

## **Economic Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Taiwan's Relations with Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to discuss the recent developments of Taiwan-Indonesia relations. It especially aims to identify the diverse efforts that Taiwan has made to secure an improved position in its relation with Indonesia, amid an increasingly cordial relation between Indonesia and China. Among the efforts that Taiwan has conducted is using the attractiveness of its economic resources to achieve a better recognition from Indonesia. However, this practice of “economic diplomacy” has been combined with an attempt to invest soft power through various means. They include, among others, promoting Taiwanese education attraction among middle-class Indonesians, particularly Chinese Indonesians, attracting Indonesian students to pursue a higher degree in Taiwan through various scholarship programs, and establishing a network between the Taiwanese and Indonesian scholars. While the above efforts have arguably enabled Taiwan to have a better recognition among certain segments of the

Indonesian public and government, it still faces a number of challenges.

**Keywords:** *Taiwanese soft power, economic diplomacy, Indonesia-Taiwan relations, “Go South” policy, Taiwanese educational promotion, Taiwanese popular culture in Indonesia*

## **1. Introduction**

Despite the absence of a diplomatic relation with Indonesia, Taiwan has enjoyed a cordial relationship with this archipelagic country since early 1970s. However, roughly a decade after Indonesia and China normalized their diplomatic ties in 1990, a phenomenon that potentially affects Taiwan’s position in its relation with this largest Southeast Asian country began to emerge. Closer relations between Indonesia and China have emerged again, especially after President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) made China the first destination for his formal overseas visit. In the economic aspect, China has become one of the top trading partners of Indonesia. The Chinese money has come to Indonesia not only through investments, but also through development assistance programs, which among others have materialized in the form of infrastructure development projects. Public perception of China has also been cordial. For several consecutive years in the last decade, China has been seen as favorable by a high percentage of Indonesian people. Meanwhile, many aspects of the Chinese state and government have been seen as a source for learning by quite a few among the Indonesian middle class. Furthermore, cultural interactions between people of the two countries are also becoming much more intensive than before.

The emergence of the above situation has evoked several inquiries related to Taiwan. Amid the emergence of the close relations between Indonesia and China, what kind of efforts has Taiwan made to maintain

its cordial relationship, or even to improve its position in its relations with Indonesia? How have these efforts been carried out? What outcomes have Taiwan achieved through these efforts?

This article attempts to provide answers to the above questions. It begins with a historical overview of the relations between Indonesia and Taiwan. Subsequently, it will discuss the economic aspects of Taiwan's relation with Indonesia. Next it will investigate the investment of Taiwan's soft power in Indonesia. Finally, a discussion of some achievements that Taiwan's economic diplomacy and soft power have made, combined with the challenges that Taiwan still needs to address, will be conducted. The article will be closed with a concluding section.

## **2. Relations between Indonesia and Taiwan: A Historical Overview**

The relations between Indonesia and Taiwan might be seen as a continuation of a relationship that had emerged in the late period of the Dutch colonial era, that is, in the first half of the twentieth century. Under the umbrella of a formal diplomatic relation between the Republic of China (ROC) and the Netherlands, several consul general offices of the ROC were established in Indonesia within the above period (Ku, 2002: 233). Later in 1949, when the Indonesian independence was finally recognized by the Dutch and the wider international community,<sup>1</sup> the Chinese Nationalist government – by then has retreated to Taiwan – immediately declared its recognition of the new republic. This quick decision was probably motivated by a hope that Indonesia would establish relations with Taipei (Mozingo, 1976: 88). However, in a wish to receive a recognition from the People's Republic of China, Indonesia decided to recognize the mainland China instead. In that regard, Vice-President Mohammad Hatta informed General Wu Teh-chuan, who was sent by Taipei to negotiate about the future relations between the two

governments, that the Nationalist China's consulates in Indonesia would have to be closed within a few months (Mozingo, 1976: 89).

Despite the closure of its consulates in April 1950, Taipei still enjoyed a support from a certain segments of people in Indonesia, especially among the ethnic Chinese. Such a support became more observable later towards the end of 1960s, after the relationship between Indonesia and China – which had been very close until 1965 – began to erode in the aftermath of a coup attempt conducted by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in September 1965. As described in detail by Benny Setiono (2003: 1000-1001), a group of ethnic Chinese businessmen associated with PT Berdikari, a trading company which was directed by Brigadier General Suhardiman from the Indonesian Army, made some attempts to improve the relationship between Indonesia and Taiwan in 1967. The group consisted of several ethnic Chinese businessmen, such as, Be Sulindro, Suwandi Hamid, and Njoo Han Siang, under the leadership of Amran Zamsani, an Acehnese who served as the operational director of PT Berdikari. In September 1967, this group welcomed a delegation from Taiwan, and made a joint statement with the Taiwanese delegation on the importance of the opening of direct trade relations between Indonesia and Taiwan. During the declaration of the joint statement, Taiwan agreed to provide a US\$20 million loan to Indonesia, which never materialized because the promise was made under a condition that Indonesia should withdraw its support for China's entrance to the United Nations. However, the attempts continued to be conducted, with the help of other prominent figures, such as Suhardiman himself, Colonel Soedjono Hoemardani, and Jusuf Wanandi.

Yet the above group of people could not successfully convince the country's top leaders to give their official recognition to Taiwan. Regarding this issue, the Indonesian foreign minister Adam Malik stated

that Indonesia would recognize the Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 government if it could return to Mainland China (Chen, 2002: 62). In fact, despite its frozen diplomatic relation for about 23 years, Indonesia still upheld the “One-China policy” and gave its recognition to the People’s Republic of China. Nevertheless, relations between Indonesia and Taiwan have significantly improved since early 1970s, albeit not on a diplomatic level. The year of 1971 might be considered as a turning point, as it was the year when the Taiwan Chinese Chamber of Commerce was set up in Jakarta, following the establishment of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce (KADIN) in Taipei a year earlier. Later in 1989, the Taiwan Chinese Chamber of Commerce changed its name into Taipei Economic and Trade Office (TETO) while the Indonesian KADIN in Taipei developed into the Indonesian Trade and Economic Office (KDEI) in 1994.

### **3. Economic Diplomacy and Taiwan’s Relations with Indonesia**

As described in the last section, Taiwan and Indonesia have continued to build economic and interpersonal relations even after the Nationalist China’s consulates had been closed in 1950. These economic and people-to-people relations have been formalized, though not at the diplomatic level, since the establishment of both side’s chamber of commerce in Jakarta and Taipei in 1970s, which two decades after were upgraded into the economic and trade offices based in both cities. For Taiwan, the establishment of the Taipei Economic and Trade Office in 1989 might be seen as a sort of achievement because it arguably enhanced Taipei’s status and thereby was in line with the foreign policy set by Lee Teng-hui 李登輝’s government which was founded a year earlier. Indeed, as discussed by Jie Chen, the key dimension of Taiwan’s foreign policy since Lee Teng-hui is its search for international

recognition of its national sovereignty through broadened and upgraded diplomatic representation, increased international agreements, frequent visits overseas by government officials, as well as the establishment of full diplomatic relations wherever possible (Chen, 2002: 1). As Chen further explained, the profile and dynamism of the business sectors have been one of the key ways through which the aforementioned goal is to be achieved. So to speak, Taiwan, which only has less than thirty diplomatic partners, began to adopt an “economic diplomacy”, making use of its significant economic resources in exchange for political supports in the global community (Ku, 2002: 239).

While the interactions between Taiwan and Indonesia began to be intensified since the implementation of the “economic diplomacy”, a further significant increase of these economic ties has taken place since early 1990s, as a result of the introduction of the “Go South” policy. The policy was adopted by Lee’s administration in March 1994, in the effort to reduce Taiwan’s economic dependence on China (Lin, 2008: 193). Under this policy, Taiwan entrepreneurs were encouraged to invest their money in Southeast Asian countries, as well as to do trades with them. As the adoption of this policy coincided with Indonesia’s need for further economic development, as well as with an economic reform initiated by President Suharto in 1988, Taiwan’s investments in Indonesia has steadily increased in the last decade of the last century (Ku, 2002: 240-241). As Samuel Ku has noted, Taiwan’s investment in Indonesia kept growing even after the financial crisis in 1997.

The “Go South” Policy gained further impetus in 2002, when Taiwan was under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)’s government (Lin, 2008: 193). Along with the increased interest among Taiwanese entrepreneurs to invest their money in Indonesia, Taiwan became one among the five largest investors in this Southeast Asian country in 2002.<sup>2</sup> Taiwan’s position as one among the largest investors in

Indonesia fell to number 15 by 2015. However, the amount of the money invested by Taiwanese businessmen/women in Indonesia was still large, reaching over US\$100 million in 275 projects (BKPM, 2016: 13). One of the most recent significant examples of Taiwan's commitment to invest in this Southeast Asian archipelagic country is the agreement between the Taiwanese government and its Indonesian counterpart to launch a project to develop the Morotai Island, an island located in the North Maluku province of Indonesia. The project aims to develop the island into a new economic hub consisting of a seafood-processing industry, tourist resort, and a new industrial zone.<sup>3</sup> Modeled after the special economic zone that Indonesia has established with Singapore in Batam Island, an Indonesian island located just roughly 30 km away from Singapore, the Morotai project would allow Taiwanese business people to invest in this island. Involved in this project is the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) from Taiwan. Meanwhile, the Indonesian side is represented by the Jababeka Group, an Indonesian conglomerate chaired by a Chinese Indonesian tycoon.

In addition to investment, development aid has also become a means for Taiwan to improve its relations with the Southeast Asian countries. Indeed, as argued by Jie Chen, development assistance has become one of "the three major components in Taiwan's economic profile in the Southeast Asian region" (Chen, 2002: 107). By way of example, Taiwan has maintained a technical mission in Indonesia to help local farmers increase their agricultural productivity (Lin, 2008: 193-194). A more recent example is a fishery assistance program which Taiwan is about to conduct in collaboration with the Hasanuddin University, Makassar.<sup>4</sup>

Taiwan's economic profile in Southeast Asian countries has also depended on its import of foreign workers from the region. In the case of Indonesia, Taiwan has become the second largest destination for the Indonesian migrant workers since 2011. Based on the report released by

the National Body for Placement and Protection of the Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI), over 78,000 Indonesians workers were migrating to Taiwan in 2011 (BNP2TKI, 2013: 7). The number was increasing to roughly 82,000 in 2014 (BNP2TKI, 2015: 7), but fell to around 63,000 in 2015 and 2016 (BNP2TKI, 2016: 7). By January 2011, the total number of Indonesians working in Taiwan had reached 159,000 or 41.6 per cent of the total foreign workers in Taiwan (Elisabeth and Tu, 2014: 5). In less than five years, the number increased to 238,298 (Tsay, 2015: 74). The majority of them work as housekeepers for Taiwanese families, as well as caregivers, especially for the old people. As an average income of a person working in an informal sector in Taiwan is roughly US\$525, a total amount of remittance that these migrant workers might send to their home country is imaginably high. They arguably contributed significantly to the US\$8.55 billion that Indonesia had received from its overseas migrant workers by 2015.<sup>5</sup>

The above picture of Taiwan-Indonesian economic relations is likely to persist in the near future. The sign of better cooperation has been observable, among others, from the Indonesian decision to allow Taiwanese to enter Indonesia without visa for a limited period, as well as the establishment of a new TETO in Surabaya. Furthermore, after the election of the new president, Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文, the DPP, with which the new president is affiliated, has launched the “New Southbound Policy” (新南向政策), which would put emphasis on bilateral interaction and cooperation with ASEAN and South Asian nations.<sup>6</sup> Under this “expanded version” of the previous “Go South” policy, the economic ties and people-to-people interactions between Taiwan and Indonesia is expected to be further enhanced.



#### **4. Taiwan's Soft Power in Indonesia**

In the effort to strengthen its position in relation with Indonesia, Taiwan has combined its “economic diplomacy” with an attempt to invest its “soft power” in this archipelagic country. A concept introduced by international relations theorist Joseph Nye in 1990, soft power is distinguished from “hard power” by its reluctance to rest on inducements (“carrots”) and threats (“sticks”). Unlike hard power, the implementation of soft power “rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others” (Nye, 2004: 5). It uses a different type of currency (not force, not money) to engender cooperation – an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values (Nye, 2004: 7). Aestheticized culture is also considered an important source of soft power.

In the East Asian context, as Lee and Melissen has argued, soft power has been executed, particularly by the newly economically rising East Asian countries, such as China and South Korea, to expand their existing economic influence and acquire more sophisticated politico-cultural leverage. Similarly, the established countries whose economy is on the verge of declining, like Japan, are more likely using soft power to compensate for their deficit of available resources (Lee and Melissen, 2011: 5). Taiwan too attempts to invest its soft power to support (and as a part of) its diplomatic efforts in the East and Southeast Asian region. One of the purposes of investing such power is to make Taiwan properly acknowledged.

Before examining the way in which Taiwan has invested its soft power in Indonesia, it is perhaps worthwhile to note that, unlike Nye's concept of soft power, Taiwan's implementation of soft power does not exclude the manipulation of its economic power. In addition to its economic model, Taiwan's sources of soft power include its foreign direct investments and international aid as well (Wang and Lu, 2008:

431). This consequently brings Taiwan's model of soft power closer to the concept of soft power understood by the Chinese leaders. As Joshua Kurlantzick has pointed out:

For the Chinese, soft power means anything outside of the military and security realm, including not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also more coercive economic and diplomatic levers like aid and investment and participation in multilateral organizations – Nye's carrots and sticks.

(Kurlantzick, 2007: 6)

Like China, Taiwan also seems to use its economic resources to support its diplomatic efforts. In its relations with Indonesia, Taiwan has used its economic resources, such as investments and aid, to function as "carrots". While minor tensions might occur, such as an incident that took place in 2002, when Indonesia refused to welcome President Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁's plan to visit Yogyakarta,<sup>7</sup> such tensions did not have a serious consequence on the economic ties between Indonesia and Taiwan. True, certain members of the Taiwanese elites reacted to the aforementioned 2002 incident by calling on the Taiwanese government to postpone or cancel its investments and aid to this Southeast Asian country. Nevertheless, as indicated in the last section, investments and aid from Taiwan have continued to flow into Indonesia in the aftermath of the above incident.

The inclusion of the economic resources as a means of soft power has made a separate analysis of Taiwan's soft power and economic diplomacy difficult to carry out. However, particularly within the last decade, an investment of Taiwan's soft power through non-economic means has been significantly apparent in Indonesian society. On the one hand, the Taiwanese government wishes to have more Indonesian people aware of Taiwan's presence as an entity completely different from China

in political, social, and cultural aspects. “To reach this end, Taiwan applies and intensifies soft power through interaction with Indonesia and Indonesians,” explained a top TETO official.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Taiwanese “non-state actors” have conducted various activities for their own purpose, which in the end might further enhance Taiwan’s soft power in Indonesia.

In an effort to achieve the above goal, the Taiwanese government has approached various non-state actors to collaborate with them through their representative in Jakarta. This strategy is adopted because a government-to-government cooperation with the Indonesian side cannot be intensively conducted due to Indonesia’s adherence to the “one China” policy. As such, activities that promote the knowledge about Taiwan in Indonesian society are carried out in collaboration with Indonesian business communities and social associations. The events that they have recently organized include the Taiwan travel fair, Taiwan Excellence Happy Run, and Taiwan art performances. Taiwan has also funded the establishment of a Taiwan Education Center (TEC) in April 2011 in Surabaya to help promote Taiwan’s education system in Indonesia. While the TEC has been directly founded and supported financially by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education – despite the fact that it is managed by the Indonesian people – another organization with a similar purpose was established in Jakarta without a direct formal support from the Taiwanese government. The Jakarta Taiwan Education Center (JTEC) was established in March 2015. Together with the Association of Taiwan Alumni in Indonesia (ICATI), the JTEC organized an event called as the Taiwan Higher Education Fair on 29 August 2015. In fact, ICATI has played a much larger role. In addition to Taiwan education fairs, the association has also organized a Mandarin summer camp program and annual visit of Indonesian high school principals to Taiwan.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that Taiwan has encouraged an intensive promotion of its education, including higher education, indicates how the Taiwan government views the educational exchange as an important tool to invest its soft power in Indonesia. Indeed, in addition to the aforementioned events, which mainly targeted middle-class Indonesians, particularly those who have an ethnic Chinese background, the Taiwan government has provided a number of scholarships to specifically enable Indonesians with other ethnic backgrounds to study in Taiwan. In addition to the scholarship program generally provided to international students (generally named as the “Taiwan Scholarship”, the Taiwan government has also established specific programs, in cooperation with the Indonesian government, to allow more Indonesian students to pursue a higher degree in Taiwan. By way of example, in 2013, Taiwan’s Ministry of Education has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government of Aceh Province to provide 35 scholarships annually to the students originally from this Indonesian province.<sup>10</sup> Taiwan has also provided special scholarships for Indonesian students through several Taiwanese universities or government institutions.

The above efforts have received a positive response from the Indonesian part. A significant number of Indonesian students have studied in Taiwan since the introduction of the aforementioned scholarship programs and educational promotions. In 2015 only, there have been 4,349 Indonesian students actively studying in Taiwan. They include those who focus on learning Mandarin and those who pursue a non-language programme at either undergraduate or graduate level. Among the non-language degree programs that the Indonesian students usually major are engineering, technology, natural sciences, and businesses management. However, a number of these students are enrolled in social science and humanity programs. (Paramitaningrum,

2013: 169).

Taiwan's desire to have an increased number of Indonesian students pursuing their degree in Taiwan is perhaps related to the fact that the university graduates, particularly at higher level, might have a certain influence on the knowledge production process. As such, they might help promote the knowledge about Taiwan in Indonesian society in a significant way. However, Taiwanese diplomats have also made an effort to invest Taiwan's soft power by establishing networks with Indonesian academics, even though they are not necessarily graduates of the Taiwanese universities. Collaborations between the TETO Jakarta and several hubs of Indonesian academics and intellectuals in the city have taken place in the last few years. The institutions with which TETO Jakarta has collaborated in the recent years include Paramadina University, University of Indonesia, President University, the Habibie Center, as well as the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI). By way of example, in June 2011, TETO helped coordinate a collaboration between the Faculty of Social and Political Science of the University of Indonesia, Depok, and the College of Social Sciences of National Sun Yat-sen University (國立中山大學), Kaohsiung 高雄, to organize an international symposium entitled as "The Ideology of San Min Chu I and the Foundation of Pancasila: A Shared Vision". The event was held at the main campus of the University of Indonesia in Depok. More than just enhancing cooperation between the two institutions, the symposium had provided an opportunity for the Taiwanese scholars to emphasize the similarity of the two ideologies that have become the basis of the Taiwanese and Indonesian societies: the Three Principles of the People or *San Min Chu I* 三民主義 and the *Pancasila* (Indonesian Five Principles).<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, at least in two different occasions, Mr Liang-jen Chang 張良任, the head of TETO Jakarta, has shared his ideas with groups of Indonesian scholars and researchers. The first occasion took

place on 2 May 2014, when a discussion forum called the “Discussion of Consortium of Indonesia’s Foreign Policies” was organized by the Graduate School of Diplomacy of Paramadina University. The second occasion was on 14 May 2014, in a seminar held by the Habibie Center, which discussed the recent development of the relation between China and Taiwan. Later in April 2015, TETO had also assisted Tamkang University (淡江大學), a leading private university in Taiwan, to organize a joint conference on the security and economic development in East Asia in collaboration with Bina Nusantara University, another private university in Indonesia.

The government of Taiwan has also annually invited Indonesian scholars, including but not only from the aforementioned institutions, to participate in a dialogue forum with their Taiwanese counterparts. In 2012, Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Habibie Center had collaboratively organized an “Indonesia-Taiwan Dialogue” held in Taipei. Similar events had been organized in the following years. In 2016, the dialogue has been expanded to include scholars from all ASEAN countries, and was given a name as the “Taiwan-ASEAN Dialogue”.<sup>12</sup> Besides the above activities, the Taiwanese diplomats in Jakarta have also frequently been inviting various groups of Indonesian scholars to the formal as well as informal events that they organize.

In addition to the efforts made by the Taiwanese government, Taiwan’s soft power in Indonesia has been invested through phenomena related to popular culture, such as the appearance of Taiwanese movies. By way of example, early in 1994, the *New Legend of Madame White Snake* (新白娘子傳奇), a 1993 Taiwanese television series, has already been broadcast by the SCTV (Surya Citra Televisi Indonesia), one of the private TV stations beginning to mushroom in the country by early 1990s. However, it was the *Meteor Garden* (流星花園), a 2001 Taiwanese drama starring Barbie Hsu 徐熙媛 and four male Taiwanese

actors popularly known as the F4, which had significantly helped promote the popularity of Taiwan as well as the Chinese language in Indonesia. Screened regularly in 2002 by Indosiar, another private TV station, the series has attracted a wide audience, many of whom were Indonesian teenagers. Unfortunately, no other Taiwanese movies/TV series as well as music artists and bands have received a similar warm welcome from the Indonesian public.

## **5. Taiwan's Economic Diplomacy and Soft Power in Indonesia: Outcome and Challenges**

The efforts that Taiwan has made in order to be better recognized in Indonesia through various strategies discussed in the last two sections have arguably paid off. At government-to-government level, communication between officials at the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their Taiwanese counterparts has taken place more intensively, albeit in informal settings.<sup>13</sup> Technical collaboration between certain government institutions, such as the Indonesian National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB), with similar bodies in Taiwan has also been conducted. Finally, two significant results have been achieved in the last year, namely, the Indonesian decision to give a visa-free status for Taiwanese who pay a short social visit to Indonesia and for other related activities, as well as the Indonesian decision to allow Taiwan to open another TETO in Surabaya. As a senior Taiwan diplomat commented, "These two achievements are considered significant and worth of celebration by the Taiwanese government."<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Indonesia views the opening of the TETO Surabaya as a development beneficial to the Indonesian side because it will enable the prospective migrant workers originally from East Java and Nusa Tenggara to process their working visa application in Surabaya. This practice is considered

more cost efficient than if those prospective migrant workers had to go to Jakarta.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the scholarship programs that the Taiwanese government has offered have made certain achievements as well. A number of Indonesian scholars who receive scholarship from Taiwan have come back and make a contribution to the academic world in Indonesia. By way of example, quite a few of the academics teaching in the prestigious University of Indonesia did their post-graduate training in Taiwan. Two academics who teach in this university's Chinese Study program hold a Ph.D. from two different universities in Taiwan. One of them currently serves as the manager of education in the Faculty of Humanities of the abovementioned public university. Several other Taiwanese university graduates have taught in many different departments in that public university, become researchers at prestigious research institutions (including at LIPI), and lecture in many different private universities.

Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges that the Taiwanese need to address. Firstly, it is observable that Taiwan's effort to outreach various groups within the Indonesian society has overwhelmingly focused on two groups. The first group is the middle-class Chinese Indonesians, who consist of the alumni of Taiwanese universities and business communities. The second group is the Indonesian academics and researchers, the majority of whom are non-Chinese Indonesians. Unfortunately, only a limited number of this kind of people have been embraced by the Taiwanese representative in Indonesia. Taiwan's effort to be better recognized will have an increased effect if it is combined with activities to reach out to more varieties of Indonesian people. Secondly, in Taiwan itself, the number of Taiwanese scholars who have an expertise in Indonesian society and culture is still not adequate. Besides, Indonesia has not been seen as an attractive subject to study by



most Taiwanese students.<sup>16</sup> If Taiwan wishes to invest a soft power which goes beyond the use of economic means such as investments and development aids, a bigger presence of scholars and students focusing on Indonesia will become an important requirement. The recent re-emergence of anti-China sentiments which have been growing despite the incoming flow of the Chinese investment in Indonesia might become a good lesson that demonstrates how the Indonesian people might respond negatively to the arrival of foreign investments.

## **6. Conclusion**

As this article has discussed, amid the increasingly close relationship between Indonesia and China, Taiwan has made diverse efforts to secure an improved position in its relation with Indonesia. To achieve a better recognition from the Indonesian government and public, Taiwan has not only cultivated its economic resources, through a practice which Professor Samuel Ku (2002: 239) called the “economic diplomacy”, but has also attempted to invest its soft power in Indonesia. True, similar to the practice conducted by China, Taiwan has used the attractiveness of its economic resources to invest its soft power in Indonesia. But Taiwan’s soft power has also been manifest in the form of the Taiwanese education attraction among middle-class Indonesians, many of them being Chinese Indonesians. Taiwan has also attempted to reach out to the non-ethnic Chinese Indonesian academics and students through various scholarship programs and other programs that enable Taiwanese and Indonesian scholars to interact and conduct collaborative activities.

The intensive implementation of the above diverse efforts has enabled Taiwan to achieve a certain level of recognition from the Indonesian government, as well as from certain segments among the Indonesian public. However, in terms of public recognition, the outcome

has not been satisfactory yet due to the rather limited scope of the people that the Taiwanese government has managed to reach out to. Meanwhile, the Taiwanese popular culture, which once became popular in the form of the popularity of the *Meteor Garden* series, has not been persistently widespread among the Indonesian public. This is worth a special attention because this kind of movies/TV series might be a significant means to introduce how the everyday life in the Taiwanese contemporary society looks like to the Indonesian people. As such, it will also better inform the Indonesian people of a Taiwanese society, which has characteristics significantly different from the Mainland Chinese society in the cultural, social, and especially political aspects. If fact, being recognized as a society and country different from China is what Taiwan needs to seek, especially at the time when the anti-China discourse is re-emerging again in Indonesian society after slumbering for roughly a decade.

## Notes

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13. Interview with a senior Indonesian diplomat (Jakarta, 2 March 2016).
14. Personal conversation with a senior Taiwanese diplomat (Jakarta, 8 October 2015).
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