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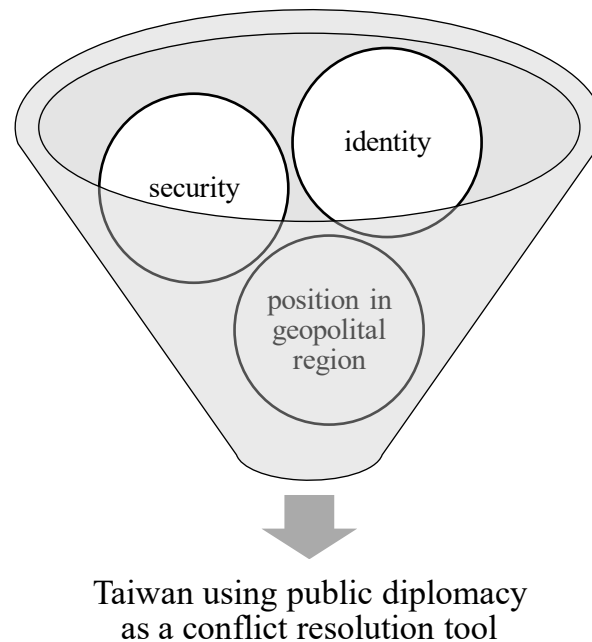
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## **Chapter 8. Evaluation of the Results**

### **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



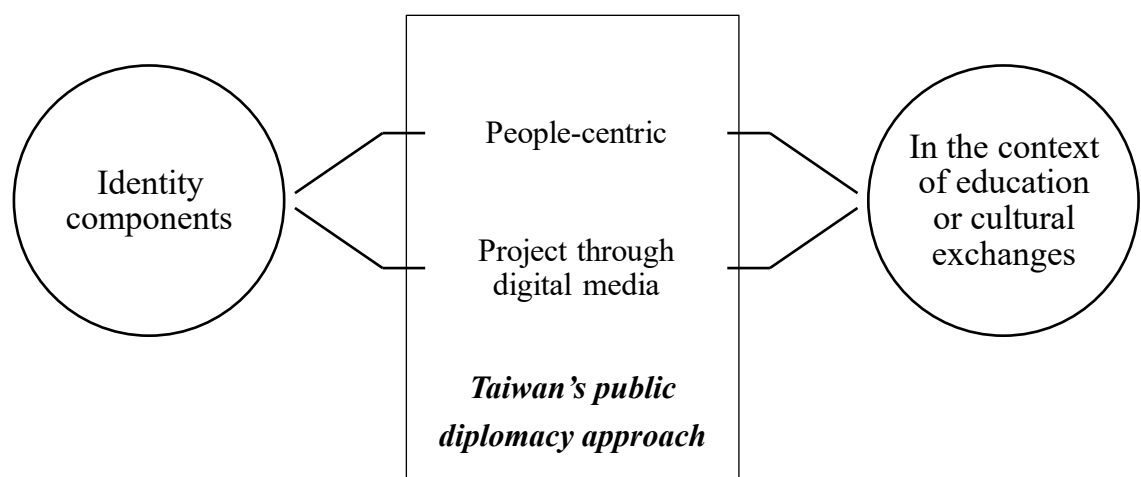
As shown in Figure 8.1, public diplomacy serves as a central thread linking Taiwan's identity-based conflicts, its regional security considerations, and its evolving geopolitical strategies. This framework underpins the integrated analysis presented in this chapter. Key concepts derived from the integrated 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.