwan's room to navigate through political difficulties under China's dominance in the region to normalise the socio-economic cooperation with partners.

Those people-centred relations can range from **people-to-people** (e.g., **interpersonal relations**), **business-to-business** (e.g., **private sectors' commercial relations**), and **institution-to-institution** (e.g., **universities sign MOU for academic cooperation**). In this way, the NSP can, thus, in turn, secure Taiwan's visibility and presence in the region against China's intensifying campaign pressing Taiwan's international space globally. Although Taiwan adopts a people-centred approach to navigate politically sensitive issues, **it does not suggest that the Taiwanese government has zero contact with its counterparts under the NSP framework.** For example, the CoA has signed MOU with its Indonesian partners (Department of Agriculture) to conduct the Demonstration Farm Project under the Regional Agriculture Development Programme. In other cases, the private sectors and civil society are being the frontline executors/enforcers under the NSP. Take the 1C1C

Project as an example. The MoHW's International Cooperation Office Technical Superintendent, Hsu Min- hwei, describe that "[i]f the Project is viewed as a ball game, then the government plays the role of cheerleader. Although it does step in to help negotiate better cooperation platforms when needed. But the real players are companies in the private sector, including hospitals and healthcare industries" (cited by Cheung et al., 2018: 13-14).

The NSP's central strategy is to "[s]ynergise public and private partnerships by going beyond official channels" (Yang & Chiang, 2019b). **This Public and Private Partnerships can dilute (if not mask) the Taiwanese government's role or official characteristics in the collaboration projects and make Taiwan's proposals more acceptable and less sensitive to its targets without violating the one-China policy.** For example, the 1C1C Project is a government open bid project. Each public or private hospital or medical centre can develop their plans for Medical and Public Health Cooperation and tenders for the governmental contract. In the end, the MoHW selects suitable candidates to run the centres. In short, we can see the (public or private) hospitals working in the frontline under the policy framework with governmental funding.

In agricultural cooperation, one Taiwanese researcher from a CoA-affiliated agriculture research institute also maintains **the people-centred approach is tailored to cope with Taiwan's unique diplomatic situation.** Her mission is to study Southeast Asian markets and agricultural regulations, looking for potential local collaborators for exporting Taiwan's agriculture equipment, promote Taiwan's

agriculture technology via exhibitions and bilateral cooperation. She points out that **the institution, as a civilian non-governmental foundation, enjoys a great degree of flexibility so that it can connect Taiwanese agricultural business (e.g., production materials and equipment) and local markets or needs in Southeast Asia by playing the role of a "bridge."** She further underscored that "Taiwan's NSP does not necessarily need government-to- government contacts. Based on her experiences, anything related to politics will face a bottleneck, and People-centred or civilian and non-governmental relations can be alternative options for Taiwan to reach out."

To sum up, Taiwan's people-centred approach is linked to soft power and public diplomacy in IR theory. **It strategically combines Taiwan's advanced areas with people or private and civilian sectors the leading operators.** Yet, it should be once again noted that Taiwan taps into different sources of soft power with different targets. For example, as a vibrant democracy, Taiwan tends to stress the shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law with "like-minded" countries, such as the United States, Japan, the European Union, and other democratic regimes (Krumbein, 2019: 293). By contrast, when Taiwan promotes the NSP, especially with ASEAN states, the island chooses to capitalise on Taiwan's advanced areas related to economic and development needs, such as education, agriculture, public health, and technology as the primary sources of soft power to appeal further cooperation. The reason is that **Taiwan fully acknowledges the liberal democratic issues that may be sensitive to touch upon at the governmental level, even though promoting those values may be welcomed at the people-to-people level.** In a way, the strategy

towards ASEAN leads the result of NSP's "apolitical" characteristics with foci on development.

6.3 Challenges for NSP: External, Internal and Dilemma for an Awkward Democracy

The challenges for the NSP can be categorised into three dimensions: external, internal, and the last, Taiwan's "apoliticism" may also hinder the people-centred norm formation and diffusion. Externally, the China factor plays a significant role in hindering Taiwan's norm entrepreneurship towards New Southbound partner countries, especially Southeast Asian ones. That is also why Taiwan instead chooses to develop people-centred relations to cope with the challenges since government-to-government connections are highly constrained. The China factor is a remarkable intervening variable worth examining in ways that almost every Southeast Asian interviewee had brought up China's influence while being asked about Taiwan's cooperation with their own countries. They may not know the complicated cross-Strait relations, but they fully acknowledge the sensitivity of Taiwan issues.

Apart from China's role, the internal problems may also hinder Taiwan from consolidating deeper partnerships with targeted countries. The NSP's people-centred approach is theoretically tangible. Yet, the main problem for Taiwan lies in evaluating the policy's success with objective criteria to convince its domestic audience. Responding to criticisms, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu claims that the NSP has gradually created the "cooperative models of mutual benefits and win-win situation" with New Southbound partner countries (MoFA, 2021) in the Foreign and

National Defense Committee of Legislative Yuan. Still, his statement may not be articulate enough. Most Taiwanese realise the importance of Southeast Asia and South Asia but in economic potentials thanks to the framing from the mass media and KMT. The normative people-centred significances are mainly circulated and identified in the academic community and government, not popular among the public.

However, the essence of building comprehensive partnerships and a sense of economic community to Taiwan's diplomacy and international standing remains less comprehended due to its irrelevance to daily lives among ordinary Taiwanese. Even within government agencies, the economic-oriented mindset is pervasive, and it turns out that the "cooperative models" somehow have still trapped in the "number" perspectives in ways that officials attempt to use "numbers" (especially in trade and investment) to prove the policy's success. This mindset or misunderstanding may hinder the policy implementation and move the NSP's vision forward because those people-centred agendas need joint efforts from all stakeholders in the public and private sectors. Thus, people should understand that the people-centred plan requires long-haul efforts to reap the fruits, and it may be not very meaningful to centre on numbers.

The last challenge may be the blind spot in the people-centred NSP in ways that the Taiwanese government will not explicitly bring up any related political issues, especially in Southeast Asia, attempting to make the policy as "apolitical" as the island can to earn more chance to cooperate with New Southbound partners. However, the "apoliticism" also criticises **neglecting democracy** from the "people" from

Southeast Asia who expect Taiwan to share its democratic assets in its NSP, which is also one challenge for Taiwan to push forward the people-centred norm.

6.3.1 China Factor

Ever since President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, China unilaterally cut off all official and semi-official contacts with China because Tsai refused to recognise the 1992 Consensus under the one-China principle. In general, Tsai's cross-Strait policy maintains the "**status quo**," implying that her administration will not pursue *de jure* independence. But China's grounded distrust towards Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) led to "**cold peace**" (Hsiao, Yang & Hsiao, 2020: 666-667) across the Taiwan Strait in the first beginning. In recent years, the tension across the Strait has intensified as China keeps wooing Taiwan's diplomatic allies with economic incentives and conducting military coercion around the self-governed island. As such, China exercises its power on Taiwan's diplomatic allies, International Government Organisations (IGOs, such as WHO and ICAO) (Thornton et al., 2021: 4), and any countries that Taiwan targets as potential partners, especially countries in Southeast Asia, to internationalise its one-China principle and eliminate Taiwan's visibility and presence in any way. Thus, Taiwan's foreign policies, including the NSP, are highly interrelated to cross-Strait relations (if not cross-Strait policy) since the main political parties, KMT and DPP, support the "status quo" position across the Taiwan Strait.

Since China enjoys significant influence on Southeast Asia, scholars have suggested that repairing the cross-Strait relations should be the Tsai administration's top priority to achieve the island's new southward engagements (Huang, 2018: 67-68,

2019), especially in signing new economic agreements (Tso & Jung, 2018; Jing, 2018). Their arguments lie in that Taiwan's only two free trade deals with current New Southbound partner nations are: (1) the Agreement between Singapore and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu on Economic Partnership (**ASTEP**), signed in November 2013. (2) the Agreement between New Zealand and the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu on Economic Cooperation (**ANZTEC**), signed in July 2013. Two agreements were concluded during the former President Ma Ying-jeou's terms (2008-2016), a period of cordial and reciprocal cross-Strait relations. However, the claims are not 100 per cent correct if the standard is agreement-signing since Taiwan has renewed Bilateral Investment Agreements (BIA) with the Philippines, India, and Vietnam, respectively, during Tsai's first term (2016-2020). It is necessary to realise that the China factor is an intervening variable, not a determinant, while analysing the NSP and avoiding over-simplification of the interactions among Taiwan, China, and New Southbound partner countries.

It is argued that Taiwan has forged robust socio-economic connectivity with the South (Hsiao & Yang, 2018; Yang & Chiang, 2019b; Hsiao, 2019) since implementing the NSP with a people-centred agenda. Even if official ties are subject to political constraints due to the pervasive one-China policy in the region or New Southbound partners' "preemptive efforts to avoid provoking China," substantive possibilities for fostering Taiwan's relations with Southeast Asia remain (Chong, 2018, 2019). Although the people-centred NSP appears to be promising, there have been some limitations during the policy implementation, which shows China's influence

still shadows Taiwan. Those "preemptive efforts to avoid provoking China" somehow prevents socio- economic relations from uplifting to governmental ones. One Filipino Environmental Engineering University professor revealed that the technology cooperation regarding water quality investigation and purification at the university-to-university level works smoothly without obstacles. However, when she proposed to expand the collaborations to the governmental level, the officials from the Philippines turned down the offer without hesitation and responded that "it needs further consideration." This incident will not be a single case under the NSP framework. For New Southbound partner countries, especially Southeast Asia, any official ties with Taiwan require thorough deliberation to avoid violating their one-China policy.

Although both sides have established communication channels via MOUs, any cooperation projects always keep a low profile. One Taiwanese senior researcher from a government-affiliated (with Environmental Protection Administration (EPA)) think tank admitted that anything related to politics is sensitive even in the environmental cooperation. He further added that the EPA-affiliated institution participates in the international forums in the name of "NGOs." Moreover, whenever they have bilateral exchanges or collaboration with the United States, Japan, or any New Southbound partner countries, the information and schedule details are classified as "confidential" before everything is settled. Those cases directly demonstrate the fragility of Taiwan's diplomacy and the limitation of the people-centred approach. Even though Taiwan attempts to normalise bilateral or multilateral cooperation in non-political areas under the NSP, there is still a long way to form a real "sense of economic community" based

on people-centred values. In other words, reproducing the quotes from "The Communist Manifesto," this research argues that **Taiwan is still haunted by a ghost, the ghost of the one-China principle from an authoritarian regime.**

However, despite the external environment disabling Taiwan's international status, Mariah Thornton (2021) maintains that **President Tsai's foreign policy strategy is more soft power-oriented and fewer China-focused.** It may yield better results for Taiwan's international space "over the long term." Even though the NSP fails to lessen Taiwan's economic reliance on China, it recognises Taiwan's soft power to improve the island's image in the region. For example, six Southeast Asian interviewees (including a hospital dean, a former MA student, a dermatologist, a university lecturer, a university professor, and one MP) uphold positive attitudes towards Taiwan's southward engagements under the NSP. But here comes another question: How many "people" can Taiwan reach out to and cultivate relations based on people-centred values? Still, the influence may only be within a limited number of people. Most of the people are unaware of Taiwan's NSP, not to mention recognising Taiwan's contributions to people-centred development in the region due to its limited resources compared to other great powers.

Besides, since the NSP denotes Taiwan's outward-looking strategy as an Indo-Pacific democracy (Scott, 2019), the China factor or BRI also form its strategic partnerships (if not alliances) in Southeast Asia. Metaphorically speaking, among the ASEAN-10, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and even Thailand after the coup since 2014 are under more substantial influence from China's geopolitical gravity than others

who may have direct conflicts with China, especially regarding the SCS issues. Each country's China affiliation may again block Taiwan's people-centred norm entrepreneurship even though the island mainly focuses on people-to-people, business- to-business, and institution-to-institution relations. In short, the closer ties with China that targeted countries have, the harder Taiwan can break into the Chinese orbit.

6.3.2 Number Trap

The main argument in this research is that Taiwan acts as a norm entrepreneur advocating people-centred values under the NSP. Therefore, this author has detailed the genealogy of the people-centred concept in the policy, which ranges from **people-to- people links, human resource/capital cultivation** to broader **people-centred development**. However, apart from the term people-centred, another phrase has been mentioned not less than people-centred. That is the **cooperative models (or modes) of mutual benefits and win-win situations**. In general, "People," "cooperation," "mutual benefits," "win-win," and "development" are the most repeated words in the political discourse. This discourse targets not only the New Southbound partner countries but also the internal Taiwanese on the island. However, as the author mentioned earlier, most people still view the NSP merely as **an external economic policy**, failing to realise the importance of people-centred agendas. Some government officials are trapped in the "number" mindset, focusing more on trade and investment than comprehensive partnerships. According to my interviewees' observations, **numbers cannot fully reflect the results of the NSP**. Accordingly, **Taiwan's soft power and NSP's people-centred dimensions may be "underestimated."**

However, the government officials' tendency to highlight numbers have multiple reasons. Other than diversification of Taiwan's economic relations, the NSP introduces the "**supply chain**" connection dimension in people-centred development, not only limited in the "Industrial Innovation and Cooperation" but also the "Medical and Public Health Cooperation" and "Regional Agriculture Development." The policy report states that the Medical Cooperation "[p]rogramme will promote medicine and public health- related industrial supply chains by raising market connectivity in and among partner countries. Having placed medical testing, services, and research and development at the core of its supply chain, Taiwan can draw on its advanced medical technologies to establish horizontal alliances and establish stronger cooperative relations in terms of medicine and public health-related industrial clustering" (OTNs, 2017: 7). As for the "Regional Agriculture Development," the official discourse indicates that "[t]o help Taiwan's agricultural enterprises effectively develop supply chains in New Southbound Policy partner countries, the COA is actively working with Taiwan's state-owned enterprises, foundations, and marketing companies, thereby enhancing the policy's effectiveness" (OTNs, 2018: 5).

The main logic behind is that Taiwan's advanced technology or equipment combined with know-how transfer and capability-building can improve local people's livelihood, fulfilling the development needs. In this sense, on the other hand, Taiwan can play a contributing role in locals' well-being and regional development. On the other, the island can also connect bilateral markets, expanding chances for exporting. It is how the government put the "mutual benefits and win-win situation" into practice.

In an interview, one Taiwan dermatologist based in Taipei, who has conducted the 1C1C Project under the supervision of MoHW, indicated that **the "supply chain" aspect is a brand-new tactic in international medical cooperation that he is unfamiliar with.** To his understandings, medical partnership mainly stresses humanitarian assistance without expecting any returns. However, the scheme of medical supply chain connectivity somehow clouds his role of a "doctor" with another one, a "salesman," which he has no idea how to manage. He said that basically all doctors should avoid conflicts of interest so that they usually will not have close relations with the pharmaceutical or medical equipment companies in Taiwan. Under the 1C1C project design, He can only introduce the local doctors in the host country he has cooperated with for companies. In any way, he cannot intervene in any business-related behaviours, such as potential market investigation or product promotion. The case mentioned above, and the programme design explain why the **Taiwanese government is led by the economic-dominated mindsets** even though it attempts to rebrand the people-centred policy.



However, diplomacy is not to do charity, and all bilateral relations should be two- sided and reciprocal. Even the UN's SDGs place the "No Poverty" as the first goal, which is also related to economic development. In a way, economic development and overall people-centred development are complementary, not contradictory. Listing the "number trap" as the NSP's internal challenges, this research is not suggesting that Taiwan should neglect the economic dimension for its moral high ground. It is also understandable that Taiwanese governmental officials tend to present the "numbers" (e.g., investment, trade, personnel exchanges, signed

MOUs between two sides) to the public since "numbers" are generally perceived as objective criteria for policy evaluation. However, as one Taiwanese interviewee mentioned earlier, Taiwan's soft power is consistently underestimated and underrepresented, and it cannot be shown by "numbers." Moreover, the people-centred values are primarily discussed in academic settings, and normal Taiwanese may not comprehend the term. Therefore, the Tsai administration must let its domestic audience realise that the NSP's people-centred values and vision are essential for the island's regional space by **presenting real NSP stories** and showcasing the policy's **humanity** sides. On the one hand, it is consistent with Taiwan's people-centred rebranding. On the other, it can help ordinary Taiwanese acknowledge Taiwan's reposition and realisation as "a force for good" in the region, boosting public support for the policy and making Taiwan a real cosmopolitan island going towards the world.

6.3.3 An Awkward Democracy Promoting People-centred Values

Thai activists Netiwit Chotiphathasial and Sukrit Peansuwan (2020) once wrote an article criticising that the Taiwanese government fails to successfully capitalise on its human rights and democracy achievements, appealing to the Thai new generation who wants to find an example in Asia of a country that was successful in becoming democratic. They (Chotiphathasial & Peansuwan, 2020) complain that Taiwan only uses alternative platforms, such as Yushan Forum, to "discuss" those issues rather than "practically act on anything." In a way, Taiwan fails the expectations of new generations pursuing democracy by only promoting those issues implicitly via transnational civil society organisations or platforms. However, neglecting

"democracy" or "freedom from fear" is intentional due to the political sensitivity in Southeast Asia, especially from governmental officials' perspectives. The Taiwanese government has remained neutral about the Thai student movements since 2020, and another coup in Myanmar in 2021 are two vivid examples of those concerns that the island's any clear move or stance on "domestic issues" may downgrade the existing fragile government-to-government relations and against the existing norms, the ASEAN ways.

Regardless, Taiwan does not remain silent about anything democratic setbacks in Southeast Asia. For example, Taiwan's MoFa issued a statement saying that "Taiwan is seriously concerned about the situation in Myanmar and condemns the military government for exercising force to suppress people" (MoFa, 2021). The action speaks louder than words. It seems like the Southeast Asian people may expect more from Taiwan. Taiwan does have advantages over China in democratisation and human rights protection. However, we should understand that although Taiwan has those cards in its hands, it dare not play them in case of any diplomatic setbacks. In practice, Taiwan tends to polish its democratic brand while dealing with like-minded countries, such as the US, Japan, EU, India, and Australia. While engaging with ASEAN states, those issues become **taboo** in political discourse. As a people-centred norm entrepreneur, Taiwan places itself in an awkward situation by not engaging the political issues to stabilise the government-to-government relations. Taiwanese government must answer Southeast Asian people's calls for democratisation and human rights protection experience-sharing to fulfil the actual people-centred values in the policy and, in the meantime, maintain steady at the governmental level. The

only viable way is the people-centred approach that the government supports NGOs or other civil society organisations to speak up and export those experiences that Southeast Asian people expect.



CHAPTER VII

7.1 Discussion

This research conceptualises and identifies Taiwan's New Southbound Policy initiative as norm entrepreneurship promoting people-centred development and normalising socio-economic cooperation with Taiwan. The neorealist and neoliberalist's research on Taiwan's foreign policy tends to be obsessed with cross-Strait relations, diplomatic hardship due to its controversial statehood, and the island's survival between the two great powers, China, and the US, further leading to the conclusion "Taiwan is struggling" in the global stage. The common metaphor for Taiwan's role is the "pawn" of great power in world politics. Unavoidably, the "struggling" is a reality as the number of Taiwan's diplomatic allies has shrunk to 15, and it still finds it difficult to sign FTAs or EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) nowadays. The most explanation is attributed to external factors (e.g., China) determining Taiwan's international space without examining its agency as a political and economic entity. Therefore, drawing insights from constructivism, ideas, values, frames, and persuasion are key concepts in this research. It is also a new attempt at redefining the relations between Taiwan and Southeast Asia by shifting the focus on the "sense of community" building process, reclaiming Taiwan's agency as a middle power in the region against China's pressure. Only by upholding people-centred values and navigating through the political sensitivity can Taiwan convince its partners to support Taiwan's participation and integration.

The NSP has been implemented for five years since 2016, and it enhances Taiwan's regional participation and integration by cultivating vibrant socio-economic relations with Southeast Asia as several bilateral development-related projects rise

year by year. This research also found that open-ended interpretation (people-to-people links, talent cultivation, and recent people-centred development) and various practices showing the people-centred policy's evolving nature correspond to the concept of "norm operationalisation (Huelss, 2017)". More importantly, according to the interviews, every respondent from ASEAN states holds a positive and favourable attitude towards Taiwan's efforts in regional development. However, although not everyone apprehends the academic term "people-centred" values or norms (only one university professor, one lecturer noticed, and MPs noticed the people-centred rebranding), they all agree that Taiwan can contribute to the region in a general sense and are also glad to see that happen. It confirms that the NSP does improve Taiwan's regional reputation and image to a certain extent. As President Tsai Ing-wen was reelected in 2020, it is expected that Taiwan's people-centred southward engagements will continue (Hsiao & Yang, 2020), sending a solid signal of Taiwan's determination in regional development and co-prosperity for New Southbound partners.

7.2 Recommendation

This research demonstrates the NSP's achievements in forging socio-economic relations. However, the policy's prolonged struggles in Taiwan's diplomacy, especially political isolation, are not fully addressed in the policy. Theoretically, a favourable attitude towards Taiwan among the people is beneficial to Taiwan's regional posture. However, as long as ASEAN states remain strong ties with China at the governmental level, there is little chance for Taiwan to have a diplomatic breakthrough in any way, even signing the EPAs appears to be complicated due to

sensitive cross-Strait politics. Diplomatic breakthrough at the governmental level seems inconceivable and beyond what the NSP can achieve. Therefore, we must revisit the original purpose of the NSP. If the policy is merely aimed at forging the so-called "sense of economy community" with vibrant people-to-people relations, it is on the right track as bilateral or multilateral cooperation persists, but in apolitical areas. Facing China's dominance in the region, Taiwan must avoid being too high-profile not to cause anxiety among its partners while remaining proactive in regional development at the same time.

However, even though Taiwan adopts the apolitical people-centred approach to engage with Southeast Asia seems logical to most audiences, there are still voices from civil society and the academic community stating that Taiwan wastes its assets as a vibrant democracy. For example, Andrea Passeri (2019) indicates that the Tsai administration has refrained from engaging the communities and civil society organisations affected by the Rohingya crisis not to upset the Myanmar government. He recommends that "if the NSP reflects Taiwan's quest to rekindle its role and identity in the region beyond economic returns, it is time to fill this silence with a more courageous voice." It is a dilemma for the Taiwanese government since Taipei is fully aware that the political issues are "taboo" among ASEAN. Ideally, if possible, Taiwan should find a discreet and creative way to reconnect civil society in need with creativity to realise people-centred values.

In addition, other than socio-economic relations, if the policy proposes to go further, contributing to Taiwan's international or regional posture generally, it may

face the limitation. There is still a massive gap from the favourable attitudes among the people into strong support in governmental official, not to mention the people Taiwan can reach out is only a small number of the enormous population (ASEAN has 620 million people whereas South Asia 1.7 billion). As President Tsai was reelected for her second term, Taiwan must recalibrate the policy periodically, making it relevant in the repertoire but only in the social and economic sense, especially the geopolitics face rapid structural change in the region and the cross-Strait relations has no sign to warm up. To retain its relevance in the repertoire, Taiwan must keep capitalising on its advantageous strengths to fulfil its people-centred development vision but only in the social and economic sense to not place targeted countries in an "either-or" dilemma in choosing sides between China and Taiwan. In other words, the island needs to prove that Taiwan is a "solution" (for development) rather than an "issue" (regional instability) in the region. For example, besides the current Five Flagship programmes and Three Potential Areas, Taiwan can share its resources and experiences combating climate change (green energy & environmental protection industry) and supply chain restructuring, especially in the high-technology industry (e.g., semi-conductor).

Finally, as Chapter VI shows, governmental officials fail to elaborate the NSP's strategic significance in Taiwan's regional survival and diplomacy so that Taiwanese people may not fully realise the NSP's importance, which may, in turn, hamper the effectiveness of the policy since the Public and Partnership Partnerships plays engine to forge relations with Southeast Asian counterparts. Other than external communication, internal communication is also the task for the Tsai administration.

Even though the official discourse highlights NSP's strategic importance in regional integration, the general public (even among some governmental officials) in Taiwan still frames the NSP as a policy for economic purposes only. The right mindset correction matters. Only when the Taiwanese are fully aware of the NSP's significance in Taiwan's diplomacy and, as a whole, consequently coordinate public, private and civil society's resources to reach out, the island has the chance to "break away" the gravity from China, diversifying its external relations and stepping into the region and the world stage.



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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Guideline

This research adopted semi-structured interviews with the participants from both Taiwan and ASEAN to picture the New Southbound Policy stakeholders' perceptions. In practices, interviews with Taiwanese and ASEAN people were conducted and recorded in Mandarin and English, respectively. Moreover, since the semi-structured interview does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions as the structured interview does, the interview guideline chose more open-ended and tailored questions rather than a well-organized format.

- 
- Interview Objective: Taiwan's images under the New Southbound Policy
 - Respondents: Related stakeholders in New Southbound Policy projects, including Taiwanese and ASEAN citizens (20-30 people)
 - Methods: Zoom, Google Meet, Telegram or other video conferencing software
 - Time: Each interview conducted from at least 30 minutes to the most 2 hours

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

A. Introducing Questions

Would you please introduce the New Southbound Policy project in which you're participating?

B. Open-ended Questions

For Taiwanese

What do you think about the New Southbound Policy's people-centred motto?

Does the New Southbound Policy contribute any good to the ASEAN countries? Does the New Southbound Policy improve Taiwan's image within ASEAN countries? 2

For ASEAN citizens

What do you think about the cooperation with Taiwan?

- If the answer is positive: What does the project contribute to yourself, your family, community, country or the region? (This question depends on the scale of the project. i.e. from personal scholarship to broader development-related programme)
- If the answer is negative: Would you please elaborate on the defects in this project? How can the Taiwanese government improve this project?

What is your first impression of Taiwan?

What do you know about Taiwan?

What can Taiwan provide or do for your country?

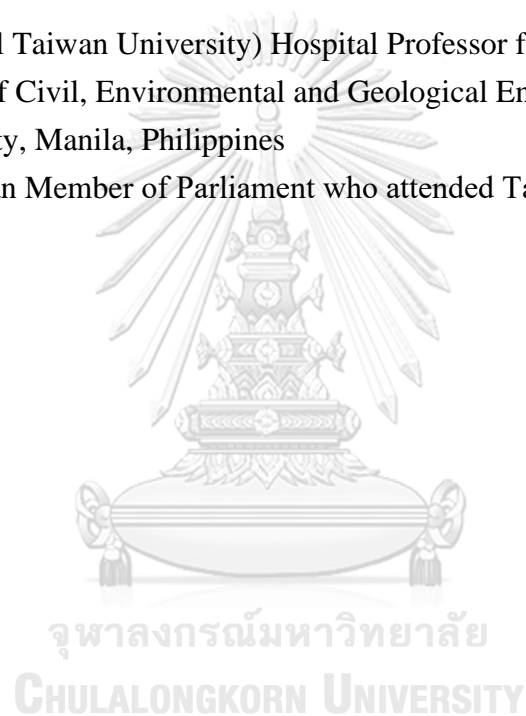
What is Taiwan's role in Asia (Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific) in your eyes?

Any further recommendations for Taiwan?

Appendix 2: Interviewee Profiles

1. Diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC (Taiwan)
2. Project Manager of Taiwan Technical Mission in Thailand, International Cooperation and Development Fund, ROC (Taiwan)
3. Head of Taiwan Technical Mission in Indonesia, International Cooperation and Development Fund, ROC (Taiwan)
4. Section Chief, Council of Agriculture, ROC (Taiwan)
5. Executive Officer, Council of Agriculture, ROC (Taiwan)
6. CEO, Overseas Medical Mission Center of Changhua Christian Hospital, Taiwan
7. CEO, NTU (National Taiwan University) Hospital International Medical Service Center, Taiwan
8. Honorary Advisor, Institute of Environment and Resources, Taiwan
9. Associate researcher, Institute of Environment and Resources, Taiwan

10. Member/University Professor, Taiwan Association for Aerosol Research, TAAR
11. Distinguished Professor, Department of Environmental Engineering, NCKU, Taiwan
12. Former Vietnamese MA Student (now working in Taiwan) at National Central University, Taiwan
13. Thai Superintendent, Overbrook Hospital in Chiangrai, Thailand
14. Thai lecturer, Thammasat University
15. Indonesian Doctor from Department of dermatology, former Resident to NTU
16. (National Taiwan University) Hospital Professor from the Philippines, School of Civil, Environmental and Geological Engineering, Mapúa University, Manila, Philippines
17. Malaysian Member of Parliament who attended Taiwan's Yushan Forum



VITA

NAME Ssu-yu, Chou

DATE OF BIRTH 30 June 1990

PLACE OF BIRTH Taiwan

**INSTITUTIONS
ATTENDED** Southeast Asian Studies Programme, Graduate School,
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

HOME ADDRESS Room 306, เลขที่ 59 ซอย โชคชัยร่วมมิตร 16/9 ถนน วิกาศีรังสิต
Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY