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**Public diplomacy as a contributing factor to solving managing identity-based conflict: Taiwan repositions its identity and security status (2000-2020)**

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**Public Diplomacy as a Contributing Factor to Managing Identity-based Conflict: Taiwan Repositions its Identity and Security Status (2000 – 2020)**

Yung Lin

**Public Diplomacy as a Contributing Factor to Managing Identity-  
based Conflict: Taiwan Repositions its Identity and Security  
Status (2000 – 2020)**

**Proefschrift**

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## **List of Acronyms**

APEC – Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation  
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations  
BRI – Belt and Road Initiative  
CCP – Chinese Communist Party  
CEPD – Civic-embedded Public Diplomacy  
CPTPP – Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership  
DPP – Democratic Progressive Party  
ECFA – Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement  
EU – European Union  
FTAs – Free Trade Agreements  
ICT – Information Communication Technology  
KMT – Kuo Min Tang  
RCEP – Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership  
THAAD – Terminal High Altitude Area Defense  
TPP – Trans-Pacific Partnership  
US – United States of America  
WHA – World Health Assembly  
WTO – World Trade Organization

## **Key Terms in Translation (in the Order of Appearance)**

台灣外交年鑑 – Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual Diplomatic Report  
天下 TianXia – All Under Heaven  
中國國民黨 Zhong Guo Kuo Min Tang – Chinese Nationalist Party  
中國共產黨 Zhong Guo Gong Chan Dang – Chinese Communist Party  
中國 Zhong Guo - China  
兩岸關係 Liang An Guan Xi – Cross-strait Relation  
民主進步黨 Min Zhu Jin Bu Tang – Democratic Progressive Party  
陳水扁 Chen Shui-bian – The DPP President (administered in 2000 – 2008)  
台灣本土化運動 Tai Wan Ben Tu Hua Yun Dong – Taiwanese Identity Movement  
海峽交流基金會 – Straits Exchange Foundation  
海峽兩岸關係協會 – Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits  
海峽 – Strait  
兩岸 – Cross-strait

胡錦濤 Hu JinTao  
和平崛起 He Ping Jue Qi – Peaceful Rising  
鄭和 Zheng He – The Chinese Mariner, and Explorer of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century  
習近平 Xi JinPing  
馬英九 Ma Ying-jeou – The KMT President (administered in 2008 - 2016)  
蔡英文 Tsai Ing-wen – The DPP President (administered in 2016 - 2024)  
戰狼外交 Zhan Lang Wai Jiao – The Wolf Warrior Diplomacy  
台灣書院 – Taiwan Library  
青年打工度假 – Youth Mobility Scheme  
外交小尖兵 – Teen Diplomatic Envoys  
新南向政策 – New Southbound Policy  
中外關係 – Relations of the Republic of China and Foreign States  
對外關係 – Relations with Foreign States  
中 – Center  
外 – Outer  
關係 – Relations  
東亞 – East Asia  
亞太 – Asia-Pacific  
我國 – My Country  
公眾外交 – Public Diplomacy  
國際傳播 – International Communication  
國際文教 – International Culture and Education  
國際傳播與公眾外交 – International Communication and Public Diplomacy  
敦睦 – Harmony  
和平 – Peace  
友好 – Friendly  
協調 – Coordination  
統一 – Unification  
復興 – Revival  
東海和平倡議 – East China Sea Peaceful Initiative  
釣魚台 – Senkaku Islands  
南海主權 – South China Sea Sovereignty  
經貿外交 – Economic and Trade Diplomacy  
青年國際接軌 – Youth International Mobility  
活路外交 – Flexible Diplomacy  
踏實外交 – Steadfast Diplomacy  
南海 – The South China Sea  
衝突 – Conflict

和平 – Peace  
外交 – Diplomacy  
關注國內 – Domestic View  
關注區域/全球 – Regional/World View  
威脅 – Threat  
危機 – Crisis  
安全 – Security  
人權議題 – Issues of Human Rights  
透明原則 – Principles of Transparency  
自由原則 – Principles of Freedom  
信任感 – Feelings of Trust  
安全感 – Feelings of Safety  
生計權 – Right to Life Building  
一級主編碼 – Pre-set Codes  
二級主編碼 – Second Stage Codes  
次編碼 – Sub Codes

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction: East Asian Identity and Taiwan Studies Status**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Since its founding in 1989, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has facilitated increasing regional integration in East Asia. Intensive economic interactions among this region's countries have fostered a demand for a more stable and cooperative political environment (Solingen 2004). Despite these economic advancements, diplomatic relations did not always align with the economic progress (Lee and Melissen 2011). This disparity led to a shift in focus towards soft power and public diplomatic strategies to pursue rapprochement. Soft power is, contrary to hard power relying on coercion, the ability to persuade or attract others and is deployed through public diplomacy strategies that influence foreign publics (Nye 2004). This dissertation investigates why and how public diplomacy has become a tool for conflict resolution in East Asia. In the past two decades, China's rise has disrupted the power distribution in the region. A shift in regional power dynamics tends to generate more conflicts (Kapur 2003). Hence, for Taiwan, which faces historical identity-based conflicts with China and marginalization in East Asian regional integration, developing a counter-strategy to address regional power change and enhance participation in the regional community is crucial for its security. This research examines how Taiwan conceptualizes public diplomacy as a solution to addressing its identity and security status from 2000 to 2020. The period 2000–2020 is chosen because it captures Taiwan's democratic consolidation following its first peaceful transfer of power in 2000, while also coinciding with China's rise as a regional power. These simultaneous dynamics created a critical context for Taiwan to develop new forms of public diplomacy. This can be assessed through the government's internalization of regional security narratives into society and the externalization of Taiwan's identity by its citizens to enhance geopolitical strategic status.

## **1.2 Central Research Question**

The central research question guiding this dissertation is framed as follows: Is public diplomacy a factor that can contribute to solving the conflict between China and Taiwan regarding the status of Taiwan?

The overarching topic investigates the conceptualization of identity, security, conflict, conflict resolution, and public diplomacy by offering an original contribution by evaluating the developments of Taiwan's public diplomatic policy and practices from 2000 to 2020. Defining

the scope as 2000–2020 also allows for a systematic analysis of two decades of consistent policy evolution, rather than isolated events. This dissertation assumes that, during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, East Asian states' pursuit of public diplomacy has been related to strategizing it as a conflict resolution mechanism. Although the term, resolution, refers to the act of solving or ending a problem, I do not predict that the conflict will be resolved by public diplomacy. The reason is that I regard the state of conflict as fluid and not fixed. The state of conflict is always changing due to the mechanisms, approaches, and activities that aim to address or tackle the conflict. Hence, the objective of this dissertation is not to argue that Taiwan's public diplomacy will eventually solve its conflict with China; rather, I focus on the process of how Taiwan's public diplomacy is conceptualized as contributing to reframing and repositioning its identity and security status in the East Asian region. While East Asian regional dynamics and China's role form the broader context, this dissertation does not pursue a comparative regional analysis; rather, it focuses specifically on Taiwan's perspective, using references to China and East Asia to contextualize Taiwan's identity-based conflict and diplomatic strategy.

Taiwan's diplomatic efforts to navigate its precarious geopolitical position vis-à-vis China from 2000 to 2020 are important in this era characterized by intensifying great power rivalry and the resurgence of identity-based politics. As of 2025, trade disputes and military tensions between the United States and China continue to escalate. *The Economist* launched a series in May 2025, entitled The Taiwan Test, warning that Taiwan may be the flashpoint in China-US power competition<sup>1</sup>. The risk of escalation remains high, not only through economic conflict but also in military operations. Despite no war having occurred, the concern is that China's increasing routine and extensive military actions in the East and South China Sea may trigger a US strategic response<sup>2</sup>. China opposes being seen as a threat in the Asia Pacific region and emphasizes its neighborhood diplomacy features amity, sincerity, and mutual benefit, but its rhetoric of "Taiwan Question" posits Taiwan to be an inalienable part of China<sup>3</sup>. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that the "Taiwan Question" harms Taiwan's sovereignty

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<sup>1</sup> "A superpower crunch over Taiwan is coming," *The Economist*, May 1, 2025, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2025/05/01/a-superpower-crunch-over-taiwan-is-coming>

<sup>2</sup> William Matthews, "Perfect Storm: The Rising Risk of China-US Conflict Over Taiwan," *The Diplomat*, December 13, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/perfect-storm-the-rising-risk-of-china-us-conflict-over-taiwan/>

<sup>3</sup> "China firmly opposes comparisons between Taiwan question and Ukraine crisis, warns against NATO interference in Asia-Pacific," *Global Times*, June 4, 2025, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202506/1335403.shtml>

and democratic values<sup>4</sup>. Some propose “Taiwan’s resilience” to monitor how social requisites of democracy, together with historical and institutional factors, respond to rising geopolitical challenges<sup>5</sup>. This dissertation corresponds to this ongoing debate and argues that understanding how entities like Taiwan utilize non-coercive instruments to assert international presence, manage existential threats, and shape international perceptions is not merely academically significant but essential for policy discourse.

From the “Taiwan Question” to the “Taiwan Resilience,” this dissertation presupposes an examination of the East Asian security environment from 2000 to 2020 in *Chapter 2* and the dynamics of conflict resolution in *Chapter 3*. Together, these two chapters establish the explanatory framework by particularly focusing on the state of China–Taiwan relations. In the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the conflict status between China and Taiwan has been continuously shaped, while its underlying nature remains identity-based. The status of this conflict is influenced by the approaches to conflict resolution that both sides adopt. Rather than treating public diplomacy only as external communication, I interpret it as a strategic approach to managing the conflict status and its underlying identity dimension. It thus leads to *Chapter 4* exploring both sides’ interpretations of public diplomacy. These three chapters provide three foundations for my assumptions: (a) the nature of conflict in China–Taiwan relations is identity-based, (b) conflict resolution is a state’s approach to mediate threat perception and position itself in a relational structure, and (c) public diplomacy strategy is for both China and Taiwan to mediate threat perception and to position their status in the East Asian relational structure.

These three foundations differentiate approaches aimed at conflict resolution from those oriented toward strategic repositioning, which reflects Taiwan’s conceptualization of public diplomacy. Taiwan’s emphasis on public diplomacy for repositioning stems from domestic developments over the past twenty years, including democratization, identity formation, and sovereignization. The notion of sovereignization, which captures Taiwan’s evolving state-society relations, is defined in more detail in the following section, 1.3.2 Taiwan Studies Status. Earlier studies on Taiwan, particularly those from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, often regarded Taiwan’s situation as an extension of the 1945-1949 Chinese Civil War, viewing

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<sup>4</sup> “外交部：嚴厲譴責中亞峰會稱台灣是中國不可分割領土,” 中央社, June 19, 2025, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aip/202506190052.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> David Arase, “Democratic Development and Social Resilience in the Asia Pacific,” Center for Asia Pacific Resilience and Innovation, May 4, 2024, <https://caprifoundation.org/democratic-development-and-social-resilience-in-the-asia-pacific/>

it within the context of the old Chinese regime. However, Taiwan has been transforming into a democratic society since the lifting of martial law in 1987, allowing citizens to voice their opinions in politics and identity, as well as endeavoring to become a sovereign state to enhance its security status in East Asia. This dissertation, therefore, takes Taiwan as the main subject to explore the conceptualization of identity and security.

A qualitative methodology is employed to examine how Taiwan utilizes public diplomacy strategies to address identity-based conflicts and enhance its security status in East Asia. The research design incorporates qualitative content and thematic analysis of data collected from Taiwan's annual diplomatic reports and interviews on Taiwanese living in or having moved to various countries in East Asia. The discussion integrates perspectives and analyses from these two data sets to argue that Taiwan has been strategizing public diplomacy as a solution to solving the identity-based conflict and repositioning itself in East Asia.

While references to China and East Asia are included throughout the dissertation to contextualize Taiwan's situation, this dissertation is not a comparative analysis; rather, it centers Taiwan as the primary analytical subject. The regional and comparative discussions serve as background rather than as competing analytical frames. The next section engages with conceptual debates in East Asian Identity and Taiwan Studies, providing the necessary context for this dissertation's Taiwan-centered investigation of identity, security, and diplomacy.

### **1.3 Defining Key Concepts**

An analysis of East Asia's conceptual scope reveals that identity plays a central role in regional conflicts. This view forms the central foundation that security issues and identity questions are inseparable. Within this context, Taiwan Studies emerges as a particularly relevant field. The evolution of Taiwan Studies in recent decades reflects the growing significance of Taiwan's identity-based conflict and its implications for regional security. This section ends with a clarification of the key analytical concepts: identity-based conflict, independence awareness, and sovereignization, which are central to understanding how Taiwan navigates its contested status through public diplomacy.

#### **1.3.1 East Asian Identity**

What is East Asia? This question can be approached from geographical, cultural, or historical perspectives, each offering different criteria for defining what East Asia is and where

East Asia is. From a geographical perspective, East Asia has not been constructed by East Asian countries themselves but defined by the West following the discovery of other world continents (Fukasaku and Kimura 1998). Thus, East Asian identity is often seen as being constructed externally rather than emerging from within the region. This goes to the cultural perspective that, due to the geographical distances among these countries, many long-standing cultures have developed independently within the region, each forming its own identity rather than a collective regional identity (Fukasaku and Kimura 1998). Dirlik (1999) argued that the modernization of East Asia, from a domestic level to an international level, necessitates an alternative view of East Asia, which considers how East Asia perceives itself, rather than how it is defined by the West. McNicoll (2004) further contended that the geographical understanding of East Asia is an obstacle to realizing the modernization of East Asia's regional integration. Investigating this view from a historical perspective, East Asia could be defined from China's All Under Heaven (天下 TianXia), where neighboring countries historically regarded China as the central power (Zhao 2006), thus shaping the territory of East Asia. Kang (2003) noted that China's view of the region is where Chinese hierarchical stability values have an impact. The Chinese hierarchical view serves as a historical factor shaping the territorial scope of East Asia, which ranges from Japan, Korea, China, to Vietnam. While these different perspectives define East Asia, I argue that they reveal that the nature of conflict in East Asia is identity-based.

This dissertation defines East Asia as a region comprising two sub-regions: Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, reflecting the contemporary realities of East Asia's international politics and economy. Kim (2009) compared East Asia with the European Union, highlighting the challenges East Asia faces in developing regional integration within the context of globalization. Such a comparison reveals that the nature of conflict in modern East Asia is influenced by the presence and impact of the West on East Asian identity formation. Unlike the European Union, East Asia's regional integration standards are not applicable due to different identity trajectories. East Asia was not an internally conceived concept but was externally fostered by the West's presence in the region. It was only at the end of the Cold War that East Asia began to be seen as a unified entity, merging the previously distinct sub-regions from both global and local perspectives (Yahuda 2011). Locally, during and until the end of the Cold War, many East Asian states underwent identity-based, coupled with political, economic, and social transformations (Jones 2013).

This context leads to a core analytical concept of this dissertation: identity-based conflict.

Identity-based conflict refers to conflicts rooted not in material interests alone but in discrepant understandings of collective identity, especially in terms of its formation, politicization, and trajectory to shaping threat perception as well as sense of belonging. Unlike realist paradigms, which often view identity as fixed and self-contained, I adopt a relational and historical understanding of identity as fluid, dynamic, and shaped by lived experiences. Such conceptualization illuminates the connection between identity and security, which has been explored in some studies. For example, Jamal (2000) analyzed how identity can provoke violent contestation in the Palestine-Israel conflict, and Ukeje (2008) examined how identity dynamics enable societal cohesion in West Africa. In East Asia, the Cold War historical experiences, followed by intensive developments in nationalist movements, economic prosperity, and human rights advocacy, have been shaping the nature of identity for the countries in the region. These historical memories and developments are evolving toward purposive norms in domestic security that contribute to regional security. Consolidating the national identity not only serves the domestic security demand but also enables the state to assert a position within the broader East Asian security architecture.

Understanding identity-based conflict is essential to grasping the stakes and strategies of East Asian security. This analytical foundation informs the later discussion of conflict resolution and public diplomacy, which are elaborated respectively in *Chapters 3 and 4*.

Geopolitical security in East Asia raises critical questions about how conflict resolution mechanisms can be designed to effectively support regional development. The complexity of regional institutions and trade agreements, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), illustrates the nature of conflictual relations in East Asia (Cai 2010). These schemes involve various East Asian countries and some Western powers. However, in each of these establishments, Taiwan has been marginalized in many of these regional developments. This leads to the next section exploring the evolution of the status of the field of Taiwan Studies.

### **1.3.2 Taiwan Studies Status**

Sullivan (2011, 706) asked “Is Taiwan Studies in Decline?” and found in the survey that “Taiwan studies is marginalized just as Taiwan is in the world.” This marginalization refers to

Taiwan's diminishing diplomatic status in the international community and its peripheral status in regional development. Sullivan's findings indicated that although there was abundant research on Taiwan, much of it was published in journals focusing on China. The majority of scholarship on Taiwan often adopts a comparative perspective with China, and this pattern is also reflected in the literature on Taiwan's soft power and public diplomacy, which is frequently analyzed in relation to China. This dissertation contributes to Taiwan Studies by centering Taiwan's public diplomacy as a distinct strategic and identity-building practice. Hsiao and Fell (2018) analyzed the state of Taiwan Studies and found that while research on Taiwan was plentiful, it was scattered across various fields. The creation of the *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* in 2016 was an effort to position Taiwan studies as a distinct subject. For example, Simon (2018) has highlighted Taiwan's indigenous research as a novel attempt to make itself relevant to the global discourse by exploring the Austronesian diaspora. This illustrates how Taiwan, like other East Asian states, is undergoing social transformations in identity formation. Furthermore, Fell and Chang (2019) argue that Taiwan studies fill a critical gap in the East Asian curriculum, offering a valuable case study through which to examine regional and global issues of identity, security, and diplomacy. In this context, this dissertation contributes to Taiwan Studies by examining Taiwan's post-Cold War evolution and its increasing use of soft power as a tool for expanding its international space, linking it with broader themes of identity formation, conflict resolution, and public diplomacy in East Asia.

I argue that Taiwan's significant 21<sup>st</sup> century developments – democratization, identity formation, and sovereignization – have reinforced its role as a regional security actor and a key subject of Taiwan Studies. Rigger (2004) notes that Taiwan's democratization marks a milestone for East Asian states. With democratization, Taiwan has been promoting normative values such as human rights, the rule of law, and transparency, which simultaneously foster the reformation of identity as East Asian states undergo similar transformations. However, democratization alone has not resolved Taiwan's challenge in the international space. The limited international recognition of Taiwan's sovereign status, exacerbated by pressure from the People's Republic of China (Glaser and Vitello 2015), has led to strategic efforts to assert its autonomy.

In this context, independence awareness is defined as Taiwan's wish to be a separate and sovereign Taiwanese state in the international community. The domestic debate over unification versus independence has shaped Taiwan's political movements and diplomatic strategies. The

unification agenda, grounded in the historical legacy of the Republic of China (ROC) and promoted by the Nationalist Chinese Political Party, now referred to as KuoMinTang Party (KMT), advocates eventual political integration with the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Qi 2012). In contrast, the independence declaration, supported by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), states that Taiwan is already an independent country and does not have to push for formal independence through legal means (Chen et al. 2024). DPP's "Taiwanization agenda" exemplifies the independence awareness of a clearer identity as a Taiwanese rather than Chinese (Schubert 2011).

The internal political identity movement is further reflected in a term that this dissertation adopts, sovereignization – Taiwan's efforts to assert sovereign status. Sovereignization is not limited to legal declarations, but includes identity narratives, diplomatic campaigns, and domestic reforms aiming at gaining international support for being recognized as a sovereign state (Jacobs 2013). This process is deeply connected to Taiwan's democratization and identity formation over the past two decades (Dunch 2020). Most importantly, Taiwanese society has played an active role in these movements, shaping the domestic debate and international perception of Taiwan's status (Rudakowska et al. 2019).

As Schafferer (2016) stated, Taiwan's post-conflict development has positioned it as one of the most developed states in East Asia in terms of human security, but the obstacles and challenges remain due to China's rising military, political, and economic power in the region. The reality of China's pressure on Taiwan's limited international space cannot be ignored, but Taiwan's strategies to overcome these challenges warrant examination. This examination reveals the interdependence of three domestic developments – democratization, identity formation, and sovereignization, which evolved throughout the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These themes will be explored further in *Chapter 3*, which analyzes Taiwan's conceptual approach to conflict resolution, and in *Chapter 4*, which examines how public diplomacy has become a key tool in that strategy. These conceptual foundations inform the research orientation and objective of this dissertation, which are outlined in the next section.

## **1.4 Research Orientation and Objective**

Five sub-questions, examined in *Chapters 2 to 4*, guide the investigation of the central research question.

*Chapter 2* establishes the explanatory framework of a synthesized view of 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security to address the significance of Taiwan's identity-based conflict to regional security. This leads to sub-question 1: How to view Taiwan's role in 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security – Is Taiwan a conflict maker or a contributor to regional peace? This chapter first establishes the explanatory framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security by synthesizing the security approaches: military alliances, trade agreements, and ad hoc diplomacy, as well as the local historical factors: China's rise, and Taiwan's wish to be recognized as an independent nation. Examining the local historical factors justifies Taiwan's security status in East Asia, intertwined with the identity-based conflict against China. However, applying this synthesized explanatory framework to three conflictual situations that occurred between 2000 and 2020 – the South China Sea dispute, the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), and the COVID-19 pandemic – this chapter argues that Taiwan has been strategizing people-to-people diplomacy to address the identity-based conflict, making Taiwan a contributor to East Asian regional peace.

*Chapter 3* presents the theoretical foundation of conceptualizing conflict resolution in the East Asian context to evaluate whether public diplomacy could serve as a mechanism to address identity-based conflict. This chapter engages with constructivist ideas of threat perception and relational structures based on a comparative perspective between China and Taiwan. This leads to sub-question 2: Has China's rise aimed to mitigate threat perception? And sub-question 3: How has Taiwan been a facilitator of conflict resolution in East Asia? Through mobilizing material and ideational sources from security approaches, the state forms its identity but acts according to its role expectations derived not only from self-identity but also through an intersubjective process involving both self and others. Therefore, despite sharing the goal of creating collective security in East Asia, different interpretations of perceived threats altering strategic roles can lead to increased conflicts. For China, the goal is to mitigate threat perceptions. For Taiwan, the goal is to diminish the possibility of escalating conflicts with China. Nevertheless, this comparison provides a pathway to examine whether Taiwan's public diplomacy serves as a solution to identity-based conflict by mobilizing domestic developments of identity formation, democratization, and sovereignization to change its role expectation in East Asia.

*Chapter 4* bridges the East Asian discourse of conflict resolution with the practice of public diplomacy through comparative studies of China and Taiwan. This chapter posits that both

China and Taiwan perceive conflict resolution as a process of changing their position in the relational structures and mitigating threat perceptions. This leads to sub-question 4: What are China's and Taiwan's historical cultural interpretations of soft power? And sub-question 5: How have China and Taiwan been conducting public diplomacy to resolve identity-based conflict? This chapter affirms that both China's and Taiwan's interpretations of soft power are oriented to address identity-based conflicts through the lens of culture, values, and institutions. This lens reveals the different purposes and the role of actors in China's and Taiwan's public diplomacy strategies. While China aims to mitigate threat perception to determine its power status in the region, it relies on government actors to conduct public diplomacy. Taiwan involves non-government actors, such as civil society, to attain more international recognition and improve its security status in East Asia.

Table 1 outlines the corresponding sub-questions as addressed in each chapter.

Table 1 – Research Orientation and Focus

Chapter	Sub-question	Research Focus
2	How to view Taiwan's role in 21 <sup>st</sup> century East Asian security – Is Taiwan a conflict maker or a contributor to regional peace?	Taiwan's regional security role
3	Has China's rising aimed to mitigate threat perception?	China's behavior in the region
3	How has Taiwan been a facilitator of conflict resolution in East Asia?	Taiwan's identity and security framing
4	What are China's and Taiwan's historical cultural interpretations of soft power?	Cultural lenses on soft power
4	How have China and Taiwan been conducting public diplomacy to resolve identity-based conflict?	Application of public diplomacy strategies

Although some sub-questions may appear closely related, especially those in *Chapters 3* and *4*, each provides a distinct analytical entry point. *Chapter 3* emphasizes the theoretical construction of identity-based conflict and conflict resolution, while *Chapter 4* translates these theoretical insights into the practical domain of public diplomacy strategies. Together, they advance a holistic understanding of Taiwan's identity-based conflict resolution strategies. While this dissertation frequently references China in the context of Taiwan's identity-based conflict, it does not pursue a comparative study. Rather, China is treated as a relational actor shaping Taiwan's public diplomacy strategies and international positioning. These chapters reveal Taiwan's distinct case due to its domestic developments from 2000 to 2020 –

democratization, identity formation, and sovereignization, which are discussed in detail in Sections 1.2 and 1.3. These developments support Taiwan's evolving security status in East Asia and establish the analytical perspective of this dissertation. To investigate these dynamics, this study employs a qualitative methodology that combines document analysis with semi-structured interviews. The methodological rationale and design are detailed in the next section.

## **1.5 Research Design and Methodology**

A qualitative research design is employed by combining document analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine Taiwan's public diplomacy between 2000 and 2020. This approach enables a comprehensive perspective that captures both governmental narratives and civil society experiences, allowing for a richer understanding of how Taiwan addresses identity-based conflicts and frames its security through public diplomacy.

The document analysis focuses on Taiwan's annual public diplomacy reports (台灣外交年鑑) published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2020. The selection of this period is significant as it aligns with the broader geopolitical and security challenges that shaped East Asia during these two decades, particularly Taiwan's evolving diplomatic strategy in response to regional tensions and its identity-based conflict with China. These reports were selected due to their open access and systematic documentation of Taiwan's diplomatic activities, making them a source for examining policy evolution over two decades. The analysis focused on identifying discursive shifts, actor involvement, and thematic priorities. It revealed two key developments: (1) increasing involvement and empowering the citizens as main actors in public diplomacy and (2) a shift of diplomatic focus to Southeast Asia through the New Southbound Policy (新南向政策) that was introduced in 2016. While these reports are an authoritative source on Taiwan's diplomatic trajectory, they represent the perspective of a single governmental institution. As such, they may not capture broader inter-sectoral dynamics, informal practices, or dissenting viewpoints within the policy-making process, which is acknowledged in *Chapter 9* as one of the limitations in this dissertation.

While policy documents capture the governmental narrative of Taiwan's public diplomacy, they risk reflecting only the institutional perspective. Semi-structured interviews thus complement this by uncovering lived experiences from societal perspectives, ensuring that the analysis does not rely only on state-produced discourse. Respondents were Taiwanese expatriates in China, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia from December 2022 to June 2023, initially recruited through academic networks in Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the

Netherlands, targeting those with study or work experience in China or Southeast Asia. Initial contacts referred others within their networks who had similar experiences, resulting in a diverse group of respondents who could offer their perspectives on Taiwan's public diplomacy efforts and interpretations of identity and security. While the first few respondents had experiences transitioning from China to Southeast Asia around or after the 2016 New Southbound Policy, the majority of respondents expatriated directly to Southeast Asia during this period. In total, 18 interviews were conducted, including two key informant interviews that relied on research notes due to a lack of consent for audio recording. The methodological considerations are examined in greater depth in *Chapter 5*, along with the measures taken to mitigate such bias, including the initial screening criteria and case-based interview questions. The interview questions were guided by the conflictual cases introduced in *Chapter 2*: the South China Sea dispute, the ECFA, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These cases were adopted to frame questions that invited respondents' understanding of conflicts, their observations, and their personal experiences in conflictual events. Incorporating these cases also served as a way to screen respondents for their familiarity with significant geopolitical challenges. Respondents' lived experiences with demonstrated awareness of these conflicts are thus valuable sources to examine the linkage between identity and security. This screening process helped identify interviews that were most relevant for analyzing the relationship between identity and security, as well as public diplomacy and conflict resolution.

The integration of document analysis and semi-structured interviews is central to this dissertation's approach. The document analysis traces the governmental perspectives of Taiwan's foreign relations in East Asia and the evolution of public diplomatic policy, while the interviews provide civil societal perspectives that illustrate how these policies are perceived and experienced. Together, these methods highlight the increasing involvement of people as main actors in public diplomacy and illuminate the regional impact of Taiwan's diplomatic engagement under the New Southbound Policy. By combining these complementary approaches, the dissertation offers a nuanced understanding of Taiwan's public diplomacy strategies and their implications for identity, security, and conflict resolution. The findings from these two methodologies converge in *Chapter 8*, which synthesizes the analysis by answering two guiding questions: (1) How has Taiwan's public diplomacy been democratizing? (2) How have Taiwan's evolving state-society relations mattered to the security context? *Chapter 8* integrates findings to assess the evolution of Taiwan's public diplomacy strategy, particularly the role of civil society in democratizing public diplomacy and shaping security narratives. Taiwan's societal desire to assert sovereignty, along with citizens' claims of Taiwan's identity,

aligns with the theory of promoting democratic values as a soft power in public diplomacy. Moreover, evolving state-society relations, driven by the societal assertion of Taiwan's identity and the emerging awareness of using information communication technology (ICT), have strengthened the connection between societal and national security, which contributes to increasing studies on Taiwan's resilience.

## 1.6 Outline of the Thesis

The Introductory Chapter has introduced the research context, defined key concepts, outlined the research objective, and presented the methodology to be used. The following outlines the structure of the dissertation, providing a description of each chapter.

*Chapter 2, titled East Asian Security and Conflict*, establishes an explanatory framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security environment to contextualize Taiwan's conflictual situation with China. The situation has shifted from an internal civil war to an international conflict, driven by the emergence of Taiwan's identity and China's rise. These two variables have become prominent in cross-strait relations and East Asian security discourse. *Chapter 3, titled Conflict Resolution in East Asia*, provides a theoretical framework based on constructivist theories of threat perception and relational structure. This builds the conceptual bridge to public diplomacy. *Chapter 4, titled China's and Taiwan's Public Diplomacy*, connects the conflict resolution framework to public diplomacy practices by comparing China's and Taiwan's approaches. While China has made theoretical attempts to develop soft power, Taiwan boasts abundant soft power resources but has seen limited development. Taiwan's public diplomacy efforts are often overshadowed in the study of East Asia's public diplomacy.

*Chapter 5, titled Research Design and Methodology*, explains the theoretical foundations of the methodology, data collection processes, and data operationalization of key concepts.

*Chapter 6, titled Results – Analysis of Policy Documents*, presents the results of document analysis of 21 Taiwan's annual diplomatic reports from 2000 to 2020. *Chapter 7, titled Results – Semi-structured Interviews*, describes the results of 18 semi-structured interviews conducted from December 2022 to June 2023. *Chapter 8, titled Evaluations of the Results*, discusses and integrates the findings from the document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

*Chapter 9* concludes that Taiwan's public diplomacy from 2000 to 2020 has played a significant role in addressing geopolitical security challenges. Shaped by limited international recognition, domestic democratization, and evolving state-society relations, Taiwan has been involving its citizens in public diplomacy to redefine its security status and foster regional stability.

- An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 2024 Joint Conference “Changing Dynamics in Geopolitics: Implications for Taiwan,” University of Nottingham, 20-21 June 2024

## **Chapter 2. East Asian Security and Conflict**

### **2.1 Introduction**

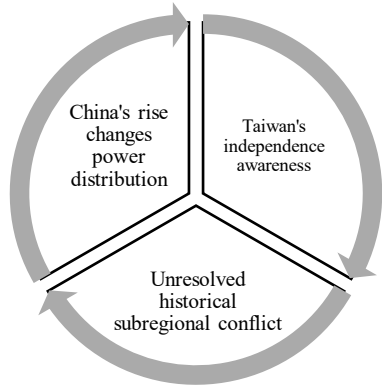
Although the shared sense of East Asian identity has not grown, East Asian countries have still been increasingly aware of the region’s security. The region’s security can be approached in various ways, for example, based on military alliance, economic interaction, and ad hoc diplomacy. Each of these security management styles is grounded in a different theoretical foundation of security approaches. The balance of power forms the basis of military alliances (Duffield 2001); institutionalization and multilateralism drive trade agreements or the formation of free trade blocs (Goldstein and Mansfield 2012); whereas the intersubjectivity of shared norms and values underlies diplomacy (Bessho 1999). These approaches should be synthesized for 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security rather than being dealt with separately (Katzenstein and Sil 2004). I argue that the synthesized theoretical approach is necessary because removing any security approach or favoring one over another may induce further development of rivalries and a variety of conflicts. Hence, it is significant to establish an explanatory framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security because the security environment implies an understanding of conflict formation and its components. Framing the explanation of the conflict provides the path to understanding conflict resolution

I argue that these security approaches have evolved into components of the regional identity that shaped this region’s interpretations of security and perceptions of conflict. Addressing the China–Taiwan conflict as an unresolved historical subregional conflict implies rivalry and competition between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of the last century. In 1949, the Chinese Nationalist Party lost the civil war to the CCP and relocated the regime to Taiwan, leading to 38 years of martial law. After martial law was lifted in 1987 and the transformation to democracy began, the Taiwanese have been promoting their identity as Taiwanese rather than Chinese (Benson and Niou 2004). Meanwhile, the CCP assumed power in China and proclaimed itself a peaceful rising power since the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1990s (Johnston 2004). However, the nature of the China–Taiwan conflict should be redefined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of China’s rise and Taiwan’s independence awareness. For example, if China’s assertiveness in building an East Asian regional order involves not recognizing Taiwan as a sovereign state and even claiming to unify

with Taiwan, does Taiwan's continuous formation of its identity, democracy, and sovereignty contribute to enhancing Taiwan's security? This not only questions whether the China–Taiwan conflict should be addressed as an unresolved conflict, but also how to view Taiwan's role in 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security. The China–Taiwan conflict should no longer be addressed as an unresolved conflict, but only indicates the historical conflict between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the CCP. Moreover, with Taiwan's independence awareness, which represents the developments of identity formation, democratization, and sovereignization in the first two decades of 21<sup>st</sup> century, to what extent do the historical conflict and the continuous independence awareness define Taiwan's security status in East Asia? Is Taiwan a conflict maker or a peacemaker?

Before further analyzing conflict resolution and the identity-based conflict between China and Taiwan, this chapter establishes a synthesized explanatory framework delineating how the China–Taiwan conflict is contextualized in 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security. As seen in Figure 2.1 – Synthesized Explanatory Framework of 21<sup>st</sup> Century East Asian Security – within the East Asian Security web of military alliances, trade agreements, and ad hoc diplomacy, all pertinent to the China–Taiwan conflict, three key factors influence one another: Taiwan's independence awareness, China's rising to changing power distributions, and the context of the unresolved historical subregional conflict.

Figure 2.1 – Synthesized Explanatory Framework of 21<sup>st</sup> Century East Asian Security

Theoretical Foundation	Security Approach	China–Taiwan conflict
Balance of power	Military alliance	
Institutionalization, multilateral talks	Trade agreement	
Shared norms and values	Ad hoc diplomacy	

Based on this explanatory framework, this chapter is to elaborate on how these security approaches have comprised of the China–Taiwan identity-based conflict in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security. Furthermore, in the second part of this chapter, I apply this explanation to three selected cases that occurred in 2000 - 2020: the South China Sea dispute, the ECFA, and the COVID-19 pandemic. While these three cases respectively are referred to the theoretical foundations of balance of power, institutionalization, shared norms, and values, the lens of the China–Taiwan identity-based conflict offers insights into how each factor – China’s rise, Taiwan’s independence, and the unresolved historical subregional conflict – can be contextualized. The following section in this chapter is divided into two parts: (1) China–Taiwan identity-based conflict, and (2) Application to three cases: South China Sea, the ECFA, and COVID-19.

## 2.2 China–Taiwan Identity-based Conflict

The evolution of the identity-based conflict between China and Taiwan challenges Taiwan’s participation in the region’s stability and security architecture. The unwrapping of the China–Taiwan identity-based conflict should be contextualized in 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asia and then exemplify the motivation to resort to public diplomacy as a conflict resolution mechanism.

Friedberg (1993) argued that East Asia is susceptible to rivalries for three reasons: change in power distributions, unresolved historical conflicts in the subregion, and growing awareness of independence. The change of power distributions has raised a question about whether China will replace the Soviet Union as the main regional power alongside the US. Moreover, the

Korean Peninsula and Taiwan Strait remain this region's flashpoints due to the presence of divided regimes. At last, independence awareness has risen along with the development of democracy and social movements, even within the Southeast Asia region. Besides the focus on power redistribution, Sheldon (1994) claimed that East Asian security should transcend territorial concerns and encompass political and ideological dimensions, so a preventive diplomacy approach becomes important to mitigate violent conflicts and foster regional mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution. Roy (2000) suggested that while paradigmatic theories like realism may offer insights into security dynamics in post-Cold War East Asia, they alone are insufficient to explain interstate behavior comprehensively. These three arguments have two common notions: First, 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security should be viewed in a comprehensive framework that extends beyond conventional security arrangements. Second, the conventional security arrangements alone cannot clarify the complexities of conflict resolution, so refining the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security framework allows for exploration of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. I argue that recognizing the China–Taiwan conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an identity-based conflict provides a lens through which to analyze how public diplomacy can serve as a tool for conflict resolution. In the following, I investigate the literature of the past twenty years to elaborate on the components of identity-based conflict in the context of the China–Taiwan conflict by the elements of (1) the unresolved historical subregional conflict, (2) China's rise, (3) Taiwan's independence awareness.

### **2.2.1 The Unresolved Historical Subregional Conflict**

The conflict between China and Taiwan can be addressed as the Chinese 1945 Civil War extension, the Taiwan Strait conflict, or the Cross-strait conflict. These appellations raise a question about the evolution and transformation of this conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the fundamental understanding can be traced back to the 1945 Chinese Civil War. This civil war occurred in 1945 between the Chinese Nationalist Party – 中國國民黨 Zhong Guo Kuo Min Tang (KMT), and the Chinese Communist Party – 中國共產黨 Zhong Guo Gong Chan Tang (CCP), both claimed to represent China. 中國 Zhong Guo in Chinese is referred to as China. This 1945 Chinese civil war is to a large extent viewed as concluded in 1949 when the KMT relocated its governing authority to Taiwan (Lary 2015). However, military crises that occurred in 1955, 1958, and 1996 still marked this conflict as a civil war extension for the disputants, the CCP and the KMT. Despite the US recognizing the CCP's sovereignty over China, its military aid to the KMT in Taiwan was perceived as an alliance. The lifting of martial law by the KMT

in Taiwan in 1987 and the subsequent opening of access for Chinese immigrants since 1949 facilitated growing economic and trade relations, known as Cross-strait relations, 兩岸關係 Liang An Guan Xi. In 2000, Taiwan elected a president first ever from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), 民主進步黨 Min Zhu Jin Bu Tang. The DPP president, 陳水扁 Chen Shui Bian, spearheaded the Taiwanese identity movement, 台灣本土化運動 Tai Wan Ben Tu Hua Yun Dong. During his term from 2000 to 2008, the cross-strait economic relations grew more interdependent. Due to growing social and economic interactions, the cross-strait relation is managed by semi-governmental organizations, Straits Exchange Foundation 海峽交流基金會 from Taiwan, and the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits 海峽兩岸關係協會 from China. Notably, the nomenclature of these two organizations – addressed as “strait” 海峽, cross-strait “兩岸” – avoids explicit references to China, reflecting the historical context of identity-based representation and sovereignty over China. These changes in names and development of interactions reveal that the essence of the conflict between China and Taiwan is the different understanding of Taiwan’s sovereignty. The division of interpretation of Taiwan’s sovereignty and whether Taiwan is a sovereign state has, through time, grown larger (Pan 2012).

Despite the US military alliance arrangements, growing interdependent trade, and diplomacy through semi-governmental organizations, the relationship between China and Taiwan is still considered confrontational and subject to various security approaches. This underscores the argument that these security approaches are intrinsic to the identity-based conflict between China and Taiwan. A military alliance is only a solution to redistribute interests, as well as trade agreements. Ad hoc diplomacy, though aimed at peace, remains contingent upon securing strategic advantages. The next section elaborates on the other component of the China–Taiwan identity-based conflict: China's rise.

### **2.2.2 China’s Rise**

In 1991, the fall of the Soviet Union raised the question of whether China would replace it as the main regional rival of the US. Moreover, since 2003 Chinese President Hu JinTao, 胡錦濤, announced China’s peaceful rising 和平崛起 He Ping Jue Qi, the subsequent question is to what extent has China’s rise impacted security and conflict in 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asia? In terms of military capabilities, China has outwardly projected a non-confrontational stance, but the military operations in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait caused concern over the

region's collective security (Karim 2014). The US strived to preserve the power balance in Asia by seeking ways to contain China's rise and China's growth (Silove 2016). China's peaceful rising is arguably a result of its evolving worldviews, which are a complex of Chinese perceptions of the world and China's aim to define its position in the global order (Son and Jenner 2016). In terms of China's growth, China's domestic economic reforms and the increasing trade ties with Asian states were initially anticipated to foster peace in the region, albeit subject to the security dynamics between China and its neighbors (Goldstein and Mansfield 2012). While free trade agreements among China, Japan, and South Korea have promoted economic integration, they have also aimed to contribute to political stability. However, the historical mistrust between China and Japan, along with territorial disputes, revealed that enhancing trade relations may not suffice to ensure peace and stability (Hu and Vanhullebusch 2014). Li (2015) suggested that China, in 2003–2014, employed economic statecraft to influence various sectors in Taiwan, including farmers, fishermen, students, and investors, to foster a common identity: An identity of blood linkages between Chinese and Taiwanese was China's underlying goal to unify China and Taiwan through increased trade, business, tourism, and academic exchanges. While such civil and social interactions offer chances for stabilizing the security environment, the motivation behind these interactions clashes with Taiwan's independence awareness.

After all, China's rise implies whether a rising regional power will challenge the hegemon and hence disrupt the current security establishment (Kapur 2003). Changes in power distribution often induce rivalries, confrontations, and conflicts. China's rise is a variable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security environment. Although there have not been large-scale wars, these unresolved disputes stemming from changing power dynamics have contributed to conflict formation (Bercovitch and DeRouen Jr. 2011). The discourse of China's rise revealed that the conflict between Taiwan and China is rooted in identity-based tensions. From military capabilities and trade relations to social and civil interactions, China has been tackling the construction and projecting its identity to itself, to Taiwan's audience, and to East Asia. This process intersects with Taiwan's growing awareness of independence. The next section elaborates on the last component of the China–Taiwan identity-based conflict: Taiwan's independence awareness.

### 2.2.3 Taiwan's Independence Awareness

The Taiwan Strait remains a flashpoint in this region and forms a potential cause for armed conflict between the US and China. Because the US chooses to protect Taiwan's self-determination, enhancing Taiwan's self-defense capabilities and providing periodic intervention has become a US priority (Franck and Melese 2003). Because China aims to unify Taiwan if necessary through invasion or armed force, along with China's military modernization and Taiwan's strategic response, the probability of a military conflict has grown and poses a threat to Taiwan Strait security. The fundamental element in Taiwan Strait security is Taiwan's sovereign status due to the growing awareness of Taiwan's independent sovereignty along with the development of democratization since the lifting of martial law in 1987 (Irwin Crookes 2016). Despite a temporary *détente* between 2008 and 2015 fueled by increased economic ties during the KMT-led administration, the underlying conflict regarding Taiwan's sovereign status remains unresolved (Kastner 2016). The economic ties between China and Taiwan expanded and, to some extent, decreased the probability of conflict among China, Taiwan, and the US (Tanious 2019). On the contrary, some argued that the conflict still existing for China posed a potential economic threat to Taiwan's economic security (Chen 2012). China's efforts to entice Taiwanese people with promises of economic prosperity to achieve unification exacerbated tensions because unification with China undermines Taiwan's sovereignty. While increased economic and social interactions seemingly resolve conflicts, Taiwan's identity as Taiwanese conflicts with China's efforts to reinforce a common Chinese identity. However, some argue that Taiwanese businesspersons have played a significant role in transforming the conflict through unofficial mediation processes (Tavares et al. 2012): Personal interactions rooted in society have served as peaceful channels when economic relations increased the interdependence for both sides. Following these enhanced trade ties since 2008, Saunders and Kastner (2012) suggested that peace between China and Taiwan is essential to reduce the risk of military conflict between the US and China over Taiwan and to alleviate the threat perceptions of other Asian states. Thus, the resolution of the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict depends on the social and civil interactions between Taiwan and China, but the dilemma is Taiwan's identity as Taiwanese in conflict with the Chinese reinforced common identity as Chinese.

To sum up, the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict in 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security is shaped by three factors affecting one another: unresolved regime representation, China's rise,

and Taiwan's independence awareness. These factors are influenced by various security approaches ranging from military alliances and economic ties to social interactions, each contributing to the formation and evolution of the identity-based. To illustrate how this framework operates in practice, I examine three cases, each representing distinct dimensions of East Asian security management: territorial and military (the South China Sea), economic (the ECFA), and societal-level interactions and ad hoc diplomacy (the COVID-19 pandemic). These cases are chosen not for comprehensiveness but to illustrate how Taiwan's identity-based conflict with China manifests across political, economic, and social domains.

## **2.3 Application to Three Cases: The South China Sea Dispute, the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security architecture has been more encompassing, from political, military, and economic, to diplomatic approaches. Due to the shared sense of security for long-term peace and stability being in demand, it necessitates a comprehensive view of conflictual situations in East Asia to illustrate the identity-based conflict between Taiwan and China. Each of the selected conflictual cases presents challenges to Taiwan's identity-based conflict with China and hampers Taiwan's participation in regional security management. (1) The South China Sea, characterized by territorial disputes and the formation of military alliances, (2) the ECFA, showcasing economic security concerns and the establishment of trade agreements, and (3) the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting societal-level interactions and the utilization of ad hoc diplomacy. Applying the explanatory framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security, these cases reveal how unresolved regime representation, China's rise, and Taiwan's independence awareness shape Taiwan's identity-based conflict across different security domains.

### **2.3.1 The South China Sea Dispute**

The South China Sea has long been an unresolved historical territorial dispute in the region. The disputants involved not only hold different opinions regarding the borders but also maintain a cautious approach towards security issues. Previous attempts to address the South China Sea issue through International Law for the Sea Tribunal resulted in the Philippines adopting a hedging foreign security policy due to concerns over China's rise. China's assertiveness in the region has been salient through its deployment of submarines and research vessels to the area

to perform military activities and to claim evidence resources for its historical rights. In terms of historical rights, the Chinese Nationalist Party, which relocated to Taiwan in 1949 and was later referred to as the KuoMinTang party, continues to assert territorial claims over the South China Sea. This assertion by the KMT regarding the South China Sea reinforces the perspective that the nature of this territorial dispute is an identity-based conflict. The identity-based conflict is whether the KMT represents the Republic of China, which, since relocating the regime to Taiwan in 1949, does not rule over the territory of the People's Republic of China. For Taiwan, since transforming to democracy and growing awareness of Taiwanese identity, even during the DPP administration, there has been a dispute over claiming the sea territory in the South China Sea (Tseng 2015). The following paragraphs hence elaborate on the intricate interplay of two intertwined factors contributing to this identity-based conflict: China's rise and Taiwan's independence awareness.

A study on the South China Sea conflict between two disputants, the Philippines and China has delineated the history of the conflict into three distinct stages (Han et al. 2023): (1) 2001-2010 was characterized more by cooperation than confrontation; (2) 2010-2016 turned to more confrontation than cooperation; (3) 2016-2022 witnessed a moderation of oppositional behavior, albeit with a decline in cooperation. Despite efforts by ASEAN during the 2010s to engage in a multilateral institutionalist movement with China (Ba 2009), the South China Sea conflict escalated to the point that the Philippines took the case to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, thereby testing the international rules-based order in East Asia. The 2016 Arbitration Award revealed the Philippines' hedging of foreign policy, which became entangled in both Sino-ASEAN relations and US-China relations. The power rivalry between the US and China in the South China Sea served as one of the driving factors behind China's maritime military actions in the region. While the Philippines' resorting to the International Tribunal may have been perceived as an alternative approach to security rather than relying only on military alliances, it eventually caused China to disregard the rules-based order and assert its historical rights over the sea territory through discursive power. China's assertive discourse regarding its historical rights symbolizes not only its economic ascendancy but also its increasing military and political influence. China not only claimed its historical rights over the South China Sea since the end of the Cold War, but also over Taiwan, to increase its assertiveness in establishing a regional order. In Sino-ASEAN relations, China has successfully attracted ASEAN by its increasing economic interests (Venkataraman 2006). Although the China-ASEAN Free Trade

Agreement ushered in peaceful development, China's military actions in the South China Sea posed a threat to Southeast Asian states. Karim (2014) argued that China's military modernization and the incompatible approach to the international dispute tribunal would destabilize peace in the South China Sea. China's militarization of the South China Sea is a symbol of China's rise. This rise to power is not only the economic rise in China but also the counterbalance to US security policy in the region (Regilme 2018). This sense of China's military insecurity not only dates from 1949 but is a result of the continuous power formation in East Asia, such as the US security dominance and China's economic rise. However, along with China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea, Taiwan's claim is often overlooked in the existing literature.

Taiwan's claim over the South China Sea is intricately linked to the country's democratization process. The dynamics of domestic elections and the competing identities represented by Taiwan's two major political parties contribute to a complex narrative surrounding the South China Sea dispute (Wilson 2017). The KMT represents an identity of reunifying with China, whereas the DPP represents a distinct Taiwanese identity. Despite their different identity representation, they have been involved in the territorial dispute in the South China Sea. In addition to the domestic identity challenge, Taiwan's identity was underscored during the 2016 Arbitrary proceedings, where Taiwan was referred to as the "Taiwan Authority of China" rather than as a sovereign state entity. This highlighted Taiwan's identity challenge in the regional dispute. Hsiao (2017) argued that the issue is more political than legal for Taiwan, as its involvement in the South China Sea dispute heightens Taiwan's security risk and impacts cross-strait relations. Tseng (2023) expanded on this perspective, explaining that Taiwan's claim in the South China Sea is tied to its domestic democratization and identity formation, yet it often finds itself being treated as an integral part of China on the international stage. Trif (2023) highlights that the South China Sea case for Taiwan is a conflict between foreign policy discourse and the international rules-based order.

As a result, the conflict between Taiwan and China can be contextualized in the development of the South China Sea dispute, where the underlying nature of the conflict is identity-based. Karim (2014) contends that Taiwan's younger generation, with its pro-independence identity, may have exacerbated the conflict between Taiwan and China; nevertheless, Taiwan's pursuit of democracy and China's emphasis on peaceful development imply the necessity of engaging in people-to-people diplomacy. In essence, the Taiwan-China

identity-based conflict is not only a subregional dispute but also a regional conflictual case for the complex interplay of historical, political, and economic factors that reverberate beyond the subregional level, impacting regional stability and security. Consequently, conventional methods of security arrangement and conflict resolution may prove insufficient in addressing the underlying complexities of this conflict. Thus, I argue that an alternative approach, such as public diplomacy, can be examined for its potential in fostering peace and cooperation in the region. In light of this, I explore this argument in the next case study, ECFA.

### **2.3.2 The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement**

The ECFA was signed on 26 June 2010 by the Straits Exchange Foundation (for Taiwan) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (for China). The agreement aimed to establish a cooperation mechanism beneficial to economic prosperity and development, aligning with the fundamental principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO). With the breakdown of the Doha multilateral trade negotiations, there has been a proliferation of regional-level or bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), of which the ECFA represents a concerted effort towards advancing common economic interests. The ECFA was believed to bring economic benefits to both Taiwan and China, to reduce political tensions across the Taiwan Strait. However, questions persisted regarding the long-term economic benefits for Taiwan, such as its potential as a gateway to China's market or its ability to facilitate FTAs with other trading partners (Chien-Hale 2011). This posits the Taiwan–China conflict as a key to the region's security. Hsieh (2011) argued that the ECFA has the potential to contribute to regional stability by exemplifying bilateral trade liberalization, but suggested that the cross-strait characteristics may hinder trade relations' normalization. The cross-strait characteristics implied that the ECFA was neither a government-to-government agreement nor one between two WTO members. Hence, the absence of established international norms governing direct negotiations between Taiwan and China poses challenges to the agreement's implementation (Davidson 2011). Although the ECFA facilitates cross-strait economic cooperation, the underlying tensions reflect the identity-based influence of China's rise and Taiwan's independence awareness.

China's rising economic power represents a challenge to the existing regional order in the East Asia region and the US dominance in the Asia Pacific region. The emergence of various regional trade agreements over the past two decades, notably the Comprehensive and

Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), reflects a shifting power balance between established and emerging powers. The US free trade agreements in the Asia Pacific have been a historical development since the Cold War, and hence the US leadership and legacy are prevalent in East Asia (Blanchard and Liang 2014). Since the 2008 Asian Financial Crisis, US leadership in the Asia Pacific has been challenged, revealing China's rising power to influence designing and managing economic mechanisms in this region (Chen 2014). China's pursuit of an East Asian regional order without US intervention can be seen in the example of ASEAN plus three, a trade agreement among ASEAN member states, Japan, South Korea, and China. Within this context, the ECFA between China and Taiwan is positioned as a means to promote security and economic regionalization across the Taiwan Straits. However, China's intention to foster political integration with Taiwan raises security concerns in the ECFA. Lo (2023) points out China's diplomatic strategy of combining economic and political power, referred to as the *guanxi* strategy, emphasizing that it is a relationship between gift-givers and gift-takers. This *guanxi* strategy reveals China's unilateral imposition on defining Taiwan's reciprocity disproportionately benefits business groups, techno-related firms, and political parties, neglecting the interests of civil society. In 2014, Taiwanese people protested the subsequent trade agreements in the ECFA to be signed with China, which was called the Sunflower Movement and it revealed the civil society's demand for security. As security across the Taiwan Strait is not only imperative for both sides but also for the wider East Asia region, both China and Taiwan must engage and convince their respective populations (Ni 2014).

Taiwan's independence awareness has been evolving since transforming into a democracy, but identity formation remains entwined with the pursuit of distinguishing itself from China; therefore, this manifests in both domestic politics and foreign policy. The ECFA and the subsequent agreements have been perceived as threats to Taiwan's security. Chen (2014) argued that the ECFA would subjugate Taiwan to a status akin to China's local government because it fails to recognize Taiwan's statehood; for example, while Taiwan was required to amend relevant provisions in its Intellectual Property laws, China faced no obligations. Beyond the disparities in interests, economic cooperation between China and Taiwan necessitates an alignment of identity. Lai (2022) suggested that identity cannot be established only by economic cooperation and hence the importance for both sides to establish a common identity to reduce hostility. Taiwan's identity, centered on distinguishing itself from China and asserting its

position in the East Asian economy, has become a focal point in the securitization process surrounding the ECFA. Some claim that despite the identity challenges inherent in cross-strait relations, the ECFA provided Taiwan with an opportunity to integrate more fully into East Asia (Matsumoto 2015). To mitigate further security risks stemming from cross-strait relations, Taiwan should pursue a multilateral trade strategy and seek trade agreements with ASEAN to alleviate political tensions (Watanabe and Irish 2014).

Consequently, the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict can be illustrated by the case of the ECFA. As the ECFA aims to promote economic cooperation between Taiwan and China, it illuminates the complexities of this conflict, reflecting divergent interests and identity concerns from domestic to regional levels. It becomes evident that both sides must engage with their respective populations, highlighting the potential of alternative conflict resolution such as public diplomacy in promoting peace and cooperation in the region. The ECFA, contextualized within the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security environment, reveals the need for a more encompassing solution to the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict, one that involves civil society and public engagement. I further demonstrate this view in the next case study: the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2.3.3 The COVID-19 Pandemic**

The emergence of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, during the Chinese New Year holiday in 2020 precipitated a cascade of security concerns regarding public health throughout the region. Given the high levels of trade, investment, and tourism, the virus swiftly spread to neighboring countries. In Southeast Asian states, a rising anti-China sentiment posed a significant challenge to China's rising power in this region's security environment. China intended to ease the resentment through its vaccine diplomacy strategy and the proposal of a Health Silk Road, integrating public health issues into its diplomatic endeavors to bolster its global leadership role (Yuan 2023). Meanwhile, in China's diplomatic initiatives, Taiwan was excluded from regional or global participation. Instead, Taiwan faced increasing military provocations from China, such as aircraft intrusions during the COVID-19 crisis. However, Taiwan actively engaged in the global health arena and sought to strengthen relations with neighboring countries. For example, Taiwan's mask diplomacy (Alton 2020) and the social campaign, Taiwan Can Help (Yan 2023) demonstrated its commitment to maintaining the stability of regional security and enhancing its visibility in the international community. An examination of security dynamics during the

COVID-19 crisis reveals the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict as a pivotal regional security concern. Both China’s and Taiwan’s diplomatic activities during the COVID-19 crisis were underpinned by competition for national identity and nationalist movements, further complicating regional security dynamics. The COVID-19 response illustrates how China’s growing influence and Taiwan’s independent identity shape societal-level conflicts and diplomatic challenges.

China’s rise has raised concerns regarding regional security, while the COVID-19 crisis has challenged China’s role in the region’s public health, trade relations, and military activities. The military exercises conducted in the South China Sea, or along the border with India, as well as in the air defense identification zone of Taiwan, heightened the risk of escalating during the COVID-19 crisis due to the surge of anti-China sentiment in the region (Nichiporuk 2021). At the outbreak of COVID-19, ASEAN faced pressure to align with either China or the US regarding the South China Sea dispute. The hedging attitude in ASEAN countries along with the anti-China sentiment lingering in the society undermined China’s leadership in maintaining security and stability. China instead developed a COVID-19 diplomacy with ASEAN emphasizing the importance of people-to-people interactions, economic cooperation, and maritime dispute resolution (Peng 2021). The anti-China sentiment in ASEAN countries influenced China’s foreign policy approaches to managing regional conflicts, evident in the institutionalization of the Health Silk Road as part of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI). For instance, the Philippines witnessed rising anti-China sentiment following the identification of the first COVID-19 case involving a Chinese national, exacerbating tensions amid the South China Sea dispute. China accelerated the institutionalization of the Health Silk Road, advocating for a reciprocal relationship trajectory (Rabena 2021). In managing foreign relations during the COVID-19 crisis, China placed considerable emphasis on emotions. For example, Schneider (2021) highlighted China’s utilization of nationalist sentiments on social media platforms as a form of emotional governance, targeting both domestic and foreign audiences. However, this form of emotional governance demonstrated the identity-based nature of the conflict, as criticisms from Taiwanese media outlets intensified concerns regarding China’s rising nationalist movements. This nationalism movement significantly heightens the risk of an identity-based conflict with Taiwan, thereby posing a substantial threat to regional security.

Taiwan’s critics of China’s online nationalism movement can be construed as a potential

threat to security relations in the region. For Taiwan, the conflict with China has revolved around issues of identity, particularly about independence awareness. During the COVID-19 crisis, Taiwan's identity evolved, leading to the development of stronger state-society relations. Taiwan's successful management of the pandemic crisis can be attributed in large part to its swift implementation of monitoring and quarantine policies, particularly in response to the vast volume of business travelers between Taiwan and China. Through effective policy transparency and civil society cooperation, Taiwan was able to maintain social stability amidst the pandemic. The success reveals the importance of tightened state-society relations. Initiatives such as the campaigns against disinformation and "Taiwan Can Help" exemplified the two-way communication channel between the government and civil society (Yen 2020a). In fighting disinformation, the government set up a central information center to disseminate COVID-19-related policies and news, while civil society engaged with digital skills to pass on the information to the public. The "Taiwan Can Help" campaign, supported by the government and initiated by civil society organizations, facilitated mask diplomacy, donating facial masks to foreign countries and domestic populations, particularly immigrant laborers. Given the significant number of immigrant workers from Southeast Asian states in Taiwan, their health conditions were incorporated into Taiwan's health security policies (Huang 2020). Simon (2021) pointed out that these security measures undertaken by Taiwan as part of its nation-state-building efforts pose a potential risk of escalating conflicts. Taiwan's management of the COVID-19 crisis, despite entailing the risk of national identity competition, highlights the significance of evolving state-society relations as demonstrated through transparent policy implementation and collaborative efforts in combating disinformation.

To sum up, the application of the synthesized explanatory framework to the three case studies elucidated that Taiwan's conflict issue in this region is an identity-based conflict with China. These three cases reveal the potential for resolving Taiwan's identity-based conflict through societal involvement and people-to-people activities. Therefore, I argue that Taiwan does not instigate conflicts in East Asia; instead, its continuous efforts in societal engagement, people-to-people exchange, and public diplomacy, as exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, position Taiwan as a promoter of peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security environment.

## 2.4 Summary

This chapter proposes an explanatory framework for the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict in the security environment of 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asia. The regional security architecture encompasses military power, economic institutionalization, and ad hoc diplomacy, as reflected in the South China Sea dispute, the ECFA, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Analysis of the case studies highlights China’s rise and Taiwan’s independence awareness as key factors shaping the identity-based conflict. Consequently, Taiwan has been strategizing people-to-people diplomacy to address the identity-based conflict and to enhance its security status in East Asia. This positions Taiwan as a promoter of peace and stability in the region, rather than a contributor to conflict. As Taiwan’s identity formation evolves, as seen in the 2024 presidential election, it is crucial to examine how unconventional conflict resolution strategies, including societal-level interactions, can empower Taiwan to shape the narrative surrounding its identity-based conflict. The next chapter establishes a theoretical framework to justify the East Asian way of understanding and interpretation of conflict resolution, considering the viewpoints of both China and Taiwan.

- An earlier version of this chapter has been submitted for potential inclusion into the volume: Abidde, S, ed., *“Tsai Ing-wen and Taiwan: An Assessment of the First Administration, 2016-2020”* Bloomsbury.

## Chapter 3. Conflict Resolution in East Asia

### 3.1 Introduction

In the context of Taiwan’s identity-based conflict, three types of security approaches – military alliance, economic ties, and ad hoc diplomacy – have been identified, each warranting examination regarding their effectiveness in resolving conflicts. These approaches are not isolated; rather, they are often intertwined. From military alliances to ad hoc diplomacy, and from the South China Sea to COVID-19, these security approaches are grounded in theoretical frameworks aimed at building a security network. However, their effectiveness in conflict resolution is not always definitive, as each approach may cause different conflict outcomes. This intractability of traditional conflict resolution approaches motivates both China and Taiwan to engage in public diplomacy as an alternative strategy. This argument stands with the theoretical foundations of threat perception and relational structure. Moreover, a growing body of literature suggests that an East Asian model of conflict resolution, drawing on humanistic, historical, and cultural perspectives, can enrich the understanding and methods of conflict resolution. Therefore, I posit that both China and Taiwan are devoted to public diplomacy with the aim of developing a unique style of conflict resolution tailored to their specific contexts.

This chapter examines two key questions: (1) Has China’s rising aimed to mitigate threat perception? (2) How has Taiwan been a facilitator of conflict resolution in East Asia? Given the different objectives of each side in conflict resolution, the effectiveness of their respective approaches must correspond to their goals. Thus, the conceptual framework seeks to bridge the theoretical foundations of conflict resolution with strategies of public diplomacy. To evaluate the effectiveness of public diplomacy strategy, the primary endeavor is to investigate the underlying motivations and security concerns driving the conflict. Accordingly, I employ threat perception theory to elucidate that both China and Taiwan seek to reduce threat perception and assert their strategic roles in the region. China’s attempt to establish an East Asia regional order devoid of US influence, while Taiwan’s desire to enhance its security position in East Asia is a countermeasure to the One China policy. This inquiry intersects with the emerging discourse on an East Asian model of conflict resolution, exploring the region’s norms, values, and

ideological frameworks shaping conflict and conflict resolution (Brigg and Bleiker 2011). These themes are intrinsically linked, emphasizing the imperative of fortifying and cultivating a sustainable regional conflict resolution paradigm. Consequently, this chapter is structured into the following sections: (1) Theoretical foundations of threat perception and relational structure, and (2) A literature review of the East Asian model of conflict resolution. These sections explain why China and Taiwan employ public diplomacy as a means of conflict resolution in East Asia.

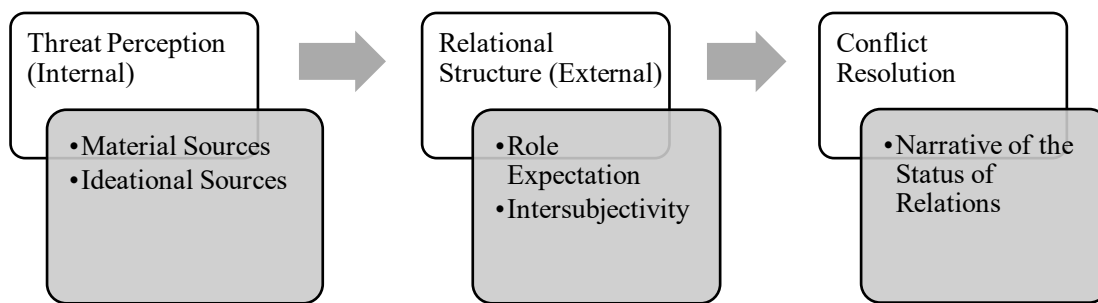
In this dissertation, the terms “conflict” and “conflict resolution” are not confined to armed conflicts or traditional forms of mediation and negotiation. Conflict is defined as the process of interaction between two parties involving the intention to counteract or eliminate the other due to perceived incompatible interests (Bercovitch 2004). Consequently, conflict resolution entails mediating or negotiating these interests. However, a broader understanding of conflict is adopted, encompassing a status of relations between two parties characterized by incompatible interests that pose a threat to domestic or regional security. Therefore, even in the absence of armed conflicts, the relationship between China and Taiwan is deemed a conflict, as both parties have incompatible interests that, if left unaddressed, could jeopardize domestic or regional security. In this sense, conflict resolution can take various forms beyond traditional mediation or negotiation of interests. For example, China employs a public diplomacy strategy as a means of conflict resolution, seeking to alter the status of its relationship with Taiwan by projecting a peaceful rising image; whereas Taiwan utilizes public diplomacy to address its conflict with China within the East Asian context. Both sides employ public diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution, reflecting the notion that conflict resolution entails efforts beyond merely mitigating violence, but also aims to address underlying disagreements (Stern and Druckman 2000). This theoretical foundation elucidates why both China and Taiwan utilize public diplomacy as a strategy for conflict resolution. Furthermore, the inquiry extends to whether an East Asian model of conflict resolution exists and, if so, how public diplomacy embodies this model for China and Taiwan. The following paragraphs are divided into two sections to apply these two perspectives in addressing the two questions posed in this chapter. Firstly, from the standpoint of threat perception, I examine China’s efforts to project a peaceful rising image and Taiwan’s endeavors to position its security status in East Asia. I argue that the cultural, historical, and humanistic perspectives form the foundation of their conflict resolution efforts.

### 3.2 Theoretical Foundations of Threat Perception and Relational Structure

Conflict resolution in East Asia is grounded in the constructivist principles of threat perception and the relational structure. A state may assert power through material or ideational means, but the perception of threat arises when the state's role expectations are established intersubjectively. Herein, "threat" refers to a natural anticipation of danger and threat perception involves the acknowledgment of these apprehensions (Cohen 1978). For example, if China dispatches military aircraft to Taiwan's air defense identification zone, the perceived threat lies in the potential invasion of this airspace, affecting Taiwan's physical security. However, if China conducts similar military maneuvers in the South China Sea, although the threat remains the intrusion of airspace, the perception of danger may be less acute for Taiwan due to the geographical distance. Still, Taiwan perceives such actions as threatening due to the relational structure within East Asia. In East Asia, states expect China to assume a stable central role, and their actions are often contingent upon this expectation (Kang 2003). Therefore, when China deploys military assets to the South China Sea, Taiwan perceives it as a threat because China's actions may disrupt the region's stability, jeopardizing Taiwan's security interests. As a result, conflict formation in East Asia is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors.

To evaluate whether a diplomatic policy can effectively serve as a conflict resolution strategy, an analytical framework is established, delineating two determining factors as depicted in Figure 3.1: the internal factor: **threat perception**, and the external factor: **relational structure**. These theoretical foundations provide insight into China's investment in public diplomacy as a means to mitigate the perceived threat associated with its rising power. Conversely, for Taiwan, the imperative to redefine its role in East Asia amid significant social changes over the past two decades has highlighted the importance of public diplomacy as a pivotal diplomatic strategy. Despite differing threat perceptions, both China and Taiwan have been committed to public diplomacy strategies aimed at managing and mitigating perceived threats while adhering to the relational structure. However, the effectiveness of these strategies varies. China's public diplomacy efforts may have failed to adequately mitigate the perceived threat in Taiwan due to conflicting conceptions regarding Taiwan's position within the relational structure. Taiwan's public diplomacy, aimed at asserting itself as distinct from China, introduces its own set of challenges to East Asian stability, particularly concerning the potential escalation of military tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

Figure 3.1 – An Analytical Framework to Evaluate Whether a Diplomatic Policy Serves as a Conflict Resolution Approach



Threat perception involves the process of generating, transmitting, and receiving threat sources, which comprise both material and ideational sources. These sources become forces that create threats (Darwich 2019). Darwich suggests that material force traditionally refers to military power, while ideational force is related to identity. Thus, for a state to generate and transmit threat cues, activities such as military maneuvers or projecting a national identity can potentially result in perceived threats. For others to receive these cues, Cohen states that threat perception is a two-stage process: first, the observation of conflictual cues, and second, the appraisal of whether these cues are threatening or benign (Cohen 1978). In this sense, any change in the current system can trigger threat perception. This connects to the security approaches in East Asia, where increasing military budgets, creating a national identity image, or signing trade agreements can all serve as conflict resolution mechanisms by potentially mediating threat perception. This framework helps explain why China has invested in public diplomacy strategies since the fall of the Soviet Union, a significant systemic change in East Asia. While security alliances are legacies of the previous system, any alteration in security approaches can provoke threat perception. For Taiwan, transforming into a democracy marked a substantial change in its domestic political system. The success of this transformation, in terms of domestic peace development, was facilitated by adherence to established communication rules. However, differing conceptions of sovereignty relative to China have become a significant element of threat perception.

The relational structure is in the discourse of social theory and social constructivism (Harnisch 2011), which emphasizes the exploration of role conceptualization through an intersubjective process. A role is distinct from identity. A state's identity is established by mobilizing material and ideational sources, while a state's behavior results from its defined role.

Thus, the formation of a role is related to the state's identity and behavior (Breuning 2011). If a state intends to mitigate threats perceived by others, it acts according to its role expectations. These role expectations are not only derived from self-identity but emerge through an intersubjective process involving both self and others (Brincat 2011). The intersubjective process is crucial for conflictual parties to determine whether to escalate or de-escalate the conflictual status. Additionally, role expectations are dynamic and evolve with the development of a state's identity. This identity development is co-constitutive with its role (Nabers 2011), providing a basis to evaluate conflict resolution through the relationship between a state's identity formation and role expectations. For example, China views itself as a leader in East Asia and seeks to establish regional order; thus, its public diplomacy efforts aim to shape its role expectations and reduce conflicts with neighboring countries. Conversely, Taiwan, over the past twenty years, has been forming a distinct "Taiwanese" identity, which influences its foreign policy. Hence, Taiwan's public diplomacy aims to redefine its role in East Asia.

Despite sharing the goal of creating collective security, different interpretations of perceived threats and aims to alter strategic roles can lead to increased conflicts. Therefore, for China, it is crucial to convey to neighboring states that the narrative of an East Asian regional order centers on collective security. For Taiwan, it is important to establish an image as a conflict resolver in the region to foster stable development of collective security. While various security approaches exist in East Asia, the following section applies this explanatory framework to military alliances and economic ties, comparing them to public diplomacy. This comparison aims to demonstrate the role of public diplomacy as a conflict resolution strategy for both China and Taiwan.

### **3.2.1 Contextualizing Alliances and Institutionalization in Threat Perception and Relational Structure**

Military alliances and economic ties have developed rapidly in 20<sup>th</sup> century East Asia. The US alliance partnerships and Asia's economic miracle are linked, contributing to the region's security and conflict resolution dynamics. While alliances may risk inducing power transition wars, strategically aligning or de-aligning can prevent further armed conflicts (Kim 2002). Additionally, increasing economic interdependence and the growth of economic institutions can significantly reduce the risk of militarized conflict (Kahler 2012). Both arguments highlight the effectiveness of these strategies in resolving conflicts.

The material sources of military budget and activities empower a state to fulfill the role expectations of maintaining an alliance network for regional peace. However, regional peace is susceptible to changes in material sources and alliance networks, which can increase perceived threats and alter a state's position within the relational structure. For example, the US hegemony is empowered by its material sources of military alliances and economic ties. Nevertheless, as China and Japan gradually replace the US role in providing military capabilities and trade development (Mauil 2011), East Asia becomes more vulnerable to conflicts. Conflict resolution in this context is often limited to strategic responses, such as state strengthening or countering threats (Myers 2019), which do not necessarily enhance conflict resolution effectiveness. An alternative conflict resolution emerges with Asia's growing economy. Focusing only on militarized conflict overlooks other levels of conflict, such as trade competition (Reuveny 2009). Growing economic ties and interdependence fulfill material and ideational sources and implement the role expectation of providing an economic developmental model but this may generate conflicts due to unparalleled trade relations (Pevehouse 2009). Conflict resolution in this scenario involves building multilateral trade relations or advancing economic institutionalization to develop normative power and prevent armed conflicts. Nonetheless, the issue of unparalleled trade relations remains a conflictual status. Therefore, East Asian states must find alternative methods to maintain peace and stability for collective security. By shaping narratives and images, public diplomacy may make the differences between regional actors more palatable and contribute to conflict resolution.

### **3.2.2 Contextualizing Public Diplomacy in Threat Perception and Relational Structure**

21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian Security is as complex as its diplomatic approaches. While alliances and economic ties have laid the foundation of material and ideational sources, the evolving state-society relations and the increased role of the public have heightened the importance of security and diplomacy. East Asian security can be managed through diplomacy; as society and the public exert greater influence on state foreign policy, public diplomacy emerges as a crucial approach to maintaining security relations and potentially resolving conflicts. When this approach appropriately addresses threat perception within the relational structure, it effectively serves as a conflict resolution mechanism.

Public diplomacy is to affect the other state's policy by attracting or persuading foreign audiences. Although Vandewalle noted that US public diplomacy could not be credited for

successfully changing Libya's behavior in the context of US-Libya relations (Vandewalle 2015), the primary target of influence is the foreign public and society. The foreign audience plays an important role in shaping state policy and diplomacy. Unlike traditional governmental-level diplomacy, public and societal perceptions of threat, as well as the formation of state self-identity, have become influential in interstate relations. Ross provided an example of US public diplomacy towards China, demonstrating that despite growing strategic and economic competition, continuous interactions occur in bilateral economic and cultural relations (Ross 2015). In this case, US public diplomacy has the potential to transform a rivalry into ongoing social and cultural interaction. Furthermore, public diplomacy can surpass traditional paradigms to be an alternative conflict resolution method. As public diplomacy engages culturally with society, it can turn conflictual statuses into normalized relations (LeoGrande 2015). In terms of threat perception, public diplomacy generates material and ideational sources and projects a national identity image to foreign audiences. This practice of nation branding and building mobilizes these material and ideational sources, demonstrating a state's role expectations or shaping them. For example, the European Union (EU) conducts public diplomacy toward Chinese society to enhance its normative power and strengthen its international role (Song and Ai 2023). By shaping role expectations and focusing on building an image, public diplomacy reduces the reliance on military power and increases interactions with foreign publics. In this sense, public diplomacy serves as a form of conflict resolution, emphasizing the importance of foreign public and civil society roles in diplomacy.

China's relations with Taiwan cannot be described only in political and economic terms but must also consider cultural and social dimensions. Despite sharing similar languages and a common historical Chinese culture, the two sides have been increasing tourism, educational exchanges, and trade and business interactions. The impact of continuous social and cultural interaction on conflict resolution should be evaluated. However, as Taiwan has opened its door to China through growing economic interdependence and sociocultural exchanges, the stronger the Taiwanese identity has become. This Taiwanese identity forms ideational forces that contribute to China's threat perception and affect Taiwanese expectations regarding Taiwan's international role, which is not to be recognized as part of China. This dynamic creates a conflict of identities. Whether public diplomacy can resolve this conflict remains to be examined, but it reveals the importance of contextualizing the issue within local history. The expanding body of research on the East Asian model of conflict resolution provides additional insights into how public diplomacy can assist China and Taiwan in navigating conflicts stemming from their

historical development.

### **3.3 Approaches to East Asia's Model of Conflict Resolution**

The development of conflict resolution in East Asia has embraced historical, cultural, and humanistic perspectives, advocating for an East Asian approach to conflict resolution. Traditional conflict resolution and peace conventions, often dominated by Western paradigms, may not adequately address conflicts in a sensitive and humanistic manner that respects the needs of the people involved. As a result, effective conflict resolution in this context relies on respecting cultural differences, understanding underlying values, and exploring the social interpretation of conflicts (Chan 2011). By considering the social interpretation of conflict and drawing on local knowledge of conflict resolution, a sustainable type of peace can be established (Richmond 2011). Hence, whether China's or Taiwan's public diplomacy can serve as conflict resolution hinges on whether it is grounded in local historical and cultural knowledge to achieve lasting peace.

The East Asian model of conflict resolution is grounded in underlying cultural understandings and norms. Tuschhoff (2016) emphasizes the importance of comprehending East Asian normative ideologies and worldviews as foundational elements for the region's unique approach to conflict resolution. For instance, in Japan, conflict resolution involves a process of accommodating contradictions until they can be resolved, emphasizing values such as consensus, dialogue, and fairness (Wasilewski and Namatame 2011). Similarly, in South Korea, traditional conflict resolution methods are deeply intertwined with daily life, recognizing that simply eliminating the causes of injustice does not necessarily resolve societal conflicts, because emotions and feelings play a central role (Bleiker and Young-ju 2011). These examples from Japan and South Korea illustrate a humanistic view of conflict and conflict resolution, focusing on individuals' feelings and the necessity of consensus for fostering fair and just behaviors within society. A harmonious society, guided by traditional and intersubjectively acknowledged ethics, is ideal in the Confucian approach to conflict resolution (Pan 2011). Consensus-building, attention to human emotions, and adherence to underlying morals and ethics are key characteristics of the East Asian model of conflict resolution.

The conflict in East Asia should be viewed as a continuum of historical events and structures that have evolved. Adopting a perspective informed by local historical and cultural knowledge offers a more integrated understanding of East Asian conflict and therefore a more

holistic approach to conflict resolution in East Asia. Resolving these conflicts, deeply rooted historically and compounded by identity conflicts resulting from social and political changes, requires a non-paradigmatic approach. In the context of the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict, where no regional institution exists to address the dispute, public diplomacy efforts from both sides serve as an underlying mechanism for maintaining social and cultural interactions. Shifting from power struggles to identity conflicts, resolving these disputes necessitates time for mutual trust to develop and for both sides to understand the evolving nature of the conflict (Hamrin and Wang 2004). Developing mutual trust entails more than military coercion; it requires fostering a sense of security conducive to economic, social, and cultural exchanges. While public diplomacy may seem like an informal approach to conflict resolution, its strategy empowers and sustains continuous social interactions. This informal regionalization serves as a preventive mechanism for addressing conflicts, particularly in the context of East Asia's economic prominence coupled with weak political structures (Hettne and Söderbaum 2010). Public diplomacy strategies establish an informal interactive framework that lays the groundwork for economic, social, and cultural relations.

### **3.4 Summary**

Enriching the theoretical framework of threat perception and relational structure with the context of East Asia's model of conflict resolution, this section answers the two questions asked respectively for China and Taiwan. China's careful management of its image in East Asia stems from systemic power change in the 21st century East Asian Security environment. On the other hand, Taiwan's conflictual status with China has shifted from power struggles to identity conflicts due to domestic political and social changes. Therefore, conflict resolution holds different objectives for each side. For China, the goal is to mitigate threat perceptions, while for Taiwan, it is to diminish the possibility of escalating conflicts with China, which could undermine Taiwan's role expectations in East Asia. Despite the traditional pattern of conflict resolution characterizing the Taiwan–China identity-based conflict, the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed, on both sides, nationalism fervor and the formation of self-identity, which requires that the traditional pattern of conflict resolution should also be re-evaluated (Ding 2010). This chapter maintains that public diplomacy may provide a pathway for reforming conflict resolution for both China and Taiwan, in tandem with their respective domestic political and social transformations. As a result, the next chapter explores China's and Taiwan's approaches to public diplomacy and their relationship with the framing of the identity conflict.

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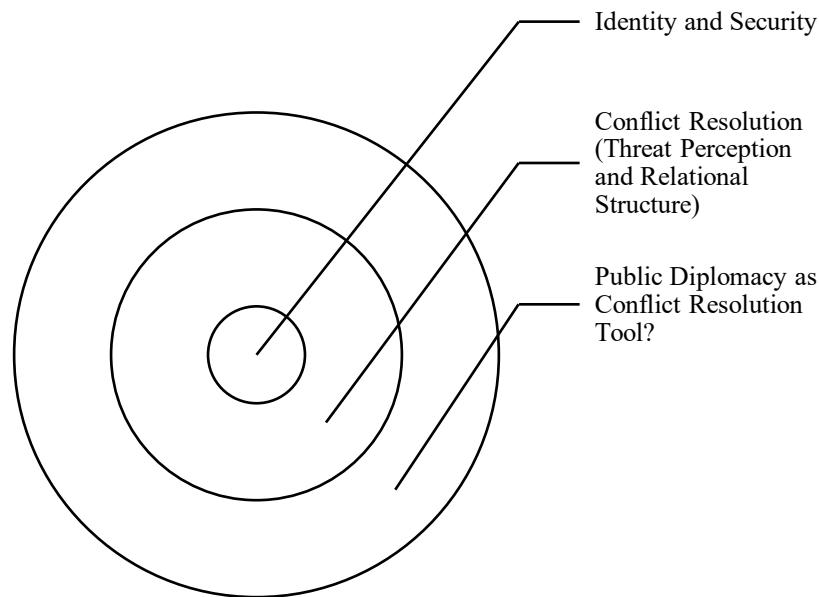
## **Chapter 4. China's and Taiwan's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter delineated the respective aims of conflict resolution for China and Taiwan, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of threat perception and relational structure, alongside an evolving body of East Asian historical conflict resolution models. This chapter seeks to apply this theoretical framework of conflict resolution to the practice of public diplomacy and to enrich the discourse on conflict resolution in Taiwan's context of public diplomacy efforts. The question in this chapter therefore goes to the exploration of China's and Taiwan's interpretations and strategies of public diplomacy: How have China and Taiwan strategized public diplomacy to resolve the identity-based conflict? By connecting the discourse of conflict resolution with the practice of public diplomacy, it is the understanding of soft power that explains how China and Taiwan strategized public diplomacy as a resolution to identity-based conflict. This analysis posits that both China and Taiwan perceive conflict resolution as a process of changing their position in the relational structures and mitigating threat perceptions. For example, Taiwan aims to shape its strategic role and economic significance within East Asia, whereas China endeavors to project a peaceful image to reduce tensions regarding its hard power in the region. In both instances, the role of the state within the region's relational structure is linked to state identity. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, titled 'Conceptual Framework', identity is significant to security dynamics, and hence conflict resolution is to resolve the issue stemming from identity and security concerns. To ensure stability and peace, the maintenance of identity within the regional structure, coupled with a secure regional environment, is important for state interactions. These interactions, facilitated through diplomatic activities, encompass trade, investment, business, tourism, culture, and education, among other forms of civil societal exchange. It is through these exchanges that both China and Taiwan exert soft power to shape their identity images and narrate their relational status within the region. In determining this relational status, state government or any delegated agencies, authorities, or institutions engage in public diplomacy to employ soft power, thereby shaping identity and relational narratives – a method posited here as a form of conflict

resolution. Therefore, this chapter is structured to address two key questions: (1) What are China's and Taiwan's historical cultural interpretations of soft power? (2) How have China and Taiwan been conducting public diplomacy to resolve identity-based conflict?

Figure 4.1 – Conceptual Framework



## 4.2 Historical Cultural Interpretations of Soft Power

Nye argued that a successful state needs both hard and soft power to coerce others and shape long-term attitudes (Nye 2004). Ding emphasized that long-term attitudes and preferences are crucial to peace, as opposed to realists' focus on short-term interests (Ding 2008). These long-term attitudes relate to threat perception, which concerns whether a state is perceived as friendly or hostile. This perception influences the state's relational status with other states and the overall relational structure within the region. Preferences of other states arise from intersubjective civil societal interactions, such as educational exchange, tourism, and business. When Nye coined the word soft power, he proposed its components rely on three resources: culture, political values, and foreign policy (Nye et al. 2009). Rather than focusing only on resources, Li suggested examining a state's capabilities to exert soft power, thereby highlighting how culture, values, and institutions were integrated into soft power (Li 2009). This perspective explains why the Chinese government has significantly invested in soft power since 2000. Despite various analyses of China's soft power resources, Rawnsley argued that

de-westernizing the concept of soft power helps understand not only China's but also Taiwan's use of soft power and public diplomacy practices (Rawnsley 2012). The de-westernization approach emphasizes local contextualization, specifically how China and Taiwan respectively bring culture, values, and eventually institutions into the use of soft power. In the context of how culture matters to domestic or international politics, Carbo-Catalan and Roig-Sanz noted that collective identity, created through a series of cultural practices such as exploring historical patterns of relations, cooperation, and interactions, can elucidate the dynamics of power and power shifts (Carbó-Catalan and Roig-Sanz 2022). For example, China has sent research ships to the South China Sea to gather evidence of Chinese historical rights in the maritime territory<sup>6</sup>. By demonstrating that 鄭和 Zheng He, the Chinese mariner, and explorer of the fifteenth century, left traces in the South China Sea, China aims to reinforce its claimed historical rights and consolidate the "Chineseness" image for both domestic and foreign audiences. This national image cultivates cultural values around the practice of establishing historical rights. These values are then generated and re-generated through civil society or institutionalized in written expressions. For instance, Sola and McMartin analyzed European values in literary prize-winning works and argued that both political institutions and cultural interactions impact diplomacy (Solà and McMartin 2022). Similarly, China's Confucius Institutes were established as cultural institutions promoting Chinese culture to foreign audiences, although their effectiveness in soft power diplomacy has been contested (Zhou and Luk 2016). The following section explores how culture, values, and institutions have been integrated into the concept of soft power in the contexts of China and Taiwan, moving beyond Nye's traditional framework of soft power resources.

#### **4.2.1 China's Interpretation of Soft Power in Culture, Values, and Institutions**

China's interpretation of soft power, characterized by its integration of culture, values, and institutions, reveals significant insights. Over the past two decades, extensive research has focused on China's soft power resources (Nye et al. 2009), its application of soft power (Nye 2012), and its soft use of hard power (deLisle 2010).

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<sup>6</sup> Laura Zhou, South China Sea: Beijing's new research ship expected to explore contested waters, South China Morning Post, 23 May 2023: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3221579/south-china-sea-beijings-new-research-ship-expected-explore-contested-waters>

The evolving debate has centered on explaining China's rise (Paruk 2014). In this section, I engage with the discourse of China's rise through the lens of how China brought culture, values, and institutions into its use of soft power.

Zhao (2006) proposed a Chinese view of international relations, referred to as Tian-Xia, or "All-under-heaven". This view envisions a world society in harmony, where communication and cooperation are ensured by commonly agreed institutions. Continuous communication and cooperation are seen as more effective for resolving international or intercultural conflicts. Since then, this concept has undergone various theoretical developments within China. Zhao (2009) argued that this view is rooted in a historical form of Chinese universalism, representing Chinese knowledge, philosophy, and culture. DeLisle (2010) discovered that Chinese soft power elements with Chinese culture still existed in China's Reformation period. For example, the Confucian concept of managing relations with nations beyond China's borders by attracting and transforming them with Chinese civilization and values was still evident. Pan (2019) expanded on this idea by highlighting the Chinese quest for harmony, which can be achieved through the Confucian approach to conflict resolution. However, the evolution of this Chinese theoretical worldview has raised concerns about China's quest for national identity and the justification of its rising to power as a pursuit of national interest. Contrary to Zhao's argument for a Chinese utopia of global governance, some critics argue that the Tian-Xia system is not fundamentally different from mainstream International Relations theory but represents another hegemonic construction (Cho and Hwang 2020). Hwang (2021a) contended that China's potential hegemonic construction of its strategic use must be carefully examined to avoid threatening others only to claim a certain status. Therefore, in exploring China's efforts to establish its theory of world relations, it becomes evident that these efforts strategically support the discourse of China's rise through its interpretations of Chinese culture. Such theoretical efforts aim to assert China's cultural dominance strategically.

Deng and Zhang (2009) argued that China's current cultural power does not match its economic power, attributing this disparity to a superiority-inferiority complex that developed historically throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Western powers introduced new political values to China, thereby altering China's worldview. This complex reflects the failure of China's historical civilization values to enter the global

cultural arena. Hence, the drive to export its cultural power is not merely an economic concern but also an effort to project its political values and assert its status in the international order. Kivimaki (2014) contended that China does not need to demonstrate the superiority of its political ideas, because major powers in today's international order seek complementarity and mutual gains rather than dominance. Paruk (2014) categorized China's active participation in international organizations into three forms of soft power utilization: multilateralism, economic diplomacy, and good-neighbor policy. These three forms reflect China's aim to attract foreign audiences with its economic development model, build reciprocal relations with neighboring states, and establish its position and image as a peacefully rising power. These aims and efforts have been particularly evident since 习近平 Xi Jinping became the president of the CCP in 2013, with initiatives such as the "China Dream" and the "Asia-Pacific Dream". However, Callahan (2015) observed that the discourse surrounding the "China Dream" primarily addresses a values crisis within Chinese society, thereby influencing domestic audiences more than international ones. Berndzen (2017) argued that while China's economic development model may have attracted Asia-Pacific nations, the region's reliance on economic ties has not been sufficient to overcome concerns about China's behavior in territorial disputes and the perceived lack of political values, casting doubts on whether its soft power has successfully built peaceful relations with the world.

While Zhao (2009) proposed the Tian-Xia system, he supported the Chinese philosophical worldview of establishing a world institute, arguing that the world is constituted as a global unity and that this is a fundamental concept of political philosophy, which aims to address all global problems as problems of the world. Zhao criticized the UN, stating that it is not a world institution but only a platform for nations to negotiate their interests. However, the concept of a world institution remains idealistic, and we have yet to see its establishment or effect. Instead, China has been promoting its cultural and political values by establishing Confucius Institutes worldwide since 2004. It is noteworthy that China set up these Confucius Institutes in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, just a few decades after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) aimed to eradicate Confucianism, viewing it as an outdated value that hindered national development. Paradise (2009) argued that it is too early to determine the positive impact of these Confucius Institutes due to negative views on China's influence around its

disputed political values and contradictory behavior in geopolitical matters, suggesting that this projection of soft power may be more targeted at its people. Yang (2010) supported this argument, asserting that the Confucius Institutes are a project for China's higher education system to transform from a recipient to a sender of knowledge. However, this project has faced challenges due to disputed relations with overseas partner universities. When these universities raised concerns about the political or social science content taught, the rights and responsibilities typically remained within the Confucius Institute rather than reflecting an equal collaboration. Furthermore, some critics have noted that the management of Confucius Institutes often fails to align with their intended purpose. A Chinese scholar argued that the content and discourse within the Confucius Institutes have been excessively commercialized, focusing on market-oriented language rather than promoting cultural exchange or education cooperation (You 2012). If the teaching language prioritizes selling a product over sharing the culture, it may undermine the goal of building China's image and promoting its culture and values to the world. Hence, China's aim of establishing a world institute, or the Confucius Institutes faces significant challenges in effectively measuring the impact of its soft power.

As a result, I argue that examining China's soft power necessitates viewing it through the lens of how China incorporates culture, values, and institutions into its soft power strategy. This perspective highlights the significance of China's substantial investment in cultivating soft power as part of its broader nation-building project. Rather than revisiting the historical trajectory already outlined in Chapter 2, it is important to note how past experiences of values crises and perceptions of inferiority have shaped China's reliance on soft power as a means of projecting stability and legitimacy. In contrast, Taiwan's developments of democratization and identity formation since the 1990s have led it to increasingly employ soft power to assert sovereignization and differentiate itself from China.

#### **4.2.2 Taiwan's Interpretation of Soft Power in Culture, Values, and Institutions**

Much of the discourse on Taiwan's soft power over the past two decades has adopted a comparative perspective between China and Taiwan, highlighting the distinctive case of Taiwan. This comparative approach concerning the discourse of soft

power should be contextualized with the local historical development, particularly the regime competition between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the CCP. Given this historical background, most arguments focus on how Taiwan should strategize its soft power, considering its abundant cultural resources. These resources are primarily linked to Taiwan's democratization since the end of martial law in 1987. Furthermore, with democratization, the legitimacy of the KMT has been questioned, specifically whether Taiwan represents the Republic of China or the Taiwanese people who have long inhabited the island (Lin 2004). This legitimacy issue, combined with the Taiwanese people's quest for sovereignty, has propelled Taiwan's sovereignization movement. Taiwan's sovereignty is a critical issue in cross-strait security relations, centering on the debate over whether the KMT governs the Republic of China or the island of Taiwan (Cheng 2008). Lastly, democratization and sovereignization have been integral to Taiwan's identity formation. This identity formation has significantly influenced Taiwan's political sphere and the security dynamics of cross-strait relations (Chen 2013). Therefore, Taiwan's political agenda of democratization, sovereignization, and identity formation justifies its strategic use of soft power. By examining how Taiwan brings culture, values, and institutions into its soft power strategy, it becomes evident that these three developments – democratization, sovereignization, and identity formation – are distinct yet interconnected elements of Taiwan's soft power approach.

Wang and Lu (2008) explored the comparative perspectives of China's and Taiwan's conceptions of soft power resources, finding that China emphasizes traditional Chinese culture and its economic development model, whereas Taiwan focuses on identity, democracy, economic development, and traditional Chinese culture. DeLisle (2010) stated that Taiwan's soft power campaign was a competition against China, as both are descendants of Chinese culture and are keen to engage with the US audience. Rawnsley (2014) argued that Taiwan's soft power campaign's emphasis on representing traditional Chinese culture would not yield significant soft power benefits. During Taiwan's soft power campaign, President Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九, leader of the KMT party, was in office from 2008 to 2016. His predecessor, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP, served from 2000 to 2008 and was considered a milestone figure for Taiwanese self-determination. Despite these administrations, no substantial effort was made to promote Taiwan's culture effectively within the soft power campaign, as Taiwan was also

navigating the complex process of identity formation. The lack of a clear representation of Taiwan's culture, while simultaneously presenting traditional Chinese culture, led to widespread discontent, culminating in the 2014 Sunflower Movement. The 2014 Sunflower Movement arose from a conflict of national identity exacerbated by increasingly close economic ties with China. Many argued that the movement was a strong assertion of Taiwan's unique identity (Pan 2015). Taiwan's incorporation of traditional Chinese culture into its soft power strategy sparked identity-based conflicts both domestically and in cross-strait relations. Nevertheless, the democratic values inherent in Taiwan's political system should not be overlooked for their significant impact on its soft power.

As Taiwan transformed into a democracy, its political values diverged significantly from the historical regime legitimacy competition between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the CCP. Democratic values should become Taiwan's primary soft power resources to compensate for its lack of international status, a consequence of this historical competition. Rawnsley (2012) suggested that Taiwan's soft power campaign should involve non-state actors, allowing them the freedom to operate outside of political interest and serving as strong symbols of Taiwan's inclusive democracy. Moreover, as China's international image is tarnished by its controversial human rights approach toward the Uyghurs, Taiwan's democratic values and its progressive stance on human rights – such as the legalization of same-sex marriage – should set it on a distinct soft power path. Hwang (2021b) argued that, in contrast to China's attempt to establish a Chinese School of International Relations theory, Taiwan has voluntarily accepted Western International Relations theory, but Taiwan should prioritize its needs and foreign relations interests based on its unique context and modernization trajectory. While theoretical frameworks may provide a foundation for Taiwan's soft power campaign, the reality is that Taiwan's soft power is influenced by its identity-based conflict with China and its domestic challenges of identity formation, democratization, and sovereignization. Therefore, neither Western International Relations theory nor Chinese International Relations theory can comprehensively address Taiwan's issue. Instead, Taiwan should forge its path, informed by its historical trajectory and the current domestic and international context.

Fell (2012) stated that the fragility of Taiwan's domestic consensus on external

relations is influenced by China's pressure for unification, yet it is significant for Taiwan's security and the peace of cross-strait relations. Taiwan aims to increase its participation in the international community and strategically position itself to safeguard national interests, particularly identity and security. Fell (2017) further argued that the social movements in Taiwan have influenced the political environment, highlighting that voices from civil society have shaped the discourse on identity and security. Hsu (2017) observed that various sectors of civil society were united during the 2014 Sunflower Movement, driven by concerns over cross-strait relations with China. Despite these developments, Taiwan's institutional incorporation of soft power remains underdeveloped. Taiwan's progress in identity formation, sovereignization, and democratization throughout the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has overshadowed its efforts to institutionalize soft power. Otmazgin (2022) interviewed several Taiwanese government officers in 2017 and found no structured institutional framework for soft power policy at that time, while Taiwan might still be in the transitional phase of planning how to leverage its soft power resources effectively in foreign policy. Additionally, he observed that Taiwanese society's ethnolinguistics and ethnic diversity share similarities with Southeast Asian nations such as Singapore and Malaysia. From this perspective, some sources indicate that Taiwan's soft power discourse has increasingly engaged with the New Southbound Policy, initiated in 2016 by President Tsai Ing-wen, 蔡英文, the leader of the DPP party, whose term spanned from 2016 to 2024. The New Southbound Policy aims to redefine Taiwan's role in regional development and create political, economic, and cultural values for its engagement in the region (Yang and Chiang 2019). Lee (2023) pointed out that the policy faces challenges, including how China will respond to the new relationship between Taiwan and Southeast Asian states, as well as the internal challenge of consolidating interests from various social actors into this policy. Although Taiwan's institutional promotion of soft power remains less evident, the New Southbound Policy may represent a significant milestone in the government's soft power strategy.

To sum up, comparing both China's and Taiwan's historical context of soft power reveals that the utilization of soft power is closely tied to each side's domestic political agenda. As both nations have undergone stages of stabilizing their regimes, their respective domestic political agendas play a pivotal role in shaping their diplomatic

policies, because they strive to establish their national identities that define their positions in the region. Notably, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has maintained the dominance of the Chinese Communist Party over its territory, while Taiwan has transformed into a democracy. This comparative perspective between China's and Taiwan's interpretations of soft power highlights the different roles of actors involved in soft power projection. In China, the government's role is dominant in promoting soft power, whereas in Taiwan, the government's role is not as strong as the civil society. As public diplomacy is to exert soft power, the role of actors involved in public diplomacy becomes crucial in understanding how soft power is utilized and promoted. The following section delves into an exploration of both China's and Taiwan's practice of public diplomacy.

### **4.3 The Practice of Public Diplomacy**

As both China and Taiwan's soft power interpretations were influenced by their domestic political agendas, the purpose of their public diplomacy diverged. For China, it is to mitigate the threat perception surrounding its rising to economic and military power. For Taiwan, it is to attain more international recognition for increasing its national security status as seen in Table 4.1. Their disparate purposes and the roles of actors set the distinct trajectories for their public diplomacy strategies.

Table 4.1 – Different Purposes and Roles of Actors in China and in Taiwan

	Purpose	Roles of Actors
China	To mitigate the threat perception for determining its power status	Government
Taiwan	To attain more international recognition for improving its security status	Government, non-state actors (such as civil society)

While China primarily relies on government actors to conduct public diplomacy, Taiwan’s approach involves a less dominant role for the government and allows for greater involvement of civil society. This contrast is evident in media outlets, where China aggressively promotes state-owned news and information to shape its image, whereas Taiwan leverages diverse private and social media platforms to engage both domestic and foreign audiences. Melissen (2007) introduced the concept of “new public diplomacy”, which acknowledges the expanding role of non-governmental organizations and the use of new technologies to foster greater exchange, collaboration, and dialogue. Promoting dialogues among different actors, Storie (2017) proposed the significance of cultivation strategy in practicing public diplomacy. Cultivating the communication between the actors and the audiences, Sullivan and Lee (2018) emphasized the significance of communication tools particularly the strategic use of media. More elaborations on the analysis of cultivation strategy and communication tools will be in *Chapter 8* with a particular focus on the original data collected in this dissertation.

These perspectives offer insights into the objectives of public diplomacy for both China and Taiwan, in particular, the roles of the actors involved. The following section investigates both China’s and Taiwan’s practices of public diplomacy.

### 4.3.1 China’s Practice of Public Diplomacy

In 2003, Hu JinTao, the former secretary-general of the CCP, articulated China’s commitment to a peaceful rise, emphasizing the use of soft power to cultivate a friendly image of China on the global stage. This vision aligned with China’s development of its theory of international relations, which aimed to harmonize foreign relations through soft power, resolving conflicts, and promoting cooperation. However, when Xi JinPing

assumed the position of secretary-general of the CCP in 2012, public diplomacy was elevated to a strategic foreign policy tool aimed not only at mitigating perceptions of China's rising but also at enhancing its power status. China's public diplomacy has thus been questioned for whether the use matches the goal. Sarnelli (2017) examined a Chinese TV program, UpClose, as a case study arguing that its content primarily served to legitimize the government's authority and target Chinese citizens living abroad, rather than effectively mediating the threat perceptions of non-Chinese speaking foreign audiences. Byrne (2019) suggested that China's public diplomacy with Indo-Pacific political leaders aimed to gain discursive power, shaping narratives of power status, and altering regional orders to serve national interests. Sun (2021) noted a desire for discursive power in Chinese officials' statements, emphasizing the expansion and strengthening of the government's policies and diplomatic practices. Furthermore, China's BRI highlighted the importance of public diplomacy in building reciprocal relations with participating countries. However, D'Hooghe (2021) argued that under President Xi Jinping's leadership, China's public diplomacy has become more politically focused, shifting from promoting Chinese culture to advocating China's political-economic models; for example, the Wolf Warrior diplomacy, “戰狼外交 Zhan Lang Wai Jiao,” was a salient change of China's style of public diplomacy. The “Wolf Warrior diplomacy” is Chinese diplomats criticizing the US and sometimes other countries on social media platforms. Mattingly and Sundquist (2022) suggested that this confrontational approach undermined China's efforts to establish a peaceful rising image, as it contradicted the principles of generosity and friendship inherent in public diplomacy. Kim and Melissen (2022) highlighted the ineffectiveness of China's public diplomacy in resolving major geopolitical crises such as the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile standoff with South Korea and tensions with Taiwan. Despite the aspirations of the Chinese school of International Relations theory to build a harmonious world society through soft power, China's practice of public diplomacy appears to deviate from this goal, raising concerns about its effectiveness and alignment with broader foreign policy objectives.

#### **4.3.2 Taiwan's Practice of Public Diplomacy**

As Taiwan has since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century been going through movements of identity formation, sovereignization, and democratization, democratic values have

emerged as significant elements of its soft power attracting foreign audiences, but Taiwan has been struggling to effectively export this soft power. Rawnsley (2017) aptly summarized Taiwan's situation as "soft power rich but public diplomacy poor," attributing this deficiency to bureaucratic barriers within government sectors. He proposed collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture to strategically utilize culture as a featured element channeling soft power. While the concept of Taiwanese culture develops alongside the formation of Taiwanese identity, the external communication tools highlighted by Rawnsley remain strategically relevant. Tsatsou (2018) studied Taiwan's use of Facebook during the 2014 Sunflower Movement and illustrated how digital platforms enabled citizen actors to shape domestic political agendas and coordinate offline activities. This involvement of non-state actors distinguishes Taiwan from China's government-dominated public diplomacy landscape. Rawnsley (2020) noted Taiwan's growing capacity for managing security threats through public diplomacy but emphasized the need to enhance popular familiarity to garner sympathy and support. He highlighted Taiwan's desire to participate in the World Health Assembly (WHA) as a case study, suggesting that effective communication strategies showcasing Taiwan's advanced healthcare systems and medical technology could yield diplomatic benefits. Alexander (2020) underscored the ethical value of Taiwan's participation in the WHA is a reflection of its internal self-identity. This premise suggests that Taiwan's societal issues and civic activism, such as the 2014 Sunflower Movement facilitated by democratization, influence its practice of public diplomacy. Chen and Fell (2021) enriched Taiwan's public diplomacy context with the case of TongZhi Diplomacy, which aims not to normalize queer individuals abroad but to normalize Taiwan's international status through its queer community. In essence, Taiwan's internal movements of identity formation, sovereignization, and democratization profoundly influence its external communication strategies, necessitating strategic utilization of public diplomacy to gain greater international recognition and enhance security status.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter explored China's and Taiwan's strategies of public diplomacy in terms of how they have been seen as a form of conflict resolution to resolve the identity-based conflict. The 20<sup>th</sup> century conflict history, primarily characterized by the

competition between the KMT and the CCP, has had a profound impact on the security environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consequently, unconventional approaches such as public diplomacy are crucial for resolving these conflicts. To bridge the theoretical foundation of conflict resolution with the practice of public diplomacy, this chapter first examined the historical cultural interpretations of soft power in China and Taiwan. These interpretations elucidated why both nations have turned to soft power to address identity-based conflicts. Secondly, the focus shifted to how these interpretations are manifested in the practice of public diplomacy. China's public diplomacy endeavors to mitigate threat perceptions and assert its power status globally, whereas Taiwan's public diplomacy, despite facing challenges in external communication strategies, seeks to garner more international recognition to enhance its security status. Taiwan's challenges of communication strategies will be elaborated in *Chapter 8* with a focus on the original data collected in this dissertation.

## **Chapter 5. Research Design and Methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design and methodology used for this dissertation. The central research question invites a qualitative analysis of the relationship between Taiwan's foreign relations narrative and its use of public diplomacy as a conflict resolution strategy. As discussed in the previous chapter, there have been abundant empirical studies on China's soft power and conflict resolution, but Taiwan's case has been limited in examination or often taken as a minor case in China studies. Therefore, the data gathered prioritizes a focus on Taiwan to enrich Taiwan's case within the fields of identity formation, security, conflict resolution, and public diplomacy. The research design relies on two complementary sources of data: (1) document analysis of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs annual policy reports (台灣外交年鑑) from 2000–2020, and (2) 18 semi-structured interviews with Taiwanese citizens who expatriated to China, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. To operationalize the concepts of peace and conflict derived from the literature review chapters, I developed a spectrum that incorporates historical and cultural dimensions in the coding process. This spectrum, introduced in section 5.4.1, displays the term lists used in the document analysis and supports the investigation of Taiwan's evolving conceptualization of conflict, security, and public diplomacy. The following sections are divided into: (1) research design: qualitative research, (2) data collection, (3) operationalization of key concepts, and (4) summary.

### **5.2 Research Design: Qualitative Research**

To address the central research question, this dissertation adopts a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the focus is not on measuring causal effects but on examining how identity, security, and public diplomacy are interpreted and practiced across different contexts. Alternative approaches such as comparative case studies (Mills et al. 2010), survey research (Julien 2008), or process tracing (Beach and Pedersen 2019) could measure effectiveness, identify general trends, or explore causality. However, the aim of this dissertation is to capture the evolving and nuanced meanings of Taiwan's identity and security within its conflict with China.

For this purpose, a qualitative design provides the necessary interpretive and context-sensitive tools.

Qualitative research is an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world, which refers to studying the natural settings to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings that people assign to them (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Qualitative methods are used to elaborate on the interpretations of themes, focusing on presenting the logic of how these themes are interpreted and connected (Graneheim et al. 2017). While qualitative research was for some time treated as an alternative to quantitative research, it has evolved and developed various approaches that should no longer restrict the definition but focus on its features (Flick 2018). For example, interpreting data can be derived from the research field notes and transcription of the interviews, which the researcher conducted in the setting of studying people's observations and perceptions. The analysis results provide a more comprehensive understanding of respondents' lives than is obtained by inviting them to complete a survey about everyday events (Bailey 2018). If the goal is to measure the effectiveness of public diplomacy strategies in solving the identity-based conflict, the methods can be comparative case studies, survey research, or process tracing.

Several research projects have employed qualitative descriptive analysis to delve into the conceptualization of conflict resolution and public diplomacy. For instance, Darnton (2020) investigated the relationship between public diplomacy and international conflict resolution in Cold War-era South America through descriptive analysis of archived evidence, such as the Argentine Ambassador's speeches and interaction events involving Brazil. Similarly, Storie (2015) conducted focus group interviews with young females in the United Arab Emirates, revealing the necessity of incorporating cultural values and local languages into public diplomacy messages, despite English's global prevalence. Storie (2017) also highlighted the challenges of interviewing public affairs officers due to their cautiousness in sharing information, suggesting that exploring the local political context could supplement interview limitations. Conducting interviews has been central to more recent studies. Arai (2023) investigated Taiwanese social memory through interviews on individual perceptions of historical conflict with China. Ayhan and Jang (2022) interviewed ten South Korean participants and supplemented their findings with interviews with bureaucrats and

policy documents to examine the impact of people-to-people diplomacy on identity, underscoring the enhanced validity achieved through combining policy documents and interviews. Building on these studies, I apply both content and thematic analysis to examine how state narratives and societal experiences together shape Taiwan's public diplomacy.

Two qualitative methods are employed: content analysis of policy documents and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. These methods are selected to address the research aim of examining how Taiwan's public diplomacy intersects with identity formation and security concerns. Content analysis is used for addressing social problems or policies affecting individuals or groups (Drisko and Maschi 2015). Here, I apply content analysis to Taiwan's annual diplomatic policy reports (2000 – 2020) to uncover evolving patterns, themes, and narratives. Particularly, these annual policy reports feature a longitudinal nature that enables the examination of evolution and development over time (Krippendorff 2004). To enhance transparency and conceptual clarity, the analysis produced conceptual maps and thematic categories (Elo and Kyngäs 2008), aided by the open-source software system, DocuSky, as specified later in this chapter. While individuals' motivations can be multifaceted, thematic analysis serves as a valuable model for interview data (Emmons and King 2009). Thematic analysis is used to examine interview data, which allows a richer description and interpretation of individual perspectives and often results in the creation of thematic maps (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). Semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable for capturing lived experiences and the ways individuals perceive Taiwan's diplomatic practices, identity, and security.

The data set combines these two perspectives: 21 annual diplomatic policy reports from Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 18 semi-structured interviews with Taiwanese expatriates conducted between 2022 and 2023. The reports reflect the state's official narrative of shifting diplomatic priorities, while the interviews capture societal perspectives, thereby bridging the gap between governmental strategy and civil society perceptions. To ground the analysis in concrete developments, the interviews focused on three focal cases: The South China Sea dispute, the ECFA, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These cases were selected because they represent critical moments in which Taiwan's identity, sovereignty, and security were tested, and they correspond with

shifts in Taiwan's public diplomacy strategy. Examining these moments through both state documents and individual experiences provides a grounded understanding of how Taiwan's public diplomacy has been conceptualized as a conflict resolution tool in the 2000–2020 period.

### **5.3 Data Collection**

The data collection process encompasses sampling procedures and stages for gathering two types of data: policy documents and semi-structured interviews. For the policy documents, this section elucidates the rationale behind selecting these data sources, the methodology employed for data retrieval, and the languages utilized in interpreting the documents. For the semi-structured interviews, this section explains the process of respondent recruitment, ethical considerations about obtaining interview consent, and the languages utilized during the interviews.

#### **5.3.1 Data Collection: Policy Document**

This section explains the data collection of the policy documents in the following order: first, the sampling process of the policy documents; second, the stages of collecting these documents; at last, the concern of languages.

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has annually released reports on diplomatic work since 1997, archived on the official website (<https://www.mofa.gov.tw/News.aspx?n=245&sms=109>). For this dissertation, twenty-one annual diplomatic policy reports spanning from 2000 to 2020 were collected. To evaluate the relationship between security, conflict resolution, and public diplomacy, the data sections selected from the reports were the chapters of (a) a summary of Asia-Pacific relations, and (b) a summary of public diplomacy implementation.

The annual reports from Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide comprehensive descriptions of diplomatic administration, relations with other states, diplomatic approaches, and challenges to Taiwan's diplomatic status. These reports, openly accessible on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, were downloaded and processed into text files for analysis. Only text-based data was used for analysis, excluding image files such as jpg or png.

All 21 annual diplomatic reports are written exclusively in traditional Mandarin and are not officially translated into other languages. This linguistic and open accessibility suggests that their primary audience is the domestic Taiwanese public, rather than international readers. In this context, these reports are not just bureaucratic records but serve a domestic communicative function, reinforcing state identity narratives and national purpose. Some terms within the reports were translated into English by the researcher for academic purposes, such as 台灣書院 translated to “Taiwan Library,” 青年打工度假 translated to “Youth Mobility Scheme,” and 外交小尖兵 translated to “Teen Diplomatic Envoys.” However, major policy terms such as 新南向政策 New Southbound Policy were retained in Mandarin, as they are commonly used and understood in mainstream media without translation.

### **5.3.2 Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews**

This section explains the data collection of semi-structured interviews in the following order: first, the sampling of the respondents; second, the ethical considerations of conducting the interviews; third, the stages of collecting the interviews; and lastly, the concern of languages in these interviews.

The recruitment of respondents began with multiple entry points, namely, the researcher’s professional and academic networks in Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. From this initial pool, respondents were identified who had expatriate experiences in China, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. These individuals came from diverse backgrounds, including academia, business, government authorities, and NGOs. The key selection criterion was that respondents had lived or worked in relation to the historical conflictual events discussed in *Chapter 2*: the South China Sea dispute, the ECFA, and the COVID-19 pandemic. To expand the respondent pool while retaining relevance to these thematic concerns, snowball sampling was employed. Initial contacts recommended others whose expatriate experiences were aligned with the focus of this dissertation. Although the snowball method carries the risk of reproducing similar demographic profiles or perspectives, this limitation was mitigated by beginning with a deliberately diverse initial sample and balancing regional experiences between China and Southeast Asia. More interviews were eventually conducted with Southeast Asia-based individuals due to availability and relevance, but

the strategy ensured a broader diversity than would have resulted from a single network or professional cohort.

In total, 18 interviews were conducted. Sixteen were carried out through online meeting platforms. These respondents resided outside of Taiwan and had limited availability due to professional responsibilities, which involved frequent travel between Taiwan and their respective countries of expatriation, making in-person interviews logistically difficult. Two respondents, however, were interviewed in person in Taiwan, as they had recently concluded their expatriate duties and were available for face-to-face interviews. All respondents have given their consent to participate in interviews under the condition of confidentiality. The consent process was explained to respondents before the interview throughout the consent form, which can be found in Appendix I, to ensure respondents the protection of their data, the interview format, and the questionnaire. The recording of 16 interviews was consented with the respondents and transcribed, while two interviews were not recorded due to respondents' concerns and thus were considered as key informant interviews. To ensure privacy protection, all recordings and transcriptions were not shared in the public archive but only in the researcher's private drive. The recordings were all deleted after being transcribed into texts without the possibility of tracing them back to the respondents.

The interviews were conducted in three stages: first, profiling the respondents' wish to engage with which historical conflictual event; second, recording by audio the respondents' interviews sharing their stories of experiencing these historical events, their observations of the environment in the country they expatriated to, and their views of the impact of these events on their life; at last, the respondents received the preliminary analysis result of their interviews and confirmed or supplemented anything to their own story, in which the recording was also deleted after the result of the transcription. These three stages were from December 2022 to June 2023. The first stage was not recorded by audio, but was interviewed within 15 minutes. The second stage was recorded by audio, and 16 interviews ranged from 78 minutes to 126 minutes, while two interviews were not recorded due to respondents' concerns. The third stage was not recorded by audio but shared in texts by respondents.

All respondents were coded in two alphabetical symbols and one digital number. The first alphabetical symbol is respectively for three different chosen historical conflictual events A, B, and C. The second alphabetical symbol is referred to if the respondent has chosen to share experiences with the other event; namely, the code X is that the respondent has shared experiences with all three events whereas code E is that the respondent has only shared experiences with one event. The digital number is the sequence of the interviews conducted. Hence, the respondent coded with AX1 refers to the interview content started from event A to the other two events and is the first in the sequence of event A to be interviewed.

The interviews were conducted in Mandarin, Taiwanese, or English suited to the respondents' linguistic environment accordingly to ensure that the respondents could use their own words in their cultural understanding to share their experiences and observations. 15 interviews were mixed in Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English. two interviews were only in Mandarin and Taiwanese while one was only in Mandarin and English. The transcription was generated with these linguistic features accordingly because the words or phrases (codes) used by the respondents in their chosen languages reflected the respondents' conceptualization of identity and conflict. These codes also facilitated the coding process of the thematic analysis of the interviews.

These 18 semi-structured interviews were not intended to achieve statistical representativeness but to access the situated perspectives across diverse professional and regional backgrounds. The respondents do not claim to represent the entirety of Taiwanese civil society, but their accounts offer grounded insight into how individuals experience and interpret Taiwan's public diplomacy in the countries where they have lived and worked. In particular, the interviews provide more nuanced and pragmatic views than the official narratives found in policy documents. While the policy documents reflect the state's evolving diplomatic strategy, they do not capture the lived experiences, affective responses, and identity negotiations that Taiwanese expatriates encounter. This dissertation adopts the view that public diplomacy in Taiwan is not exclusively state-driven but increasingly shaped and co-produced by active citizens. As discussed in Chapter 2, state initiatives such as the New Southbound Policy have explicitly encouraged civil society engagement and people-to-people diplomacy. The semi-structured interviews thus serve not only to supplement the governmental

narratives but also to foreground the civil society perspectives. By selecting individuals who have experienced major historical conflictual events, the interviews enrich this dissertation's exploration of identity-based conflict and public diplomacy from the bottom up, which is often invisible in official discourse.

## **5.4 Data Operationalization of Key Concepts**

The operationalization of key concepts draws upon insights gleaned from the literature review chapters on East Asian Security, conflict resolution in East Asia, and China's and Taiwan's public diplomacy. The theoretical frameworks from these chapters have guided the conceptualization of key concepts within this research design chapter. The theoretical perspectives have elucidated the interconnections among security, conflict resolution, and public diplomacy in the context of East Asia, particularly in the case of China and Taiwan. Therefore, the data collection and analysis process is structured to reflect these conceptual frameworks, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research question. The data set derived from policy documents was utilized to examine these key concepts, focusing on their manifestation within official diplomatic reports. On the other hand, the data set obtained from semi-structured interviews was employed to explore the conceptualization of conflict and public diplomacy from the perspective of individuals residing in East Asia.

### **5.4.1 Data Operationalization: Policy Documents**

The operationalization of the policy documents involved three stages: (a) setting up key concepts into a spectrum, (b) creating a term list, and (c) analysis with the DocuSky software.

First, I constructed a spectrum to capture concepts of peace and conflict, drawing on insights from the literature review chapters and grounded in Taiwan's historical and cultural context. This framework, presented in Figure 5.1, ensured that conflict resolution concepts were not imported from external theories but adapted to Taiwan's specific context.

Second, based on this spectrum, I categorized words into two groups: one for peace and one for conflict, as compiled in the resulting term list in Table 5.1. These terms were employed as codes in the analysis of the government documents.

Third, I applied the list to the texts of 21 policy documents using the open-source software DocuSky<sup>7</sup> system, which is designed and managed by National Taiwan University. DocuSky was selected for its compatibility with traditional Mandarin, the language of Taiwan's official documents. Through topic modeling, the analysis traced Taiwan's evolving narratives on foreign relations in East Asia, highlighting conceptualizations of security, conflict, and public diplomacy. The results provide an overview of how Taiwan's public diplomacy has developed in relation to its East Asian neighbors, with detailed findings presented in *Chapter 6*.

Figure 5.1 – Spectrum of Peace and Conflict



Table 5.1 – Term List

<b>Peace, stability, cooperation, collaboration</b>	和睦, 和諧, 和平, 和藹, 和好, 融洽, 平和, 友善, 友好, 友愛, 敦睦, 溫和, 親睦, 和氣, 妥協, 互惠, 互利, 共存, 共生, 協調, 調協, 調勻, 調和, 調諧, 諧和, 諧調, 諧和, 相和, 協和, 祥和, 和煦,
<b>Conflict, war, unification, revolution</b>	統一, 合併, 統戰, 戰爭, 戰鬥, 交戰, 奮鬥, 打仗, 戰役, 交鋒, 干戈, 搏鬥, 交兵, 兵戈, 革命, 鬥爭, 獨立, 振興, 復興, 崛起, 強盛, 興盛, 解放, 維穩

#### 5.4.2 Data Operationalization: Semi-structured Interviews

In the first stage of the data collection, respondents received an invitation along with an outline of questions and explanations of three chosen historical conflictual events as detailed in Table 5.2, titled 'Outline of Questions', and Table 5.3, titled 'Explanation of Three Chosen Conflictual Events'. These are also included in the consent form given to respondents (see Appendix I).

<sup>7</sup> <https://docusky.org.tw/DocuSky/home/>

Table 5.2 – Outline of Questions

<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the conflict?</li> <li>• What are the reasons that make it a conflict?</li> <li>• Has there been any effort made to appease the conflict?</li> </ul>
<b>Opinion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What solutions have the experts proposed to appease the conflict?</li> <li>• Have you spotted the government (China's/Taiwan's) engaged in diplomatic policy to appease the conflict? Do you think they are effective in resolving conflicts?</li> <li>• What do you think of the (China's/Taiwan's) public diplomacy practices?</li> </ul>

Table 5.2 illustrates that the interviews were in a semi-structured format, designed to prompt the respondents to describe their experiences and articulate their observations and views. The descriptive nature of the questions aimed to elicit respondents' language, capturing the words or phrases (codes) they used to describe the conflict. In Table 5.3, each conflict type is accompanied by a question mark, aligning with the interview questions. This approach encouraged respondents to provide their perspectives on how they would describe the conflict and the reasons they attributed to each historical event. This method enabled the investigation of the concepts of conflict and conflict resolution from the perspectives of civil society and individuals.

Table 5.3 – Explanation of Three Chosen Historical Conflictual Events

<b>Event Code</b>	<b>Conflict Type</b>	<b>Events</b>
A	Territorial Issue?	2002 Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea 2016, Arbitral Tribunal to the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China
B	Economic Trade Crisis?	2010 Chong Ching, China, Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement 2014 Taipei, Taiwan, Sunflower Movement against the trade agreement
C	State-society Relations?	2020, COVID-19 crisis border control/immigration

While the interview questions, along with the explanation of the historical conflictual events, were explained to respondents in the consent form, the questions were further elaborated during the interview, which can be seen in Appendix II. After the initial interview, the respondents received a preliminary analysis of their interview responses, which can be seen in Appendix III. They were invited to provide supplementary details to either description-type or opinion-type questions. The

interviews remain confidential and not traceable to the respondents' identification. Respondents were provided with a profiling of their interviews, as shown in Table 5.4, titled 'Interview Profiling.' In this profiling, only the boxes marked with an asterisk were mandatory, while the other boxes were optional.

Table 5.4 – Interview Profiling

<b>A</b>	<b>The South China Sea</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>ECFA Trade Agreement</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>COVID-19 Border Control</b>
Respondents* Pseudonym	Date of Interview*	Age	Gender	Occupation	Position

Respondents coded in X shared their memories, observations, and experiences from all other historical conflictual events. Only 1 respondent shared the experiences about only two historical conflictual events and thus is coded as BC3, indicating the provision of experiences about events B and C. In total, 9 respondents shared their experiences with more than one event, while the remaining 9 respondents shared experiences about only one event. The average time duration of the interviews for respondents with multiple events differed by less than five minutes compared to the respondents with only one event. The reasons for respondents choosing to be interviewed about only one event were not further investigated, as interview content and questions were based on the respondent's initiative to select the event of interest. The results of the interviews profiling from 18 respondents are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 – Results of Interview Profiling

<b>Event code</b>	<b>More than one event</b>	<b>Only one event</b>
A: The South China Sea	AX1, AX2	
B: Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement	BX1, BX2, BC3	BE1, BE2, BE3
C: COVID-19	CX1, CX2, CX3, CX4	CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4, CE5, CE6

Based on the event types covered in all interviews, the data gathered consisted of 15 interviews focused on the COVID-19, 12 interviews on the ECFA, and 8 interviews on the South China Sea. Table 5.6 lists the date of the first stage of interviews conducted, the second stage of interviews whether supplementary details were provided, and the language used during the interview. It is worth noting that the COVID-19 event was ongoing during the interview period. For respondents engaged with the ECFA event, it

was perceived as a historical event that occurred around 2012 - 2014. The South China Sea event presented more variability in terms of its historical timeline, as evidenced by respondents' descriptions of the conflict's origins and development. Some respondents claimed it began in the 1990s, while others suggested it was a more recent development, particularly since 2013 when Xi Jinping became the Secretary-General of the CCP. In addition, respondents coded with event B, the ECFA, have all provided supplementary details of opinion-type questions in the second stage of data collection, except for respondent BE1. Although more respondents were coded with event C, fewer supplementary details were provided, except for respondents CX4, CE4, and CE6.

Table 5.6 – List of Interviews Conducted (in Alphabetical Order of the Respondent Code)

<b>Respondent Code</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> stage: Interview Date</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Supplementary Details</b>	<b>Language used during Interview</b>
AX1	2 Feb 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin, partially English
AX2	5 Feb 2023	Supplied opinion-type questions	Mandarin, partially English
BX1	7 Feb 2023	Supplied opinion-type questions	Taiwanese
BX2	17 Feb 2023	Supplied opinion-type questions	Mandarin
BC3	5 Feb 2023	Supplied descriptive and opinion-type questions	Mandarin
BE1	29 Dec 2022	Confirmed	Taiwanese, partially Mandarin
BE2	10 Feb 2023	Supplied opinion-type questions	Mandarin
BE3	12 Feb 2023	Supplied descriptive and opinion-type questions	Mandarin, partially Taiwanese
CX1	19 Feb 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin, partially Taiwanese
CX2	24 Feb 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin, partially Taiwanese
CX3	16 Mar 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin, partially English
CX4	13 Mar 2023	Supplied opinion-type questions	Mandarin
CE1	25 Mar 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin, partially English
CE2	12 Jan 2023	Confirmed	Taiwanese
CE3	10 Feb 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin
CE4	14 Feb 2023	Supplied descriptive-type questions	Mandarin, partially English
CE5	2 Mar 2023	Confirmed	Mandarin
CE6	20 Jun 2023	Supplied descriptive-type questions	Mandarin

## **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the qualitative approach employed to investigate the relationship between Taiwan's evolving narrative of foreign relations and its strategic use of public diplomacy as a mechanism for conflict resolution. The methodological design is grounded in the conceptual discussions of identity, security, and conflict resolution developed in the literature review chapters, which inform the operationalization of key concepts such as peace and conflict. To capture both institutional and societal dimensions, the research integrates two data sources: Taiwan's diplomatic policy reports spanning from 2000 to 2020 and semi-structured interviews with Taiwanese expatriates. This combination of top-down policy analysis and bottom-up experiential perspectives provides a richer and more nuanced understanding than reliance on a single data type. By bridging governmental narratives with lived experiences, the research addresses a critical gap in the literature, which has often overlooked Taiwan's distinct approach to public diplomacy amid its contested international status. This interdisciplinary perspective provides an original contribution to the fields of security and diplomacy studies, with a fresh lens on how public diplomacy strategies are conceptualized and practiced to address identity-based conflicts.

- An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Academic Conference “Challenging Relations with(in) East Asia,” Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania, 3-4 Nov 2023 as well as sent as a book chapter awaiting publication at the time of this dissertation’s completion: Abidde, S, ed., “*Tsai Ing-wen and Taiwan: An Assessment of the First Administration, 2016-2020*” Bloomsbury.

## Chapter 6. Results – Analysis of Policy Documents

The data set to be analyzed is the annual reports of diplomatic work from Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2020. I conducted content analysis to present the evolution of the diplomatic policy over these twenty years, along with a term list of the rhetoric of peace and conflicts. In this chapter, I present three main findings from this data set: (1) expanding and the restructuring of the contents, (2) change of narrative in relations status, and (3) content evolution of “public diplomacy.”

### 6.1 Expanding the Restructuring of the Contents

I categorized Taiwan’s diplomatic annual reports into three stages, as summarized in Table 6.1. From 2000 to 2009, the reports took the form of a basic web page with a straightforward table of contents listing only the chapters. Between 2010 and 2014, the format shifted to an e-book, featuring a more elaborate table of contents that included both chapters and sub-chapters, with the reports ranging from 482 pages to 652 pages. From 2015 to 2020, the reports appeared as PDF files, each extending from 732 to 876 pages. Based on this sampling and dataset construction, the subsequent analysis is organized into three sections: (1) changes in the table of contents, (2) a summary of relations in the Asia-Pacific region, and (3) the sub-chapter devoted to “public diplomacy.”

Table 6.1 – Taiwan’s Diplomatic Annual Reports in Three Stages by Format

2000–2005	2006–2015	2016–2020
webpage	E-book Pages 482 to 652	PDF File Pages 732 to 876

These three structural shifts in the format and content organization of the annual reports reflect not just bureaucratic changes in information management but signal a growing attempt by Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to institutionalize a broader, more accessible, and systematic diplomatic narrative. This evolution suggests an effort to align presentation with strategic objectives, particularly in relation to visibility, audience engagement, and international positioning.

### 6.1.1 Changes of the Chapter Title Describing Relations with Foreign States

In the first stage of the dataset, chapter 3 is entitled 中外關係, which can be translated as Relations of the Republic of China and Foreign States. In the second stage, chapter 2 appears under the title 對外關係, translated as Relations with Foreign States. The same title, 對外關係, is used again for chapter 3 in the third stage. Linguistically, 中 signifies “center” and denotes the Republic of China, 外 means “outside” or “foreign,” and 關係 indicates “relations”. Hence, in the local language and political context, 中外關係 refers to the Republic of China’s relations with foreign states. In contrast, in 對外關係, the character 對 conveys “facing” or “toward,” 外 denotes “foreign,” and 關係 signifies “relations.” Taken together, the phrase is more directly understood as Foreign Relations. The comparative overview of these chapter titles is displayed in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 – Changes of the Chapter Title

2000–2005	2006–2015	2016–2020
第一章 首長外交活動照片	第一章 首長外交活動照	第一章 首長外交活動照片
第二章 外交施政概況	片	第二章 外交施政方針與計畫
第三章 中外關係 (Centre-Outer Relations)	第二章 對外關係 (Outer Relations)	第三章 對外關係 (Outer Relations)
第四章 領事事務	第三章 領事事務	第四章 領事事務
第五章 外交行政	第四章 外交行政	第五章 外交行政
第六章 外交大事日誌	第五章 外交大事日誌	第六章 外交大事日誌

The shift from 中外關係, Republic of China’s Relations with Foreign States, to 對外關係, Foreign Relations, is not merely semantic. It marks a strategic reorientation toward a more neutral, internationally palatable framing of Taiwan’s global engagement. By removing explicit references to China, 中, the terminology subtly distances Taiwan’s diplomatic narrative from China-centric frameworks, thus reinforcing Taiwan’s identity as a distinct international actor.

### 6.1.2 A Summary of Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region

In the chapter summarizing Taiwan's relations with foreign states, the content was organized by region. There was no dedicated section for East Asia 東亞, but rather for Asia-Pacific 亞太. This section consistently omitted any description of relations with China. Moreover, between 2000 and 2013, the Asia-Pacific section explicitly stated that it excluded China, whereas from 2014 to 2020, it no longer mentioned China but instead specified the inclusion of 我國, which literally translates to “my country.” Table 6.3 provides excerpts of these descriptions from the dataset. The Asia-Pacific region was defined in the reports as follows: “[...]...亞太地區一般以地緣及政治因素加以區分，大致 分為東北亞、東南亞、南亞、澳紐與南太平洋 4 個區域。” It is literally translated as “The Asia-Pacific is generally divided according to geopolitical factors into four regions: (a) Northeast Asia, (b) Southeast Asia, (c) South Asia, (d) Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific.”

Table 6.3 – Summary of Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region

2000–2013	2014–2020
[...]...亞太地區除中國大陸外.....	[...]...亞太地區.....包含我國在內.....
[...]...Asia-Pacific region except Mainland China.....	[...]...Asia-Pacific Region.....Including my country.....

Moreover, the order of the states in the Asia-Pacific region has changed and can be categorized into three stages, as seen in Table 6.4. From 2000 to 2007, the order of the states in Northeast and Southeast Asia was Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei. From 2008 to 2015, it was changed and inter-situated with other Oceanic states: the order was then Brunei, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. From 2016 to 2020, it was the same order as in the previous stage, but one more state was mentioned, Myanmar. At last, in 2020, Myanmar was even re-ordered between Malaysia and the Philippines.

Table 6.4 – Order of the States in Asia-Pacific

Years	2000–2007	2008–2015	2016–2020
Listed order	Japan South Korea Thailand Indonesia Singapore Philippines Malaysia Vietnam Brunei	Brunei Indonesia Japan South Korea Malaysia Philippines Singapore Thailand Vietnam	Brunei Indonesia Japan South Korea Malaysia Philippines Singapore Thailand Vietnam Myanmar

The redefinition of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly the omission of China and inclusion of 我國, my country, reveals a subtle but meaningful recalibration of Taiwan's regional identity. By categorizing itself within the Asia-Pacific rather than in reference to China, Taiwan signals its aspiration to be seen as a proactive regional player rather than a subordinate geopolitical entity. This reflects an implicit conflict resolution strategy, which is to disengage discursively from the disputed cross-strait relations narratives and to re-direct attention to cooperative regionalism.

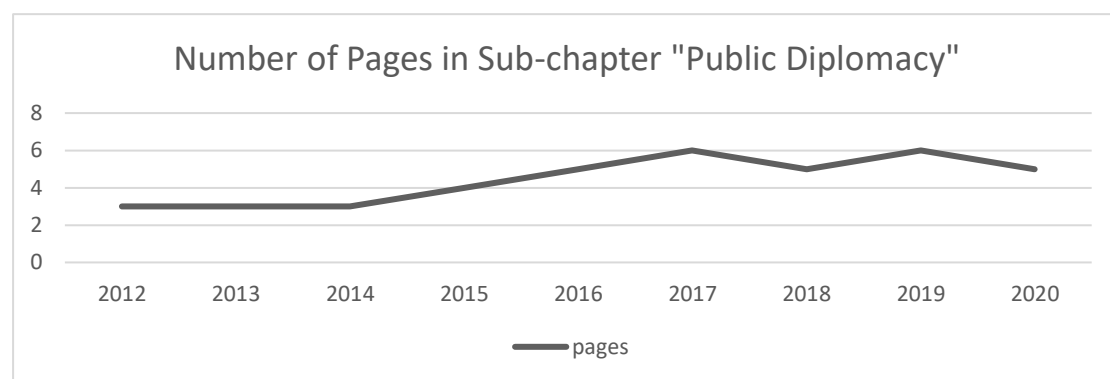
### 6.1.3 The Sub-chapter Devoted to “Public Diplomacy”

In Taiwan, public diplomacy is translated as 公眾外交. In the dataset, it did not appear in the table of contents between 2000 and 2011. Beginning in 2012, however, a dedicated sub-chapter on public diplomacy was introduced under the chapter “對外關係,” which is translated as “Relations with Foreign States.” Between 2012 and 2015, this sub-chapter was grouped together with 國際傳播 and 國際文教, terms referring to “International Communication” and “International Culture and Education.” From 2016 onward, the title was streamlined to 國際傳播與公眾外交, a phrase that means “International Communication and Public Diplomacy.” Table 6.5 shows this development in chapter structure, while Figure 6.1 illustrates the expansion of content, which grew from three pages in 2012 to five pages by 2020.

Table 6.5 – Table of Contents Including Public Diplomacy

2012–2015	2016–2020
第一章 首長外交活動照片	第一章 首長外交活動照片
第二章 對外關係	第二章 外交施政方針與計畫
第四節 國際傳播、公眾外交及國際文教	第三章 對外關係
第三章 領事事務	第四節 國際傳播與公眾外交
第四章 外交行政	第四章 領事事務
第五章 外交大事日誌	第五章 外交行政
	第六章 外交大事日誌

Figure 6.1 – Number of Pages in Sub-chapter of Public Diplomacy from 2012 to 2020



The formal inclusion and rebranding of 公眾外交, Public Diplomacy, in the report structure, particularly its increasing prominence and association with communication, reflects more than a discursive trend. It evidences a strategic shift toward soft power and people-to-people engagement as pillars of Taiwan's external policy. This institutional recognition of public diplomacy demonstrates the state's adaptation to the constraints of formal diplomacy by emphasizing legitimacy through societal outreach, cultural affinity, and global narrative-building.

## 6.2 Change of Narrative of Relations Status

The evolution of the narrative of relations in the Asia-Pacific region can be divided into four stages<sup>8</sup>: 2001 敦睦, 2002–2005 和平, 2007–2013 友好敦睦, 2016–2020 友好協調, as displayed in Table 6.6. The term 敦睦 conveys the idea of harmony, while 和平 denotes peace. 友好 carries the sense of friendliness, and 協調 emphasizes

<sup>8</sup> The result of 2011 was not displayed, because a technical issue prevented the file from reading in text format. Due to the technical difficulty, the result of this year was discarded.

coordination. This progression of terminology reflects a rhetorical shift from a more passive emphasis on harmony to a more active and cooperative tone that stresses coordination and mutual benefit. The transition from “harmony” to “coordination” may indicate the increasing institutionalization of Taiwan’s regional diplomacy and an effort to move from symbolic reassurance toward concrete partnership-building.

Table 6.6 – Result of DocuSky System Analysis

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020

Table 6.7 displays a further analysis by applying the spectrum of peace and conflict (Figure 5.1 Spectrum of Peace and Conflict, in *Chapter 5*), in which the top section represents peace, whereas the bottom section represents conflict. Although peace-related terms are mentioned from 2001 to 2020, conflict-related terms are stated in the time period of 2008–2016.

Table 6.7 – Result of Narrative of Relation Status Evolution

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Peace		敦睦	和平	和平	和平	和平	友好	友好	友好 敦睦	敦睦
Conflict	獨立								獨立	獨立
Year	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Peace	敦睦	和平 敦睦	友好			友好	協調	友好	協調	友好 協調
Conflict	獨立	獨立	獨立	獨立	獨立	獨立				

This coexistence of peace and conflict vocabulary suggests that Taiwan’s diplomatic strategy during this period was marked by both reassurance and caution. It reflects a dual imperative, which is to assert peaceful intentions while simultaneously acknowledging rising regional tensions particularly related to its contested sovereignty. The inclusion of conflict terms during these years may also reflect the pressures of growing cross-strait tensions and regional disputes, necessitating a more complex diplomatic vocabulary.

### 6.3 Content Evolution of Public Diplomacy

From 2012 to 2020, there has been a fixed chapter entitled Public Diplomacy. Table 6.8 presents the sentiment of the description in public diplomacy, which is more toward peace, coordination, and cooperation. This trend reflects a deliberate shift in tone and priorities rather than merely rhetorical rebranding. By emphasizing “coordination,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs articulates a diplomacy that seeks legitimacy through cooperation rather than confrontation, and through people-to-people engagement rather than formal recognition.

Table 6.8 – DocuSky Result of Public Diplomacy Narrative

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
統一	和平 協調 統一 復興	協調	協調	協調
2017	2018	2019	2020	
協調	協調	協調	協調	

Table 6.9 displays the top section to be peace-related terms, 協調, coordination, and it is mainly the rhetoric in public diplomacy, whereas the conflict sentiments only appear in 2012 and 2013. The result of public diplomacy narrative evolution is similar to the result of the narrative of summary of relations with foreign states (as in previous paragraphs). From 2008 to 2016, there was more sentiment toward 統一 unification, and 復興 revival, which are categorized into the conflict spectrum. However, since 2014, there has been mainly and only the term 協調 coordination, in the rhetoric of public diplomacy. This shift from references to “復興 revival” and “統一 unification” to a persistent emphasis on coordination marks a rhetorical turn away from assertive nationalism toward pragmatic coexistence. It signals that Taiwan’s public diplomacy is evolving as part of a broader conflict resolution strategy that highlights soft power and relationship-building.

Table 6.9 – Result of Narrative Evolution

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Peace		和平、協調	協調	協調	協調
Conflict	統一	統一、復興			
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Peace	協調	協調	協調	協調	
Conflict					

I applied content analysis in this sub-chapter and argued three main findings of public diplomacy evolution: (1) from informing people to strengthening people's support and involvement, (2) disseminating public diplomacy in the educational context, and (3) the New Southbound Policy.

### 6.3.1 From Informing People to Strengthening People's Support and Involvement

The first key finding concerns the rhetorical evolution of Taiwan's public diplomacy. This shift highlights a strategy that increasingly positions ordinary citizens as active participants in public diplomacy. Table 6.10, titled 'Rhetoric of Public Diplomacy from Informing to Involving,' illustrates this trajectory. When public diplomacy was first introduced as a core strategy in the 2012 diplomatic report, it was framed as a means of satisfying the people's right to know. By 2014, the emphasis had moved toward making people understand and gaining popular support. In the period from 2015 to 2020, the rhetoric was refined further, stressing the consolidation of both understanding and support as central objectives of public diplomacy.

Table 6.10 – Rhetoric of Public Diplomacy from Informing to Involving

2012–2013	滿足民眾對外交施政”知”的權利 Satisfy the people's right to know
2014	使民眾了解外交施政 爭取全民對外拓展關係的支持 Make people understand and to gain people's support
2015–2020	強化國人對我國外交事務的了解與支持 Strengthen people's understanding and support

This increasing emphasis on citizen involvement represents more than rhetorical expansion; it reflects a shift toward a participatory model of diplomacy. Public diplomacy becomes a site of identity production, where Taiwanese citizens are not just informed of policy but enlisted as representatives of the national image abroad. This suggests that Taiwan's citizens have become increasingly involved as the actors practicing public diplomacy, which is further investigated in semi-structured interviews with Taiwanese citizens abroad.

In addition, the involvement of Taiwan's people in the public diplomacy strategy has turned more active, and so has the adaptation of foreign affairs, regional topics, and

international issues, as shown in the conduct of public diplomacy. It is stated in these reports how Taiwan's public diplomacy strategy is resorted to dealing with foreign policy. The adaptation of the foreign affairs topics can be defined in three stages: 2012, 2013–2015, and 2016–2020 (as seen in Table 6.11). In 2012, it was stated that one of the public diplomacy strategies is to collect and analyze information on China's policy, and to update to react to foreign states' concerns about China. In 2013–2015, it was mentioned that public diplomacy strategy is to connect with significant foreign affairs such as 東海和平倡議 East China Sea peaceful initiative, 釣魚台 Senkaku Islands dispute and peaceful solution, 南海主權 South China Sea sovereignty, 經貿外交 economic and trade diplomacy, 青年國際接軌 Youth International Mobility. The term applied to describe the diplomatic policy at this stage is 活路外交 Flexible Diplomacy. In 2016–2020, there is a significant element of the New Southbound Policy highlighted to build stronger ties with Southeast Asian states at this stage. Beyond the New Southbound Policy, the public diplomacy strategy broadened its scope to include civil society dimensions, such as economics, trade, investment, driver's licenses exchanges, and youth mobility schemes. The diplomatic approach during this period was labeled 踏實外交 Steadfast Diplomacy.

Table 6.11 – Rhetoric of Public Diplomacy Strategy in Adaptation of the Foreign Affairs Topics

2012	適時將政府大陸政策、兩岸關係重要措施與作法及首長有關大陸政策之談話等資訊提供駐外館處參考，以利適時向駐在國各界說明
2013–2015	東海和平倡議 釣魚台 南海主權 經貿外交 青年國際接軌 活路外交
2016–2020	新南向政策 援外國際合作 友邦經貿投資商機 推動國際參與 國人免簽證待遇免試申換駕照 青年打工 踏實外交

These developments indicate that public diplomacy has become Taiwan's preferred mechanism for shaping international narratives through shared societal values and civic engagement. Especially under the New Southbound Policy, the state deliberately promotes soft channels of influence through education, cultural diplomacy, and digital outreach, which bypass official recognition barriers but reinforce Taiwan's de facto international presence.

Besides involving people in and connecting to foreign affairs topics, in each year from 2012 to 2020, there is a key emphasis on three goals: 數位化 digitalization, 連

接社群媒體 the use of social media, and 提升政策的網路能見度 the promotion of awareness of policy stance online. For example, the implementation of public diplomacy is to establish a website and social media, such as YouTube, and promote awareness online about the current foreign policy content. Information about the policy stance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was printed and sent to not only all levels of government authorities but also civil society, private and public universities, middle schools, as well as domestic or foreign libraries. This digital turn reveals Taiwan's pivot toward network-based diplomacy. The use of online platforms to engage with civil society and foreign audiences suggests a long-term strategy to cultivate soft legitimacy across borders, particularly where formal diplomatic ties are absent.

### **6.3.2 Disseminating Public Diplomacy in the Educational Context**

The educational context was highlighted in three main practices of public diplomacy: Cultural Exchange: Taiwan Library 台灣書院, Youth Mobility Scheme 青年打工度假, Teen Diplomatic Envoys 外交小尖兵. This systematic dissemination reflects a strategic intent to embed Taiwan's international positioning within the everyday cultural and educational experiences of young people. Education becomes a key site for constructing legitimacy and for projecting Taiwan's soft power identity across borders.

#### *Cultural Exchange: Taiwan Library 台灣書院*

From 2012 to 2015, it stated that there was an establishment of the Taiwan Library in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. In 2016–2020, the set-up of the Taiwan Library is to promote Taiwan's rich soft power and expand cultural diplomacy, together with civil society organizations of arts, to introduce in-depth Taiwan's particular culture, humanities, and arts.

These libraries function as long-term cultural outposts that present Taiwan's uniqueness in international contexts. Unlike formal diplomatic missions, which face constraints of recognition, Taiwan Libraries operate as symbols of cultural legitimacy and serve as soft tools for conflict de-escalation through familiarity and cultural literacy.

### *Youth Mobility Scheme 青年打工度假*

The Youth Mobility Scheme entails bilateral agreements between Taiwan and other countries for young students working abroad for a fixed period to learn, to share, and to exchange cultural values. This program targets university students or recent graduates aged between 18 and 30 years old. The development of this scheme is clearly stated in the public diplomacy strategy from initiation to expansion. In 2013, an official website for this theme was established to assist the younger generation's expansion of international vision and to increase self-value and competence. In 2014, this scheme was expanded by a level-up administration, such as cross-sectoral collaboration from different ministries, to approach the Youth Mobility Scheme. From 2015 to 2020, each year in the annual report of public diplomacy about the Youth Mobility Scheme, there was a significant increase in the number of countries that signed the agreement of the Youth Mobility Scheme and the number of Taiwan's young people participating in this scheme.

The scheme signals a shift in diplomatic practice by positioning youth as cultural ambassadors. It reflects a longer-term strategy of identity diffusion through person-to-person engagement, especially in countries that do not formally recognize Taiwan. This complements Taiwan's broader conflict-avoidance strategy by replacing hard power visibility with grassroots legitimacy.

### *Teen Diplomatic Envoys 外交小尖兵*

Teen Diplomatic Envoys is a program co-promoted between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, targeting high school students, with the aim of promoting high school students' cultural exchange experience. This program has been mentioned every year in the annual report since 2012. From 2012 to 2015, this was to promote young students' participation in diplomatic affairs. Since 2016, the aim has been to increase the domestic people's understanding of current diplomatic circumstances and to gain recognition and support, so the target is not only on domestic schools but also on civil societies. Another finding in this program is that it is connected to the New Southbound Policy. Since 2016, Teen Diplomatic Envoys have shifted the

target countries to Southeast Asian states (Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines, and even New Zealand and Australia) rather than the US and the UK, as in 2012–2015.

This geographic pivot reflects a deeper realignment in Taiwan's diplomatic priorities, which is to shift away toward a regional soft power strategy centered in Southeast Asia. Educational diplomacy becomes a channel not only for goodwill but for preemptive conflict reduction through mutual familiarity.

### **6.3.3 New Southbound Policy 新南向政策**

In the Teen Diplomacy Envoys program, the New Southbound Policy has been in place since 2017. There has been a highlight of the New Southbound Policy in the educational context, as well as the conduct of the New Southbound Policy in public diplomacy in the general context. The New Southbound Policy is to focus on strengthening the bond between Taiwan and Southeast Asian states. Contextualizing New Southbound Policy to Public Diplomacy is creating opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in the agricultural industry, a university students exchange program, and a business network. For example, in 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked together with an agriculture committee to visit Indonesia and the Philippines. It is to help establish collaboration in agriculture among agricultural universities, international organizations, and local agricultural economic production lines. The same activities were implemented in 2018, but in Vietnam and Malaysia, followed by 2019 in Thailand and India. In 2020, the visit to the southbound countries was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The New Southbound Policy stands out not just as a regional shift but as a diplomatic reframing. From security concerns about China to proactive engagement with neighbouring states, Taiwan aims to reinforce its position through soft cooperation. By anchoring public diplomacy in agricultural, educational, and cultural collaboration, Taiwan redefines regional influence in ways that lower geopolitical tensions while enhancing its de facto international presence.

## 6.4 Summary

This section used qualitative content analysis to present the data findings of Taiwan's diplomatic reports from 2000 to 2020, particularly in the content chapters of "Summary of Relations with Foreign States" and "Public Diplomacy". As a result, the naming and structure of the chapters in the report's content had evolved over twenty years and revealed the gradual shaping of Taiwan's narrative of foreign relations. Moreover, positioning public diplomacy as a key diplomatic strategy could be seen in expanding the content and gradually structuring the report into themes of educational and cultural contexts. Taiwan's public diplomacy strategy could be seen in increasingly involving Taiwan's people and the New Southbound Policy was the item for the change in both contents of "Summary of Relations with Foreign States" and "Public Diplomacy." To sum up, Taiwan's movements of identity formation, sovereignization, and democratization could be seen in the findings of policy documents for the change of narrative on relations with foreign states and for the increasingly diversifying public diplomacy strategy. These shifts do not merely reflect changes in document formatting and elaboration but signal a deliberate strategic evolution toward conflict avoidance and identity-based legitimacy through people-centered diplomacy.

- An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Fourth Emerging Scholars Workshop on De Facto States, University of Tartu, 11-12 Apr 2024 (Online) as well as sent as a book chapter awaiting publication at the time of this dissertation's completion: Abidde, S. ed., "*Tsai Ing-wen and Taiwan: An Assessment of the First Administration, 2016-2020*" Bloomsbury.

## **Chapter 7. Results - Semi-structured Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted from December 2022 to June 2023, involving eighteen Taiwanese citizens expatriating to China, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. Although respondents received the suggested interview questions in the consent form (see Appendix I), the detailed interview questions were further elaborated as shown in Appendix II. While the interviews offer insights into how Taiwanese expatriates perceive and engage with public diplomacy as well as security, this chapter does not assume a direct correspondence between individual perceptions and the Taiwanese government's strategic intent or diplomatic success. Personal feelings of security reflect how state narratives are interpreted and received in people's everyday lives. These narratives are filtered through respondents' professional and cultural environments and cannot be treated as direct measures of diplomatic effectiveness. Instead, this chapter uses respondents' perspectives as an interpretive entry point into how identity-based security and public diplomacy are internalized at the individual level and reflected within broader civil society. The following sections display the results of the analysis by explaining firstly the coding process, secondly the linkages of the codes in response to the interview questions, and eventually the analysis of findings.

### **7.1 Coding Process**

The coding process was aligned with the data operationalization process in three stages: first, the pre-set codes of the three historical conflictual events and the key concepts to be explored; second, the second stage codes of the level of analysis used by the respondent and words respondents used to relate to the pre-set codes of key concepts; at last, the subcodes of social issues and topics evidenced by the respondents to relate to the key concepts. The overview of the coding process is visualized in Table 7.1. The following section elaborates on these three stages of the coding process.

Table 7.1 – Coding Process

一級主編碼 Pre-set codes	南海, ECFA, COVID-19, 衝突, 和平, 外交 South China Sea, ECFA, COVID-19, Conflict, Peace, Diplomacy
二級主編碼 Second stage codes	關注國內, 關注區域/全球, 威脅, 危機, 安全 domestic view, regional/world view, threat, crisis, security
次編碼 Sub codes	人權議題, 透明原則, 自由原則, 信任感, 安全感, 生計權 issues of human right, principles of transparency, principles of freedom, feelings of trust, feelings of safety, right to life building

First, the pre-set codes were the three events: the South China Sea 南海, ECFA, COVID-19, as well as the three key concepts: conflict 衝突, peace 和平, and diplomacy 外交. These are the first stage codes and throughout the second round of the coding process, I generated the second stage codes based on the level of analysis found in respondents' opinions of the conflictual events as well as the words or phrases respondents used to relate their observations to the concepts of conflict, peace, and diplomacy.

Second, in the second round of the coding process, the codes generated were respondents' levels of analysis: domestic view 關注國內, regional/world view 關注區域/全球, as well as the words or phrases respondents used to further describe the key concepts: threat 威脅, crisis 危機, safety or security 安全. Respondent's opinions shared to describe the conflictual events could be found in two different levels of analyses: domestic and regional or world view. The domestic view was the focus of the conflict's impact on Taiwan's domestic society or the conflict's impact on the country where respondents expatriated. The regional/world view was the focus of the impact on Taiwan's foreign relations with the country where respondents expatriated to or Taiwan's position in East Asia. Respondents' observations and words used to relate their experiences to the key concepts were commonly found in three codes: threat 威脅, crisis 危機, safety or security 安全. The conflict was further interpreted as a crisis, perceived as a threat, and wrecked the safety and sense of security. Under the second stage code, subcodes were found concerning the second stage codes in the details of respondents' memories, observations, views, and opinions.

At last, the sub-codes were issues of human rights 人權議題, principles of transparency 透明原則, principles of freedom 自由原則, feelings of trust 信任感, feelings of safety 安全感, right to life building 生計權.

## **7.2 Linkages of the Codes: Respondents' Answers to the Interview Questions**

Although respondents used different terms to describe such conflict, their accounts converged on three dimensions: peace framed as vulnerability to security, economic dependence on China perceived as a crisis, and cultural or lifestyle changes regarded as a threat. These concerns emerged across multiple levels of analysis, from domestic to regional and world views. From these different levels of analysis, there are linkages of how identity becomes significant in the sense of security. The elements of these linkages are reflected in the sub-codes, which illustrate how identity both shapes and enhances the sense of security. The following paragraphs explain the linkages among the pre-set codes, second-stage codes, and subcodes in each question set given to the respondents. The detailed question set is divided into three themes: the concept of security, approaches to enhance the sense of security, and public diplomatic policy (see Appendix II).

### **7.2.1 The Concept of Security is Related to Identity**

The first question set investigates, from a civil society perspective, the concept of security related to identity. When respondents described the conflictual event they chose, they used words such as threat, crisis, rivalry, competition, stagnation, and danger to define the conflict. Even though there has been no war, respondents still consider the events to be a conflict. Rather, respondents' views of these conflictual events revolve around identity expression. The concept of security derives from the experience where they have felt a threat, a crisis, or a danger to their identity. Some also experience the need to compete against China's prevalent identity and to constantly emphasize their identity as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. In these experiences, it is the violation of respondents' right to life-building that makes respondents define the events as a conflict. The following section elaborates on the concept of security in each conflictual event.

First, the South China Sea issue is not seen as a territorial conflict because respondents questioned Taiwan's motivation to claim the territory. This motivation is not legitimate to enhance Taiwan's security. However, it is still a conflict for Taiwan. Respondents described this event as an identity conflict for Taiwan. Herein, respondents' views can be found in two different perspectives: domestic view and regional or world view. From a domestic view, it is an identity conflict because it is not clear and convincing for whom the territory should be claimed. Respondent AX2 stated, "The KMT thinks that the South China Sea is their territory, but I do not think that the South China Sea is Taiwan's territory (Interview, February 2023)." It caused a conflict within Taiwan that those claiming the sea territory in the South China Sea are not doing it for Taiwan's sake; instead, it is for the political party, which does not respect the expression of identity as Taiwanese. If it is for Taiwan's sake, under what law or policy should Taiwan act accordingly? From a regional or world view, it is also an identity conflict because it is uncertain if Taiwan's claim is in conflict of interest with China and Southeast Asia. Respondent AX1 stated,

"I read that the South China Sea is stated in the Constitution of the Republic of China, but I doubt if this constitution really has its legitimate ruling in Taiwan. If Taiwan puts itself as the Republic of China, then it is an identity competition against the People's Republic of China. This competition caused security concerns for Southeast Asian states. If Taiwan states its identity to be Taiwan, I think it provides a peaceful pathway in this geographic region (Interview, February 2023)."

Therefore, the South China Sea is not a mere territorial conflict among the claimant countries. Rather, it is an identity conflict that derives from within domestic society and its threat perception evaluated by foreign states.

Second, the ECFA is seen as an economic conflict, but while respondents provided more views on claiming economic security, it revolved around identity issues. To be more specific, the ECFA is not seen as opening up space for Taiwan's participation in the regional economy; rather, it is seen as Taiwan's sacrificing its domestic market for China's regional economic dominance. Respondents used more terms to describe this conflict, such as crisis, endangerment, loss, and sacrifice. Herein, respondents' views can be found in two different perspectives: a domestic view and a regional or world

view. From a domestic view, this sacrifice endangers Taiwan's domestic market and the Taiwanese people's right to life-building. Respondent BC3 mentioned,

“In those years when more and more trade agreements were signed between China and Taiwan, my father lost his business because those Chinese companies were on a larger scale, which quickly replaced lots of Taiwan's local businesses. Sadly, these large-scale Chinese companies offered more job opportunities to Chinese people than to Taiwanese people. I do not believe that the ECFA is protecting Taiwan. Rather, it is a crisis for the Taiwanese people. Where is our right to build a life? (Interview, February 2023)”

Moreover, while respondents described the event of ECFA, they all mentioned the Sunflower Movement. “I joined the Sunflower Movement. That was the only way to voice our concerns. It is not just a student movement. It is an identity expression as a whole nation and a protest to the government for their non-transparent process of passing this act in the Legislative Yuan<sup>9</sup>. If the government can do this without respecting its people, how can we trust this government to protect us? (Respondent BE3, Interview, February 2023)” The threat of China is often intertwined with the ruling party at that time (either the KMT or the DPP). During the ECFA and Sunflower Movement, it was the KMT's willingness to open up more employment opportunities for Chinese business and exchange students. Either the new business opportunities or the educational exchange could be a threat to Taiwan's identity and its internal business. From a regional or world view, the ECFA is perceived as an identity crisis because it reduces Taiwan to a sub-market of China, undermining its role as an independent market actor in East Asia and beyond. Respondent BE3 further stated that, “Southeast Asian states would rather appreciate Taiwan directly negotiating trade agreements on equal terms with the Southeast Asian market rather than through China because this again could cloud over Taiwan's position in East Asia (Interview, February 2023).”

Hence, the ECFA is an economic conflict, but can also be contextualized as an identity conflict. Due to the strong relation to the identity of the Taiwanese, the ECFA conflict stems from within domestic society and would endanger Taiwan's security position in East Asia.

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<sup>9</sup> The Legislative Yuan is the supreme legislative organization of Taiwan.

At last, the COVID-19 pandemic is perceived as a conflict arising from discrepancies in shared norms. Respondents described in detail how Taiwan, China, and Southeast Asian states controlled and managed the coronavirus, noting limited opportunities to work in China or with the Chinese in various Southeast Asian states. The lack of human rights protections, freedom, and transparency in China's border control measures raises concerns about trust and safety. For respondents, these values, such as human rights, freedom, and transparent governance, are seen as intrinsic to Taiwan's identity and, therefore, closely tied to its security. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan embodied these principles, which strengthen its security position in East Asia. Respondent CE4 provided details of the border control experienced while traveling between Taiwan and China, as well as Taiwan and Singapore:

“I still needed to work at that time, but all the rules and regulations in China made me feel scared. There were a lot of uncertainties about what was next and my situation. It caused me lots of inconvenience, so I turned to Singapore. Singapore gave me clear guidelines so I could plan my work accordingly. When I traveled back to Taiwan, there were not only clear guidelines but daily news reports of the coronavirus situation, so I felt safe. (Interview, February 2023).”

From a domestic view, Taiwan has successfully contained the COVID-19 outbreak by respecting the needs of those who still had to travel for work and by issuing clear guidelines and government regulations. This reinforces Taiwan's identity within domestic society and advances Taiwan's interaction with foreign states. From a regional and world view, Taiwan's identity as a country that upholds human rights and public trust gives respondents a sense of safety and creates opportunities to expand business ties with Southeast Asia. Respondent CX4 stated,

“It was so much noticed in Malaysia that Taiwan is a safe and healthy country. During COVID-19, lots of people lost their jobs, the economy was in recession, and countries closed down. However, Taiwan was not closed down. I was able to travel between Taiwan and Malaysia, where no one would see me as a danger. Rather, I made up lots of business opportunities because I am a Taiwanese (Interview, March 2023).”

In short, respondents' experiences during the pandemic illustrate how Taiwan's handling of COVID-19 reinforced its identity and, in turn, strengthened both their sense of security and Taiwan's regional standing.

### **7.2.2 Approaches to Enhance the Sense of Security**

The second question set explores respondents' approaches to solving the conflict. It is apparent that respondents, in experiencing these conflictual events, actively seek to enhance their sense of security, which is to establish a clear identity as Taiwanese. Promoting the identity of the Taiwanese clarifies the complexity of these conflictual events and provides opportunities for Taiwan to establish peaceful relations with foreign states. The following section elaborates on these approaches raised by respondents.

First, the South China Sea provides Taiwan with an opportunity to clarify its role in East Asia. Before asserting territorial claims, however, Taiwan must first justify its position to its own domestic audience. From a domestic view, Respondent AX2 pointed out,

“The solution is not to send more military sources to Pratas Islands. Not to mention that many Taiwanese people do not know where Pratas Islands are. It is first to educate our people not only in geographic knowledge but most importantly the legitimacy of claiming the territory (Interview, February 2023).”

From a regional and world view, Respondent CX4 mentioned, “I do not feel awkward to say that I am Taiwanese when the Philippine colleague asked for my opinion about the South China Sea. I said to him that I am a Taiwanese, not a Chinese (Interview, February 2023).” For CX4, this experience reduced the likelihood of conflict and demonstrated how Taiwan's broader identity, which is associated with respect for human rights during COVID-19, could be projected outward to ease regional tensions.

Second, the signing of the ECFA marks a turning point in Taiwan's efforts to articulate a distinct Taiwanese identity. Yet, this process also generates internal conflict, as debates over identity become deeply tied to Taiwan's economic and social policies. From a domestic view, Respondent BE1 shared the difficulties of doing tourism

business in those years when Taiwan accommodated a vast amount of Chinese tourists.

“The difficulty was that only those who accepted Chinese tourists were able to survive, but the problem is that it caused the tourism supply chain to develop only for Chinese tourists. I learned from my customers, those from Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia, that they do not want to travel to Taiwan because of the decreasing quality of Taiwan’s tourism business. However, thanks to the students protesting in the Sunflower Movement, Taiwan’s image as a true, friendly Taiwanese identity is clear on social media. Our government also changed in 2016 and took a different stance (Respondent BE1, Interview, December 2022).”

If the identity of the Taiwanese is established clearly first in domestic society, it facilitates Taiwanese citizens in Southeast Asia to build up peaceful relations. From the regional and world view, Respondent BC3 stated,

“Japanese companies have a good reputation in Vietnam, and this reputation takes a long time to establish. It is so powerful that Vietnamese companies would sign trade agreements with Japan without too much consideration. I see Taiwan is also now having this reputation. Ten years ago, my manager said how difficult it was, and now, in my generation, it is easier. We need a trustworthy image of good Taiwanese people (Interview, February 2023).”

In the respondents’ experiences, a good reputation is so powerful that only an image of friendliness developed over a long time can validate the element of trustworthiness in identity components.

At last, the COVID-19 pandemic is believed to be a successful case for Taiwan, and a clear identity projection would alleviate conflict and achieve peace. In the respondents’ experiences, the comparison of the border control policy in Taiwan and in the countries they traveled to work provides a chance to evaluate the security in their conditions. Most respondents mentioned Taiwan’s successful prevention of the pandemic outbreak was prevalent in Southeast Asia, and this has become a significant element representing the identity of Taiwan. Taiwan didn’t implement the measurement of city lockdown and continued tracking and openly publishing the number of people who tested positive. From a domestic view, there was a transparent policy

communicated by the government to the people, which assured respondents' feelings of safety. From a regional and world view, this successful containment established Taiwan's identity as a trustworthy country. Respondent CE6 stated,

“Singapore at that time also controlled the coronavirus outbreak well, but I must say that I felt the difference. During the COVID-19 crisis, I felt that I, as a Taiwanese, was vivid proof of Taiwan as a trustworthy partner. Thanks to the identity image, I networked with more local people and opened up more opportunities for future collaboration (Interview, June 2023).”

Respondent CE2 pointed out that “Taiwan is a democratic country. This is what Thai people told me about the reason why they feel friendly with Taiwan (Interview, January 2023).” The image of Taiwan's identity is linked to phrases such as – transparent policy, a democratic country that respects human rights and freedom, and the right to life-building – and these became elements in Taiwan's identity components. In respondents' experiences, projecting a Taiwanese identity created greater opportunities to collaborate with local communities in their host countries.

### **7.2.3 Public Diplomatic Policy**

The last question set aims to evaluate, in the process of these approaches, enhancing the sense of security, whether respondents feel empowered by Taiwan's public diplomacy in their interaction and network with Southeast Asians. While none of the respondents consider themselves to represent Taiwan's government in conducting public diplomacy in Southeast Asia, most respondents acknowledge the significance of Taiwan's public diplomacy in the event of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a domestic view, it is the government's open communication on TV and social media with the people that builds up the identity of trustworthiness. From a regional and world view, this identity of trustworthiness has been visible everywhere in the local news and social media in the countries where respondents are expatriated. Respondent CE5 noted the importance of conveying a clear Taiwan image on social media in Vietnam,

“The mask diplomacy was invented during COVID-19 when Taiwan donated the medical facial masks to other countries. My Vietnamese colleagues shared this news with me on social media channel and asked me if I could help them get the

facial masks made in Taiwan because the term – made in Taiwan – stands for good quality (Interview, March 2023).”

Respondent BC3 shared the same opinion,

“Japan has a good reputation, and it is strong evidence for Taiwan that we need to spend some time developing a good reputation with other countries and societies from different cultural backgrounds. Taiwan’s reputation was at its most glorious moment during the COVID-19 crisis. When people still need to work to keep their life and safety, my colleagues in Vietnam believed that working with Taiwan is safe and gives them a chance to life-building (Interview, February 2023).”

Thus, in the respondents’ observations and experiences, promoting the identity of Taiwanese is an important element in their interactions with the locals. As the identity of the Taiwanese has been enriched with elements such as trustworthiness, respect for human rights, democracy, and freedom, these elements constructed a sense of security for the respondents and the locals and, most importantly, enabled them to continue working for their life-building during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Beyond the case of COVID-19, several respondents also reflected on public diplomacy during the ECFA period, particularly the societal response that culminated in the 2014 Sunflower Movement. Participants in the movement used various social media platforms to promote awareness of Taiwan’s identity, offering a notable example of how civil society actors became the main agents of public diplomacy. From a domestic view, the movement voiced society’s demand for greater control over Taiwan’s market. From a regional and world view, it projected the message that the Taiwanese are distinct from the Chinese. As Respondent BC3 observed,

“Actually, I read that there was a lot of research about how Taiwan’s students at that time strategically shared this on Facebook and Instagram. The information on social media is much more powerful than on traditional news channels. The reason is that you need to know to whom you are talking about your story. There are many more audiences on social media (Interview, February 2023).”

Some respondents also highlighted the challenges posed by identity competition between Taiwan and China, noting that such rivalries complicate Taiwan’s public

diplomacy efforts. They emphasized the importance of presenting a clear expression of Taiwanese identity abroad. As Respondent BE3 stated,

“Even though we Taiwanese know that we are Taiwanese, it is not clear to the locals. We live too much in our own world that we think others should just know that. However, this identity expression really was not clear when I first came here. It took me several years to tell the locals that Taiwan is not part of China. Taiwan is different. Taiwan is a democracy (Interview, February 2023).”

These reflections illustrate how, at the societal level, Taiwan’s public diplomacy relies on its citizens to advance identity awareness and project a distinct Taiwanese image in Southeast Asia.

In sum, the interview data provides a civil societal perspective on security and conflict, highlighting the central role of identity. Respondents emphasized that a clear expression of Taiwanese identity helps to resolve conflicts rooted in ambiguity and, crucially, prevents further tensions arising from identity competition with China. This identity expression was central to their interactions with local communities in Southeast Asia, underscoring the consistency with the policy document analysis that Taiwanese citizens act as key agents of public diplomacy. The documents also show that, after 2016, Taiwan redirected its public diplomacy toward Southeast Asia through initiatives in education and youth engagement, a shift echoed by respondents during and after the interviews. From these findings, three insights emerge. First, it is the transparency of the government policy that builds up the people’s trust and empowers the people in a diplomatic context. Second, the tool for engaging in a diplomatic context is social media. The strategic use of social media has been raised by many respondents as its significance in communication with the locals in Southeast Asia. At last, the education system should be noted as the greatest opportunity for cross-cultural understanding and communication. Respondents think it is easier to blend in and interact with the locals by integrating into the local society so as to have communication settings. The following section elaborates on these findings.

## **7.3 Analysis of Findings**

### **7.3.1 Transparency of Policy**

At the time of the interviews, Taiwanese expatriates in Southeast Asian were experiencing the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 crisis. Many emphasized the importance of policy transparency, particularly regarding border control and public health measures. For respondents, clear and transparent policies were closely tied to fundamental values such as the right to life, freedom of movement, and equality. Border and health measures were understood not only as safeguards for national security but also as instruments shaping Taiwan's foreign relations. For example, Respondent CE6 was relocated to Thailand in November 2019 and experienced three times border control until 2021 when traveling back and forth between Thailand and Taiwan:

“For business travel, there was clear instruction [for where to stay during quarantine] by what passport you hold and by what company you worked for. It was a lot, thanks to the clarity of the policy in Thailand and the company regulations that saved me trouble. The quarantine policy in Taiwan was complicated, but the transparency made us feel safe. Moreover, the transparency of the quarantine policy made us trust Thailand, as well as saved me trouble when entering Thailand.” (Interview, June 2023)

For Taiwanese expatriates, transparency in both local regulations and Taiwan's diplomatic policies enabled them to sustain their professional activities abroad. Just as importantly, it fostered trust from host governments, which in turn facilitated their work and mobility. These reflections should not be taken as direct evidence of policy effectiveness but rather as socially situated perceptions that illuminate how transparency contributes to Taiwan's diplomatic image in practice.

### **7.3.2 Social Media is Significant in Building a Friendly Image**

There has been prevalent content of Chinese information or news on social media platforms in Southeast Asian countries. As social media is quite an effective platform in Southeast Asian countries due to the number of users and the accessibility to the local society, most respondents emphasized the significance of social media in

terms of building a friendly image, when China's image is quite powerful on social media platforms. However, some respondents claimed that the unfriendliness of China stems from the interactions with Chinese people. For example, one respondent claimed, "Most people would not ponder over the information received on social media" (Respondent BX2, Interview, February 2023). Therefore, the image promoted on social media is generally taken as it is, but the perception of these images is generated in actual interactions with the people. For example, Respondent BE3 stated the experience:

"I would not actively think badly of Chinese people because we worked a lot with Chinese customers and Chinese businesspeople. It was generally on social media that I saw some Chinese people asserting their Chinese nationality and often asking for attention to their identity. This attitude and behavior made me so against China, this country, and the people strongly acting this assertion." (Interview, February 2023)

China's public diplomacy may deliver the image on social media, but the effect of establishing an image is hard to convince the Taiwanese of China's friendliness. Although the economic benefits encouraged some Taiwanese to work closely with Chinese people, those who stayed in China working claimed that they would not remain there in the long term because of the strict and authoritarian social system. Respondent CE5 demonstrated this argument by the relocation experience to Vietnam:

"I used to travel back and forth between Taiwan and China. Although people said there seemed to be more economic opportunities in China, I was not inclined to stay there. Despite China's government sparing no effort in building the image of peace and friendliness, I didn't sense this at the societal level. Mainly, there is no transparency and trust that put me off from staying in China to work for a longer time. However, after I moved to Vietnam, I had faith in working here and was not afraid of China's image on Vietnamese social media platforms. Still, as China has been so prevalent on social media, we Taiwanese should not ignore the power of social media." (Interview, March 2023)

While respondents consistently described social media as influential in shaping

Taiwan's public image, these reflections remain subjective and anecdotal. The analysis does not assess actual public opinion or digital sentiment trends, which future research could address using survey methods or social media analytics.

### **7.3.3 The Educational System Influences the Public's Discussion on Policy**

The educational system was noted by the majority of the respondents as a critical momentum for cultivating people to interact with foreign nations. It is not just the foreign language but also the foreign culture and the worldview, which should all be systematized in Taiwan's education. Some respondents argued that in their schooling in Taiwan, the educational approach did not nourish the cultural understanding of foreign languages, but only trained students to choose the only correct answer. Such an educational system would not empower Taiwanese people's interactions with foreign nations. For example, Respondent BX2 shared the view in detail:

“It was the educational style in the elementary school, middle school, and high school that created the conflict with China and within Taiwan, which fostered a yes or no way of accepting foreign culture rather than an inclusive approach to interacting with foreign culture. The identity is important, but the learning of other cultures is also important because that is also a process of forming the identity.”  
(Interview, February 2023)

Some respondents shared their observations that some locals experienced an identity conflict with the Taiwanese, but the clearer image of the Taiwanese, which represents trustworthiness, is what bonded the respondents and the locals. The locals may also need to see the Taiwanese image through their educational systems, but the key is whether the Taiwanese have originally been open to learning other cultures.

## **7.4 Summary**

This chapter presents the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted as supplementary data for the results of policy document analysis. The semi-structured interview results reveal how identity is related to security and how Taiwanese people have been involved in practicing public diplomacy. The results of the findings can be inferred from the coding process, and the linkages among the codes explain how

identity components were generated and involved in practicing public diplomacy to serve the purpose of managing the sense of security. In addition, the analysis of the findings discloses three themes: the transparency of policy, the strategic use of social media, and the significance of implementing public diplomacy in an educational context. These three themes not only aligned with the findings in policy document analysis but also supplied the civil societal levels of understanding the relations between identity and security as well as public diplomacy and conflict resolution.

The results of the findings are inferred from the coding process, in which the pre-set codes are the conflictual events – the South China Sea, the ECFA, and COVID-19 – derived from *Chapter 2* to prompt respondents' experiences and opinions on three main concepts – conflict, peace, and diplomacy. The linkage between identity and security is justified by how Taiwan's formation of identity projects to Southeast Asia. This is found in respondents' answers and therefore put as the second stage codes – domestic view, regional/world view. Due to the threat perceived domestically or crisis experienced in foreign states, the awareness of Taiwan's security was raised in respondents' experiences when identity expression is the crux in the interaction and communication setting. Threat, crisis, and security are thus placed in the second stage codes that can be found in either the domestic view or regional/world view. Lastly, in further probing into how identity expression has distilled in the process of enhancing the sense of security in order to mediate the perceived threat and to manage the crisis, I placed them into subcodes – issues of human rights, principles of transparency, principles of freedom, feelings of trust, feelings of safety, right to life building. As found in respondents' experiences, Taiwan's identity components entail the image that Taiwan is a country that respects human rights, which can be found in the government's transparent policy that protects people's freedom. These identity components provide people with the feelings of trust and safety that are derived from when people have the right to continue working to build their lives during conflict and crisis.

The three themes from the analysis of the findings – the transparency of the government policy, the strategic use of social media, and the educational context – correspond to the results of the policy document analysis that the public diplomatic policy shifted its target to Southeast Asia, and the public diplomatic strategy has been

putting Taiwan's citizens as the main actors. First, the transparency of policy could be spotted in respondents' experiences of COVID-19 border control and public health measures in Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries. Although border control restricts the freedom of movement, the transparency of policy enhances the feelings of trust and safety. Second, due to social media's reachability to the local society in these Southeast Asian states, Taiwanese people's and Southeast Asian people's feelings of trust and safety could be increased if Taiwan established a friendly image on social media. At last, the significant momentum of cultivating people to interact with foreign nations lies in the educational system, both in Taiwan and Southeast Asian states. The clearer image of Taiwanese representing trustworthiness bonded the respondents and the locals to avoid identity conflict as being Chinese or Taiwanese. However, Taiwan's identity conflict could be seen not merely in its relations with foreign states but also in domestic society, which forms in the educational system. Taiwan's educational system should empower Taiwanese people's interactions with foreign nations by nourishing the understanding of foreign cultures through learning foreign languages. By doing so, it attributes the trustworthiness of the identity of Taiwan and enhances the image of Taiwan as a contributor to peace.

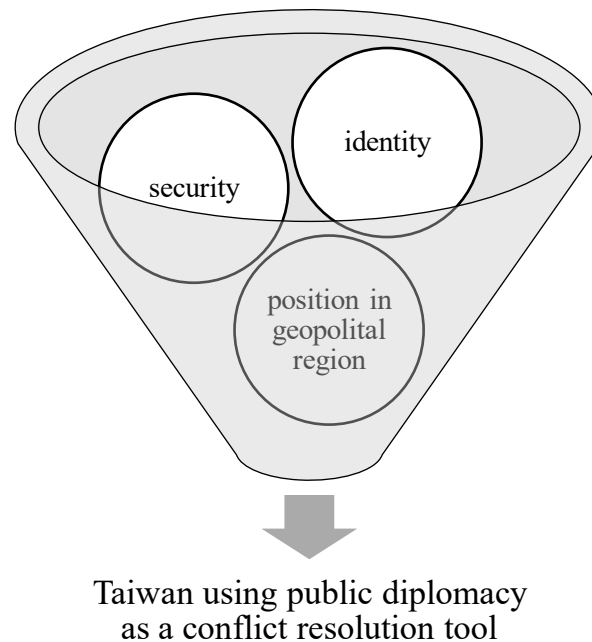
- An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Fourth Emerging Scholars Workshop on “De Facto States,” De Facto State Research Unit at University of Tartu, 11-12 April 2024 (Online)

## **Chapter 8. Evaluation of the Results**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter evaluates the findings from both the document analysis and the semi-structured interview analysis in relation to the central research question: Is public diplomacy a factor that can contribute to solving the conflict between China and Taiwan regarding the status of Taiwan? With a particular focus on Taiwan’s case, this chapter highlights the interconnected insights provided by the two methodologies, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of Taiwan’s use of public diplomacy as a means to address identity-based conflict. The two methodologies used – document analysis and semi-structured interviews – serve a distinct purpose for this research. The document analysis provided a foundational understanding of Taiwan’s historical narrative. It explored Taiwan’s geopolitical position, its diplomatic relations with regional countries, and its employment of public diplomacy. The semi-structured interviews offered insights into the lived experiences and interpretations of conflicts, shedding light on civil societal level understanding of Taiwan’s security in the region and Taiwan’s public diplomacy in Southeast Asia. This chapter illustrates how these two methodologies intersect, revealing how public diplomacy connects identity, security, and geopolitical position. This intersection is visualized in Figure 8.1, which highlights the interplay between the methodologies and the thematic insights they provide.

Figure 8.1 – Conceptual Framework: Linking Public Diplomacy to Conflict Resolution in Taiwan



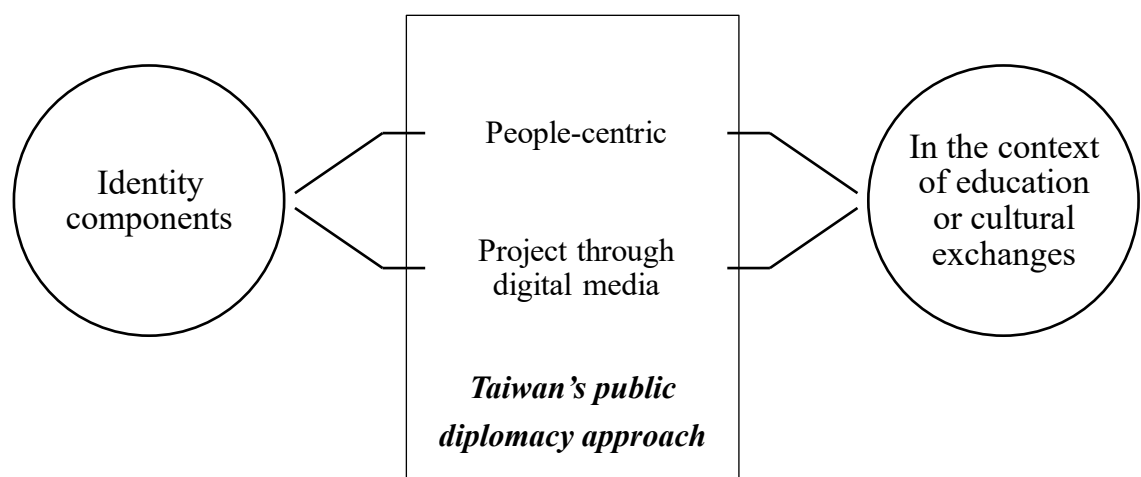
As shown in Figure 8.1, public diplomacy serves as a central thread linking Taiwan's identity-based conflicts, its regional security considerations, and its evolving geopolitical strategies. This framework underpins the integrated analysis presented in this chapter. Key concepts derived from the integrated analysis address two guiding questions: (1) How has Taiwan's public diplomacy been democratizing? (2) How have Taiwan's evolving state-society relations mattered to the security context?

To explore these two questions, this chapter is divided into three parts. First, the integrated findings are compared with existing research to situate this dissertation in a broader scholarly discourse. Second, exploring key concepts identified in the field are analyzed to address the guiding questions. At last, limitations and potential explanations for unexpected findings are examined to provide implications for future research. This chapter bridges the insights from the document analysis and interview data through this structure and offers an original contribution to the central research question.

## 8.2 Comparing the Results with Existing Research

*Chapter 4* explored the role of public diplomacy in implementing soft power through an institutional and cultural lens. In the context of China and Taiwan, public diplomacy has been associated with efforts to mitigate historical tensions and redefine geopolitical roles. However, Taiwan's case remains underexplored, particularly in terms of the implications of its evolution of public diplomacy for regional security. Rockower (2011) acknowledged a linkage between Taiwan's public diplomacy strategy and its security status, assessing that in 2011, Taiwan's governmental sectors lacked a consolidated structure for public diplomacy policy. Rawnsley (2012) provided a comparative analysis of China's and Taiwan's public diplomacy. Rawnsley (2017) further critiqued that Taiwan requires a strategic communication and structural plan for the public diplomatic policy. The findings from this dissertation affirm previous scholarship on the role of public diplomacy in identity-based conflict resolution. The document analysis revealed Taiwan's strategic framing of its geopolitical identity as a contributor to the region's peace by shifting the diplomatic target to Southeast Asia and involving the people. The semi-structured interviews provided a complementary aspect of how civil society engages with Southeast Asians, which I argue is an area overlooked. The interplay between state-led initiatives and grassroots involvement underscores Taiwan's distinct approach, as seen in Figure 8.2. The government puts the people as the main actors in projecting the identity components in Southeast Asia, and through digital media. In the diplomatic engagement, the findings reveal that public diplomacy is implemented in the context of education or cultural exchanges.

Figure 8.2 – Taiwan's Distinct Approach to Public Diplomacy Strategy



To further contextualize the findings, this section compares the results of the integrated analysis with existing literature on public diplomacy. This comparison highlights how Taiwan's evolving public diplomacy strategy aligns with existing scholarly discourse in terms of cultivation strategies, communication tools, and the role of state-society relations in Taiwan's public diplomacy. Table 8.1 summarizes the main concepts that emerged from both document analysis and semi-structured interviews – trust, openness, people-centric diplomacy, and media strategy – and compares them with relevant literature.

Table 8.1 – Situating Integrated Analysis in Existing Literature

Concept	Insights from Document Analysis	Insights from Semi-structured Interviews	Existing Literature
Cultivation Strategies – Trust, Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taiwan's response to crises, such as COVID-19, builds trust with transparent policy to increase its credibility</li> <li>Public diplomacy shifted to greater transparency, clarifying the policy aim and involving the people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents felt assured by Taiwan's consistent identity and security messaging</li> <li>Two-way communication was key to fostering trust and openness, especially through social media platforms</li> </ul>	Storie (2017) – Trust and openness as key elements in cultivation strategies of a successful public diplomatic practices
Communication Tool – The Strategic Use of Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on people-to-people diplomacy in the New Southbound Policy, particularly in cultural and educational context</li> <li>Using social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook although with limited cross-sector coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents' lived experiences highlighted the importance of grassroots involvement in diplomatic engagement</li> <li>Respondents noted the potential of social media and digital diplomacy in engaging younger generations and international audiences</li> </ul>	Sullivan & Lee (2018) – Proactive public diplomacy strategy needed  Zhou (2022) – Need for collaborative and decentralized media strategy

### 8.2.1 Cultivation Strategy

Storie (2017) conducted a qualitative study on public diplomacy and proposed two important elements in evaluating the cultivation strategies: trust and openness, which the data analysis results correspond to. Trust is identified as the foundational dimension for promoting public diplomacy. During crises that threaten security, a state's public

diplomacy can be highly effective in fostering a sense of security among people. If this sense of security is achieved, the public diplomacy strategy has successfully promoted trust. In the results from semi-structured interviews, some respondents noted that during the COVID-19 crisis, when Taiwan and the countries where they expatriated to implemented clear border control regulations, they perceived these policies as credible, which in turn provided them with a sense of security. This observation aligns with the second dimension of Storie's framework, openness. Openness, as defined in this dissertation, involves the transparency of policies. Some respondents emphasized that it was not only the clarity of the government policies but also the potential for two-way communication between the public and the government that contributed to their sense of security. Additionally, a study on the failure of China's public diplomacy efforts to influence Taiwan between 2008 and 2016 (Lin and Chu 2020) argued these efforts failed primarily because they violated Taiwan's core security concern – its sovereignty – by attempting to pressure Taiwan into subordination to the Beijing government. Hence, the data analysis in this dissertation reveals that the importance of transparency is strongly related to the dimensions of trust and openness in cultivation strategies.

Following the cultivation strategy, this dissertation has not grounded the findings of networking in either document analysis or semi-structured interviews, but has argued the relation to the time strategy. In the document analysis of Taiwan's diplomatic policy in a twenty-year time frame, the periodic changes in the public diplomacy content aligned with the domestic political development, as well as the limited international space. These changes revealed the importance of persevering in cultivating public diplomacy, for the effect is not to respond to short-term goals but to practice for long-term existence. In the document analysis, from 2016 to 2020, Taiwan's public diplomacy started forming a stable structure focusing on empowering the people-to-people exchanges in academia, education, culture, and tourism, which are all activities that require a longer time to cultivate the relationship. At last, the communication tool could be found prevalent in the document analysis, in which similar studies also examined the strategic use of media in the study of public diplomacy. The next section compares the research results to similar studies in terms of the strategic use of media.

### **8.2.2 Communication Tool: The Strategic Use of Media**

Sullivan and Lee (2018) utilized quantitative and qualitative methodologies examining Taiwan's image in Western media over the past two decades and concluded that "Taiwan demands a proactive, organized, and holistic communication strategy to address it [Taiwan's narrative of Taiwan's image]." In this study, through a different data analysis, the argument was the same: Taiwan lacks a communication strategy to disseminate its soft power. From my research analysis of Taiwan's diplomatic reports, I find that Taiwan enlisted the tools of social media, such as YouTube and Facebook, and emphasized the establishment of an official website for Taiwan's cultural diplomacy. Still, they were not incorporated with other sectors, such as the Ministry of Culture, to promote a structured public diplomacy program. There was cooperation with the Ministry of Education in terms of promoting educational exchange at the high school and university level, but no further highlights on the communication tool engaged with.

However, some other research argued that state-owned media may not generate as much soft power influence on foreign audiences as on domestic audiences. Zhou (2022) used quantitative text analysis comparing Chinese news and Japanese news and found that China's desired narratives were not well circulated in Japanese news, and the potential reason was that China's public diplomacy strategy is centralized and mostly affected at home rather than toward foreign states. Hence, I argue that Taiwan needs not a government-controlled media to disseminate information but a cross-sector collaborative media to promote Taiwan's soft power impact. In my findings of Taiwan's diplomatic reports, I argued that there were increasingly systemized educational or academic activities, such as the Youth Mobility Scheme, High School Students Exchange, and Taiwan Library, that were mentioned since 2012 in each year's report. Although these activities were offline, they could be promoted through online media or even through social media to build a two-way dialogue with society. Respondent BE2 stated that the Taiwan Association of Digital Diplomacy, a non-governmental organization founded mostly by a generation of young people born in the 1980s and 1990s, campaigned for the healthcare resources exchange program in Vietnam. This non-governmental organization convinced him that a good media strategy is to empower the people to interact with the other society's people (Interview, Feb 2023). Isnarti (2023) used qualitative content analysis to examine the dissemination of

Taiwan's New Southbound Policy in Indonesia through digital public diplomacy and found that, despite positive feedback at the home country for meeting the objective of delivering information, there was a limited response in Indonesia due to a shortage of two-way communication on digital media platforms. Therefore, in the need for a comprehensive and collaborative communication strategy for public diplomacy, Taiwan could have two significant future developments as found in the semi-structured interviews: First, Taiwan should embrace digital information technology and media because traditional government-controlled media deterred the soft power benefits. Second, Taiwan's government should empower the people to implement a two-way dialogue. Therefore, in the need for a comprehensive and collaborative communication strategy for public diplomacy, Taiwan could have two significant future developments as found in the semi-structured interviews: First, Taiwan should embrace digital information technology and media because traditional government-controlled media deterred the soft power benefits. Second, Taiwan's government should empower the people to implement a two-way dialogue.

Against this backdrop, Taiwan's public diplomacy has been increasingly involving citizens to become more people-centric, which I argue is a democratization process in Taiwan's evolution of public diplomacy strategy. While existing research on public diplomacy is often state-centric, this dissertation highlights that the evolving role of state-society relations plays a significant role in strategizing public diplomacy as a way to manage the security status and geopolitical position. Interviews with civil society actors revealed a growing perception of public diplomacy as a collaborative rather than purely governmental effort. The concept of identity is core to security, which I argued to be an important development in Taiwan, along with the evolving state-society relations throughout the democratization process. The next section further elaborates on these two key concepts - democratizing and state-society relations – by answering the two guiding questions.

### **8.3 Key Concepts in the Field**

The evolution of Taiwan's public diplomacy over the past two decades demonstrates that identity lies at the core of its security. Document analysis shows the growing involvement of citizens in diplomatic practices, while interview data reveal

how respondents emphasized a distinctly Taiwanese identity and culture when engaging with foreigners, whether as students, tourists, businesspeople, or other non-government actors. I argue that Taiwan's distinctive approach to public diplomacy strategy stems from the democratization of its foreign policy process. Over the past two decades, this democratization has reshaped state-society relations and mobilized citizens as active participants in diplomacy. Table 8.2 summarizes how democratization, together with evolving state-society relations, enables Taiwan's public diplomacy to address the identity-based conflict in the East Asian geopolitical context.

Table 8.2 – Key Concepts in the Findings

<b>Role of Actor</b>	Government	Citizens, Society
<b>Conduct</b>	Protect Taiwan's identity	Clarify Taiwan's identity
<b>Aim</b>	Enhance Taiwan's security	Attain sense of security
<b>Consequence</b>	Resolve Taiwan's geopolitical position in East Asia	Facilitate the social-level interactions with foreigners
<b>Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taiwan's geopolitical position in East Asia is shaped by identity-based conflict.</li> <li>This process of democratizing public diplomacy empowers citizens, enabled by evolving state-society relations over the past two decades.</li> </ul>	

The following paragraphs elaborate on the concepts of Taiwan's democratizing public diplomacy and Taiwan's evolving state-society relations with similar previous research.

### 8.3.1 How has Taiwan's Public Diplomacy been Democratizing?

Adler-Nissen (2015) argued that relationalism expands the scope of diplomacy by recognizing the role of non-state actors. World politics, she suggests, is shaped not only by governments but also by broader social phenomena. This does not diminish the government's role in diplomacy but bridges the gap between theory and practice. In Adler-Nissen's research, diplomats adopted a relational approach that emphasized mediation and representation over governance. This implies that societal actors can also shape diplomatic practices. Historical research supports this perspective. McCarthy (2013), examining Britain between 1918 and 1945, showed how civil society actively

promoted democratic values and sought to influence the League of Nations. Democratizing foreign policy did not replace government officials or eliminate conflict, but it highlighted the influence of civil society on international affairs. The interview data and document analysis both affirm the relevance of this framework for Taiwan and building connections with local societies abroad. Similarly, since 2012, Taiwan's public diplomacy has shifted from merely informing citizens about foreign policy to actively empowering them to participate in diplomatic practices. These developments underscore Taiwan's key trajectories in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: democratization, sovereignization, and identity formation. As Taiwan's domestic politics have become increasingly democratic, citizens' claims to sovereignty and identity have grown stronger. Public diplomacy reflects this shift, for instance, through the establishment of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy in 2003, as well as through policies that enable citizens to act as representatives of Taiwan in societal-level diplomacy.

Recent scholarship has further emphasized the growing importance of society in diplomacy. Kim and Melissen (2022) argue that practices such as para-diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, and grassroots diplomacy highlight a modern transformation: the need for dialogue with people. If diplomacy is understood as relationship-building, then state-society relations are central. Easley (2023) illustrates this through South Korean NGOs that shaped bilateral relations with Japan by promoting social and historical narratives within the domestic political agenda. Although questions remain about their effectiveness, this example resonates with Taiwan's experience. Taiwan has institutionalized similar practices. For example, the Teen Diplomatic Envoys Program 外交小尖兵 empowers high school students to share Taiwan's political and economic achievements through educational exchanges. Likewise, the Youth Mobility Scheme 青年打工度假 enables university students to work abroad temporarily, fostering cross-cultural exchange. These initiatives reflect how educational exchanges have become a cornerstone of Taiwan's public diplomacy. Over time, Taiwan's diplomatic practice has become more people-centered, reshaping state-society relations and reinforcing the democratization of diplomacy. The following section further explores how these evolving state-society relations matter to Taiwan's security context.

### **8.3.2 How have Taiwan's Evolving State-Society Relations Mattered to the Security Context?**

As discussed in *Chapter 2*, three domestic developments have shaped Taiwan's security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: democratization, sovereignization, and identity formation. These dynamics are interconnected and together have reshaped relations between the state and society. Over the past two decades, this evolving relationship has linked civil society's political agenda with that of the state, and ultimately with Taiwan's foreign policy. This section examines how these changes have influenced Taiwan's position in the broader East Asian security context. To do so, I place my research findings in dialogue with existing literature to show how state-society relations have become central to Taiwan's security concerns.

Yun (2012) proposed sociological globalism to argue that global mobility, such as international studies, migrant workers, or diaspora, has widened the meaning of public diplomacy to meaningful state-society relations. Public diplomacy in the current global context, where people-to-people activities and interactions are diversified, is no longer just between governments but between the government, its people, and the target audience. This does not mean that the society has replaced the state government in conducting public diplomacy, but only enabled the lens of the evolving state-society relations in the discourse and practice of public diplomacy. Neumann (2018) provides a definition of the socialization of diplomacy, which is that the state government increasingly works with non-state actors rather than with people. This view sets diplomacy as an evolving result of social making and a realm to examine the relations between the state and society. An empirical case study of Japan's diplomacy towards China argues that the internal societization of diplomacy enables the legitimizing of foreign policy both domestically and internationally (Zhang 2022). The process by which politicians and society involve each other in the deliberation of foreign policy not only ensures a coherent effective policy deliverable but also evolves relations between the state and society. Therefore, for scholars in public diplomacy, it is crucial to engage with research that critically examines the roles of identity, power, and access in shaping foreign policy, while also reflecting its reciprocal impact on domestic society (Popkova and Michaels 2022). Taiwan's public diplomacy provided an exemplary case

for this argument. The semi-structured interviews showed that a clear identity of Taiwanese empowered Taiwanese citizens in educational, academic, cultural, or business exchanges. The document analysis also revealed that Taiwan's government has been ensuring citizens' awareness of opportunities to engage with foreign countries. If Taiwanese citizens are more involved in foreign policy, the society's wish for a clear identity image and demand for a sense of security would eventually surface in public diplomacy.

As society nowadays has been seeing complex human interactions related to globalization, the societization of diplomacy can be helpful in societal self-regulation and development at global, regional, and local levels (Faizullaev 2022). This view supported the argument not only that the society is involved as an actor but also that the society's issue is involved in the diplomatic policy. If Taiwan's society's demand is for enhanced security, the evolving state-society relations should enable this presence in public diplomatic policy. Cull (2019) framed the connection between public diplomacy and security by proposing the idea that reputational security is not just for the national leader but also for the society at home and internationally to persist in producing a shared sense of soft power values. Namely, if the state government projects the values of democracy and human rights to the international community, these values should also be present and demonstrated in the home society. Hence, the state and society should collaborate in upholding the values that are eventually disseminated to foreign policy. A study on Taiwan's indigenous peoples as non-state diplomatic actors in public diplomacy revealed that the cultural events promoted by the society and funded by the government would enhance Taiwan's distinct political and cultural image and enable Taiwan's reputation of standing for the values of democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights (Figueira 2020). Reputation security is only one form of security, but it is a way of connecting Taiwan's public diplomacy to Taiwan's security in East Asia; most importantly, reputation security manifests the importance of the evolving relations between the government and society.

Moreover, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, ICT has become an integral part of the discourse on public diplomacy (Cull 2019). Some research initiated the analytical view on the impact of ICT on the nature of diplomacy and suggested that digital technology decentralized

and democratized the state's traditional capacity to provide and manage information in foreign policy (Metzl 1999). The significance is that ICT is the cause of not only the changing nature of public diplomacy but also the evolving state-society relations. The impact of ICT on evolving state-society relations and public diplomacy can be seen in Taiwan's diplomatic reports, where the emphasis on digital or social media was constantly present in the content. On the other hand, ICT has given people the ability to manage and deliver information, which does not mean that people replace the government, but rather that they complement public diplomacy, shifting it from being traditionally government-led to involving both governments and people. Respondent CE2 stated that at the time of the COVID-19 crisis, the fact that there was an official government social media account to consult with the border control and measures assured the sense of safety and security, especially in the respondent's experience of traveling in and out of Taiwan at that time. Taiwan's resort to ICT was demonstrated in Taiwan's public diplomacy during the COVID-19 crisis (Interview, Jan 2023). The government set up an official digital platform to deliver verified information about border control for migrant workers; in addition, an official authority to prevent false information was founded by the government and collaborated with society (Chen et al. 2022). Yen (2020) highlights several factors behind Taiwan's success in managing the COVID-19 crisis, among which the strategic use of ICT was central. ICT enabled two-way communication and strengthened state-society relations. As citizens demanded transparency, the government responded with clear information; at the same time, the government introduced preventive measures for public health, which society largely accepted in the interest of collective security. In this way, Taiwan's use of ICT both reflected and reinforced evolving state-society relations, linking societal security to the broader security of the state.

In sum, viewing Taiwan through the lens of evolving state-society relations highlights the importance of identity formation for its geopolitical security. The reciprocal dynamic between state and society elevated societal security concerns into the national diplomatic agenda. In turn, Taiwan's public diplomacy has been designed to address identity-based conflicts, thereby shaping Taiwan's security position in the region.

## 8.4 Limitations and Explanations for Unexpected Results

This dissertation has provided insights into Taiwan's public diplomacy and its potential role in conflict resolution in East Asia. Although the term, resolution, suggests the definitive ending of a dispute, this dissertation understands it as an ongoing process. As discussed in *Chapter 1*, I conceptualize conflict as fluid rather than fixed, because conflict is constantly shaped by mechanisms, approaches, and activities aiming to address or transform it. Therefore, my analysis does not argue that Taiwan's public diplomacy can directly resolve its conflict with China. Instead, it explores how public diplomacy can contribute to reframing and repositioning Taiwan's identity and security status within East Asia. Establishing a clear causal link between public diplomacy initiatives and conflict resolution processes is inherently difficult because, as discussed in *Chapter 5*. Moreover, this dissertation relies on qualitative interviews rather than public opinion surveys or social media sentiment analysis. The effectiveness of the efforts is mediated by broader geopolitical dynamics in East Asia, domestic political debates within Taiwan, and perception gaps between Taipei and Beijing. Moreover, some strategies, especially those promoting Taiwan's distinct identity, may inadvertently reinforce opposing narratives in Beijing, thereby restraining the space for mutual accommodation. This dissertation acknowledges these limitations while emphasizing how they shape the interpretation of the findings, which focus on perceptions of Taiwan's public diplomacy and its state-society relationships.

In addition to these conceptual limitations, there are a few methodological constraints. First, the type of government documents and their alignment with reality. Second, the number of respondents restricted the scope of the lived experiences. At last, the role of language in public diplomacy is limited to analysis and, hence, loosely contextualized in the scholarly discourse of public diplomacy. However, despite limited analysis of the role of language in public diplomacy, an increasing awareness of language education in Taiwan manifested in a few interviews; thus, I put it here as an unexpected result because it was not inherently a research direction to be evaluated. The following section addresses these aspects of limitations and eventually offers my explanation for the unexpected results.

#### **8.4.1 Aspects of Research Limitations**

First, the document analysis relies only on the annual diplomatic reports archived in Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I extracted from the reports only the sections mentioning Taiwan's diplomatic relations with regional countries and Taiwan's public diplomacy. While these reports are critical for understanding Taiwan's diplomatic policy, they exclude other document types, such as non-governmental organizations' work papers and media narratives. These alternative sources could have complemented the view of the evolving state-society relations and their impact on the changes in strategizing public diplomacy.

Second, the official documents from the government are biased in terms of the gap of perspectives between civil society actors, which is why I conducted semi-structured interviews. However, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with a relatively narrow variety of respondents, so they should not be generalized for their representation of the whole of civil society. Interviewing more participants, such as government officers, scholars, or grassroots leaders in certain non-government organizations, could have yielded additional perspectives and nuanced interpretations. In addition, expanding the interview participants to Southeast Asian citizens might illustrate their perception of Taiwan's public diplomacy and further examine the overlooked dimension of the role of language in public diplomacy. The next section elaborates on this gap between the dissertation analysis and the scholarly discourse of public diplomacy about the role of language in public diplomacy.

#### **8.4.2 The Role of Language in Public Diplomacy**

An important element in public diplomacy is the role of language in the facilitation of communication and relationship-building. However, the dissertation findings did not strongly manifest this argument. Language as a factor appeared to be implicit rather than explicit in Taiwan's public diplomacy strategies. For instance, the policy documents highlight the shift from English-speaking countries such as the US, the UK, and New Zealand to Southeast Asian countries. However, there was no statement that language education assisted this change in the public diplomacy target audience. As Southeast Asian countries all have different official languages, the language as a tool in public diplomacy should adapt to the target audience's linguistic

environment. It does not mean that Taiwan has no language policy adjusted to this shift of the target audience toward Southeast Asian countries. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews generate no inference about whether language is an obstacle to enabling interactions and building relations with Southeast Asian people. Instead, the role of language in the interviews only indicates whether the respondents are comfortable in expressing themselves in the interview. From the perspective of language as a factor in data collection, the interviews were conducted in the language that respondents felt comfortable with, but the result was that almost all interviews were mixed languages among Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English. A potential explanation of the result of the respondents' experiences was that being in the environment of interacting with foreigners should have equipped them with the lingua franca in the respondents' cases, English, in a few cases, and Mandarin.

#### **8.4.3 Language in Education: A Potential Explanation**

A possible explanation for this gap in the role of languages lies in the evolving role of language education within Taiwan's domestic and foreign policy frameworks. This became the unexpected result of this dissertation analysis that Taiwan has introduced Southeast Asian language education programs, primarily targeting new immigrant communities and their children. These initiatives, led by the Ministry of Education, aim to foster inclusivity and promote people-to-people interactions. The Southeast Asian Language Policy was for the "New Residents," namely, the immigrants from Southeast Asian countries to Taiwan. Huang (2021) argued that this language policy set up from 2012 to 2016 was mainly to avoid the political tension against China, but after 2016, it was expanded to be conceptualized as a product of image to sell to Southeast Asian countries for advancing people-to-people interactions and exchanges. For example, Respondent BX2 shared the observation of Taiwan's domestic policy in the Ministry of Education that has started promoting indigenous languages and Southeast Asian languages such as Vietnamese at the elementary school level (Interview, Feb 2023). Promoting indigenous languages is part of Taiwan's identity-building or re-justification. Promoting Southeast Asian languages is the concern of inclusivity for an increasing number of Southeast Asian migrant workers and cross-cultural relations in marriage inhabited in Taiwan. Namely, if the language is found to play an indispensable role in public diplomacy to Southeast Asian countries, the language in the education

system should start developing in Taiwan's society. For instance, Respondent BE3 also brought in the view of Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan by comparing women's job security, maternity leave, and welfare benefits between Vietnam and Taiwan (Interview, Feb 2023). In Respondent BE3's experience, it is the topic of women's job security that has bonded and empowered her in Taiwan-Vietnam relations; in turn, she started caring about the Vietnamese immigrants in Taiwan, whether they enjoyed the benefits and felt assured a sense of security. This illustrates how democratized public diplomacy and evolving state-society relations empowered Taiwanese citizens to engage effectively abroad, while simultaneously reinforcing Taiwan's security status at home. Although language has not been explicitly framed as a tool of public diplomacy, its incorporation into education policy reflects Taiwan's long-term strategy for building mutual understanding and enhancing security. By equipping citizens with the linguistic skills to engage across Southeast Asia, Taiwan lays the foundation for more inclusive and effective diplomacy. Yet this connection remains underexplored in current policy discourse and warrants closer examination in future research.

## **8.5 Summary**

This chapter evaluated the findings from both the document analysis and semi-structured interviews, integrating insights to address the central research question: Is public diplomacy a factor that can contribute to solving the conflict between China and Taiwan regarding the status of Taiwan? The analysis suggests that while public diplomacy cannot be expected to directly resolve the conflict, it plays an interconnected role in addressing identity-based conflicts, enhancing perceptions of security, and shaping Taiwan's geopolitical strategies.

The integration of both methodologies was engaged with existing literature on public diplomacy to illustrate the distinct features of Taiwan's public diplomacy. The document analysis showed the evolution of Taiwan's public diplomacy narratives, from emphasizing relations with English-speaking countries to targeting Southeast Asian nations under the New Southbound Policy. This shift reveals a strategic focus on people-to-people exchanges, particularly in educational and cultural contexts, positioning individuals as central actors in diplomatic engagement. The semi-structured

interviews complemented this by capturing societal perspectives, demonstrating how Taiwan's clear identity and democratization process resonated with both domestic and foreign audiences. The strategic use of social media and education emerged as pivotal tools for building trust, fostering openness, and enabling cross-cultural connections. This chapter acknowledged the difficulty of establishing a clear causality between public diplomacy and conflict resolution, particularly given the absence of public opinion surveys or social media sentiment analysis that could try to trace societal effects. Instead, the findings highlight how Taiwan's domestic democratization and evolving state-society relations strengthen the linkages between identity and security, shaping an environment for potential conflict transformation while remaining contingent on broader geopolitical and societal factors.

Eventually, this chapter reflected the limitations of the research design and considered potential explanations for unexpected findings, particularly the overlooked role of language in public diplomacy and the unexpected salience of language education. The language education initiatives, while primarily domestically oriented, hold promise for strengthening Taiwan's diplomatic engagement with Southeast Asia in the future. This chapter contributes to the growing field of Taiwan studies and offers theoretical implications for the study of public diplomacy, conflict resolution, and security in East Asia. The findings presented here set the stage for broader discussions in the concluding chapter, where the theoretical and practical implications of Taiwan's public diplomacy will be explored in greater depth.

## **Chapter 9. Conclusions**

This dissertation aimed to answer the central research question: Is public diplomacy a factor that can contribute to solving the conflict between China and Taiwan regarding the status of Taiwan? By examining Taiwan's case from 2000 to 2020, it offers an original contribution to the understanding of identity-based conflict resolution through the strategic deployment of public diplomacy. The findings demonstrate Taiwan's domestic transformations – most notably democratization, identity formation, and sovereignization – have shaped a distinctive approach to public diplomacy. These developments enabled Taiwan to utilize public diplomacy not only as a tool of external communication but also as a means of redefining its geopolitical security status and mitigating identity-based tensions in the region. Through both methodologies of document analysis and semi-structured interviews, this dissertation illustrates how evolving state-society relations in Taiwan have influenced the design and practice of public diplomacy. The findings provide a nuanced perspective on the dynamic relationship between identity and security in East Asia.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section reflects on the key insights generated from each chapter, emphasizing how they connect with broader theoretical implications. The second section considers methodological reflections and research limitations. The final section identifies directions for future research, highlighting how the case of Taiwan opens new avenues for studying the intersections of identity, security, and conflict resolution.

### **9.1 Reflection on Key Themes and Broader Theoretical Implications**

By synthesizing the case study with broader theoretical perspectives, the dissertation advances two main contributions. First, it deepens understanding of the theoretical relationship between identity and security in international relations by showing how identity contestation can be managed not only through hard power but also through public diplomacy strategies. Second, it highlights the role of public diplomacy as a form of conflict mitigation, extending its relevance beyond image-building to include identity clarification and societal reassurance. In particular, the findings suggest that Taiwan has developed a distinctive model of civic-embedded

public diplomacy (CEPD). This model is characterized by state-led initiatives that are co-produced with civil society actors and designed to serve both domestic and international audiences. Domestically, CEPD reassures Taiwanese society of its distinct identity and democratic values; internationally, it persuades foreign audiences by projecting Taiwan as a responsible and rights-respecting actor in the region. Table 9.1 summarizes the key themes and illustrates their connections to broader theoretical contributions. The following sections elaborate on these themes, linking empirical findings from Taiwan to wider debates in international relations and security studies.

Table 9.1 – Summary of Key Themes, Linkages, and Theoretical Contributions.

<b>Key Themes</b>	<b>Linkages</b>	<b>Theoretical Contribution</b>	<b>This Dissertation's Findings</b>
Identity and Security	Identity influences perceptions of security so identity-based conflicts require ideational approaches	It expands security studies by recognizing identity as a factor influencing regional stability; in addition, it shifts the focus from traditional security to ideational security.	Taiwan's public diplomacy fosters the citizens' perception of security by promoting a clear national identity emphasizing democracy, human rights, and freedom.
Public Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution	Public diplomacy is a tool for addressing identity-based conflicts so involving the civil society should be examined for their role in diplomatic engagement	It demonstrates how public diplomacy can serve as a mechanism for conflict resolution, complementing state government's practices	Taiwan's people-centric public diplomacy, projecting through social media and engaging with Southeast Asian in educational context, enhances reputational security and thus regional security.

### 9.1.1 The Theoretical Relationship between Identity and Security

A key theme emerging from this research is that identity-based conflict, exemplified by Taiwan's position relative to China, demands alternative approaches to conflict resolution beyond traditional military or economic measures. As shown in *Chapter 2*, East Asia's security environment during the early 21st century highlighted the need for strategies aimed at mediating threat perceptions. Building on this, *Chapter*

3 situates Taiwan's public diplomacy within the theoretical framework of conflict resolution, emphasizing its role in justifying the state's security position in the region. The findings of this dissertation highlight that Taiwan's efforts in public diplomacy are shifting the focus to people-to-people exchanges. These efforts mitigate identity tensions by fostering trust among people from different cultural backgrounds, ultimately enhancing Taiwan's security status. Moreover, Taiwanese citizens, in the process of presenting their identity to Southeast Asians, foster a collective understanding of security. The sense of security is not only generated within Taiwanese people but also interconnected between Taiwanese and Southeast Asians when Taiwan projects a clear identity with elements of respect for human rights, democracy, and freedom. These identity linkages are further reinforced through CEPD, in which citizens themselves become active in addressing security narratives across borders. This expands the theoretical discourse on conflict resolution by presenting how ideational sources that comprise a clear identity and people-centric strategies contribute to regional stability. This complements existing security frameworks focusing on material capabilities in the military and economy by incorporating perceptions of security at both the state government and civil society levels.

### **9.1.2 The Theoretical Relationship between Public Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution**

Taiwan's approach to public diplomacy enriches the conceptual evolution of public diplomacy by positioning it not just as a tool for statecraft but as a mechanism for civil society's demand for identity expression. As explored in *Chapter 4*, Taiwan's inviting civil society's participation contrasts with China's central government approach. This difference highlights how domestic political systems shape public diplomacy practices and emphasizes the relations between Taiwan's development of democratization and public diplomacy. This dissertation's findings demonstrate Taiwan's democratized approach by empowering citizens as the main actors in conducting public diplomacy. Moreover, Taiwan's evolving state-society relations, thanks to the role of social media and digital communication technology, have become an important element in promoting a people-centric public diplomacy. Social media platforms create spaces for Taiwan to connect with Southeast Asians. In addition, language plays a crucial role in enabling communication between Taiwan and Southeast

Asia. With the development of social media and digital technology, Taiwan enhances its geopolitical security status by strengthening its reputation, which is not only an awareness of the government but also a sense of safety and confidence for Taiwanese citizens. Taiwan's model enriches the interdisciplinary discussion of public diplomacy by linking insights from political science to communication studies and illustrating public diplomacy strategies from international, governmental, and individual security concerns. This can be described as CEPD: it shows that public diplomacy in contested-status settings is not only top-down statecraft but also an inclusive practice, enacted by citizens, NGOs, and digital networks. CEPD broadens the notion of conflict resolution. Rather than securing immediate settlement, it manages identity-based tensions by reinforcing legitimacy, building reputational security, and creating conditions that may gradually enable conflict transformation.

### **9.1.3 Broader Theoretical Implications**

By situating these themes within broader theoretical implications, this dissertation highlights the importance of integrating cultural and ideational factors into security studies. The research findings expand traditional security frameworks that emphasize material capabilities by recognizing identity as both a source of conflict and a pathway to resolution. As this dissertation argues, conflict is not fixed, but contingent, dynamic, and managed through ideational processes. The key to the changes lies in mobilizing and developing identity components through a people-centric approach. Digital media further facilitates these processes by cultivating trust across borders and advancing a collective understanding of security. Building on Friedberg's argument for East Asia's potential rivalry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (1993) and Rawnsley's conceptualization of China's and Taiwan's soft power (2012), this dissertation offers original contributions to Taiwan's studies by bridging security studies' emphasis on rivalry with diplomacy studies' attention to soft power, through CEPD as a mediating practice. Within security studies, Taiwan's public diplomacy exemplifies how ideational resources, such as cultural narratives and people-to-people exchanges, can mitigate security risks in a contested geopolitical landscape. In terms of diplomacy studies, Taiwan's democratized approach to public diplomacy—integrating civil society actors and leveraging digital communication platforms—highlights the evolving role of soft power strategies in global politics. Conceptualized as CEPD, Taiwan's approach

demonstrates how public diplomacy functions simultaneously as a form of identity diplomacy, a tool of strategic repositioning, and a mechanism of conflict management, broadening both diplomacy studies and security studies. These insights contribute to a more nuanced understanding of diplomacy as a dynamic process rather than a state-centric model. This reframing invites scholars to treat diplomacy not only as instrumental communication but as a site of security-making.

## **9.2 Reflection on Methodology and Limitations**

The methodology employed in this dissertation combines policy document analysis and semi-structured interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of Taiwan's public diplomacy practices. The integration of these methodologies allowed for an in-depth analysis of both official narratives and lived experiences, yielding insights into the dynamics of identity and security. First, the document analysis provided a historical and policy-oriented perspective, tracing the evolution of Taiwan's public diplomacy strategies over two decades. Second, the semi-structured interviews complemented this by capturing diverse viewpoints from the civil society perspectives, offering nuanced understandings of public diplomacy's practical applications and its linkage to security. This approach points out the interdisciplinary nature, enabling the research to address multi-layered questions that require both state-government and civil society levels of analysis.

While this dissertation offers insights, it is essential to recognize the limitations. First, relying only on the annual reports of diplomatic policy not only generates a biased view but also restricts the variety of other document types, such as publications from other ministries, non-governmental organizations, or media outlets that could have provided a more comprehensive view of official narratives of public diplomacy. This document analysis, nevertheless, aligns with the research objective to examine Taiwan's internal identity formation and its link to shaping its security position in East Asia. Second, although the restriction of document analysis is complemented by the semi-structured interviews, the diversity of interview participants was limited to only Taiwanese citizens in a few countries in Southeast Asia. Despite a narrow perspective of the civil society level in understanding of security and interpretations of diplomatic engagements, it corresponds to the research aim of exploring public diplomacy and its

relation to conflict resolution. A further limitation is the lack of systematic counter-analysis of alternative or dissenting narratives, whether within Taiwan's domestic discourse or in the reception of its diplomacy abroad. While glimpses of such perspectives emerge in the empirical material, they were not the central focus of this dissertation. This boundary reflects the dissertation's objective to prioritize Taiwan's own diplomatic narratives and civil society engagements, though future research could extend this analysis by examining contested receptions more directly.

Finally, the examination of language's role in public diplomacy reveals a gap between the data analyzed in this dissertation and its theoretical implications. While language is a critical factor in fostering effective communication, this dissertation instead focuses on the strategic use of social media. With the development and awareness of utilizing ICT, it facilitates a two-way model of communication that builds trust among different nations. This finding contributes to emerging scholarly discourses on digital diplomacy and the role of ICT in fostering reputation security.

By addressing the limitations of this research methodology, this dissertation provides a balanced evaluation of its contributions to existing scholarly discourse. Despite these challenges, they pave the way for future research to expand beyond the limitations. The next section elaborates on the potential for future research.

### **9.3 Suggestions for Future Research**

This dissertation has provided new insights into the intersection of identity, security, and public diplomacy in East Asia, using Taiwan's case as a focal point. While it has answered the overarching research question, it has also raised new questions and highlighted areas for further exploration. First, a key research orientation is the measurement of the effectiveness of Taiwan's public diplomacy strategies. This dissertation analyzed the content and evolution of public diplomacy initiatives but did not assess their measurable impact on regional or international perceptions of Taiwan's identity and security status. Future studies could adopt complementary quantitative methods, such as public opinion surveys or social media sentiment analysis, to evaluate the influence of specific programs like the New Southbound Policy on target audiences. Such approaches would not only broaden the methodological base but also allow for systematic counter-analysis of alternative narratives. Second, as addressed in the

research limitations, the role of language in public diplomacy emerged as a critical but underexplored theme in this dissertation. Investigating how Taiwan's domestic language policies, particularly those aimed at Southeast Asian immigrants and students, shape its international relations could provide valuable insights into the link between linguistic strategy and identity-building. Comparative studies examining similar efforts in other multilingual or culturally diverse states might enrich this line of inquiry. Third, future research could expand the geographic and temporal scope of analysis. This dissertation concentrated on Taiwan's strategies from 2000 to 2020 and its relations with Southeast Asia; subsequent studies might examine Taiwan's engagement with other regions or during earlier or more recent periods. Such studies could test the generalizability of this dissertation's findings and uncover additional dimensions of Taiwan's public diplomacy. Finally, beyond Taiwan, future research could advance the theoretical framework of CEPD by applying it to other de facto states navigating contested sovereignty. This could refine our understanding of public diplomacy not only as a communication tool but also as a practice of conflict management, identity negotiation, and security-making. By addressing these avenues, future research can build on the conceptual framework established in this dissertation, furthering our understanding of public diplomacy as a conflict resolution tool and its implications for regional and global security.

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## Appendix I: Respondent Consent Form

Yung Lin

Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs

### Respondent Consent Form

#### Terms of Conditions:


- The respondent has the right to ask for more details about this research project prior to, during, or after the interview, to view the output of the interview, and to withdraw during the interview if the interview questions are not wished to be answered.
- The profiling of the interview is as detailed below, in which the respondent's name will not be recorded. Other information outside of this form will not be recorded.
- The interview will be audio recorded for transcription but removed after the transcription is completed. The researcher will ensure the analysis of interview content is presented in a way that will not trace back to the respondent's identity.
- The respondents will receive first-hand analyzed results and decide whether they would like to provide supplementary content.
- The interview content will be stored in the researcher's private data archive in the format of transcription until December 2028.
- The duration of the interview will be 45 – 60 minutes but the interview can be conducted longer if the respondent would consent to continue.
- The interview is for academic purposes only. The researcher is Yung Lin, PhD candidate at Leiden University. If there is any question, the respondent can contact the researcher at [y.lin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:y.lin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- By signing this form, both sides agree to conduct the interview at the date and time decided.

Interview Profiling: (respondent can choose to be interviewed at more than one event)

A	The South China Sea	B	ECFA trade agreement	C	COVID-19 border control
Respondents*	Date of Interview*	Age	Gender	Occupation	Position
Pseudonym					
(marked by researcher)					

\*marked as mandatory and to be stored in the project

Signature

Respondent	Researcher – Yung Lin
	

### Interview Questions

Description	<p>How would you describe the conflict?</p> <p>What are the reasons that make it a conflict?</p> <p>Has there been any effort made to appease the conflict?</p>
Opinion	<p>What solutions have the experts proposed to appease the conflict?</p> <p>Have you spotted the government (China's/Taiwan's) engaged in diplomatic policy to appease the conflict? Do you think they are effective in resolving conflicts?</p> <p>What do you think of the (China's/Taiwan's) public diplomacy practices?</p>
Other views?	<p>The respondent may choose to share their views on more than 1 event or list other events related through the lens of interpretations on conflict and opinions on conflict resolution.</p>

Hints: Historical Conflictual Events (Timeline for your reference)

Event code	Conflict type	Events
A	Territorial issue?	<p>2002 Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea</p> <p>2016, Arbitral Tribunal to the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China</p>
B	Economic trade crisis?	<p>2010 Chong Ching, China, Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement</p> <p>2014 Taipei, Taiwan, Sunflower Movement against the trade agreement</p>
C	State - society relation?	<p>2020, COVID-19 crisis</p> <p>border control/immigration</p>

## Appendix II: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Before the start of the interview question, when I press the recording, I would like to inform you of the design of the interview question. There are two different types of questions, description-type and opinion-type as you have seen in the consent form. I will always point out this when asking the question. This is to give the respondent flexibility in remembering what happened and to prompt the respondent's reflection on what happened. In this interview, I invite you to share your answers, like telling your life story, but in between your stories, I will ask for your opinion or argument. The interview questions are designed in the structure of three themes derived from the first three chapters of my PhD dissertation: (1) security and conflict, (2) conflict resolution, and (3) public diplomacy. You may request details or read from my chapters after the interview. In this interview recording, I hope to hear more of your first-hand insights. Now if you agree, I will ask the first question and the recording will start when you answer the first question. You may always request to stop any parts that do not want to be recorded.

### Background information

Question	Can you describe briefly WHY you chose this event to share your experiences?
Purpose	This question is at the beginning of the interview to confirm with the respondents their motivation to share their experiences and observations about the conflictual event they chose.

Recording starts.

### I. Concept of security/conflict

Question (Description-type)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How do you describe this conflictual event? What kind of conflict is this? What words would you use?</li><li>2. In this conflictual event, how did/do you experience it? Why was/is it a conflict?</li><li>3. Did/Do you feel that it was/is a threat?</li></ol>
Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The first question aims to understand respondents' concept of conflict and to investigate whether the words respondents used to describe the conflict are related to the concept of security.</li></ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The second question helps respondents' remember how they experienced through those historical moments in order to capture the formation process of conflict.</li> <li>3. The third question is to understand how has the conflictual event formed and developed.</li> </ol>
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Thank you for your description. Now I would like to ask for your opinions based on your story.

Follow-up Prompts (Opinion-type Question)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why was/is it a (threat, rivalry, competition, stagnation, danger, crisis, safety) issue? What did you use this word to describe the conflict?</li> <li>2. Why do you think that this (threat, rivalry, competition, stagnation, crisis, safety) gives you the fear? What will you lose in this fear?</li> <li>3. Why do you think you have this argument? Is it from your interactions with your local colleagues? Or is it from what news sources you've been reading about?</li> <li>4. So in your opinion, has this conflict finished or is it ongoing?</li> </ol>
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## II. Approaches to enhance the sense of security

Question (Description-type)	<p>Do these conflicts constantly generate in your engagement in your expatriate work experience? If so, what are your ways of dealing with these conflicts?</p> <p>Are these approaches guided by the company or by the people you interacted with?</p> <p>When extended development of conflicts occurred, what solutions have taken place?</p>
Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The first question invites the respondent to think about how the conflictual event is contextualized in the respondent's daily life in order to capture the civil societal level of understanding the conflictual event and how the people are faced with the conflicts?</li> <li>2. The second question aims to justify whether there have been institutionalized ways of tackling the conflict issue or it is improvised in people-to-people interactions.</li> </ol>

	3. The third question invites the respondent to share more details if the respondent recognized any approaches as the solutions to these conflicts.
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Thank you for sharing this. If there is any part of the information that should not be shared, please let me know. Now I would like to ask of your opinions on what you have just told me.

Follow-up Prompts (Opinion-type Question)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think that your goal is to make peace when you talked about this conflict with the locals? Does that give you a sense of security?</li> <li>2. When you emphasized your identity as a Taiwanese, did you notice any awkwardness or avoidance from the locals? If not, what do you think is the reason?</li> <li>3. Why do you think the locals have such impression about Taiwan? Where do they source their impression from? Do you think that you actively promote the identity as a Taiwanese to them?</li> </ol>
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Thank you. Now that is overall for my research on the relationship between identity, security, and conflict. The following questions are mostly opinion-type. I am going to ask for your opinions on the study of public diplomacy. This is connected to my findings in Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs annual diplomatic policy. I found that public diplomatic policy emerged in 2012. Moreover, after 2016, there has been a major change in the public diplomatic strategy, which is that the government put the people as the main actors in public diplomacy. In addition, the New Southbound Policy changed Taiwan's diplomacy target to Southeast Asian states. The interview questions here are not asking you to represent the government but asking for your opinions on what you have just said about your emphasis on your identity as Taiwanese when interacting with the locals.

I would like to investigate if your experience proves that Taiwan's public diplomatic policy empowers the people to be the main actors.

### III. Public diplomacy

Question (Opinion-type)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think that in your experience you are an active person conducting public diplomacy with the locals?</li> <li>2. How do the locals respond to your identity expression? Do you think identity expression would cause unnecessary conflicts?</li> <li>3. Do you think that you are often put in the situation where you have to clarify your identity to be a Taiwanese rather than a Chinese?</li> </ol>
Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The first question aims to know whether the respondent feels empowered to conduct the diplomatic practices.</li> <li>2. The second question is a general follow-up prompt from the respondent's story if the respondent mentioned their experiences of identity expression to the locals.</li> <li>3. The third question is a general follow-up prompt if the respondent mentioned the difficulties of identity expression they faced at work or daily contact with the locals.</li> </ol>

Thank you for your opinions and observations. Now I am going to ask some follow-up questions. They may be a little politically sensitive and the questions are also inviting your opinions. If there are some parts that should not be shared, please let me know. You can opt out of the interview question if you feel uncomfortable.

Questions (Opinion-type)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you spotted the China's and Taiwan's government engaged in diplomatic policy to appease the conflict? Do you think they are effective in resolving conflicts?</li> <li>2. What do you think of the China's and Taiwan's public diplomacy practices?</li> </ol>
Follow-up Prompts (Questions generated during the interviews)	<p>You mentioned that the local education system is the easiest way for you to interact with the locals but the education policy hasn't been improved to increase the cross-cultural communication awareness. Then what do you think of Taiwan's education system? Has Taiwan's education policy been raising the awareness of cross-cultural communication?</p>

*Another follow-up prompt found in only a few interviews	You mentioned the migrant workers policy in the country you expatriate to and this made you start thinking about the Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan. Why do you think that the welfare policy of the Southeast Asian migrant workers is crucial in Taiwan's diplomatic policy? How do you think that the relationship between Taiwan and Southeast Asia may advance from improving the migrant workers policy?
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Thank you for sharing your story, observations, and opinions. The recording is now officially finished. I will send you the transcription. Please let me know if there are some parts you would like not to be transcribed or any further information you'd like to share. If you'd like to share additional information, please indicate if this is answering to the description-type or opinion-type questions.

## **Appendix III: (For Respondents) Brief Results of Semi-structured Interview**

(Translation version)

**Dear Respondent,**

Thank you for assisting me during 2022-2023 by sharing your observations and experiences through invitations and recruitment. After months of analysis and completing the final steps of data security protection, this brief analytical summary is provided here to all respondents who participated in the interviews.

### **Important Notice:**

This brief analysis is intended for respondents only. Receiving this document also serves as a statement of data security protection: all audio recordings from the interviews have been deleted. The notes and text files generated during the interviews are stored only in the researcher's database for a maximum of five years (until December 2028). Upon the completion of this research project (expected September 2024), all primary source data will no longer be retained in the institution's database. The identity of the respondents will be displayed in codes.

### **Overview of the Interview:**

All interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format (questions were not strictly predetermined), guided by three historical events to prompt respondents to recall personal experiences, local observations, or compare perspectives from their student and working years. Below is a summary of the main findings:

### **(1) Interpretations and Experiences of Conflict**

- **Conflict with [Institutions]:**

Most respondents described conflicts stemming from their personal experiences or observations of opaque regulations. Policies in the local context or unclear workplace rules often created uncertainty, leading to challenges in arranging their work or personal lives. This gave rise to resistance against institutional systems. These conflicts were not necessarily physical

altercations or traditionally defined violence but were categorized as conflicts based on respondents' feelings of challenging the system.

- **Conflict in [Defining Relationships]:**

These conflicts were further categorized into three types:

- **Intergenerational conflicts** between respondents' own generation and their parents or between respondents and the millennial generation, arising from differing views on public issues.
- **Peer conflicts** among respondents from the same generation over differing approaches to engaging in public issues, leading to divisions in how relationships were defined.
- **Foreigners' perspectives on Taiwanese identity:** Some respondents described debates with foreigners during academic or professional exchanges, where conflicts arose from defining or distinguishing their identity.

- **Conflict in [Beliefs/Perceptions]:**

These were harder to pinpoint. In cases where respondents held unchallenged beliefs, conflicts arose when their perceptions were questioned or required further explanation. Respondents often hesitated, could not provide concrete ideas, or felt no need to elaborate further. This resistance to questioning firmly held beliefs was categorized as a type of conflict.

## **(2) Communication Tools: The Importance of Social Media**

In the information age, social media serves as a primary platform for communication and interaction. Nearly all respondents mentioned its necessity for work, while a few highlighted its role in daily life. Respondents identified three modes of social media use in their experiences: passive reception, active dissemination, and deliberate dialogue-building. Passive reception was the most common, followed by active dissemination and deliberate dialogue-building. Many respondents expressed concerns about the risks of social media, highlighting its tendency to enable unilateral messaging and the intentional shaping of narratives.

## **(3) Core of Communication: The Education System**

Many respondents believed their interactions with neighboring countries and their own identity observations stemmed from foundational education. In discussing intergenerational conflicts, respondents noted a generational gap in foundational education, particularly in cultivating critical thinking or understanding historical conflicts. This gap contributed to various conflicts over relationship definitions. Additionally, foundational education should emphasize media literacy, reflecting the earlier point about the dangers of one-sided messaging. In the information age, fostering media literacy is increasingly critical for effective communication.

### **Additional Issues Identified in Some Respondents' Experiences:**

#### **(4) Growing Attention to Migration Issues:**

Across the three experiences (personal experiences, societal observations, and student versus work comparisons), some respondents mentioned an increased awareness of migration issues. Although the reasons for this concern were not analyzed in detail, respondents showed a growing awareness and willingness to advocate for the rights, treatment, and welfare of immigrants in Taiwan.

#### **(5) Language Barriers:**

No respondents mentioned encountering language barriers during international interactions, nor did they specify which languages were used in cross-national exchanges or social media communications.

If you are interested in this research project and wish to continue participating or sharing your thoughts, feel free to contact me at [y.lin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:y.lin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl).

(Original version)

親愛的受訪者：

您好，感謝您之前協助我在 2022-2023 年間以邀請和招募的方式分享您的觀察觀點和經驗，經過幾個月的分析以及最後幾個資安保護的步驟，這篇簡要結果分析是回饋給所有曾經協助我進行訪問的受訪者。

以下聲明：

本篇簡要結果分析僅供受訪者參閱保留，在您接受到這份文件同時也是一份資安保護的聲明，所有訪問的錄音檔已經刪除，訪問時所產生的筆記和內容文字檔只存於研究者本身的資料庫最多五年（至 2028 年十二月），並不存於研究者所在機構的雲端資料庫中，在本篇研究計畫完成時（預計 2024 九月），所有第一手元資料也不會存於研究者所在機構的資料庫，訪問的結果分析皆以代號呈現。

所有受訪者接受的訪問方式，皆以半結構似（不限定問題方向），以三種歷史事件引導受訪者，回憶自我親身經驗，所在地觀察；或比較學生時期及工作時期的觀點。以下簡要結果分析供您參閱：

#### （一）衝突的詮釋和感受

- 對於[體制]的衝突感：多半來自於自我經歷或觀察到不透明的規範而產生，因為所在地的政策，工作相關領域的規範不透明，而帶來的不確定性，造成在工作或生活的安排上困擾，因此而對於體制的制定產生反抗，衝突並不一定是肢體碰觸或傳統定義上的暴力衝突，而是因為挑戰體制的感受而定義成衝突。
- 對於[定義關係]的衝突：又分為三種，世代關係的衝突，同儕之間的衝突，外國人對於台灣身份定義的衝突。
- 世代關係：受訪者本身世代與父母或者受訪者本身世代與千禧年世代，討論公共議題而產生的不同見解。
- 同儕之間：受訪者本身世代對於參與公共議題的不同方式而分裂定義彼此的關係。
- 外國人對於台灣身份的定義：出現在一些受訪者在求學或者工作經驗中曾經需要因為各種場合，需要與外國人交流介紹自己身份時與外國人產生辯論，因為需要定義身份或者劃分身份界線進而產生衝突。
- 對於[信念/認知]的衝突：較模糊捕捉，從受訪者具有第三種比較經驗中發現，信念是受訪者在未經過問題挑戰時本身具有的認知，而如果在訪問過程中出現，原本認知被挑戰，或者需要被詢問多作解釋，以上兩種情況，受訪者產生猶豫無法提供確切概念，或者不認為需要多做解釋，如此狀況也被列

為一種衝突。是因為對於概念本身具有不需挑戰的信念，因此在受到問題挑戰時會先產生反抗。

以下是與第二手資料文本分析比較後的歸納（政府外交政策元資料）

#### （二）交流的工具：社群媒體的重要性

在資訊時代的交流，社群媒體是傳遞交流溝通的主要平台，幾乎所有受訪者都提及是工作上的需要，或者少數認為是生活中的需要。然而社群媒體上的交流在受訪者經驗裡有三種模式：被動接受，主動傳遞，或有意識建立對話。以被動接受佔大多數（次為主動傳遞，最後是有意識建立對話），因此多數受訪者在分享完經驗後有意識表示社群媒體上訊息的危險性，這項危險是單方面傳遞及有意識塑造形象的訊息主導流。

#### （三）交流的核心：教育體制

多數受訪者認為與鄰國互動及自我觀察本身的身份認同是來自於基礎教育，在世代關係衝突的分享經驗中，受訪者指出與不同世代之間在基礎教育上有落差，因為較少有批判思考的培養，或者缺乏辨別背後歷史衝突的概念，因此而導致各類對於定義關係的衝突。再者，基礎教育也應重視媒體釋讀的培養，此項呼應前項交流工具的重要性，因單方面訊息傳遞的危險，因此在資訊時代的交流更需重視媒體釋讀的能力。

以下是分析結果主論點之外，在幾位受訪者經驗中出現的議題：

（四）關注移民議題的增長：在三種經驗中（親身經歷，觀察所在地社會，學生和工作時期的比較）皆有受訪者提及關注移民的議題（確切原因為何會關注並無多做分析），這項議題圍繞的主觀意識是，受訪者開始關注並有意識捍衛在台移民的權利待遇以及福利保障。

（五）並無受訪者提及與他國交流會遇到語言障礙，但也並無提及使用何語言與他國交流以及在社群媒體上的訊息溝通。

如您對於這項研究計畫有興趣並希望繼續參與或分享，歡迎來信 [y.lin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:y.lin@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)

## Samenvatting

De onderzoeksvraag van dit project luidde: Kan publieksdiplomatie een bijdrage leveren aan de oplossing van het conflict tussen China en Taiwan over de status van Taiwan? Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, heb ik de evoluerende inhoud van Taiwan's diplomatieke beleid in de periode van 2000 tot 2020 gepresenteerd om de relatie tussen identiteit en veiligheid te demonstreren. Dit breidde zich uit tot het beantwoorden van vijf deelvragen in elk substantieel hoofdstuk.

De eerste deelvraag in Hoofdstuk 2 was: Hoe moet men Taiwan's rol zien in de veiligheidscontext van Oost-Azië in de 21e eeuw – is Taiwan een conflictmaker of een bijdrager aan regionale vrede? Hoofdstuk 2 bood het verklarende kader van het veiligheidsklimaat in Oost-Azië in de 21e eeuw en definieerde het conflict tussen China en Taiwan als een identiteit-gebaseerd conflict. Hoofdstuk 3 ging dieper in op dit identiteit-gebaseerde conflict met deelvraag 2: Heeft de opkomst van China als doel gehad de dreigingsperceptie te verminderen? En deelvraag 3: Hoe heeft Taiwan als bemiddelaar gefunctioneerd in conflictresolutie in Oost-Azië? Op basis van het verklarende kader van conflictresolutie in de Oost-Aziatische context, mobiliseert een staat materiële of ideële bronnen om dreigingsperceptie te mediëren en handelt dienovereenkomstig via een intersubjectief proces om zijn eigen gedefinieerde veiligheidsstatus in de regio te bereiken. Hoewel zowel China als Taiwan hetzelfde doel delen van het creëren van collectieve veiligheid in Oost-Azië, bevestigde de verschillende interpretaties van waargenomen bedreigingen en hun eigen gedefinieerde veiligheidsstatus dat het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict een alternatieve kijk op conflictresolutie vereist, waarin deze dissertatie publieksdiplomatie verkent. Dit leidde tot deelvraag 4: Wat zijn de historische culturele interpretaties van soft power door China en Taiwan? En deelvraag 5: Hoe voeren China en Taiwan publieksdiplomatie om het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict op te lossen? Hoofdstuk 4 beantwoordde deze deelvragen 4 en 5 door te bevestigen dat zowel China's als Taiwan's interpretaties van soft power gebaseerd zijn op cultuur, waarden en instituties. Vanuit dit perspectief is China's doel om de dreigingsperceptie te verminderen, terwijl Taiwan streeft naar meer internationale erkenning. Bovendien verschilde de rol van actoren betrokken bij publieksdiplomatie in de strategieën van beide partijen. Dit leidde tot de data-analyse

van deze dissertatie om de relatie tussen identiteit en veiligheid in Taiwan's publieksdiplomatieke beleid van 2000 tot 2020 te onderzoeken.

Door het geval van Taiwan te onderzoeken om de onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden, verklaarde Hoofdstuk 5 de kwalitatieve methodologie en het dataverzamelingsproces. Ik tekstanalyse van Taiwan's jaarlijkse diplomatieke rapporten van 2000 tot 2020 en inhoudsanalyse op 18 semi-gestructureerde interviews. Hoofdstuk 6 presenteerde de resultaten van de documentanalyse over de twintig jaar aan diplomatieke rapporten, en Hoofdstuk 7 verklaarde de resultaten van de inhoudsanalyse van 18 interviews. Ik besprak de afgeleide conclusies en de betekenis van beide analysemethoden in Hoofdstuk 8. Dit onderzoek bevestigde dat Taiwan publieksdiplomatie heeft ingezet als een oplossing om zijn veiligheidsstatus in Oost-Azië in de 21e eeuw te herpositioneren. De volgende paragrafen zijn onderverdeeld in drie secties om de conclusie van dit onderzoek te presenteren: (1) Inzichten gegenereerd uit elk hoofdstuk, (2) reflectie op de methodologie en de beperkingen van dit onderzoek, en (3) suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek.

### **Inzichten gegenereerd uit elk hoofdstuk**

Deze dissertatie heeft de onderzoeksvraag beantwoord door het geval Taiwan te gebruiken. Door originele data-analyse van Taiwan's situatie te presenteren, wordt een bijdrage geleverd aan de velden van identiteit, veiligheid, conflictresolutie en publieksdiplomatie in de context van Oost-Azië.

Hoofdstuk 1, *Inleiding*, beschreef het regionale perspectief van Oost-Azië en wees erop dat er geen geïnternaliseerd concept is van een Oost-Aziatische identiteit. De afbakening van Oost-Azië in dit onderzoek werd gedefinieerd als geopolitiek Oost-Azië, met landen zoals China, Japan, Zuid-Korea, Taiwan en Zuidoost-Azië. Taiwan deelt het probleem van een geïnternaliseerde identiteit binnen deze regio, maar kent ook nuances die het onderscheiden van de academische discussie over Oost-Azië. Als resultaat heb ik het onderzoeksprobleem gedefinieerd binnen het kader van Taiwan in Oost-Azië in de 21e eeuw, zoals uiteengezet in Hoofdstuk 2.

Hoofdstuk 2, *Oost-Aziatische Veiligheid*, toonde aan dat er drie theoretische paradigma's zijn in Oost-Azië: militaire allianties, handelsakkoorden en ad-hoc diplomatie. Ik stel dat deze drie theoretische kaders moeten worden geïntegreerd met de historische lokale context van Taiwan's veiligheidskwestie om een omvattend beeld van het veiligheidsprobleem te geven. Taiwan's veiligheidsstatus werd vaak gezien als een subregionaal conflict of een verlengstuk van de Chinese Burgeroorlog (1945-1949). Deze opvatting is echter niet langer van toepassing, omdat Taiwan door drie belangrijke ontwikkelingen is gegaan in de eerste twee decennia van de 21e eeuw: democratisering, soeverenisering en identiteitsvorming. Deze ontwikkelingen hebben Taiwan onderscheiden in de veiligheidsdiscussie van Oost-Azië en laten zien dat Taiwan's veiligheidskwestie een identiteit-gebaseerd conflict is. In dit hoofdstuk heb ik dit verklarende kader toegepast op drie conflictuele casussen: de Zuid-Chinese Zee, het Economisch Samenwerkingskaderakkoord (ECFA) en COVID-19. Als gevolg hiervan heb ik de onderzoeksscope gedefinieerd van Taiwan's identiteit-gebaseerde conflict in Oost-Azië.

Hoofdstuk 3, *Conflictresolutie in Oost-Azië*, bood een analytisch kader voor de conceptualisering van conflictresolutie in Oost-Azië om publieksdiplomatie als conflictoplossing te contextualiseren. Dit kader is gebaseerd op twee concepten: dreigingsperceptie en relationele structuur. Ik heb dit kader toegepast door China en Taiwan te vergelijken, en ik betoog dat Taiwan's oplossing voor het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict in deze regio gebaseerd is op het balanceren van China's dreigingsperceptie en het herpositioneren van Taiwan's veiligheidsstatus in Oost-Azië. Bovendien werd het conflict tussen Taiwan en China historisch beschouwd als een subregionaal conflict tussen twee politieke regimes: de Chinese Nationalistische Partij (KMT) in Taiwan en de Chinese Communistische Partij in China. In dit hoofdstuk heb ik het analytische kader ontwikkeld om de aanname te onderzoeken dat Taiwan publieksdiplomatie heeft gebruikt om het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict op te lossen.

Hoofdstuk 4, *China's en Taiwan's Publieksdiplomatie*, vulde deze aanname aan door een literatuurstudie te onderzoeken van Taiwan's publieksdiplomatiestrategie in de afgelopen twee decennia. De vergelijking met China's situatie was bedoeld om Taiwan's lokale historische context van het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict te analyseren.

Dit hoofdstuk verkende de interpretatie van soft power door zowel China als Taiwan, en vond een connectie met het analytische kader van conflictresolutie zoals ontwikkeld in Hoofdstuk 3. De interpretatie van soft power kan worden onderzocht via hoe staten cultuur, waarden en instituties inzetten. Daarnaast presenteert de rol van actoren in publieksdiplomatie het belang van de relatie tussen identiteit en veiligheid. In Taiwan's geval is er een toenemende deelname van niet-gouvernementele actoren aan publieksdiplomatie in de eerste twee decennia van de 21e eeuw. Zodoende wordt publieksdiplomatie door Taiwan beschouwd als een oplossing om zijn veiligheidsstatus in Oost-Azië te verbeteren.

Hoofdstuk 5, *Onderzoeksopzet en Methodologie*, beschrijft de kwalitatieve methodologie die in dit onderzoek is gebruikt, de verzamelde datasets en de operationalisering van sleutelconcepten zoals besproken in Hoofdstuk 2, *Oost-Aziatische Veiligheid*, Hoofdstuk 3, *Conflictresolutie in Oost-Azië*, en Hoofdstuk 4, *China's en Taiwan's Publieksdiplomatie*. De kwalitatieve methodologie bestond uit tekstanalyse van beleidsdocumenten en inhoudelijke thematische analyse van semi-gestructureerde interviews. De datasets omvatten 21 jaarlijkse diplomatieke rapporten van Taiwan, geschreven in traditioneel Mandarijn tussen 2000 en 2020, zoals gedetailleerd in Hoofdstuk 6, *Resultaten – Beleidsdocumenten*. Daarnaast heb ik 18 semi-gestructureerde interviews afgenomen tussen december 2022 en juni 2023, voornamelijk in Mandarijn of een mix van Taiwanees en Engels, met Taiwanezen die naar China, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore en Maleisië zijn geëmigreerd. Door deze sleutelconcepten, in lijn met Taiwan's historische culturele context van veiligheid, heeft Taiwan publieksdiplomatie als conflictresolutietool ingezet om identiteit-gebaseerde conflicten aan te pakken en zijn veiligheidsstatus in de Oost-Aziatische veiligheidsomgeving van de 21e eeuw te beheren.

Hoofdstuk 8, *Evaluatie van de Resultaten* bevestigde het concept van Taiwan's publieksdiplomatie als oplossing voor het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict in Oost-Azië, zoals gedetailleerd in eerdere hoofdstukken van de literatuurstudie. Daarnaast heb ik de gesynthetiseerde resultaten besproken door in te gaan op vergelijkbaar eerder onderzoek en de belangrijkste gevonden concepten te illustreren. Vergelijkbaar eerder onderzoek naar publieksdiplomatie onderzocht strategieën voor het opbouwen van

relaties en het strategisch gebruik van media in het uitvoeren van publieksdiplomatie. Daarom zijn de sleutelconcepten die zowel uit de resultatenanalyse als het vergelijkbare eerdere onderzoek naar voren kwamen: (1) Taiwan democratiseert zijn strategie voor publieksdiplomatie en (2) de evoluerende staat-samenlevingsrelaties in Taiwan stimuleren deze democratisering van publieksdiplomatie. Een van de belangrijkste elementen in de relatie-opbouwstrategie van publieksdiplomatie is bijvoorbeeld Taiwan's transparantie van beleid, wat de betrouwbaarheid van Taiwanese interacties met Zuidoost-Aziaten vergroot. Bovendien streefde Taiwan's publieksdiplomatie, met name in de periode 2016-2020, ernaar om Taiwanese burgers te versterken in hun rol als actoren in publieksdiplomatie. Hoewel de verzamelde gegevens beperkt waren in het verklaren van het belang van taal in de strategie voor publieksdiplomatie, leveren deze twee concepten een genuanceerde en originele bijdrage aan verschillende onderzoeksgebieden, zoals identiteit, veiligheid, conflictresolutie en publieksdiplomatie.

Samenvattend toonde deze dissertatie aan dat Taiwan publieksdiplomatie heeft ingezet om zichzelf opnieuw te positioneren in het geopolitieke Oost-Azië van de 21e eeuw, door het narratief van zijn buitenlandse betrekkingen te vormen via binnenlandse democratisering en evoluerende staat-samenlevingsrelaties om zijn veiligheidsstatus in Oost-Azië te verbeteren. Een voorbeeld hiervan is het programma "Teen Diplomatic Envoys" (外交小尖兵), waarbij middelbare scholieren via uitwisselingsprogramma's economische en politieke prestaties tussen landen delen. Daarnaast stelt het Youth Mobility Scheme (青年打工度假) universiteitsstudenten in staat om tijdelijk in het buitenland te werken, waarbij ze culturele waarden kunnen leren, delen en uitwisselen. Binnen deze educatieve uitwisselingsprogramma's speelt de Nieuwe Zuidwaartse Politiek (新南向政策) een belangrijke rol in het toepassen van publieksdiplomatie om het identiteit-gebaseerde conflict aan te pakken. Sommige respondenten gaven bijvoorbeeld aan dat lokale inwoners in Zuidoost-Aziatische landen een identiteitsconflict ervoeren met Taiwanese, maar dat het heldere en betrouwbare imago van Taiwan de band versterkte tussen de respondenten en de lokale bevolking. De toenemende maatschappelijke vraag naar veiligheid in Taiwan en het groeiende bewustzijn onder de bevolking over het aanpakken van identiteit, manifesteerden zich uiteindelijk in publieksdiplomatiestrategieën als een instrument voor conflictresolutie.

Dit stelt Taiwan in staat om zijn positie in Oost-Azië, zowel op het gebied van identiteit als veiligheid, opnieuw te definiëren en te verstevigen.

## **Theoretische Implicaties**

De onderzoeksresultaten breiden traditionele veiligheidskaders die materiële mogelijkheden benadrukken uit door identiteit te erkennen als zowel een bron van conflict als een pad naar een oplossing. Zoals dit proefschrift betoogt, is conflict niet vaststaand, maar contingent, dynamisch en wordt het beheerd door middel van ideële processen. De sleutel tot de veranderingen ligt in het mobiliseren en ontwikkelen van identiteitscomponenten via een mensgerichte benadering. Digitale media faciliteren deze processen verder door vertrouwen over de grenzen heen te cultiveren en een collectief begrip van veiligheid te bevorderen. Voortbouwend op Friedbergs argument voor de potentiële rivaliteit van Oost-Azië in de 21e eeuw (1993) en Rawnsleys conceptualisering van de soft power van China en Taiwan (2012), biedt dit proefschrift originele bijdragen aan de Taiwanese studies door de nadruk op rivaliteit in veiligheidsstudies te verbinden met de aandacht voor soft power in diplomatieke studies, via CEPD als bemiddelende praktijk. Binnen veiligheidsstudies illustreert Taiwans publieksdiplomatie hoe ideologische bronnen, zoals culturele verhalen en intermenselijke uitwisselingen, veiligheidsrisico's kunnen beperken in een betwist geopolitiek landschap. Binnen diplomatieke studies benadrukt Taiwans gedemocratiseerde benadering van publieksdiplomatie – waarbij actoren uit het maatschappelijk middenveld worden geïntegreerd en digitale communicatieplatformen worden benut – de evoluerende rol van soft power-strategieën in de wereldpolitiek. Geconceptualiseerd als 'Civil-embedded Public Diplomacy', laat Taiwans benadering zien hoe publieksdiplomatie tegelijkertijd functioneert als een vorm van identiteitsdiplomatie, een instrument voor strategische herpositionering en een mechanisme voor conflictbeheersing, waardoor zowel diplomatieke studies als veiligheidsstudies worden verbreed. Deze inzichten dragen bij aan een genuanceerder begrip van diplomatie als een dynamisch proces in plaats van een staatsgericht model. Deze herkadring nodigt wetenschappers uit om diplomatie niet alleen te beschouwen als instrumentele communicatie, maar ook als een plek voor het creëren van veiligheid.

## **Reflectie op de Methodologie en de Beperkingen van dit Onderzoek**

De methodologie die in dit proefschrift wordt gebruikt, combineert analyse van beleidsdocumenten en semi-gestructureerde interviews om een uitgebreid inzicht te bieden in de praktijken van Taiwanese publieksdiplomatie. De integratie van deze methodologieën maakte een diepgaande analyse mogelijk van zowel officiële verhalen als levenservaringen, wat inzicht opleverde in de dynamiek van identiteit en veiligheid. Ten eerste bood de documentanalyse een historisch en beleidsgericht perspectief, waarbij de evolutie van Taiwanese publieksdiplomatie strategieën over twee decennia werd gevolgd. Ten tweede vulden de semi-gestructureerde interviews dit aan door diverse standpunten vanuit het maatschappelijk middenveld te verzamelen, wat een genuanceerd inzicht bood in de praktische toepassingen van publieksdiplomatie en de relatie ervan met veiligheid. Deze methodologische aanpak benadrukt het interdisciplinaire karakter, waardoor het onderzoek meerlagige vragen kan beantwoorden die zowel een analyse op het niveau van de overheid als van het maatschappelijk middenveld vereisen.

Hoewel dit proefschrift inzichten biedt, is het essentieel om de beperkingen te erkennen. Ten eerste genereert het enkel vertrouwen op de jaarverslagen over diplomatiek beleid niet alleen een bevooroordeeld beeld, maar beperkt het ook de verscheidenheid aan andere documenttypen, zoals publicaties van andere ministeries, niet-gouvernementele organisaties of media die een completer beeld hadden kunnen geven van de officiële verhalen over publieksdiplomatie. Deze documentanalyse sluit echter aan bij de onderzoeksdoelstelling om de interne identiteitsvorming van Taiwan en de relatie ervan met de vorming van de veiligheidspositie in Oost-Azië te onderzoeken. Ten tweede, hoewel de beperking van de documentanalyse wordt aangevuld door de semi-gestructureerde interviews, was de diversiteit van de interviewdeelnemers beperkt tot slechts Taiwanese burgers in een paar landen in Zuidoost-Azië. Ondanks een beperkt perspectief op het niveau van het maatschappelijk middenveld in het begrip van veiligheid en interpretaties van diplomatieke betrokkenheid, komt dit overeen met de onderzoeksdoelstelling om publieksdiplomatie en de relatie ervan met conflictbemiddeling te verkennen. Een verdere beperking is het gebrek aan systematische tegenanalyse van alternatieve of afwijkende verhalen, zowel

binnen het binnenlandse discours van Taiwan als in de receptie van zijn diplomatie in het buitenland. Hoewel er in het empirische materiaal glimpen van dergelijke perspectieven opduiken, vormden ze niet de centrale focus van dit proefschrift. Deze grens weerspiegelt de doelstelling van het proefschrift om prioriteit te geven aan Taiwans eigen diplomatieke narratieven en betrokkenheid van het maatschappelijk middenveld. Toekomstig onderzoek zou deze analyse echter kunnen uitbreiden door betwiste ontvangsten directer te onderzoeken.

Ten slotte onthult het onderzoek naar de rol van taal in publieksdiplomatie een kloof tussen de in dit proefschrift geanalyseerde gegevens en de theoretische implicaties ervan. Hoewel taal een cruciale factor is bij het bevorderen van effectieve communicatie, richt dit proefschrift zich in plaats daarvan op het strategische gebruik van sociale media. Met de ontwikkeling en het bewustzijn van het gebruik van ICT wordt een tweerichtingscommunicatiemodel mogelijk dat vertrouwen tussen verschillende landen schept. Deze bevinding draagt bij aan opkomende wetenschappelijke discourses over digitale diplomatie en de rol van ICT bij het bevorderen van reputatiebescherming.

Door de beperkingen van deze onderzoeksmethodologie aan te pakken, biedt dit proefschrift een evenwichtige evaluatie van de bijdragen ervan aan het bestaande wetenschappelijke discours. Ondanks deze uitdagingen effenen ze de weg voor toekomstig onderzoek om verder te kijken dan deze beperkingen. In het volgende gedeelte wordt dieper ingegaan op de mogelijkheden voor toekomstig onderzoek.

## **Suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek**

Dit proefschrift heeft nieuwe inzichten opgeleverd in het snijvlak van identiteit, veiligheid en publieksdiplomatie in Oost-Azië, met Taiwan als centraal punt. Hoewel het de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag heeft beantwoord, heeft het ook nieuwe vragen opgeworpen en gebieden voor verdere verkenning gemarkeerd. Ten eerste is een belangrijke onderzoeksoriëntatie het meten van de effectiviteit van Taiwans strategieën voor publieksdiplomatie. Dit proefschrift analyseerde de inhoud en ontwikkeling van initiatieven voor publieksdiplomatie, maar beoordeelde niet hun meetbare impact op regionale of internationale percepties van Taiwans identiteit en veiligheidsstatus. Toekomstige studies zouden aanvullende kwantitatieve methoden kunnen gebruiken, zoals opiniepeilingen of sentimentanalyses op sociale media, om de invloed van

specifieke programma's zoals het New Southbound Policy op doelgroepen te evalueren. Dergelijke benaderingen zouden niet alleen de methodologische basis verbreden, maar ook een systematische tegenanalyse van alternatieve verhalen mogelijk maken. Ten tweede, zoals aangegeven in de beperkingen van het onderzoek, kwam de rol van taal in publieksdiplomatie naar voren als een kritisch maar onderbelicht thema in dit proefschrift. Onderzoek naar hoe Taiwans binnenlandse taalbeleid, met name dat gericht op immigranten en studenten uit Zuidoost-Azië, de internationale betrekkingen vormgeeft, kan waardevolle inzichten opleveren in het verband tussen taalstrategie en identiteitsvorming. Vergelijkende studies die vergelijkbare inspanningen in andere meertalige of cultureel diverse staten onderzoeken, kunnen deze onderzoekslijn verrijken. Ten derde zou toekomstig onderzoek de geografische en temporele reikwijdte van de analyse kunnen vergroten. Dit proefschrift concentreerde zich op de strategieën van Taiwan van 2000 tot 2020 en zijn betrekkingen met Zuidoost-Azië; vervolgonderzoek zou de betrokkenheid van Taiwan bij andere regio's of tijdens eerdere of recentere periodes kunnen onderzoeken. Dergelijke studies zouden de generaliseerbaarheid van de bevindingen van dit proefschrift kunnen testen en aanvullende dimensies van Taiwans publieksdiplomatie kunnen blootleggen. Ten slotte zou toekomstig onderzoek, buiten Taiwan, het theoretische kader van civic-embedded public diplomacy (CEPD) kunnen verbeteren door het toe te passen op andere de facto staten die te maken hebben met betwiste soevereiniteit. Dit zou ons begrip van publieksdiplomatie kunnen verfijnen, niet alleen als communicatiemiddel, maar ook als een praktijk van conflictbeheersing, identiteitsonderhandelingen en het creëren van veiligheid. Door deze wegen te bewandelen, kan toekomstig onderzoek voortbouwen op het conceptuele raamwerk dat in dit proefschrift is beschreven. Zo kunnen we onze kennis van publieksdiplomatie als instrument voor conflictbemiddeling en de implicaties ervan voor regionale en mondiale veiligheid verder vergroten.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Yung Lin was born in Taiwan in 1993. Yung went to Taipei Wego Private Senior High School for her pre-university education. After graduating with a BA in Foreign Languages and Literature from National Sun Yat-sen University in 2015, she worked as a project executive at the International Council on Social Welfare. Managing relations with social workers and social studies academics from Japan and South Korea, she decided to advance her knowledge in international relations. She holds an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy from SOAS, University of London in 2017 and worked for two years in London for investment firms and risk analysis consultancies covering the Asian markets. Throughout her work experience in investment and risk analysis, she found the security issues critical to the trade and economic relations in East Asia. A sustainable security management and creative design of conflict resolution mechanisms are in demand along with the prospering and complex development of international relations in East Asia. Therefore, she, in 2020, started her PhD research project exploring the relations between concepts of conflict resolution and public diplomacy, as well as security and identity. While working on her PhD project in the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs at Leiden University, she has also been teaching in the tutorials of Sociolinguistics, Global Political Economy, and Economy East Asia at BA International Studies in the Faculty of Humanities. It is her belief that diplomacy is through language, first to learn about different cultures, then to exchange views on economic and political topics.