



Discussion Report Talking ASEAN

on

Sailing South: What's Next for Taiwan's
New Southbound Policy?

Jakarta, August 1st 2024



Introduction

On Thursday, 1 August 2024, The Habibie Center (THC) convened the Talking ASEAN seminar titled “**Sailing South: What’s Next for Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy?**.” The seminar featured **Rangga Aditya Elias** (Head of the International Relations Department, Binus University), **Alan H. Yang** (Professor, the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies, National Chengchi University and Executive Director of the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF)), and **Ratih Kabinawa** (Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences, University of Western Australia and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Taiwan Fellowship Visiting Scholar)—and was moderated by **Patrick Kurniawan** (Researcher of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center).

The objectives of the seminar were to: (a) assess the implementation and challenges of Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy (NSP) in ASEAN during the Tsai Ing-wen administration, (b) explore the prospects of NSP under President Lai Ching-te in fostering Taiwan-ASEAN relations, and (c) analyze the impacts of NSP from ASEAN’s perspective.

This discussion report summarizes each speaker’s key points and the following questions-and-answer session.

PRESENTATION FROM THE PANELIST



Rangga Aditya Elias
(Head of International Relations Department,
Binus University)



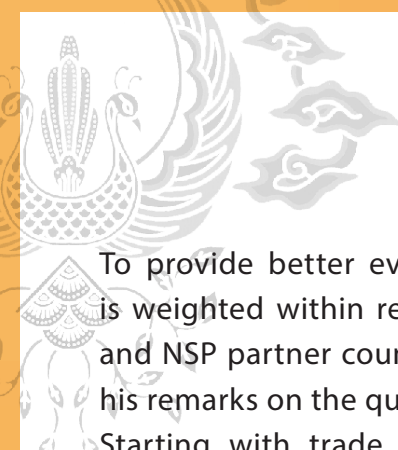
Rangga Aditya Elias began by assessing the NSP in retrospect. He evaluated the implementation and challenges of the NSP during the Tsai Ing-wen administration by trying to see the policy in a broad sense. While mentioning that the policy was previously titled “Go-South Policy” and “Southbound Policy,” Rangga elaborated on the objectives of such policies. He identified four main objectives, including (1) expanding a two-way exchange in trade, investment, and tourism, with the addition of culture and talent under the NSP; yet, unlike its preceding policies, the NSP expanded its goal to (2) encourage Taiwan’s industries to adopt to the NSP approach in their business development; (3) cultivate the human resources to help supporting the NSP; and (4) expand multilateral and bilateral dialogue for accelerating economic cooperation and future conflict resolution. At this point, Rangga saw the NSP as distinct from its predecessors because of the current policy in employing a more people-centered approach and aiming to encourage more partnerships with its prospective neighbors in the south rather than to compete and lessen its economic dependence on China as the previous policies were.

Rangga later elaborated on how the NSP revolutionized from its preceding policies. With the past circumstances in which Taiwan depended on its economic exchange with China from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the Lee Teng-hui administration’s Go-South Policy aimed more as a tool to reduce the economic exchange with China. Rangga also

previously noted that during the Lee Teng-hui administration, the Go-South policy focused mainly on the ASEAN Member States (AMS). As it progressed, such policy shifted to a more Taiwan’s economic independence-oriented objective during the Chen Sui-bian administration in the early 2000s to late 2000s. During this era, Taiwan took significant measures to bring Taiwan’s trade and investment to Southeast Asia.

As Rangga noted, the policy began to work differently following the administrative change from Chen Sui-Bian to Ma Ying-jeou. He then explained policy implementation from the late 2000s to 2016 during the latter administration. He used the word “stepping stone” when describing the Ma Ying-jeou administration’s use of the policy to initiate the regional integration in the region, and it was evident with the establishment of economic agreements between Taiwan and several NSP partner countries during Ma Ying-jeou’s tenure. He noticeably touched upon the former president’s effort to initiate a trade agreement with China to stimulate the establishment of the agreement with other countries, such as Singapore and New Zealand. As Rangga explained how the Tsai Ing-wen administration further progressed with the policy, he touched upon the administration’s milestone in creating a more extensive regional network. Under Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan has engaged with a total of 18 partners through the NSP, including the ten AMS, six South Asian countries, and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania.





To provide better evidence of how the NSP is weighted within relations between Taiwan and NSP partner countries, Rangga kicked off his remarks on the quantitative impact of NSP. Starting with trade numbers, he explained the increase in the number of imports from NSP partner countries to Taiwan from 2003 to 2024, with Australia peaking the highest in 2022, reaching almost USD 25 million. A similar increasing trend is also shared with Taiwan's number of exports to NSP partner countries in the same range of years. From the investment perspective, there was an increase in Taiwan's outbound investment to NSP partner countries from 2003 to 2024, with Taiwan's investment to Singapore peaking twice in 2012 and 2021, reaching USD 4.5 million in the former year.

Rangga also showed evidence of an increasing number of migrant workers, international students, and visitors in Taiwan, not only from an economic perspective. While Vietnamese workers topped the number of migrant workers working in the industrial sector in Taiwan, Indonesian workers topped the number of migrant workers working in the social welfare sector. Both showed an increasing trend from 2009 to 2024. Moreover, Rangga highlighted the strong educational bond between Taiwan and the NSP partner countries, as evidenced by the rapid increase of international students' arrival in Taiwan from 2008 to 2024. Interestingly, he noted that the number of Vietnamese students in Taiwan outnumbered other international students from other NSP partner countries.

As a more recent aspect of the policy, tourism significantly contributed to the NSP's implementation. This was evident from Rangga's explanation of the rising number of tourists entering Taiwan in the past two decades – from 2003 to 2023. Despite the graphic going south following the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions taking place between 2020 and 2022, there was a sharp increase in visitor arrival from NSP partner countries to Taiwan following the global lifting of travel restrictions. Rangga further argued that the rise has been further fostered by the visa exemption policy enforced by Taiwan that targets the NSP partner countries. By 2023, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand took the top three most significant contributors of visitors to Taiwan.

Despite the absence of diplomatic relations, Taiwan garnered good government-to-government relations with the AMS. As Rangga took Indonesia as an example, he proved the excellent relations by mentioning that both have their representative office within each territory and convened annual meetings to discuss many issues. Before the Tsai Ing-wen administration, Taiwan and Indonesia often brought to the table the issues of taxation, investment guarantee, and agriculture. However, the focus later shifted to intellectual property rights protection, education, culture, tourism, financial assistance, public health, and medicine following Tsai Ing-wen's assumption of the presidential office.



Rangga explained further the difference within the NSP implementation as the policy evolved from the beginning and was established in the Lee Teng-Hui to Tsai Ing-wen administrations. Among the most defining distinctions is the aspect of leading governmental institutions. While the previous administrations engaged solely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economic Affairs as the policy implementation leads, the Tsai Ing-wen administration established the New Southbound Policy Office (NSPO) under the presidential office. Other structures that are responsible for leading the implementation of NSP include the National Security Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Tourism (MOT), and Executive Yuan.

Rangga also mentioned at least two other characteristics that set the Tsai Ing-wen administration apart from previous administrations in implementing the NSP. First, the presence of guidelines and an action plan to base the policy implementation. Another one is the mandate to contribute to the NSP implementation given to various

Taiwanese institutes, such as the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, Taiwan External Trade Development Council, and Taiwan Education Center.

In closing his remarks, Rangga highlighted two challenges for the NSP implementation as it progressed in Southeast Asia. As one of the epicenters of e-commerce growth in the world, Southeast Asia's revenue from the sector reached USD 99.5 billion in 2022, with Indonesian e-commerce entities contributing almost 52% of the total revenue. With many e-commerce entities in Indonesia and Southeast Asia being run by Chinese corporations, the challenge was that the NSP had not addressed the wide-open e-commerce opportunities in the region —particularly during the Tsai Ing-wen administration. Rangga argued that Taiwan's technological advances and the digital economy could be the supporting modality for expanding the policy to the sector mentioned.

Additionally, Rangga noted an increase in discourse on the NSP and previous policies in academic publications between 1978 and 2022. Most of the research was published in Taiwan, the United States, and China, with only a few published in Indonesia and Malaysia. At this point, he argued that Taiwan needs to develop a regional discourse. More discourse on Taiwan and NSP in Southeast Asia can further stimulate more awareness from policymakers and create more connections and integration between the people of the region and Taiwan.

PRESENTATION FROM THE PANELIST



Alan Hao Yang
(Professor, the Graduate Institute of East
Asian Studies, National Chengchi University,
and Executive Director of the TAEF)



Alan Hao Yang started his remarks by introducing the main idea of his discussion on the prospects of the NSP under the current President Lai Ching-te administration in fostering the relations between Taiwan and Southeast Asia. As he acknowledged that Taiwan and its neighboring partners are sharing smart facilities and digital technology because of the NSP – including smart health care system, smart farming, and drone technology, Alan argued that the NSP practice has progressed beyond these aspects during the past eight years. By saying that the NSP is transforming beyond technology and digitalization, he echoed the previous speaker's, Rangga, emphasis on NSP being more people-centered these past few years under the Tsai Ing-wen administration. As the NSP focused more on a people-centered approach, he defined the approach by using the ASEAN lens as a strategic gesture to echo ASEAN's people-centered community-building process. With the people-centered approach in mind, Taiwan's strategy has been keen to facilitate the welfare of the people and link up with the civil society in Southeast Asian countries.

Moreover, Alan argued that the people-centered approach allows the NSP implementation to reach the elites, policymakers, and the public through interpersonal exchange and engagements. This preposition was also supported by his view of Taiwan as a home of many migrants, as evident in the fact that currently, around one million Southeast Asians reside in Taiwan.

Apart from contributions from Southeast Asian residents in Taiwan, Alan reminded the participants that Taiwan's varying business enterprises have contributed to the economies in key Southeast Asia countries. He argued that this began as early as the late 1980s and persisted with the dynamics and changes of administration in Taiwan, starting from Lee Teng-hui in the 1990s to President Chen Shui-bian in the 2000s. Alan then summed up his argument, acknowledging that, apart from the presence of Southeast Asian residents in Taiwan, Taiwan's economic footprint and the Taiwanese people, saw an increasing interest in Southeast Asia. This imagery helped Taiwan emerge as a part of Southeast Asia.

Alan asserted that the NSP is not a one-dimensional policy; thus, Taiwan will not be the sole actor that projects its foreign policy and gains benefits with the implementation of the NSP. However, with the people-centered approach, Taiwan's NSP represents a collaborative effort made by the government, Taiwan's civil society, and its business entities to facilitate the multifaceted partnership aimed at achieving development goals. Therefore, through the NSP, Taiwan looks forward to facilitating two-way exchanges. With previous speakers touching upon the potential challenge that NSP might face amidst the growth of e-commerce in Southeast Asia, Alan reiterated that what NSP aspires to achieve is beyond striving for economic excellence. The NSP also works to build an environment for dialogue, such as the Yushan Forum.





TAEF, the institute that Alan represents, organized the Yushan Forum and marked NSP as the center of Taiwan's Indo-Pacific strategy. The forum symbolizes the NSP's effort to strengthen Taiwan's diplomacy-at-home advocacy. Since its initiation in 2017, the Yushan Forum has been organized annually, and it has brought together global and regional leaders to work together to overcome common challenges in the region.

As Alan compared the NSP with prior policies, including the Go-South Policy, he echoed Rangga's explanation on expanding the NSP to broader partners, which covered 18 partner countries, including the eight priority countries such as Indonesia and also other Southeast Asian countries, plus India

and Australia. Moreover, Alan viewed public diplomacy and warm power diplomacy as being at the center stage in the discourse of the NSP. Warm power diplomacy has two connotations. The first connotation draws diplomacy through sharing resources with those in demand. For instance, when some of the NSP partner countries encountered resource shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan donated medical resources and facilities to its neighbors to solve their shortage problem. The second connotation revolved around the effort to make Taiwan central in the NSP partner countries' ongoing discourse. This became the previous speaker Rangga's concern that NSP needs to stimulate more connection and integration between NSP



partner countries and Taiwan. Alan attested that, even with Taiwan's middle power status and limited resources, the contribution made Taiwan indispensable.

Alan also emphasized the important role of private entities and people as the element of the NSP, somewhat echoing Rangga's elaboration of two essential aspects of the NSP—the objective to encourage Taiwan's industries to adopt the NSP approach in their business and the role of various Taiwanese institutes in contributing to the policy. With the government definitely taking the lead in setting up the direction for the policy, the P-P-P-P approach, which stands for public-private-people partnership, provides space for the private sector and civil society to contribute to join the efforts in promoting good governance, fostering social and economic resilience through NSP. Taiwan's private sector shapes the regional production network and facilitates trade and investment in Southeast Asia and other foreign investors. The role that the industry has taken since around the 1980s. Meanwhile, civil society seeks and establishes partnerships with the NSP partner countries across Southeast Asia – including universities, foundations, and think tanks.

Ministries, such as the previously mentioned MOFA, MOEA, MOE, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), took an active part in running the government lead on the implementation of NSP. The Taiwanese Government's role in implementing NSP has been evident in

some flagship programs. For instance, the MOEA worked on economic and industrial connectivity programs. Alan then elaborated on MOEA's responsibility, which is to promote the bilateral investment agreement with the NSP partner countries. The Philippines was the first to support the NSP by promoting bilateral investment with Taiwan in 2017, followed by India, Vietnam, and recently Thailand.

The MOE worked on the education and talent cultivation programs. Alan reminded the audience of the significant number of international students from key Southeast Asian countries, as previously explained by the previous speaker. Furthermore, he mentioned that apart from encouraging inbound Southeast Asian students, Taiwan also encouraged its youth to study or participate in internship programs across Southeast Asian countries, including international organizations, private entities, universities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Alan described that 56% of 980,000 international students in Taiwan come from our new NSP partner countries, including the Southeast Asian countries.

The agricultural and health sectors have been important to Taiwan's bilateral relations with its NSP partner countries. In fact, as for Taiwan-Indonesia relations, agricultural cooperation has been one of the main subjects since 1976. Under the NSP framework, MOA is responsible for running regional agriculture programs. The Taiwan Government worked with local stakeholders to provide resources and training





programs to local farmers, including inviting the local farmers to take training programs in Taiwan to help stabilize the production of agricultural commodities, especially rice. Being largely dependent on the agricultural sector, Alan attested to the success of agricultural programs in Southeast Asia, such as in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Moreover, the MOHW has also been responsible for working on the medical and public health cooperation programs. Alan noted the One Country, One Program as evidence of this sector's success. The programs started in 2018 when Taiwan established ten NSP Medical Centers in seven NSP partner countries in Southeast Asia and India. In addition, Taiwan has successfully trained more than 1,300 medical doctors, nurses, health personnel, and experts. Alan concluded his remarks by stating that President Lai Ching-te firmly intends to continue this new soft power policy under the name "New Southbound Policy Plus (NSP+)." He also provided an outlook on the priority issue areas of the upcoming phase. He suggested that the NSP+ might revolve around digital technology, the semiconductor supply chain, and the resilience supply chain, the latter of which includes social resilience and stability, as well as disaster preparedness. Furthermore, Alan shared that civil society-led efforts have become more apparent. Regarding TAEF's contribution to the upcoming phase, the foundation will continue to serve as the think tank of the NSP+. In running the efforts, TAEF will materialize the three corridors—think tank,

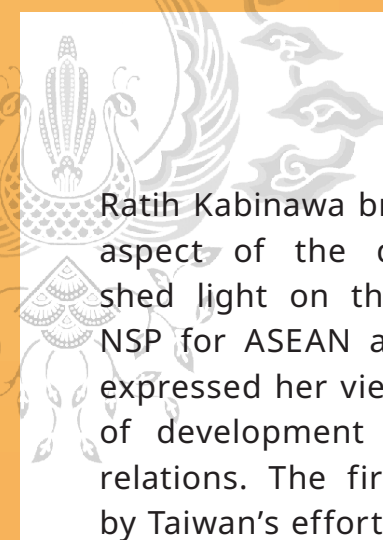
NGO, and youth. To serve as the realization of the contribution, TAEF will invite the think tanks in the NSP partner countries to co-organize the think tank summit in 2025 to serve as a brainstorming platform among the experts and policymakers.

PRESENTATION FROM THE PANELIST



Ratih Kabinawa

(Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Social
Sciences, University of Western Australia and
MOFA Taiwan Fellowship Visiting Scholar)



Ratih Kabinawa brought up an essential aspect of the discussion when she shed light on the implications of the NSP for ASEAN and AMS. Initially, she expressed her view on the three stages of development within Taiwan-ASEAN relations. The first stage was marked by Taiwan's efforts to build regional ties with AMS, especially between the 1960s and the 1980s. During these periods, cooperation focused on education, agriculture, and agricultural technical missions, and a small scale of foreign direct investment that came from Taiwan to Southeast Asia. The second stage began during the Lee Teng-hui administration when Taiwan and Southeast Asia took initial steps towards democratization during the third wave of democratization in the 1990s. During that time, Taiwan also promoted its new identity and initiated pragmatic diplomacy in the region. Moreover, the new era of NSP marked the third stage of Taiwan-ASEAN relations. Ratih saw that Taiwan's objectives gravitated around its vision to deepen regional ties with AMS through two-way exchanges at this stage.

Ratih proceeded as she echoed the preposition that the people-to-people approach is the element that sets the NSP apart from its predecessors. She argued that it has shifted the policy's utmost importance from economic to people-to-people ties, with key frameworks

covering four areas of cooperation—economic collaboration, talent exchange, shared resources, and regional links. In the economic cooperation area, Ratih described the area's cooperation priorities to include supply chain, domestic supply, and infrastructure development. Furthermore, the area of talent exchange covers priorities such as education cooperation, talent industry, and new immigrants. Ratih then described medical technology, culture, tourism, information and communication technology, and agriculture as shared resources cooperation. Moreover, the NSP prioritized the enhancement of Taiwan's regional integration, improving dialogue and negotiation, strategic alliance, and establishing foreign networks to forge regional links.

As she went on, Ratih addressed an important point of discussion on the depth of NSP's contribution to Taiwan-ASEAN relations. She quoted President Joko Widodo's impression of Taiwan as one of the most developed economies in the world, with a comparative advantage in its products by being deemed as one of the powerhouses in the manufacturing and microchip industry, among the top 10 largest trading and investment partners in ASEAN, and has advanced and innovative technology and service sectors. Ratih further described the results of two surveys on Taiwan and Taiwanese business images in Thailand



and Indonesia to draw a comprehensive picture of Taiwan's contribution. The surveys found that Taiwan contributed to creating job opportunities, with response percentages reaching about 83% and 68% of the respondents in Thailand and Indonesia, respectively. Other responses included (1) introducing innovative technology and (2) aiding industry innovation.

Beyond economic contribution, the most profound contribution of the NSP towards ASEAN is increasing mutual presence. Southeast Asians are among the largest migrant communities in Taiwan. Their significant number clearly improved social-cultural awareness and engagement between Taiwan and ASEAN. In addition, this number has been increasing annually. The work to increase mutual presence has been rather difficult as there has been an asymmetrical existence between Taiwan and AMS. As evidence, Ratih described the incomparability of Taiwanese students coming to AMS compared to those who came to other areas, especially Australia. She stated that asymmetrical exchanges have become a challenge that Taiwan needs to address in the future. Addressing the challenge, Ratih thought language proficiency and connectivity could become the keys. First, Taiwan could encourage its students to improve their proficiency in Southeast Asian languages. Second, Taiwan could

also promote increasing direct flight connections between Taiwan and the AMS.

Ratih described another critical dimension of people-to-people exchanges between Taiwan and Southeast Asia. She viewed the situation of migrant workers as potentially becoming a contentious issue. This occurred when China decided to stop its envoy to the Philippines, causing overseas Filipino workers to be caught in the middle of geopolitical tensions and threatening their lives in Taiwan. Despite most seeing people-to-people relations as a low-politics issue, in the case of increasing cross-strait tension between Taiwan and China, people-to-people relations could shift to a high-politics issue, becoming a national security issue and foreign policy issue.

Increasing China's military patrols and exercises in the waters surrounding the Taiwan Strait has increased the possibility of collision between China and Taiwan's vessels. As she recalled the common presence of Indonesian crews in the Taiwanese vessels, Ratih mentioned that the Government of Indonesia should be prepared with a plan to protect its citizens on board. The need for a contingency plan has constantly been an essential topic of discussion among Southeast Asian governments. Ratih attested the significant relevance of the discussion to the question of "what sort



of contingency plan needs to be ready?" should be addressed should the tension accelerate on an unprecedented level between China and Taiwan. Based on her discussion with the representative of the Government of Indonesia, she saw that the government has been utterly concerned about the safety of Indonesian workers and citizens in Taiwan.

The chip wars are another potential impact of the NSP. Ratih reminded the forum that, just a few weeks ago, Donald Trump made an accusation about Taiwan, which might have a more profound impact on the chip war. That kind of maneuver, she argued, may happen in the future, especially following the US election and the alternative supply chain. Apart from

the chip war, the supply chains have also become a prioritized discourse, making the chip war two main contentious issues in Taiwan recently.

Ratih wrapped her remarks by reiterating the impacts of NSP from the ASEAN perspective. Despite the One China Policy, the NSP won the hearts and minds of the AMS as it relied on Taiwan's soft power. The AMS has welcomed the policy given its nature, which focuses on economic cooperation and people-to-people ties. She saw the alignment of the NSP to the needs and interests of the NSP partner countries in the region. However, as the geopolitical tension across the Taiwan Strait has put the economic and people-to-people ties with the AMS at risk, the interdependency created under the NSP would directly impact the AMS if China decided to use force over Taiwan.



QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Questions

Gunawan (Ombudsman Indonesia):

Ombudsman Indonesia is an independent state institution, and the institution has established close relations with Control Yuan as its counterpart in Taiwan. Ombudsman Indonesia has discussed plenty of topics before the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Rangga and Ratih already mentioned that Taiwan has enforced the policy since the three previous presidential administrations, however, unfortunately, it was the first time I heard about the NSP. What I would like to know is how Indonesia could utilize this relationship to support the policy. Ratih also mentioned several cases that involve Indonesian citizens who work in Taiwan, I remembered that the Ombudsman also received complaints from Indonesian citizens working in Taiwan, I see this is something that we can do in partnership with Control Yuan.

Responses

Alan Hao Yang (Professor, the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies, National Chengchi University, and Executive Director of the TAEF):

Alan first clarified that Taiwan's focus on Southeast Asia started in 1994. In 2016, a new policy was announced. The maneuver has set up a good foundation. To respond to the labor rights issue that the question touched on, Alan explained that the Government of Taiwan has stepped up its policy to be more responsible, resilient, and helpful to its partners. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government and the NGOs helped the illegal migrants to approach relevant agencies to take the vaccine for free without any legal consequences. He stated that since Taiwan and some of the AMS have their national human rights commissions, they can work out many valuable references to protect human rights and the labor rights issue in the future.

Alan put forward three measures to strengthen the Taiwan-Indonesia relations. He suggested a policy dialogue to meet at one consensus among the participants and priority issues, therefore producing publication and policy recommendations to be further submitted to the policymakers at the national and local levels. Alan also suggested conducting a survey at the ASEAN level to support scientific evidence on Southeast Asian people's perception of Taiwan. He attested that this measure can also help Taiwan to leverage its policies. Ultimately, Alan suggested strengthening public awareness through media exposure to better understand the priority issues to target and develop feasible steps for the action plan.

Ratih Kabinawa (Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences, University of Western Australia and MOFA Taiwan Fellowship Visiting Scholar):

Ratih first argued that the issue of migrant worker protection is a challenging subject. With Ratih viewing the migrant protection issue as having transnational characteristics, she reiterated the need to collaborate through regular coordination and communication between the Governments of Indonesia and Taiwan. Moreover, the relevant laws governing migrant labor protection in Indonesia stipulate that the government should be responsible for their safety. The Government of Indonesia and the civil society organizations proposed the bilateral labor migration agreement on migrant visas to the Government of Taiwan. Ratih hoped that the Government of Taiwan would seriously review and consider the initiative.

Ratih also suggested regularly revising the bilateral labor agreement between Indonesia and Taiwan. She argued that a regular dialogue to coordinate the labor situation between Taiwan and Indonesia could help regulate and maintain the relevance of migrant labor protection clauses. Furthermore, Ratih described how Indonesia's government is currently prioritizing improving labor protection.

One of the examples of the measures the Government of Indonesia took was to bring the issue to the ASEAN level. Ratih mentioned that following one of the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings in 2023, a statement was released to improve labor protection during the crises. However, she also noted that the connection between the situation in the Taiwan Strait and the term "crises" remains unclear – it currently refers only to pandemics and force majeure.

Rangga Aditya Elias (Head of International Relations Department, Binus University):

By referring to Ratih's explanation of asymmetrical exchanges, Rangga acknowledged the asymmetrical efforts made by the Government of Indonesia regarding government-to-government relations between Indonesia and Taiwan. Rangga described the efforts by giving an example of the Taiwan desk and joint working groups. While he described the function of the Taiwan desk to overlook the Taiwan-related affairs in some of the ministries, Rangga explained the joint working groups have worked on several issues, including human trafficking and smuggling.

He emphasized the importance of utilizing the available instruments optimally and translating them to achieve the interest of both Indonesia and Taiwan. With the guidelines available for the NSP implementation, Rangga argued that Indonesia needs to synergize guidelines through internal coordination forums between ministries. Moreover, Rangga highlighted his thoughts on making the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office in Taipei the frontier. As he viewed the efforts from Taiwan's side as having already been significant, he attested to the need for Indonesia to equalize the efforts to increase bilateral cooperation and improve understanding.

Questions

Judith (the Singapore Mission to ASEAN):

What has been the domestic sentiment towards the NSP in Taiwan? Many of the speakers talked about the asymmetrical exchanges in terms of having more interest from the AMS going into Taiwan – whether it is business opportunities, investments, migrant workers, or foreign students. Will this asymmetry impact the longevity of the NSP in terms of it being a longer-lasting policy than the previous policies?

Responses

Alan Hao Yang (Professor, the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies, National Chengchi University, and Executive Director of the TAEF):

Alan highlighted two critical points in addressing the question. In his first point, Alan described Taiwan's domestic sentiment regarding the NSP. In terms of politics, the opposition has criticized the NSP for the past seven to eight years as the side prioritized Taiwan's foreign policy on working harmoniously with China. However, Alan also argued that, even if they are aware of the achievement of trade investment diversification between Taiwan in line with the NSP, the opposition will utilize any channel to argue that the cross-strait ties should be prioritized.

Moreover, Alan argued that long-term engagement will be another benefit. With many residents of Southeast Asian origin living in Taiwan, including international students and migrant workers, the groups' experience with Taiwan could leverage Taiwan's image abroad. Should those experiences be reasonable, these groups will help build a good image of Taiwan back in their home countries.

Alan's second point touched on the general public's perception of Taiwanese society. As he compared contemporary Taiwanese society to those in the 1980s and 1990s, Alan explained that some older generations were unfamiliar with the distinct religious and cultural traditions. This was evident in the number of complaints addressed during the 1990s against the presence of migrant workers. He emphasized that this situation has changed in the last two to three decades, and Taiwanese society has become more well-educated and accepting. He argued that the Asian identity has been enriched and has been shaping some of the Taiwanese localities.

Questions

Patrick Kurniawan (The Habibie Center):

How should the AMS safely engage with the NSP without any pushback from the Chinese counterpart?

Responses

Rangga Aditya Elias (Head of International Relations Department, Binus University):

Rangga pointed out three important pointers on how the AMS can engage with the NSP. He first advised to deepen people's understanding of cross-strait relations. Rangga viewed some groups as maintaining a traditional understanding of cross-strait relations. Some people perceived the cross-strait relations as a trap in the so-called One China Policy. The fear of complaints from China has limited the space to interact and cooperate with Taiwan. Rangga argued the importance of putting forward the AMS' interests and finding possible ways to cooperate that do not jeopardize the AMS' principled relations with China.

Rangga's following pointers highlighted the importance of people-to-people ties and engaging in semiconductor cooperation with Taiwan. With many public servants, businessmen, and scholars in the AMS having been educated in Taiwan, he argued that this could be a supporting factor to enhance the AMS' bilateral cooperation with Taiwan by utilizing their familiarity and connections. Rangga's final pointer emphasized the importance of the AMS to work on developing semiconductors with Taiwan. By highlighting Taiwan's significant contribution to a global semiconductor supply chain, Rangga viewed this as helping some AMS tap into the supply chain as the region began to develop the semiconductor industry recently.

Ratih Kabinawa (Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences, University of Western Australia and MOFA Taiwan Fellowship Visiting Scholar):

Ratih shared the same sentiment on the AMS's difficulties in engaging with Taiwan without disrupting China. However, she pointed out the importance of acknowledging the One China Policy as a gray zone. It is not only a gray zone in Indonesia and the other AMS, but also in every country's foreign policy. In the case of Indonesia, it recently signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Diplomatic Resumption with China, embracing its right to establish and maintain its relationship with Taiwan in the economic and trade aspects. She attested that those aspects are what the NSP talks about – economic and socio-cultural relations. Therefore, Ratih argued that it should not be a problem for every AMS to engage with the NSP.



ABOUT ASEAN STUDIES PROGRAM

The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights.

The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

ABOUT TALKING ASEAN

Talking ASEAN is a monthly public dialogue held at The Habibie Center in Jakarta. Covering a wide array of issues related to ASEAN, Talking ASEAN addresses topics of: Economic Integration, Socio-cultural, & Democracy, human rights and regional peace, among others. Featuring local and visiting experts, Talking ASEAN is one of a series of twelve dialogues regularly held each month and open to a target audience consisting of ASEAN officials, foreign ambassadors & diplomats, academics, university students, businesses, and the media.

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