

## **FROM SUPPLY CHAIN TO SURVIVAL CHAIN: STRATEGIZING ASEAN-TAIWAN COLLABORATION IN THE EMERGING INDO- PACIFIC ORDER**

*Alan Hao Yang*

Institute Of International Relations,  
National Chengchi University,  
Taipei city 116, Taiwan (R.O. C)

[museiniin@gmail.com](mailto:museiniin@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Being hit by the Covid-19 pandemic since late 2019, ASEAN countries have been vulnerable in fighting against the pandemic and will be struggling for the post pandemic recovery. In addition, ASEAN countries have also been trapped in the US-China power-politics which has complicated the progress of post-2015 Community consolidation efforts. Implications of the US-China trade friction and strategic competition were re-directing the supply chain in the region and, to some extent, further eroding the ASEAN Centrality. Hence, it is imperative for ASEAN countries to advance further collaboration in strategising ASEAN Centrality and Community building efforts in a more consolidated manner. This paper argues that it is of strategic importance for the ASEAN Community to transform the cooperation for building supply chain to reinvigorating the survival chain (that is, “sc transformation”) for the purpose of securing the interests of ASEAN and move towards the direction of not over-relying on external powers.

This article will employ an analytical framework of three Ds (in terms of regional dynamics, development of post-pandemic recovery, and driving forces) for “sc transformation” to address how the transformation from supply chain to survival chain can be achieved. Hence, it begins with outlining the features of regional dynamics of the US-China strategic competition and Covid-19 Pandemic challenges to the ASEAN Community. Then, it will unveil the development of the ASEAN Community in the post-pandemic recovery. Finally, it will address the driving forces of ASEAN Collaboration to strategise its importance in the Indo-Pacific region, including the impetus of Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy.

*Keywords:* ASEAN Centrality, ASEAN Community, supply chain, survival chain, Covid-19, post-pandemic recovery, Taiwan, New Southbound Policy

## Introduction

The current dynamics in Southeast Asia and in a broader Indo-Pacific region<sup>107</sup> are much more complicated than that in the first decade of this century. An increasing number of reminders warn that the new “Cold War” or “hot struggles” between the United States and China as the global great power rivalry are taking place so that the international system featured with multi-polarity that has been running for a long time since the end of the Cold War from last century is undergoing drastic changes. ASEAN countries, in particular, progressing from the early non-aligned movement to the ASEAN-led regional community-building process (Acharya, 2021; Jüland, 2017), have achieved national resilience under the regional resilience crafted by ASEAN. ASEAN has been providing a buffer zone for its members so that they do not have to choose sides among the competing great powers. As the regional dynamics are becoming intricate, the tasks ahead of ASEAN are more challenging.

Furthermore, as the great international power struggle continues to heat up, ASEAN must strengthen its internal unity and strategise its importance in the Indo-Pacific context. Hence, ASEAN Centrality should not be merely rhetorical; instead, the reinforcement of ASEAN Centrality needs to match the importance of this regional community. Against this backdrop, this article argues that there are three important elements that propel further development and consolidation of the ASEAN community in the near future. First, the ASEAN “the institution” must be highly needed by its member states. It is not an “either or” option but a precondition for national survival and regional autonomy. How can ASEAN offer a clear sense of safety for its well-being as the umbrella or architecture of peace and stability for its members in the face of crisis? What kind of buffer zone crafted by ASEAN can increase the flexibility for ASEAN members becoming the key to ensure the resilience of member states?

Second, ASEAN must also ensure its driver seat is not being undermined or replaced by great powers. In this regard, ASEAN Centrality is the key.

Third, the most tangible concern is that as ASEAN members encountered difficulties and crises during the pandemic and the great power rivalry, how can the organisation clearly chart a bright future and bring its members to work together for overcoming such difficulties. These three elements mentioned above are crucial to the continued success of the ASEAN story recognized by major powers and the international community. This is the best of times and the worst of times. Today is right at the critical moment to review and reboot ASEAN collaboration in the Indo-Pacific dynamics. Moreover, ASEAN can consider a pragmatic partnership with neighboring middle powers in the region, such as Taiwan. Against this backdrop, this article will further address the potential configuration of ASEAN-Taiwan collaboration.

### The Rationale: Three Ds Analysis

To understand the currents of international politics, it is necessary to examine the dynamics of the macro-level regional structure, the meso-level regional situation, or the development of institutional arrangements, and the micro-dynamics that trigger changes. These also echo the analytical framework of this article, the *three Ds* analysis. From the perspective of structural configuration, the dynamics of power politics have a profound impact on the development of

---

<sup>107</sup> Indo-Pacific is not merely referring to the geographic region, but a regional community in the sense of development complex or Barry Buzan’s “supra security complex” (Buzan, 2003).

regional configuration, rooted in those micro dynamics and institutional changes. Currently, ASEAN is at the core of such a structure in the Indo-Pacific region. In order to respond to the strategic struggles among major powers, ASEAN has also put forward its own position on the Indo-Pacific region in 2020, which is the *ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP)*.

This article will analyse the complex changes of the Indo-Pacific from *three Ds* analyses: (1) the *dynamics* of the Indo-Pacific region, (2) the *development* of ASEAN's role and efforts, and (3) the *driving forces* that facilitate the importance of ASEAN Community. Moreover, this article will also focus on the enhancement of Taiwan-ASEAN Community partnership in the era of post-pandemic recovery by linking Taiwan's New Southbound Policy with ASEAN's implementation of the Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

### ***Dynamics***

The current shift in global politics is reshaped by three forces. The first force is the struggle between the United States and China. Such major powers collision originated from the trade friction, later scaling up to the trade war and technology war, and reaching to the US-China strategic rivalry over political and security issues, all collision having complicated the regional configuration of the Indo-Pacific (Lau, 2019; Singh, 2020).

In contrast, the second force is a rather stabilising one at the regional level. From the EU-led integration of Europe to the regional community-building practice in Southeast Asia, the role of regional organisations for the promotion of regional integration is indispensable. It helps establish various institutional platforms and networks for communication and dialogues, reduces the possibility of misperception among state actors, and even helps build up trust among stakeholders. Promoting cooperation facilitated by regional institutions is of great significance to regional stability and prosperity. Hence, ASEAN is the key to the peace and prosperity of Southeast Asia.

Lastly, the third force is the reinforcement of regional small and middle powers' dependence over major powers (Chen & Yang, 2013). Owing to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the even tighter global border controls have also caused national economic stagnation, and global economies have become much more vulnerable (Lean, 2022; Shin, et al., 2022). At the same time, small and medium-sized economies have been forced to rely more on major powers and those countries with abundant resources. These dependencies include resource dependence on diseases prevention or public health, such as medicines, medical resources, and vaccines. In addition, small and medium-sized countries are going to seek the support endorsed by major powers in the long march of economic recovery, in particular, in the process of reorganising the supply chain. Therefore, the priority of resetting priorities of cooperation would be easily dominated by major powers.

Just as in the just-concluded series of ASEAN-related summits, the high-level participation of President Joe Biden of the United States not only demonstrated his clear commitments to ASEAN leaders, but also revealed potential crises in the region, which responded to the new regional dynamics crafted by the aforementioned three forces. China, while paying close attention to Washington's Southeast Asian engagement, devoted to upgrade its comprehensive strategic partnership with ASEAN as a whole to commemorate its three-decade anniversary of dialogue partnership with this regional grouping. These contending

concerns and trends have highlighted the importance of the ASEAN as a platform for regional prosperity and maintaining regional peace and stability, but these colliding trends once again signaled the far-reaching influence of the US-China struggles and the difficulty of power politics upon the ASEAN.

### ***Development***

The development of the ASEAN itself is imperative for the strategic autonomy or the so-called regional and national resilience of Southeast Asia (Yang, 2017). On the one hand, the ASEAN, on behalf of the ASEAN Community as well as its member states, must respond to the new structure of competition among powerful giants, including in response to Trump's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) by facilitating a consensus on the Indo-Pacific Outlook (Singh, 2020; Wang and Hsiao, 2021). Faced with China's economic offensive against and inducement to the ASEAN countries (Diokno, et al., 2018), including the regional diffusion of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects and its practice of pandemic/vaccine diplomacy (Liu, et al., 2021). For example, facing Beijing's Charm offensives in providing ASEAN countries with hundreds of millions of doses of vaccines and the operation of "China-ASEAN Vaccine Friend," ASEAN must consolidate its member states to seek common grounds for and common interests in further collaboration responding to external influence. In addition, internal issues such as the military coup that took place in Myanmar in the February of 2021 that led to the uncertainty of its democracy, yet settled, and the long term unsolved South China Sea disputes may weaken the ASEAN institution and undermine the solidarity of the regional community.

So far, there are two living and guiding documents that clearly demonstrate the future (short-term to mid-term) direction of ASEAN development, namely, *The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (hereafter, AOIP)* and *the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework: implementation plan (hereafter, ACRF)*. The importance and Strategic meaning of these two documents are worthy of scrutiny.

### ***ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific***

The concept of Indo-Pacific is not unfamiliar to the ASEAN. In 2013, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Marty Natalegawa (2013), who shared the strategic vision of linking up two oceans, namely, the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean to his ASEAN counterparts and argued that in the political and economic domain, the Indo-Pacific referred to an area encompassing some of the most dynamic economies in the world. The Indo-Pacific should be identified as having a rising role not only in the evolving global economic architecture but also in the political arena. The Indo-Pacific region is an economic power in its own right. It serves as the engine for global economic growth. Natalegawa once suggested that the ASEAN should advance the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asian (TAC) to the Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (Georgieff, 2013).

Then in 2017, in addition to Indonesia, the mainland power Thailand also reminded ASEAN members to recognise "the Indo-Pacific" as not just about geographical location but referring to the strategic importance of geopolitics. This proposition immediately gained support from Indonesia. It is worth noting that at the beginning of 2019, the *ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook* was not officially adopted (ASEAN, 2019). It was not until mid-2019 that the ASEAN countries reached such a consensus. Through the *AOIP* document, ASEAN expressed its united tone and position over the Indo-Pacific strategies and policies practiced by external

major powers narrating their own interests and interpretations on the Indo-Pacific geo-politics and geo-economic settings. By proposing its own official position, ASEAN demonstrated its regional strategic interest in responding to the Indo-Pacific power struggles and highlighting the future direction of cooperation and competition.

Among the key features included in this *AOIP* document, “existing”, “inclusivity”, “ASEAN Centrality”, and “complement” are the keywords and key concerns. First, “existing” means ASEAN will not reject or embrace any major powers’ Indo-Pacific regional initiatives, while inclusivity too echoes this statement. Moreover, ASEAN Centrality is to highlight and prioritise ASEAN as the driver of the Indo-Pacific dynamics while it has established the institutional platform for regional interaction and cooperation. The AOIP not only serves as the strategic reference of ASEAN Way to its member states but calls upon external major powers to respect ASEAN Centrality. Last but not the least, it is important to pinpoint the term “complement” as the AOIP highlights its purpose for complementing the existing mechanisms, rather than creating new ones. This echoes the previous concepts, that is, the ASEAN has its own rules and regulations, and all regional initiatives intended to cover ASEAN should respect the ASEAN norms as well as positively recognise ASEAN in the driver seat of the regional integration.

This article argues that the AOIP document represents the strategic development of ASEAN responses to contending Indo-Pacific power configuration with three features. First, it aims to embrace the Indo-Pacific in a rather positive manner, and helps promote a favourable environment for regional peace, stability, and prosperity, responding to common challenges, and maintaining a rule-based regional order.

Second, it strengthens the ASEAN community-building process and further facilitates the existing ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), as an inclusive regional architecture among the struggle of the Indo-Pacific powers.



Third, it is to implement existing issues of cooperation and explore other priority areas of ASEAN integration, including economic and trade, maritime cooperation, connectivity, the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs), and other emerging issues with specific interests among stakeholders (Yang and Chiang, 2019).

#### ***ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF)***



Since late 2019, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic rooted in and spread from Wuhan Province of China has not spared any ASEAN countries as China’s neighbours. What’s worse, most ASEAN members are developing countries, and the lack of public health resources has also made domestic pandemic governance even more challenging. As the pandemic and its variant continue to threaten the regional Community, the ASEAN Community building process has also been delayed. In order to consolidate the regional unity and facilitate good governance of the ASEAN Community over the pandemic while enlightening the future Direction for closer collaboration, ASEAN has approved and implemented a comprehensive recovery framework for living with the new reality and engaging the post-pandemic recovery in a timely manner. This is a strategic reference for ASEAN collaboration for re-building economic and social resilience. The ACRF, on the one hand, unites the ASEAN position to

jointly respond to the challenges imposed by the epidemic, and at the same time focuses on specific cooperation plans(ASEAN, 2020).

According to ACRF, ASEAN will work together on five dimensions to lead the region towards a full recovery, including five broad strategies: (1) strengthening the health systems; (2) strengthening Human security including social security and food safety; (3) Maximising the Potential of Intra-ASEAN Market and Broader Economic Integration; (4) Accelerating inclusive digital transformation; and (5) Creating a more sustainable and resilient future. (See Table 1)<sup>108</sup>

<p><b>Broad strategy(1):</b> <i>Enhancing health systems</i></p> 	1-a. building and sustaining current health gains and measures.
	1-b. maintaining and strengthening essential health services.
	1-c. strengthening vaccine security and self-reliance including its equitable access, affordability, safety, and quality.
	1-d. Enhancing capacity of human resources for health.
	1-e. Strengthening prevention and preparedness detection, and response and resilience to emerging/re-emerging infectious diseases, public health emergencies and pandemics; and strengthening relevant regional coordination mechanisms including development of health protocols or frameworks during recovery phase.
	1-f. Enhancing capacity of public health services to enable health emergency response including ensuring food safety and nutrition in emergencies.
<p><b>Broader Strategy(2):</b> <i>Strengthening human security</i></p> 	2-a. further strengthening and broadening of social protection and social welfare, especially for vulnerable groups.
	2-b. Ensuring food security, food safety, and nutrition.
	2-c. Promoting human capital development, including i) promoting digital skills and literacy, and 21st-century skills in basic education, TVET, and higher education, through Human Resource Development Roadmap for Changing World of Work; ii) reskilling and upskilling for employment, including digital skills and creating job opportunities; iii) capacity building program of women and youth development; iv) more contribution of rural area production by promoting digital skills of MSMEs; and v) promoting eco-technology.
	2-d. Ensuring responsive labour Policies for the new normal through social dialogue (cross-border labour movement, WFH, occupational health, and safety).

<sup>108</sup> [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACRF-Implementation-Plan\\_Pub-2020.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACRF-Implementation-Plan_Pub-2020.pdf)

	2-e. Mainstreaming gender equality throughout recovery scheme and actions of ASEAN.	
<p><b>Broader Strategy(3):</b> <i>Maximizing the potential of the intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration</i></p> 	3-a. Keeping markets open for trade and investment.	
	3-b. Strengthening supply chain connectivity and resilience.	
	3-c. Enabling trade facilitation in the new normal.	
	3-d. Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and cutting down market-distorting policies.	
	3-e. Setting up travel bubble/corridor framework. (Note: ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement is now being discussed at SOM. As agreed by the SOM on 7 September 2020, the Concept Note would be consulted with other sectoral bodies. The Concept Note has since been circulated to SOMHD, STOM, and DGICM for comments/inputs)	
	3-f. Strengthening transport facilitation /connectivity.	
	3-g. Accelerating sectoral recovery (tourism, MSMEs), and safeguarding employment in most affected sectors.	
	3-h. Streamlining and expediting investment process and facilitation and joint promotion initiatives.	
	3-i. Enhancing Public and Private Partnership (PPP) for regional connectivity.	
	3-j. Signing and early entry into force of RCEP.	
	<p><b>Broader Strategy(4):</b> <i>Accelerating inclusive digital transformation</i></p> 	4-a. Preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
		4-b. Promoting E-commerce and the digital economy.
4-c. Promoting e-government and e-services.		
4-d. Promoting financial inclusion including through digital financial services and regional payment connectivity.		
4-e. Providing a digital platform and related policy for promoting MSME digital upskilling and providing digital technology and fin-tech to access markets.		
4-f. Enhancing connectivity.		
4-g. Promoting ICT in education.		
4-h. Improving digital legal framework and institutional capacity.		
4-i. Strengthening data governance and cybersecurity.		
4-j. Strengthening consumer protection.		
4-k. Promoting the adoption of digital technologies in ASEAN businesses.		
<p><b>Broader Strateg(5):</b> <i>Advancing towards a more sustainable and resilient future</i></p>	5-a. Promoting sustainable development in all dimensions.	
	5-b. Facilitating the transition to sustainable energy.	
	5-c. Building green infrastructure and addressing basic infrastructure gaps.	
	5-d. Promoting sustainable and responsible investment.	
	5-e. Promoting high-value industries, sustainability, and productivity.	
	5-f. Managing disaster risks and strengthening disaster	


	<p>management.</p> <p>5-g. Promoting sustainable financing [these are the efforts undertaken by the WC-CMD and ACMF via the capital markets. These are the outcomes of engagements with the private sectors via round table discussions and comprise actionable recommendations that focus on the private sector, and broad recommendations that are to be implemented by AMS individually based on their respective timelines, and others by ASEAN as a region].</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 1: ACRF broader strategies and key priorities Source: Summarized from the ACRF: Implementation Plans, ASEAN, [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACRF-Implementation-Plan\\_Pub-2020.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACRF-Implementation-Plan_Pub-2020.pdf) (accessed on November 25, 2021).

The actions outlined in this framework and the implementation plan are interlinked. Of course, it also identifies that ASEAN attaches great importance to the connectivity and facilitation of the supply chain. Much attention has been directed to the active response and collective actions to the existing or emerging threats imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and US-China rivalry to social stability and common challenges of the regional community, which to some extent presents a concrete plan to craft a larger survival chain rather than the narrowly defined supply chain for manufacture industry or the semiconductor production network. In other words, although the cooperation of ASEAN countries much highlighted in the *ACRF* focuses on economic recovery, more adequate social recovery and resilience can make the development of the ASEAN community much stable, and this, for sure, is the most fundamental value showing the significance of the comprehensive recovery framework.

In terms of uncovering the driving forces, this framework lies in the expectation and investment in economic recovery, and to be more prepared for ensuring the stability of the people's well-being. This is the meaning of the ASEAN survival chain, the survival of the people, the stability of the country, and the prosperity of the region.

### **What Taiwan can contribute?**

Strategising the importance of the “survival chain” as a multifaceted collaboration between ASEAN and Taiwan needs to be highlighted.

There is a rising global demand for semiconductor chips in which Taiwan’s TSMC is a key provider. Against this backdrop, Taiwan has not limited itself to semiconductors alone. Instead, the Taiwan government and its people have devoted themselves to the peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region in terms of showcasing Taiwan’s capacity in safeguarding democratic resilience against external invasion, its unique model for the effective Covid-19 pandemic governance, sharing its national experience of developing high-quality locally produced vaccines; these dimensions, nevertheless, show Taiwan’s indispensable role and function in the making of a survival chain for the region and the globe. To be more specific, the New Southbound Policy *per se* advocated by President Tsai Ing-wen since 2016, is the key and can be partnering with ACRF in practice as well.

Launched in 2016, Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy (NSP) is now in its fifth year. Regarded as Taiwan’s “regional strategy for Asia,” the NSP is Taiwan’s response to regional dynamics in South and Southeast Asia. The NSP also articulates Taiwan’s strategic interests and



practices echoing major powers' engagement and initiatives toward the region. The strategic highlights of the NSP are characterised by the "4S" approach: systemizing Taiwan's regional strategy for Asia, strategizing Taiwan's importance, synergizing public and private partnerships, and structuring social links between Taiwan and regional neighbours.

### ***Systemizing Taiwan's Regional Strategy for Asia***

President Tsai Ing-wen's NSP reflects a detailed conceptualisation of national interests and careful inter-ministerial input. In comparison with the "Go South" policies in the 1990s, the NSP puts increased emphasis on local agendas and the developmental needs of the people. While the "Go South" policies concentrated on economic cooperation and state-owned-enterprise (SOE) investments towards some Southeast Asian countries, the people-centered NSP seeks deeper socio-economic connectivity between Taiwan and its neighboring region as a closer community.

In 2018, more than 2.3 million visitors from the NSP partner countries visited Taiwan, a 15percent increase from the previous year. Institutional linkages such as some recent MoUs on talent cultivation cooperation concluded by high schools and universities from Taiwan and Vietnam have also enabled pragmatic efforts in multiple social layers.

A more systematic Taiwan-ASEAN partnership achieves two important policy objectives. First, it recognises and supports South and Southeast Asia as the driving forces of Asian integration. Second, it promotes Taiwan's government and civilian connectivity with local counterparts and stakeholders in Asia, which should be in line with the regional agenda and local needs of ASEAN integration.

A number of like-minded countries have placed ASEAN and its centrality at the core of their Indo-Pacific strategies. Likewise, Taiwan has emphasised the importance of Southeast Asian countries for its own Asian policy. The emergence of the Indo-Pacific construct has provided further thrust for Taiwan to expand its external engagement. This complements Taiwan's New Southbound Policy. In other words, Taiwan's New Southbound Policy can complement and contribute to the comprehensive recovery of the regional community (Hashmi & Yang, 2021).

Taiwan has advanced relations with ASEAN members in a wide range of areas, including the four pillars of the New Southbound Policy: promoting economic collaboration; conducting talent exchanges; sharing resources; and forging regional links. While Taiwan is slowly moving toward expanding ties with the other NSP partners, all four pillars are well-placed in Taiwan's relations with ASEAN members through the implementation of the five flagship programs: economic and industrial cooperation; education and talent cultivation; public health and medical cooperation; regional agricultures; and youth development and social connectivity (Hsiao & Yang, 2018; Yang, 2018; Yang & Chiang, 2019).

The NSP shows that Taiwan is not only an active partner for regional development, it is also a caring member of the regional community (Wang & Hsiao, 2021). For example, Taiwan Water Corporation has planned to build a water purification plant in Malang, East Java to meet local needs. This is based on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) model, which will include a feasible management model that may be possible to introduce to other areas. Taiwan's

Ministry of Health and Welfare has also facilitated training programs for over 300 medical and public health personnel from nine NSP partner countries.

While Taiwan does not have the abundant resources as Japan, China, or the United States, its commitment to Asia is just as strong. Taiwan is expanding its presence in the ASEAN-led regional community, and also to rebrand Taiwan as a facilitator of regional prosperity and local economic growth.

### ***Synergizing Public and Private Partnerships***

Synergizing public and private partnerships by going beyond official channels and institutions is also an important component of the NSP. The policy is not a unilateral initiative of the Taiwan government, but a partnered action between government and civil society, while also linking out to governments and civil societies in South and Southeast Asia.

For example, in its five flagship programs of the NSP, Taiwan has been promoting a “One Country, One Center” project in its Medical Cooperation and public healthcare program, tasking seven major Taiwanese hospitals each with opening or linking up with prestige medical centres in Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and India. The partnership includes talent training exchange and professional collaboration. Additionally, for the Regional Agriculture programme, Taiwan’s Council of Agriculture has activated a Modern Agriculture Demo Farm in Karawang, a province in West Java, in collaboration with its Indonesian counterparts and stakeholders. Both of these projects involve technological knowledge sharing and quality training, while also showcasing Taiwan’s commitment to combining governmental and civilian resources to share with civil organisations and governments in the region. These efforts highlight Taiwan’s take on securing social stability and regional prosperity in Asia (Yang, 2018; Chiang & Yang, 2019).

1. Flagship program: <i>economic and industrial cooperation</i>	Facilitating the resilient supply chain, industrial cooperation, economic relations, and facilitate institutional cooperation such as the promotion of Bilateral investment agreement (BIA): Philippines (2017), India (2018), and Vietnam (2019). Trade values increased 13%(2016-2020)
2. Flagship program: <i>talent cultivation and education cooperation</i>	Bi-directional exchange on talent cultivation, training, and communications. An increasing number of inbound and outbound student exchanges, and internship programmes.
3. Flagship program: <i>medical and public health cooperation</i>	Regional hub for medical services & research; 2. Promotion of biotech and healthcare; industry in markets of NSP countries; 3. Enhancing healthcare quality by cooperation partnership in Asia; 4. Epidemic Prevention & Control through regional collaboration: One Country One Center (OCOC)program: Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, and India,

4. Flagship program: <i>regional agriculture cooperation</i>	Regional agricultural cooperation on efficiency, risk controls, safety, Smart agriculture and sustainable development of regional agriculture: i.e., Comprehensive agricultural demonstration farm: in Indonesia (2017), mushroom demo farm in the Philippines, high-tech agricultural park(Vietnam) and Malaysia()
5. <i>Youth development, social connectivity, and Yushan Forum as the platform</i>	Think tank collaboration, young leaders' initiative, and youth development; cultural exchanges; civil society connectivity; regional resilience (disaster preparedness); Yushan Forum.

Table 2: Taiwan's NSP: key goals and features of flagship programs Source: compiled by the author

### *Structuring Social Links between Taiwan and Regional Neighbours*

The NSP has also structured new social links between Taiwan and its regional neighbours. Traditional manufacturing industries were once regarded as the dominant Taiwanese presence in Southeast Asia. However, as bidirectional exchanges have become more diverse, businessmen, students, young professionals, NGOs, start-up enterprises, and artists are now moving into South and Southeast Asia, helping spread Taiwan's well-celebrated "Warm Power." Taiwan has also initiated the Asia Engagement Consortium (AEC) in 2018 led by Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF), which includes leading think tanks, civil society organisations, and academic institutions in Taiwan with the aim to widen networks in South and Southeast Asia, and further linking up with the region.

On the other side, Southeast Asian communities residing in Taiwan actively seek to set up new networks and institutions, such as the Vietnam Expert Association in Taiwan (VNEAT) — a local network in talent cooperation that brings together Vietnamese experts and talents from various fields in Taiwan — and the nongovernmental organization Living Arts International, which also established a branch in Taipei City in recent year. The Living Arts branch in Phnom Penh will help facilitate cooperation between Taiwan artists and their counterparts in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Such bi-directional exchanges between Taiwan and Southeast Asia are in the process of gradually shaping a new collective identity. It is community consciousness that brings together immigrant life and culture at both local and regional levels. New residents, as well as the second generation of earlier waves of immigrants, are deepening linkages between Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and other parts of Asia. In the near future, it is conceivable that there will be more than a million ethnic Southeast Asians who have resided in Taiwan. Taiwan will no longer be a lonesome Asian offshore isle but instead, become an integral part of the ASEAN-led regional Community as a contributing stakeholder based on a solid partnership and further regional integration.

The timely launch of the NSP not only underlines the soft connectivity between Taiwan and Southeast Asia but also strengthens the partnerships between Taiwan and the region. These people-to-people exchanges and existing interpersonal relations do not aim at constituting the "community of common destiny" (*ming yun gong tong ti*) that China envisions, but are a kind

of mutual caring, a natural connection that exists due to a regional consciousness and affinity led and facilitated by ASEAN. Given that in the near future one in ten Taiwanese residents will likely root from Southeast Asia or have close ties with the region, it will be even harder for Taiwan to stay on the sidelines of regional integration.

So far, the NSP becomes an effective and responsible initiative of Taiwan to respond to the regional dynamics and political uncertainty and echo to the making of regional community in Asia and the greater Indo-Pacific region. It is also enlightening for Taiwan to work together with ASEAN partners to navigate in the hegemonic struggles such as US-China rivalry as well as foster an innovative regional collaboration, particularly in the post-covid-19 recovery.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Recalibrating ACRF-NSP partnership matters!***

This article aims at encouraging a radical linkage between Taiwan and ASEAN facing the post-pandemic recovery process. The NSP can be partnering with the ACRF and contribute to the quality of good governance of restoring social and economic resilience. For example, the contribution of the NSP economic and industrial cooperation program can serve to strengthen the ACRF broader strategies in (1) strengthening the health systems, (3) maximizing the Potential of the Intra-ASEAN Market, and Broader Economic Integration, and (4) Accelerating inclusive digital transformation. NDP flagship program on talent cultivation and education cooperation can contribute to the ACRF broader strategy in (4) Accelerating inclusive digital transformation. The NSP Flagship program: medical and public health cooperation can shed light on ACRF strategies in (1) strengthening the health systems and (2) strengthening Human security. Furthermore, as Taiwan is aimed at sharing lessons of smart agriculture through its NSP flagship program on regional agriculture cooperation, the effort can be with ACRF strategies in (1) strengthening the health systems and (2) strengthening Human security. Last but not the least, ASEAN can also partner with Taiwan's annual Yushan Forum<sup>109</sup> in brainstorming and implementing ACRF strategy in (5) Creating a more sustainable and resilient future (see Figure 1). These institutional and joint efforts can stabilize the making and operation of the survival chain that paves the way for a more resilient future of the Indo-Pacific region.

---

<sup>109</sup> For example, the themes of Yushan Forum held in Taiwan in 2020 and 2021 were “Forging A Resilient Future Together”(2020) and “Resetting Priorities of Progress with Resilience.” Global leaders addressed their concerns over ongoing challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and suggested solutions for post pandemic recovery. See <https://www.yushanforum.org/>

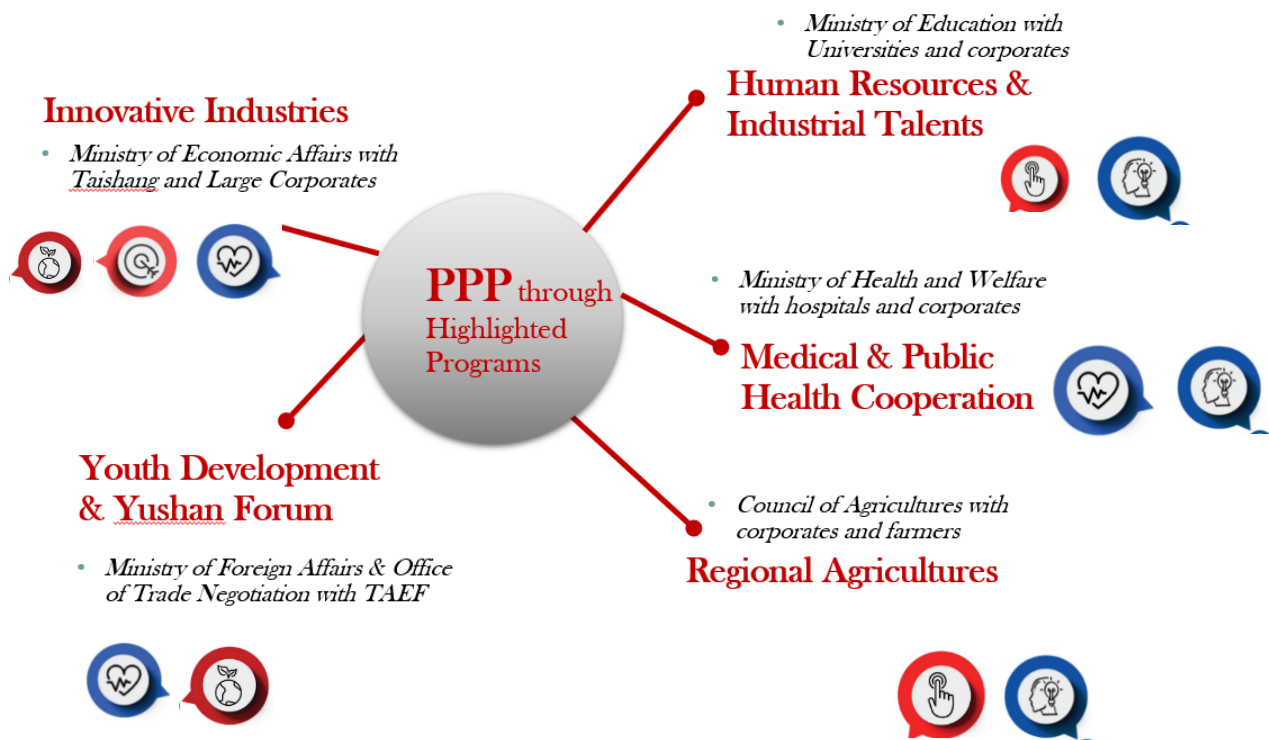


Figure 1: NSP’s five flagship programs echoing and partnering with ACRF’s five broader strategies. Source: Diagramme by the author.

## References

- Acharya, A. (2021). *ASEAN and Regional Order: Revisiting Security Community in Southeast Asia*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hashmi, S. & Yang, A. H. (2021). ASEAN is core to Southbound policy. Retrieved from <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2021/11/27/2003768580>, [accessed on 27 November 2021].
- ASEAN (2019). “ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific: Towards New Cooperation in the Strategic Landscape,” ASEAN Secretariat, Retrieved from <https://asean2019.go.th/en/news/%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99-%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%94%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%99%E0%B9%82%E0%B8%94-%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%8B%E0%B8%B4/>, [accessed on 5 January 2022].
- Lau, L. J. (2019). *The China-U.S. Trade War and Future Economic Relations Hong Kong*: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.
- Buzan, B. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Singh, B. (2020). *Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and ASEAN*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Natalegawa, M. (2013). "An Indonesian perspective on the Indo-Pacific," *The Jakarta Post*, Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/05/20/an-indonesian-perspective-indo-pacific.html>, [accessed on 5 January 2022].
- Lean, H.H. (2022). *Revitalising ASEAN Economies in a Post-COVID-19 World: Socioeconomic Issues in the New Normal*. Singapore: World Scientific Publisher.
- Liu, H., Tan, K.Y., & Lim, G. (2021). *Political Economy of Regionalism, Trade, And Infrastructure, The: Southeast Asia And the Belt and Road Initiative In A New Era*. Singapore: World Scientific Publisher.
- Shin, H.B., McKenzie, M., & Oh, D.Y., eds. (2022). *Covid-19 in Southeast Asia: Insights for a post-pandemic world*. London: Ubiquity Press.
- Rüland, J. (2017). *The Indonesian Way: ASEAN, Europeanization, and Foreign Policy Debates in a New Democracy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Yang, A.H. & Chiang, J.H.C. (2019). Enabling Human Values in Foreign Policy: The Transformation of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy, *Journal of Human Values*, 25 (2): 75-86.
- Alan H. Y. (2018). Unpacking Taiwan's Presence in Southeast Asia: The International Socialization of the New Southbound Policy, *Issues & Studies*, 54 (1): 1840003-1840033
- Georgieff, J. (2013). An Indo-Pacific Treaty: An Idea Whose Time Has Come? Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2013/05/an-indo-pacific-treaty-an-idea-whose-time-has-come/>, [accessed on 22 December 2021].
- Hsiao, H.H.M. & Yang, A.H. (2018). Repositioning Taiwan in Southeast Asia: Strategies to Enhance People-to-People Connectivity. Retrieved from <https://www.nbr.org/publication/repositioning-taiwan-in-southeast-asia-strategies-to-enhance-people-to-people-connectivity/>, [accessed on 10 December 2021]
- Diokno, M., Hsiao, H.H.M., & Yang, A.H., eds. (2018). *China's Footprints in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.
- Wang, R. & Hsiao, R. (2021) *Connecting Taiwan's New Southbound Policy with U.S. Foreign Policy Initiatives in Asia: Recommendation for Taipei and Washington*. Taipei: Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation.
- Chen, I.T.Y. & Yang, A.H. (2013). A Harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory Typologies of ASEAN Countries' Strategies to the Rise of China, *The Pacific Review*, 26(3): 265-288.
- ASEAN. (2019). *The ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- ASEAN. (2020). *The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.
- Yang, A.H. (2017). The South China Sea Arbitration and Its Implications for ASEAN Centrality, *Asian Yearbook of International Law*, 21: 83-95.