

Philippine-Taiwan Soft Power Dynamics and the One-China Policy

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Abstract

This study talks about the One-China Policy as the intervening factor in the soft power dynamics of the Philippines and Taiwan. Despite this constraint, both countries exert effort to strengthen their influence on each other through soft power on a global scale. The main focus is on how soft power is utilized between the Philippines and Taiwan in the context of the One-China policy and seeks to answer two key questions: How do the Philippines and Taiwan utilize soft power strategies to enhance their influence amidst the constraints imposed by the One China Policy? and how do the Philippines' stance on the One China policy and non-formal diplomatic engagements influence the bilateral soft power dynamics between Taiwan and the Philippines? Using Joseph Nye's idea of soft power, the study uses qualitative analysis of participants' responses from various fields and official communications between TECO and MECO. By examining the soft power interactions between the Philippines and Taiwan, this study adds knowledge to the multilateral complex relations of small regional states and giant global powers. This study also provides suggestions for improving soft power cooperation between these two nations, despite the challenges presented by the One-China Policy.

Keywords: Philippines; Taiwan; One-China policy; soft power

菲台軟實力動態與一中政策

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摘要

本研究探討菲律賓與台灣在軟實力方面的干預因素「一中政策」。儘管有此限制，兩國仍努力透過軟實力在全球範圍內增強彼此的影響力。本研究主要探討菲律賓與台灣在一中政策下如何運用軟實力，並嘗試回答兩個關鍵問題：菲律賓與台灣如何在一中政策的限制下運用軟實力策略來提升其影響力？以及菲律賓對一中政策的立場與非正式外交接觸如何影響台灣與菲律賓的雙邊軟實力動態？本研究運用約瑟夫·奈（**Joseph Nye**）的軟實力觀念，對來自不同領域的參與者回應，以及東協與經建會之間的官方溝通進行定性分析。透過檢視菲律賓與台灣之間的軟實力互動，本研究為區域小國與全球巨權的多邊複雜關係增添了知識。儘管面臨一個中國政策所帶來的挑戰，本研究也提供改善這兩個國家之間軟實力合作的建議。

關鍵字：菲律賓；台灣；一中政策；軟實力

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural Connections and Soft Power Dynamics

Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (R.O.C.) is the nearest country to the Philippines in proximity, as the distance between the northern tip of Luzon Island and Taiwan's southernmost point is around 250 kilometers (155 miles).¹ With regular air travel, the flight distance is only 90 minutes, and this close distance has facilitated historical and cultural connections between the two regions over the years that paved the way to showcase their soft power abilities.

Both countries regularly organize cultural exchange programs that display their respective traditions, arts, and cuisines. Universities and academic institutions in the Philippines and Taiwan often collaborate on research projects, student exchanges, and joint academic programs.² For instance, the Education Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in the Philippines (TECO), acting as Taiwan's de facto embassy, serves as the representative of the Taiwan Ministry of Education (MOE). Its primary goal is to enhance educational ties by offering top-notch support to scholars, students, and government officials between the Philippines and Taiwan. Another non-profit organization aimed at fostering education between the two countries is the Taiwan Education Center in the Philippines, which aligns its establishments with the trends of globalization and the increasing internationalization of education. Its primary objective is to address the demand among the residents in the Philippines for Mandarin language education.

In times of natural disasters and humanitarian crises, the Philippines and Taiwan have demonstrated “bayanihan” by providing mutual assistance and support. When the Philippines

¹ Island, Bubble Tea. 2023. “How Far Is Taiwan from the Philippines?” Bubble Tea Island. July 12, 2023. <https://bubbleteaisland.com/2023/07/12/how-far-is-taiwan-from-the-philippines/#:~:text=Taiwan%20and%20the%20Philippines%20share>.

² (“Taiwan in the Philippines-Education Division”)

suffered from severe landslides and floods on February 28 this year, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) donated USD 200,000 (NTD 6.32 million) in funds to be spent on humanitarian aid for the affected Filipino families.³ Furthermore, in December 2021, Super Typhoon Odette (Rai) caused extensive damage in the central and southern regions of the Philippines, resulting in a pressing need for assistance, and the government of Taiwan donated one hundred metric tons of urgently needed relief items to the Philippines. These actions of communal solidarity reflect the spirit of `bayanihan between Filipinos and Taiwanese.

The Philippines and Taiwan also share common ideals such as freedom, democracy, free media, the rule of law, civil society, and Austronesian culture. Furthermore, they have characteristics such as friendliness, optimism, courtesy, care, and hard work. These similarities serve as an advantage for both countries to practice their soft power abilities most effectively. Centuries ago, the Philippines played a significant role in introducing Taiwan to the world. Following the Spanish occupation of the Philippines in 1571 and the establishment of Manila as a trading hub, new trade routes were opened, bringing the two countries closer together. Moreover, Taiwan`s strategic location has long been a network of migration, commerce, and cultural interaction with the Philippines. With the latter experiencing robust and sustainable growth, its market has emerged as one of the most prosperous in the Southeast Asian region, ranking fifth according to the latest Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) on October 16, 2018.⁴ In 2021, the trade between Taiwan and the Philippines amounted to \$6.63 billion in investments across various areas such as economics, trade, investment, technology, agriculture, fisheries, law enforcement, labor affairs, tourism,

³ Chen, Kelvin. 2024. "Taiwan Donates NT\$6.32 Million to Philippines Following Severe Floods, Landslides | Taiwan News | Feb. 28, 2024 10:06." Taiwannews.com.tw. February 28, 2024. <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/5103900>.

⁴ ("Department of Budget and Management")

education, culture, and regular interactions between people.⁵ Consequently, the Philippines has been prioritized by Taiwan as the primary gateway to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries under the “New Southbound Policy” (NSP). The policy was formulated to lessen Taiwan's reliance on China and enhance its collaboration with other nations in response to economic coercion imposed by China in previous years.⁶ This policy was outlined after the dramatic shift in Philippine foreign policy in 1975 that favored the People's Republic of China and established the solid groundwork for the advancement of Beijing’s diplomatic ties with Manila. During the shift, the Philippines' strong economic ties with China, characterized by trade agreements and exchange of goods, contributed to its positive relationship with China, aligned with the One China Policy. This policy asserts the existence of a single Chinese government and prohibits countries with diplomatic relations with China from recognizing Taiwan's sovereignty. Taiwan has declared itself as a separate country from China, while China itself still considers Taiwan as part of a province under Chinese control. Although Taiwan's political status has caused the Philippine government not to officially recognize it diplomatically, Taiwan has managed to diffuse its soft power influence on the island. In recent years, Taipei's New Southbound Policy (NSP) has evolved as a natural progression of their enduring relationship.

Geopolitical Landscapes and the One China Policy

Despite their proximity, formal diplomatic relations remain limited due to the sensitive geopolitical dynamics surrounding Taiwan's status. This delicate balance requires both nations to navigate their relations with the eagerness to strengthen their ties more, mindful of broader regional changes. These two close neighbors, the Philippines, and Taiwan, will always have to be careful while building relationships due to the One China Policy.

⁵ (“Taipei Economic and Cultural Office”)

⁶ 新南向政策 a recalibrated foreign policy for states located southward from its location.

According to Facts Asia (2024), the One China Policy between the Philippines and China was established through a Joint Communiqué signed in 1975, following a United Nations resolution that recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the Republic of China or Taiwan. This policy acknowledges China's claim that Taiwan is part of its territory. However, it does not make a final decision on Taiwan's status or support any specific action by China. The Philippines commits to respecting this policy, refraining from unilateral decisions about Taiwan's status and not interfering in China's handling of Taiwan's issue unless compelled by international law or humanitarian concerns. This commitment was reaffirmed in a 2000 agreement. The Philippines has taken steps to uphold this policy, including banning officials from visiting Taiwan to ensure China's trust.⁷

But even before 1975, the Philippines and Taiwan had formal diplomatic connections.⁸ Nowadays, despite not having official relations, the Philippines maintains economic and cultural ties with Taiwan through the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) and is recognized by the Supreme Court, which facilitates unofficial relations between the two countries while adhering to the One China Policy. Economic exchanges between the Philippines and Taiwan have been extensive, with suggestions for increased investment from Taiwanese firms, particularly in agriculture. Since the two involved states do not have formal diplomatic ties, people might see both as rivals trying to become regional leaders. Based on the principles of soft power, such discussions neglect the definitions that claim soft power to be the act of influencing others through attraction, persuasion, and culture — as opposed to military might or monetary

⁷ Yusingco, LL.M, Michael Henry. 2024. "Revisiting the Philippines' One China Policy." F.A.C.T.S. February 1, 2024. <https://www.factsasia.org/blog/revisiting-the-philippines-one-china-policy>.

⁸ Galas, Jan Vincent. "Taiwan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) as Soft Power Instrument in the Philippines." In *Taiwan and Southeast Asia*, pp. 125-141. Routledge, 2023.

bribery. For many years now, the Philippines has recognized Taiwan's geographical proximity while maintaining the island nation at arm's length geopolitically. This has changed in the last few weeks, especially under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s administration.⁹ During the end of the Taiwan Presidential Election this year on January 13th, President Marcos Jr. congratulated President-elect Lai Ching Te on his election victory. This has enraged the People's Republic of China, telling the country "Not to play with fire". The President then apologized and reaffirmed once again its position on the One China policy. During the former presidency that took office in 2016, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's administration actively sought closer ties with China, which has influenced how people view the Philippines' stance on the "One-China" policy. This shift in foreign policy towards the People's Republic of China (PRC) has had political effects on Taiwan's diplomatic status internationally. In September 2017, Duterte openly accused criminal syndicates operating in Taiwan of supplying illegal drugs to the Philippines, while not mentioning other major suppliers like China.¹⁰ Due to this, recent shifts in political relations between Manila and Taipei have impacted Taiwanese perceptions of Filipinos. A survey by the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation in June 2018 ranked the Philippines as Taiwan's second "most hated" country, with 52.9 percent of respondents expressing negative views. This was surpassed only by North Korea with 70.9 percent. China came in third with 43.9 percent.

The Philippines sees Taiwan as a vital component in achieving a balanced and stable region and it is still attempting to navigate its international environment. It is crucial to have an

⁹ Joshua Bernard, Espena. 2023. "Evolving, Not Evading: The Philippines' National Security Policy and Its Strategic Calculus in Taiwan." Global Taiwan Institute. October 4, 2023. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/10/evolving-not-evading-the-philippines-national-security-policy-and-its-strategic-calculus-in-taiwan/>.

¹⁰ Mark, Manantan. 2019. "The Philippines and Taiwan: Partners for a Stable and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region?" Global Taiwan Institute. April 24, 2019. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2019/04/the-philippines-and-taiwan-partners-for-a-stable-and-prosperous-indo-pacific-region/>.

in-depth understanding of the soft power dynamics between the two nations, especially within the bounds imposed by the One-China policy to improve stronger bilateral relations and placements in the Asia-Pacific region.

Motivation

Seeing how Taiwan and the Philippines, even without official diplomatic ties and the latter's adherence to the One-China Policy that makes it tricky, continuously push people-to-people exchange is unprecedented. Since Taiwan and the Philippines are only 90 minutes away from each other, it is much easier and more convenient to execute bayanihan. The motivation for doing this research is because I want to understand how they are using soft power under this policy. There's not a lot of information about this topic in books and articles, so we want to fill that gap of how these counties push borders of limitations to rich their common goal of deepening their relations.. Understanding how these countries use soft power can help us understand how diplomacy works in Asia. People who make decisions about what countries do in Asia can learn from this research. This study will help not just academics but also policymakers and diplomats make better decisions.

Research Purpose

The main purpose of this research is to understand how soft power dynamics between the Philippines and Taiwan interplay amidst the principle of the One-China policy. Along with this, I also want to analyze the soft power strategies employed by the Philippines and Taiwan in the context of the One China Policy and examine how the Philippines' stance on the One-China Policy impacts bilateral relations between the country and Taiwan. Lastly, I want to provide

insights and recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to enhance soft power engagement between the Philippines and Taiwan without the presence of official diplomacy.

Research Questions

The One China Policy challenges the extent of the diplomatic affairs between Taiwan and the Philippines in terms of international recognition, diplomacy, and regional influence. Given this political backdrop, this research aims to explore the soft power dynamics between the Philippines and Taiwan. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the Philippines and Taiwan utilize soft power strategies to enhance their influence amidst the constraints imposed by the One China Policy?
2. How does the Philippines' stance on the One China policy influence the soft power dynamics between Taiwan and the Philippines?

Contribution

Taiwan, despite having only 12 diplomatic allies, still continues to build bilateral relationships with other countries that mostly favor the principle of the One-China policy. Since the Philippines is one of the countries on the list, understanding the soft power dynamics between it and Taiwan helps legislators, scholars, and practitioners in the international relations field and diplomacy. By examining how these two countries navigate the restrictions of the One China Policy while seeking to enhance their influence, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of regional dynamics in the Asia-Pacific. Additionally, it can also serve as a source of information on the diplomacy initiatives focused on strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation despite the political challenge between the Philippines and

Taiwan posed by the One-China policy, and the results of this study can provide relevant literature for future fellow researchers on how to formulate more effective soft power strategies in the context of complex geopolitical settings.

Limit

Many studies were not conducted around public opinion and perception surveys of the countries involved. Resource limitations, such as time and funding, also hinder further analyses. Barriers related to language can be a challenge, especially when it comes to accessing and interpreting sources in languages other than English or Tagalog. This may narrow down the study's scope and the thoroughness of its examination of soft power approaches and perspectives. The research is also constrained by the nature of the subject concerning regional tensions involving conflicts between the Philippines and China's maritime disputes as well as issues regarding Taiwan's sovereignty over its surrounding straits. Political sensitivities might hinder access to information and impact how openly interviewees share their thoughts, potentially influencing the analysis.

Delimits

The research focuses on sectors where soft power initiatives play a role, such, as cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and economic influence. It will also explore areas like education, or technology if they directly contribute to the strategies of the Philippines and Taiwan. The study examines soft power dynamics within the framework of the One China Policy. While recognizing its importance, the research does not aim to analyze the policy itself or its implications for relations beyond how it influences the soft power strategies of the Philippines

and Taiwan. The research is restricted to a qualitative examination of soft power approaches, mostly from official announcements, policy documents, and media sources. It excludes quantitative analysis of public opinion polls and media coverage, which may offer more insights but are outside the preview of this study

LITERATURE REVIEW

Taiwan and the Philippines continue to diffuse their soft powers on one another but their dynamics have long been barriered by the One-China policy. Ever since its imposition, both of the countries` soft power abilities, focusing on cultural, economic, and diplomatic relations have limited their dynamic extent. This literature review will layout past studies regarding how soft power dynamics between the Philippines and Taiwan interplay amidst the principle of One China policy.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was founded by the concept of soft power, popularized by Joseph Nye that refers to a country's ability to influence others through non-coercive means such as culture, political values, and foreign policies¹¹. This was particularly relevant in the context of the Philippines and Taiwan, as both countries have been actively seeking to increase their soft power influence in the Asia-Pacific region. Soft power theory was crucial in understanding the dynamics between China, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Soft power involves influencing others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. For small states like the Philippines, leveraging soft power was essential for navigating complex international relationships. According to Timilsana, small states can use soft power to achieve foreign policy objectives, despite their limited military and economic resources.¹² While there were various explanations for foreign policy behavior, it can generally be said that the influence

¹¹ Gilley, Bruce. "Middle Powers during Great Power Transitions." *International Journal*, vol. 66, 2011, pp. 245–264, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070201106600202>.

¹² Timilsana, Bishnu K. "Soft Power and Small States: A Theoretical Discussion." *Journal of Political Science*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2024, pp. 139–158.

of domestic politics was evident when foreign policy decisions were more causally linked to the state's "*political institutions, cultures, economic structures, or leadership goals*" rather than other factors.¹³

Robert Putnam offers the most widely accepted theory on how domestic factors impact foreign policy on "two-level game." Putnam's Two-Level Game Theory posits that international negotiations are conducted on two levels: the international level (Level I), where national governments negotiate with one another, and the domestic level (Level II), where governments seek ratification of agreements from their domestic constituents. This interplay between domestic and international politics sets the stage of understanding how soft power is influenced.

Indeed, compared to China which is a global power capable of standing on its own, Taiwan and the Philippines were relatively smaller states that need to rely on one another since they have geographical advantage when it comes to their strategic locations, roles in the First Island Chain, maritime security capabilities, and potential humanitarian and refugee concerns. These factors contribute to the importance of their bilateral relations and regional cooperation in maintaining stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. With this said, it can be implied that these countries have become dependent on one another. This claim was backed up by the concepts of interdependence and institutionalism. Interdependence referred to the mutual reliance between two parties, particularly evident in the context of commercial cooperation discussed earlier. This type of interdependence fostered collaboration between countries to pursue mutual benefits for their respective interests. When cooperation proves beneficial for both parties, they are incentivized to maintain their relationship, leading to a continuous and enduring

¹³ Fearon, James D. "Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations." *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1998, pp. 289–313.

bond. For instance, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) were key regional institutions that foster economic cooperation and integration among member states. Both the Philippines and Taiwan were part of these organizations, which provides a framework for them to engage in trade agreements, investment, and people-to-people exchanges. Aside from APEC and ASEAN, the Philippines and Taiwan have signed several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and investment agreements, which provide a legal framework for cooperation.¹⁴ These incentivize cooperation by creating a structured environment for dialogue, policy coordination, and mutual support. Over time, this ongoing interaction develops into a state of dependence, wherein both parties become reliant on each other for their well-being and survival especially in the context of One China Policy and its referral, China being the thing that Taiwan and the Philippines need to be one of the most careful with. With Beijing challenging Manila to abide by the “one-China” principle and avoid having the Taiwan-related issue undermine the larger picture of China-Philippines relations.

Two-Level Game Theory and the Triangulation of Manila, Taipei, and Beijing

Two-Level Game theory is particularly relevant in analyzing the diplomatic maneuvers of small states like the Philippines and Taiwan, which must balance external pressures from major powers like China with internal political, economic, and social considerations. At Level I, the Philippines’ adherence to the One-China policy represents its negotiation strategy on the international stage, aiming to maintain favorable relations with the PRC, a major economic partner and regional power. The diplomatic constraints imposed by this policy necessitate a careful balancing act. The Philippines engages with Taiwan through unofficial channels, such as

¹⁴ On 6 May 2024, Taiwan and the Philippines took a significant step forward in disaster management collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) in Taipei, to sustain economic and cultural ties without formal diplomatic recognition. At Level II, the Philippine government must address domestic interests, including the economic benefits derived from trade and investment with Taiwan and the welfare of the Filipino community in Taiwan. These domestic factors influence the government's approach at Level I, driving a pragmatic stance that seeks to maximize economic gains while avoiding political friction with the PRC. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP) exemplifies a Level I strategy aimed at strengthening ties with Southeast Asian nations, including the Philippines, through economic and cultural engagement rather than formal diplomacy. This strategy reflects a hedging approach against the PRC's influence, balancing economic interdependence with efforts to diversify Taiwan's international partnerships.

Taiwan as Barometer of the Philippine Foreign Policy Shifts

The Philippines has to navigate its foreign policy to maintain its economic ties with China while also recognizing the importance of its relationship with Taiwan (Wang et al., 2020). Amador (2024) said that today, Taiwan has a significant role in determining how the Philippines approaches China and the wider East Asian region in terms of foreign policy. However, under Marcos Jr. administration, a One China Policy policy is highly likely to be two-faced — one facing towards Beijing and another towards Taipei. This delicate balance has implications for the Philippines' ability to assert its soft power in the region, as it must consider the preferences of both China and Taiwan in its foreign policy decisions. Due to its strategic significance and conflict with the Mainland, Taiwan is an important benchmark to reevaluate the orientation of the Philippine foreign policy. The latter's increasing engagement in defense collaborations with Taiwan, as well as its supportive stance on Taiwan's inclusion in international forums, indicates a

positive direction towards strengthening alliances with democratic nations and counterbalancing China's regional influence.

Additionally, Taipei's signaling will be essential if it hopes the Philippines would take a more active part in enhancing the significance and prominence of the informal connections. It is entirely in the national interest of the Philippines to create an ad hoc Taiwan policy. The area as a whole should pay more attention to the special overlaps between Taiwan's efforts to protect its sovereignty and the Philippines' interest in maintaining regional stability. Testing China's "red line" might support Manila's status as a middle power in the region because the Philippines stands to gain from strengthened ties with Taiwan. The Philippines can withstand the highs and lows of China's diplomatic effort through Taiwan.

Philippines Taiwan Diplomatic Relations

A study describes the extent of Taiwan's soft power influence on the Philippines as promising as characterized by linkages and connections that are evident in education, business, tourism, and other kinds of people-to-people exchanges.¹⁵ However this degree of connection has limited geopolitical space that calls for reconstructing Taipei's strategic roadmap with Manila. One of the well-known soft powers of the Philippines is its diaspora, or the spreading of Filipinos across the globe along with their cultural practices and values. There is a significant Filipino community in Taiwan, comprising migrant workers who contribute to Taiwan's economy and send remittances back home. This demographic connection fosters people-to-people ties and enhances bilateral relations on a societal level. Additionally, Taiwan's democratic

¹⁵ Flores, Wilfredo. "Taiwan's Soft Power Influence on the Philippines: Education, Business, and Cultural Linkages." *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2023.

values resonate with many Filipinos, fostering a sense of shared political ideals and cultural affinity. Just in Taiwan alone, there are an estimated 180,000 number of Overseas Filipino Workers. As Taiwan's declining population may threaten their economic progress, this soft power puts a break on it because of Filipino manpower. On the other hand, Taiwan owns the largest semiconductor production in the world and this opportunity alone serves as a soft power for underemployed Filipinos. Taiwan's semiconductor sector faces an acute labor shortage, impacting its productivity and growth. This shortage has led to increased recruitment of foreign talent, particularly from Southeast Asia, to fill the gaps in the industry.¹⁶ Taiwan's NSP has led to increased recruitment of semiconductor professionals from the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries to address Taiwan's acute talent shortage in the industry.¹⁷¹⁸ The Taiwanese government and major semiconductor companies like ASE Technology Holding Co. and Powertech Technology Inc. have organized talent-seeking missions to the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam to recruit professionals for the domestic semiconductor industry. This initiative is part of Taiwan's efforts to address its labor shortage and maintain its competitive edge in the global semiconductor market.¹⁹ Among the aforementioned 180,000 Filipino workers in Taiwan, many of whom work in factories assembling semiconductors. This significant presence of Filipino labor in Taiwan's semiconductor industry highlights the importance of international labor migration in addressing labor shortages in high-tech sectors. The Philippines, on the other hand, has traditionally focused on mass unskilled labor, both domestically and exported. If the Philippines were to shift its focus to high-tech industries like semiconductors, it

¹⁶ “Labor Shortage in Taiwan’s Semiconductor Sector & the Vital Role of Southeast Asian Talents.” 2024. [www.linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/labor-shortage-taiwans-semiconductor-sector-vital-role-hc7mc). April 19, 2024. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/labor-shortage-taiwans-semiconductor-sector-vital-role-hc7mc>.

¹⁷ FocusTaiwan, January 14, 2024

¹⁸ 中華民國僑務委員會

¹⁹ FocusTaiwan, January 14, 2024

could potentially increase its exports and economic growth. However, this would require significant investments in education and training to develop the necessary skills and infrastructure.

Also, Taiwan's focus on educational exchanges and cultural programs aims to foster a positive image and build long-term relationships with the Filipino population. As Patriadi argues, soft power allows Taiwan to circumvent the diplomatic isolation imposed by the One-China policy and maintain its international presence through people-to-people connections and cultural diplomacy.²⁰ This strategy not only enhances mutual understanding but also lays the groundwork for stronger economic and social ties, further mitigating the diplomatic challenges posed by the One-China policy.

Following the signing of the Joint Communiqué in 1975, the Philippines formally recognized the One-China Policy, aligning itself with the PRC's stance on Taiwan's sovereignty. This diplomatic stance has constrained Taiwan's international standing and limited its ability to engage in official diplomatic exchanges with other countries. Initiatives such as cultural festivals, language programs, and educational exchanges have fostered positive perceptions of Taiwan among Filipinos, despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties. For example, the Taiwan Education Center in the Philippines, as mentioned in Chapter One serves as a platform for promoting Mandarin language learning and enhancing cultural exchanges between the two countries.²¹

²⁰ Patriadi, Hendri Budi. "Soft Power and Taiwan's New Southbound Policy." University of Jember, 2022.

²¹ Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Manila. "Public Opinion Survey on Taiwan-Philippines Relations." TECO Reports, 2020.

Philippine-Taiwan Economic Relations

Economic relations between the Philippines and Taiwan are robust, characterized by significant trade and investment. Taiwan is one of the Philippines' top trading partners, with bilateral trade reaching substantial figures annually. Taiwanese investments in the Philippines span various sectors, including electronics, manufacturing, and agriculture. The economic interactions are facilitated through non-diplomatic channels, emphasizing practical cooperation over political recognition.²² The economic dimension showcases how the Philippines navigates the One-China policy pragmatically, engaging in mutually beneficial economic activities with Taiwan while avoiding political complications with China. Bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$6.63 billion in 2021, reflecting the deepening economic ties between Taiwan and the Philippines. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP) has played a pivotal role in strengthening economic relations with ASEAN countries, including the Philippines, as part of Taiwan's strategy to diversify its economic partnerships. Taiwan's NSP can be seen as part of its hedging strategy against the PRC's growing influence. This strategy involves balancing and engagement elements to mitigate risks while maximizing opportunities. Taiwan's approach under the NSP focuses on creating bilateral partnerships through economic pragmatism and diversification, reflecting a nuanced response to the constraints imposed by the One-China policy . While formal diplomatic recognition of Taiwan remains elusive, informal channels of communication, such as the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO), have facilitated unofficial relations and cooperation between the two entities. Economic relations between the Philippines and Taiwan illustrate the interplay between Level I and Level II pressures based on

²² Wang, Hongying, and Yeh-chung Lu. "The Role of Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy." *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 17, no. 56, 2008, pp. 425–447.

the abovementioned Putnam Theory. Taiwan's investments in the Philippines and the employment of Filipino workers in Taiwan generate significant economic benefits, which are crucial domestic considerations (Level II). These economic ties are facilitated through pragmatic, unofficial engagements at Level I, where both parties avoid overt political statements that could jeopardize their broader diplomatic strategies. The literature underscores that while the One-China policy restricts formal diplomatic interactions, it does not entirely hinder economic cooperation. The economic pragmatism of the Philippines, which seeks to balance its relations with both the PRC and Taiwan, is a strategic response to the dual-level pressures identified by Putnam's theory.

A study examined the experiences of Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan, highlighting their generally positive perceptions of Taiwan's labor policies and societal integration efforts.²³ This study found that Filipino workers appreciate Taiwan's relatively higher wages and better working conditions compared to other destinations, which foster a sense of goodwill towards the Taiwanese government and people. Another survey conducted by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Manila revealed that many Filipinos view Taiwan favorably due to its democratic values, technological advancements, and educational opportunities. These perceptions are reinforced by Taiwan's active promotion of cultural and educational exchanges under its New Southbound Policy (NSP), which aims to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines.

Recent political developments have significantly influenced Taiwanese perceptions of the Philippines. The administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, known for its pivot towards China,

²³ Hsu, Ching, and Ping Chen. "Experiences of Filipino Migrant Workers in Taiwan." *Journal of Asian Labor Studies*, 2018.

initially caused some concern in Taiwan regarding the stability and direction of Philippine foreign policy. However, subsequent actions and statements from the Philippine government emphasizing the importance of economic and cultural ties with Taiwan have helped mitigate these concerns. I analyzed the impact of Duterte's administration on Taiwanese perceptions and found a mixed response. While there was apprehension about the Philippines' increasing alignment with China, Taiwan appreciated the Philippines' pragmatic approach in maintaining robust economic interactions and people-to-people ties. The study noted that Taiwan's NSP has played a crucial role in sustaining these positive perceptions by fostering deeper economic and cultural links despite the geopolitical tensions.

Literature agrees that the One-China policy's diplomatic constraints mean that the Philippines must navigate its relationship with Taiwan cautiously to avoid antagonizing the PRC, a major economic partner. This results in a complex diplomatic dance where official recognition is withheld, yet substantial economic and cultural exchanges occur unofficially. Fabry, in his paper about, `The Effect of 'One China' Policies of Foreign States on the International Status of Taiwan` argued that for Taiwan to be able to maintain its status quo, it must adhere to the notion of One-China Policy.²⁴ He added that the policy constitutes a global diplomatic framework that marginalizes Taiwan legally. However, since there is a lack of an agreed-upon One China policy, Taiwan, with its de facto independence, is still able to navigate internationally and diffuse its soft power. Hsieh refuted that even though Taiwan is facing diplomatic losses and the United Nation (UN) Resolution 2758, it must still be wary as the policy will still continue to pose renewed challenges with its international affairs particularly its notion to join UN-affiliated organizations.

²⁴ Fabry, Mikulas. "The Effect of 'One China' Policies of Foreign States on the International Status of Taiwan." *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2024, pp. 90–115, doi:10.1080/09592296.2024.2303855.

With this being said, TECO of Taiwan and MECO of the Philippines still update their people-to-people exchange avoiding the involvement of the internal government.

Timilsana discusses how the Philippines employs soft power to manage its international relations, using cultural diplomacy and economic pragmatism to maintain beneficial ties with both China and Taiwan. However, this balancing act is fraught with difficulties, particularly when geopolitical tensions between the PRC and Taiwan escalate, potentially putting the Philippines in a precarious position.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous opportunities for enhancing Philippine-Taiwan cooperation. Taiwan's NSP offers a framework for deepening economic, educational, and cultural exchanges, which can serve as a foundation for stronger bilateral relations. By focusing on areas such as technology transfer, higher education partnerships, and cultural exchange programs, the two sides can build a robust network of informal ties that transcend official diplomatic limitations. Wang and Lu emphasize the importance of leveraging these opportunities to create mutual benefits. For instance, Taiwan's technological expertise and the Philippines' growing market present opportunities for collaboration in sectors like information technology, agriculture, and healthcare. Educational exchanges and scholarships can also foster a generation of Filipinos with deep connections to Taiwan, further strengthening bilateral relations over the long term.

Empirical data on the economic impacts of bilateral trade and investment, as well as the role of non-state actors, would provide deeper insights into the relationship. Policy implications include the need for the Philippines to continue leveraging soft power and economic pragmatism to sustain beneficial relations with both China and Taiwan. Expanding educational and cultural

exchanges can build long-term goodwill and understanding, creating a stable foundation for continued cooperation despite geopolitical challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in this study, which explored the soft power dynamics between the Philippines and Taiwan amidst the constraints imposed by the One-China Policy. The methodology was qualitative and descriptive, informed by the literature review which emphasizes the effectiveness of qualitative approaches in capturing diplomatic and soft power interactions. This chapter detailed the research design, sources of data, locale of the study, population sampling, instrumentation and data collection procedures, data analysis tools, ethical considerations, limitations of the methodology, and the research timeline.

Research Design

The research design was qualitative and descriptive and was a good method for its suitability in exploring nuanced and context-specific phenomena such as soft power dynamics and diplomatic relations. This design enabled an in-depth understanding of how the Philippines and Taiwan utilized soft power strategies and how these were influenced by the One-China Policy. Qualitative methods were effective for this study as they allow the collection of detailed data that can provide information about the subjective experiences and perceptions of the participants. This design addressed the research questions by facilitating the exploration of soft power strategies through interviews and document analysis. This allowed for the examination of non-formal diplomatic engagements and their impact on bilateral relations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between policy constraints and soft power utilization. This study used thematic Nvivo software to conduct thematic analysis from the interview transcriptions which is further organized in a codebook.

Sources of Data

Data for this research paper included primary sources which were extracted from semi-structured interviews with students, scholars, and representatives from cultural and educational institutions in both the Philippines and Taiwan (refer to Appendix A). Also, analysis of official documents, policy papers, and reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations help added to draw the conclusion.

Locale of the Study

The primary setting of this study was in Taiwan. I preferred conducting purposive sampling in this area particularly in Kaohsiung City since my target participants who were both Taiwanese and Filipinos mostly resided here.

Population Sampling

The population for this study included Filipino students who were pursuing either Bachelor's or Master's Degrees and are individuals accepted and enrolled in Taiwan through the efforts of Philippine-Taiwan educational institutions. Additionally, experts in international relations, political science, and Asian studies with a focus on the Philippines and Taiwan were part of the target participants. Representatives from Cultural and Educational Institutions (TECO and MECO) were individuals engaged in soft power initiatives, such as cultural exchange programs and academic collaborations. *Purposive sampling* was used to select participants who were most knowledgeable and relevant to the research questions. The sample size was

determined based on the principle of saturation, where data collection continues until no new information or themes emerge.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Interview Guides, particularly semi-structured interview guides, were developed to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to explore relevant themes in depth. The guides were cover topics such as soft power strategies, the impact of the One-China Policy, and non-formal diplomatic engagements. The software Nvivo was used to set up a framework for analyzing documents to be established, focusing on identifying key themes and patterns related to soft power dynamics and policy constraints.

Validation of Instruments' Reliability and Validity

The instrument validation was conducted using the Questionnaire Validation Instrument for Undergraduate Qualitative Research to confirm the credibility and reliability of the questions. The questionnaire aimed to gather unbiased factual data within the given timeframe and distinguish between differing characteristics. Additionally, experts in international relations and qualitative research methods reviewed the instruments to further ensure their validity and reliability. To enhance the reliability of findings, multiple data sources, including interviews and documents were used for triangulation to cross-verify information.

Procedures for Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in-person and recorded with participant consent, and transcribed for analysis. Official documents and media publications were gathered from the official websites of TECO and MECO, reliable and truthful online media outlets, and involved

NGOs` platforms. Specific instances of soft power initiatives were selected and analyzed using direct observation, participant interviews, and secondary data.

Participants were selected based on their expertise, experience, and involvement in Philippine-Taiwan relations and soft power initiatives. Specific qualifications were considered to ensure the selection of highly knowledgeable and relevant individuals. These qualifications included their professional role, such as direct involvement in foreign policy, diplomatic relations, or participation in cultural and educational exchanges between the two nations. Additionally, participants must have a minimum of two years of relevant professional or academic experience to demonstrate a solid foundation in the field. Their experience highlighted significant contributions or engagements that provided them with a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. By selecting participants with these specific qualifications, the study aimed to ensure that the gathered insights and data were both credible and deeply informed.

Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis software package that can be used to perform thematic analysis chosen for its flexibility and effectiveness in handling complex datasets. It was utilized to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the qualitative data collected. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of diverse perspectives and experiences shared by participants, ensuring that key themes and underlying patterns were carefully identified and interpreted. Content frequency analysis, on the other hand, was employed to rigorously categorize and interpret textual data extracted from the interview transcription as well as from policy documents and media reports.

Thematic Analysis involved the systematic coding of interview transcripts to identify recurrent themes related to soft power strategies and the influence of the One-China Policy. This

method was particularly suited for uncovering underlying patterns and perspectives within qualitative data, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of how different soft power approaches are perceived and affected by geopolitical policies. Potential themes that may emerge include the effectiveness of various soft power initiatives like cultural exchanges and educational programs, challenges in their implementation, and the broader implications of the One-China Policy on bilateral relations and public perception. On the other hand, content frequency analysis systematically coded documents to identify key themes, narratives, and discourses surrounding Philippine-Taiwan relations. This approach enabled researchers to identify the important key themes providing a structured understanding of the prevailing narratives and discourses shaping bilateral relations. It was integral that these analytical approaches ensured a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of Philippine-Taiwan relations and soft power dynamics to generate useful insights and contribute to understanding of international relations.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were fully informed about the study, including its purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits, and their consents were obtained before participation. Confidentiality measures ensured that personal information and interview data remain confidential and anonymized in all aspects of the study's reporting and dissemination of findings. Voluntary participation was emphasized, allowing participants to withdraw at any time without facing any penalties or consequences. These ethical principles upheld the integrity of the research process, prioritizing participant rights and ensuring their comfort and security throughout the study. Wenzao Ursuline University of Language's Department of International Affairs under the conduct of this year's advisors and panelists ensured ethical considerations were met.

Limitations of the Methodology

Purposive sampling, while deliberate in selecting participants based on specific criteria, introduced sample bias as it relies on the researcher's judgment. This potentially limit the diversity of perspectives represented in the study, affecting the comprehensiveness of the findings. Moreover, findings from qualitative research posed challenges in terms of generalizability to broader contexts or populations beyond those directly studied. The contextual nature of qualitative data restricted the extent to which conclusions could be applied universally. Additionally, access to data presented another potential limitation, as difficulties in obtaining certain documents or reaching key informants constrained the breadth and depth of information collected. These limitations underscored the importance of acknowledging the scope and boundaries of the research, while also highlighting opportunities for transparency and careful interpretation of findings within their specific contexts.

Contextualization of findings was prioritized to clearly specify the applicability of research outcomes within their specific contexts. This involved providing detailed descriptions of the study's scope, participant characteristics, and contextual factors influencing the research findings. Building rapport with participants was emphasized to establish trust and facilitate open communication, thereby enhancing access to data and ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences. These strategies collectively aimed to strengthen the rigor and validity of the research, while also addressing potential limitations related to sampling bias, generalizability, and access to data.

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presented the qualitative analysis of the interview and document gathered from Chapter 3 data which were related to the soft power dynamics between the Philippines and Taiwan, examined within the constraints imposed by the One-China Policy. The primary purpose was to explore how the Philippines and Taiwan utilized soft power strategies to enhance mutual influence and maintain non-diplomatic connections. The analysis focused on themes that emerged from participants' responses, which largely are about cultural, educational and economic perspectives within the Philippines-Taiwan relationship. The findings are also linked to broader theoretical debates surrounding soft power, particularly as articulated by Joseph Nye, to provide more elaboration.

Data Preparation

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students, scholars and professionals from cultural and educational institutions. There are three sets of questions that correspond with the profession of the interviewees. The interviews were recorded with consent via phone voice recorder and then transcribed and translated to English verbatim. Transcriptions are necessary for the preservation of context and will allow detailed coding and thematic analysis.

After transcription, the data was coded using a codebook developed based on initial themes from the Nvivo software, literature review and emerging patterns during the preliminary reading of transcripts. These themes (refer to Appendix B) were then categorized by hashtags and were linked or synthesized after based on the participants' response. Codes such as

`economic partnership`, `cultural diplomacy`, and `One-China Policy impact` were applied. This process was helpful to distinguish the identification of key themes and subthemes.

Soft Power Utilization

To address research question one, the following subthemes laid out the strategies used by the Philippines and Taiwan to utilize soft power strategies to enhance their influence on one another amidst the threat imposed by the One-China Policy:

Cultural Diplomacy and People-to-People Exchange: This theme explored how cultural and educational initiatives served as powerful tools for strengthening perceptions of Taiwan and fostering mutual understanding between the two entities. Programs such as the *Taiwan Education Center* in Quezon City and language exchanges play essential roles. The Taiwan Education Center, for instance, promotes Taiwan's culture and educational opportunities while subtly counteracting political limitations. Participants discussed how exposure to Taiwanese culture and language positively influences Filipino students' perceptions of Taiwan, fostering a sense of connection and shared heritage.

One interviewee from an educational institution shared, "*Taiwan's focus on educational programs, like scholarships and Mandarin language classes, help build bridges that formal diplomacy cannot achieve.*" This resonated with Nye's concept of soft power, as the Taiwan Education Center builds goodwill and trust, thus subtly reshaping public perception in a way that formal diplomacy might not achieve under One-China Policy constraints. Programs that emphasize shared Austronesian heritage also reinforce bonds, fostering solidarity through cultural commonalities.

Economic Cooperation as Soft Power: Economic exchanges, particularly in labor, trade, and investment, function as a robust foundation for Philippine-Taiwan relations. Participants consistently said that Taiwan's semiconductor industry, the TSMC and the high demand for Filipino labor both benefit the countries. Even though diplomatic limitation exists, these economic exchanges allowed for sustained engagement and provided mutual advantages that transcend political barriers. Some responses from the interviewees showed interest in lifting economic soft power by establishing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and exploring Taiwan's technological advancements, particularly in semiconductors, as a way to deepen ties without direct government involvement. A participant from the labor sector said, "*There are a high number of Filipinos here in Taiwan, mostly factory workers and domestic helpers, and there are many Taiwanese who come to the Philippines to study English.*" This ongoing exchange creates a meaningful relationship where Filipino workers help contribute to Taiwan's economy, and Taiwan gives educational and economic opportunities for Filipinos. Although the relationship is generally positive, it challenged labor rights discrepancies which reveal a potential area for tension, illustrating the complexity within economic cooperation. Here, we see how Nye's theory of soft power underscores the importance of this economic engagement, as it maintains positive relations without formal diplomacy.

Philippines Adherence to One-China Policy: Adherence to the One-China Policy presents a significant diplomatic constraint, limiting the formal relationship between the Philippines and Taiwan. Because of this, economic and cultural exchanges were mainly facilitated through informal channels, such as the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO), which act as de facto bodies. These offices bridged the gap between governmental and non-state actors to support continued

engagement within the bounds of existing diplomatic agreements. *“Adhering to the One-China Policy limits our ability to officially recognize Taiwan,”* an interviewee noted, *“yet our economic and cultural ties are stronger than ever.”* This interview showed us the reality that Taiwan and the Philippines maintain an “unofficial” relationship, leveraging non-state actors and cultural programs to sustain connectivity and alignment. This reflected Nye’s argument that soft power relies on attractive cultural and economic influence, even in the absence of formal recognition. Participants also highlighted how the One China policy complicates relationships between the Philippines, Taiwan, and China. They noted its influence on government-to-government interactions, as well as the constraints it places on international collaborations and agreements. Majority recognized that soft power initiatives, particularly in culture, education, and economic ties, are impacted by the One China policy, as direct engagement between Philippine and Taiwanese entities faces political barriers.

MECO and TECO Representatives: MECO and TECO were very important in maintaining the informal diplomatic relationship between Taiwan and the Philippines as they facilitate economic cooperation and cultural exchanges that bypass formal diplomatic recognition. Representatives from these organizations often address Filipino students` and workers' needs directly, and they helped offer services that smooths the cultural and economic transitions in Taiwan. For example, MECO and TECO actively supported Filipino workers through the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO). They assisted in labor issues, helping Filipino workers navigate Taiwan’s labor market where rights may vary significantly from the Philippines. Filipino students in Taiwan also relied on these representatives to address issues related to visas, health insurance, and educational support. Using Putnam’s theory for more understanding, MECO and TECO negotiated between Taiwan’s policies and the Philippines'

interests, seeking resolutions that maintained diplomatic alignment while addressing domestic concerns of citizens abroad. This dual focus highlighted their role in sustaining economic cooperation and protecting the welfare of Filipino citizens, a central element of soft power. However, MECO and TECO representatives noted the challenge of balancing advocacy for workers' rights with Taiwan's economic demands, creating a tension within economic cooperation that requires careful negotiation. I concluded that Nye's soft power theory was evident in MECO and TECO's influence strategy, where support for Filipino workers' welfare and educational opportunities builds good bayanihan and strengthens Taiwan's image among Filipinos. In this manner, it contributed to a positive image of Taiwan, helping the host country by building a cooperative, productive workforce and strengthening the Philippines-Taiwan relationship at a grassroots level. The support offered by these representatives, while informal, contributes to an enduring form of people-centered diplomacy that reinforces economic ties and cultural rapport.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs played a crucial role in people-to-people connections by helping to promote cultural exchanges and educational collaborations. Unlike MECO and TECO, NGOs operated in less politically sensitive spaces, allowing them to advocate openly for Filipino workers' needs and address their challenges without direct political implications. Some NGO interviewee, the Mandaluyong Edu-Connect Org and Edu-Connect Association of Southeast Asian Nations facilitated informal connections between Taiwanese and Filipino communities, often through scholarship programs and educational tours. Edu-Connect has had hundreds of delegations coming to Taiwan for a city learning tour. It has partnerships all over Taiwan like the Linhai Industrial Park and other southern taiwan universities. These initiatives provided Filipino workers especially the students, access to Taiwan's educational and

cultural resources, which, in turn, raises awareness and appreciation for Taiwanese society. Taiwanian Initiative, Growth Corridor, IUSR projects, and UP Kaohsiung Office are also some of the startups that Edu-Connect has started. One interview is a graduate student in Shu-Te University and has started a joint business called Ing Stingless Bee. It is a Philippine company that is based in Taiwan and they help offer job opportunities to either nationality. We can see here that soft power operates through the lens of education and cultural familiarity. By facilitating educational opportunities and cultural exchange, NGOs help uplift Taiwan's image as an inclusive and supportive partner, as per Nye's theory principle. This insight was very important for Filipino workers who faced cultural and economic adjustment issues in Taiwan; by fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual respect, these NGO-led programs address Filipino workers' needs while promoting Taiwan's cultural and educational values abroad. Additionally, these exchanges empowered Filipino workers to become cultural ambassadors, sharing their experiences and perceptions with their home communities, further strengthening soft power on a transnational level.

Academic Institutions and Scholars: One important subthemes of this research paper was the academic partnerships between universities, such as Kaohsiung Medical University and the University of the Philippines which provided platforms for Filipino and Taiwanese scholars to collaborate on topics like regional security, cultural diplomacy, and economic development. Additionally, the DongHwa National University in Hualien City and National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology have offered scholarships waivers to some participants involved. This academic engagement helped enhance intellectual exchange that bypassed governmental constraints, giving Filipino scholars and students chance to contribute to and benefit from Taiwan's educational sector. But, participants highlighted concerns regarding

inequalities faced by Filipino workers in academia, such as limited support for lower-income students and workers in educational roles and discrimination due to skin color. One interviewee told me that she had a hard time finding job in Taiwan because of her nationality and this posed another factor that is not included in this study. This, however, reveals a wall within economic cooperation: while academic institutions foster intellectual ties, barriers to equitable access remain a concern. Academic exchange as a form of soft power was paralleled with Nye's principle that influence was boosted by intellectual collaboration and mutual understanding. Researchers from the University of the Philippines were conducting in joint research and student exchange programs, one which was held this year on November 27th. On the other hand, Taiwan extended its cultural influence and enhanced its academic prestige by reinforcing its status as a regional partner in education. For Filipino scholars, these exchanges were opportunities to strengthen their professional networks and advocate for the welfare of Filipino workers in Taiwan, using research to propose actionable solutions. Such interactions powers Taiwan's soft power by positioning it as a supporter of academic freedom and development, reinforcing the notion of Taiwan as a valuable and sympathetic partner to the Philippines.

Taiwan Education Center's Role

The Taiwan Education Center especially the ones in Manila and Quezon City were very important in strengthening Taiwan image in the Philippines through its providing access for Taiwanese language and cultural programs. Programs offered by the TEC, such as Mandarin language courses, scholarships and educational workshops cater to Filipino students and professionals with an interest in East Asian languages and cultures. Through this engagement, the younger Filipinos were not only acquainted with Taiwan but also nurtured genuine interest in

the country which generated goodwill amongst future leaders, scholars and advocates (of the Philippines) as well. Besides fostering Taiwan's culture, the TEC effort through its language programs also acted as a counterbalance to Mainland China's growing influence in the region. More than merely an educational resource, the TEC promotes cultural commonality, linking Austronesian ancestry and historical connections between Taiwan and the Philippines.

Austronesian programs, for instance, sound an echo familiar to both Filipino and Taiwanese indigenous sensibilities: a shared heritage that create kinship. Such a heritage project follows the soft power theory by Nye, creating a narrative that highlights cultural similarity as well as bilateral respect preservation and bolstering Taiwan's position in the eyes of global public within an area where official diplomatic acknowledgment is difficult. Students and participants who engage in TEC programs frequently report having a deeper understanding and appreciation of Taiwanese society, which they share with families and friends thus slowly shaping the perception of Filipino people towards Taiwan.

In addition to TEC, other cultural programs like the Taiwan Cultural Festival and institutional partnerships between Taiwanese and Filipino entities bolstered culture diplomacy through localized outreach. The holding of events such as the Taiwan Cultural Festival wherein Taiwanese films, traditional music, and food were showcased in Manila allows Filipinos to see firsthand the rich diversity of Taiwanese culture. It all built an emotional bond when Filipinos also integrate into these traditions and customs of the Taiwanese which eventually brings a sense of togetherness as well as respect towards each other. In addition, Filipino-Taiwanese university collaborations serve as venues for cultural exchange; conducting collaborative research; and pursuing academic dialogues. Taiwanese universities also regularly invited Filipino students to

enroll in immersion programs through which they could immerse themselves in the society and education of Taiwan.

Impact of the Philippines` Stance on One-China Policy

Now to address research question number two, there are contextual factors influencing the Philippines and Taiwan`s soft power dynamics:

Domestic Political Climate in the Philippines and Taiwan: How soft power strategies are applied is highly dependent on the internal political climate of respective countries. As an illustration, the transition from Duterte to Marcos Jr. leadership in the Philippines resulted in adjustments of foreign policy focus on Taiwan and potential stake for engagement. Likewise, a different administration in Taiwan can affect its relations with the Philippines. A few respondents also raised issues about the need for more balanced and mutually beneficial partnerships with Taiwan, as well its dependence on superpowers such as the US and China. China's reaction to any perceived deviation from the One-China Policy remains a major contextual factor. Participants highlighted that even minor gestures, such as when the current Philippine President Marcos Jr. congratulatory messages to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te can trigger strong reactions from Beijing which could complicate the Philippine government balancing act.

The One-China policy necessitates the use of non-state actors to bypass diplomatic limitations and this strategy aligns with the theory of soft power stating these initiatives can serve as a substitute for formal diplomacy in a constrained international environment. There are some changes in policies and leadership in either the Philippines and Taiwan that can cause significant shifts in soft power dynamics. An interview from the Public Administration

department noted that Taiwan's New Southbound Policy has played a vital role in molding its engagement with the Philippines, while the latter's foreign policy orientation towards China also indirectly impacts its relations with Taiwan. The constraints imposed by the One-China Policy is now given and non-state actors such as the Ing Stingsless Bee, Edu-Connect and Mandaluyong Org, above mentioned academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations have taken on an elaborated role in sustaining and even deepening bilateral relations. These actors operate through informal channels that allow for greater flexibility and creativity in engagement. Participants emphasized the importance of these media in maintaining soft power dynamics and highlighted the role of non-governmental diplomacy in bridging gaps left by formal diplomatic restrictions.

Findings Interpretation

The qualitative analysis revealed three central key themes, which was also mentioned above. Each theme intersects uniquely within the geopolitical landscape shaped by the One-China Policy. This first key theme is cultural diplomacy and people-to-people exchange which is seen as a significant aspect of the soft power strategies used by the Philippines and Taiwan. Educational programs were frequently cited by participants as effective tools in promoting mutual understanding. This study found out that these initiatives are important in building informal diplomatic relations, especially in the case of Taiwan and the Philippines where One-China Policy restricts official diplomacy. For example, the Taiwan Education Center Quezon City, Philippines was noted for its contributions to improving public perception and fostering a sense of shared heritage. Secondly, economic ties are central to Philippine-Taiwan relationship and it functions as a non-formal way of engagement that bypasses the restrictions under the

policy of One-China rule. This research highlighted that trade, investment and labor exchanges are important in maintaining robust bilateral relations. This is a firm emphasis by participant responses on the crucial role of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), which supports Filipino workers and acts as a bridge between the two countries. Moreover, sectors such as technology, specifically the semiconductor industry of Taiwan, were recognized as key areas where both nations benefit mutually, showcasing a pragmatic approach to soft power. Lastly, despite the strong cultural and economic relations, formal diplomatic interactions are hampered by the Philippines` adherence to the One-China Policy that limits the extent to which both nations can collaborate on governmental levels. Interviewees from local government units frequently expressed frustration over the limitations imposed by the said policy, which complicates efforts to pursue more structured and official engagements. This underscored a fundamental tension in the Philippines and Taiwan where they strive to maintain strong connection without violating international agreements.

While the majority of the interviewees viewed the abovementioned key themes as positive, there are still contradictions. Some interviewees from the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) expressed divergent views on the One-China Policy, mentioning that it is an unnecessary constraint and most of their operations are not held back by it. While local government unit participants firmly expressed its significance in maintaining regional stability as well as to avoid conflict with the mainland which might stress further constraints if continuous neglect is seen. Furthermore, a few interviewees from the labor sectors expressed concerns about the perceived inequities in economic relations, particularly in terms of labor rights and protection for Filipino workers in Taiwan. There is no doubt that Philippine-Taiwan economic ties are

strong but there are still undercurrents of dissatisfaction that could impact the long-term sustainability of the two countries' bilateral relations.

The qualitative analysis presented in this chapter shows that even though there are geopolitical complexities imposed by the One-China Policy, the Philippines and Taiwan have successfully developed a relationship centered on cultural and economic exchanges. The major themes illustrate how both nations navigate the limitations of formal diplomacy through strategic use of soft power. The research shows that cultural diplomacy initiatives, such as educational programs and people-to-people exchanges are effective in maintaining positive public perception and fostering mutual understanding. Similarly, economic cooperation, particularly in labor and technology sectors, provides a solid foundation for bilateral relations. However, the One-China policy remains a significant barrier to formal diplomatic engagement, highlighting the importance of informal channels, and non-state actors in sustaining the relationship. The insight from participants' responses underscores the need for a nuanced approach to diplomacy, one that leverages soft power to overcome political constraints. As the study moves to Chapter 5, the focus will shift to synthesizing these findings into concrete recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders. This will include strategies for strengthening soft power initiatives, addressing contradictions and potentially reimagining the role of informal diplomacy in the context of the Philippines-Taiwan relationship. The final chapter will also discuss the broader implications of these findings for regional diplomacy and international relations

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research paper focuses on the central question on how the Philippines and Taiwan maneuver their soft power relations with one another in the context of One-China policy. Despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations, both countries continue to engage with each other through cultural, educational and economic exchanges. This paper aims to investigate the strategies these nations use to enhance their influence in the constrained environment, particularly by exploring non-formal diplomatic affairs and their impacts on bilateral relations. Key findings extracted from the research reveal that cultural diplomacy plays a central role in maintaining the relationship of the Philippines and Taiwan and this aligns with Joseph Nye's concept of soft power proving non-coercive methods such as culture, education are valuable tools in international relations. A study of Patriadi have noted that Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP) strategically utilizes cultural diplomacy for sustainable relations with southeast asian countries like the Philippines²⁵. This study expands on this idea with the aforementioned cultural programs such as Mandarin education and Edu-Connect city learning tours that allow both countries to deepen ties outside formal channels. However, another major finding is the strong presence of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Taiwan and Taiwan's reliance on Filipino labor in key industries such as caretaking and semiconductor that enhanced the economic cooperation of the two nations. This result confirms the work of Flores which suggests that Taiwan's soft power influence on the Philippines is robust²⁶ and emphasized the importance of pragmatic economic engagement as a cornerstone of soft power, particularly when formal diplomatic recognition is absent. Another point is the emphasis the study found on One-China

²⁵ Patriadi, H. (2022). Soft Power and Taiwan's New Southbound Policy. Retrieved from https://taiwanfellowship.ncl.edu.tw/files/scholar_publish/2217-mecakqgjymffsbr.pdf

²⁶ Flores, Wilfredo. "Taiwan's Soft Power Influence on the Philippines: Education, Business, and Cultural Linkages." *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 2023.

Policy which is widely discussed in the study of Fabry who argued that this policy globally marginalizes Taiwan and limits formal diplomacy. It will remain a critical barrier to deepening bilateral ties of Taipei and Manila thus relying on no other choice than informal channels. However, this presents a paradox: while it allows both nations to bypass the diplomatic barrier, it also reinforces their political dependency on One-China policy.²⁷ Lastly, when it comes to soft power agents, the research revealed that non-state actors like non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and cultural associations are important in sustaining relations between the two entities. Gilley suggested that small states like Taiwan often rely on non-state actors to exercise soft power influence when formal engagements are not viable.²⁸ This study adds depth by pointing out how MECO and TECO facilitate people-to-people exchanges and contribute to economic and cultural relations.

To address the research questions of this study, findings show that both the Philippines and Taiwan mainly use non-state actors or people-to-people exchanges for cultural diplomacy and economic cooperations to utilize and enhance their soft power influence amidst the constraints imposed by One-China policy. Examples included both countries' de facto embassies, MECO and TECO, academic institutions such as the Open University of the Philippines and Kaohsiung Medical University, and non-governmental organizations like the Edu-Connect South East Asian Nations and Mandaluyong Edu-Connect Scholars. The reliance on informal, non-state driven channels supports literature's perspective that cultural and economic affairs can effectively sustain international relations without formal diplomacy. The second research question of this study asked about how the Philippines' stance on the One China

²⁷ this reliance challenges conventional understanding of state power and highlights innovative ways in which they navigate geopolitical constraints.

²⁸ Gilley, Bruce. "Middle Powers during Great Power Transitions." *International Journal*, vol. 66, 2011, pp. 245–264.

policy influenced its soft power dynamics with Taiwan. Indeed, the former's adherence to the policy limits diplomatic bilateral relations however it paradoxically enhances the importance of non-formal channels such as the aforementioned people-to-people cultural and economic exchanges and NGO-led activities. The One-China policy necessitates the use of non-state actors to bypass diplomatic limitations and this strategy aligns with the theory of soft power stating these initiatives can serve as a substitute for formal diplomacy in a constrained international environment. This finding demonstrates that while this strategy enables to build relations, the hurdles imposed by One-China policy also create underlying tensions and emphasizes the need to continuously adapt newer balancing acts to navigate Mainland China's influence while maintaining positive hands with Taiwan.

To wrap up this research, the succeeding parts are suggestions and recommendations for experts such as policymakers and researchers that aim to strengthen bilateral relations under One-China policy while utilizing the best out of existing soft power strategies. First, MECO and TECO could explore additional partnerships at the grassroots level to provide joint initiatives. A practical recommendation for this is to establish a Philippine-Taiwan Collaborative Innovation Center, jointly managed by the two informal channels to coordinate more cultural diplomacy efforts, workforce training in high demand fields and shared humanitarian response initiatives. Theoretically, this center could serve as a model for `informal diplomacy hubs` in regions where formal diplomacy is restricted. Policymakers in the government could establish a formal mechanism to support non-state actors in their roles by establishing a coordinating body for NGOs and others allowing them to align their objectives more effectively and contribute strategically to deepening Taiwan and the Philippines relations. Finally, some participants recommended using futures thinking and foresight frameworks to study the potential impacts of

the One China policy on Philippine-Taiwan relations. This approach was suggested as it allowed researchers to create scenarios and project possible outcomes based on current trends. For future researchers, they could conduct comparative studies among countries with limited formal diplomacy on one another and analyze which are maintaining better relations and what soft power strategies they used without hampering outside imposed policies. Then, they can recommend this to the Philippines and Taiwan to solidify their relations.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This appendix contains three sets of interview questionnaires for three groups of participants chosen by purposive sampling. Each set of questionnaires contains five questions of varying angles. The interview aimed to gather information on the participants' perception on Philippine-Taiwan bilateral relations.

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses will provide valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding Philippine-Taiwan bilateral relations.

This interview will cover your work/study experience, your views on bilateral relations between the Philippines and Taiwan, and your overall satisfaction. Your responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

Participant Background

1. Can you please tell me a little about yourself?

- (Probe: Age, gender, nationality, current occupation or field of study, duration of stay in Taiwan/Philippines)

For Local Government Units (LGUs):

1. Awareness and Impact - How does your local government unit understand and navigate the implications of the One-China Policy on its international relations, particularly with Taiwan?
2. Soft Power Strategies: - Can you provide specific examples of programs or initiatives your LGU has implemented to foster cultural, educational, or economic exchanges with Taiwan, despite the constraints of the One-China Policy?

3. Local Government Role- What role do local government-sponsored events (e.g., cultural festivals, trade fairs) play in enhancing the Philippines' soft power influence with Taiwan?
4. Challenges - What are the main challenges your LGU faces in maintaining or enhancing soft power relations with Taiwan under the One-China Policy?
5. Collaboration - How does your LGU collaborate with other local government units and the national government to navigate the One-China Policy while engaging with Taiwan?

For Bachelor Students/Researchers:

1. Knowledge and Perception - How familiar are you with the One-China Policy and its impact on the Philippines-Taiwan relations?
2. Research Focus - What specific aspects of the Philippines-Taiwan soft power dynamics do you find most intriguing or worthy of further research?
3. Application of Theory - How do you think Joseph Nye's concept of soft power applies to the Philippines' and Taiwan's efforts to enhance their influence globally?
4. Methodological Recommendations - What methodologies would you recommend for studying the impact of the One-China Policy on the bilateral relations between the Philippines and Taiwan?
5. Future Directions - How can academic research contribute to improving the soft power relations between the Philippines and Taiwan?

For Non-Government Organizations (NGOs):

1. Engagement- How does your organization engage with stakeholders in Taiwan to promote cultural, educational, or social initiatives?

2. Impact of One-China Policy - In what ways has the One-China Policy influenced your organization's ability to collaborate with Taiwanese counterparts?
3. Challenges - What challenges does your organization face when working on projects involving Taiwan, considering the One-China Policy?
4. Strategies - How does your organization navigate these challenges to maintain effective collaboration with Taiwanese entities?
5. Role of NGOs - How can non-government organizations like yours contribute to strengthening the soft power dynamics between the Philippines and Taiwan?

APPENDIX B

Table 1. Result of conducting thematic analysis from the interviewees

Theme	Codes/ Key phrases	Hashtags
Awareness of the One-China Policy	One China policy, policy awareness, international relations, political impact, Philippines-Taiwan relations	#OneChinaPolicy, #PolicyAwareness, #InternationalRelations, #PoliticalImpact, #PhilippinesTaiwanRelations
Economic Relations	Economic engagement, business partnership, SMEs, investments, trade relations, Philippines-Taiwan economy	#EconomicEngagement, #BusinessPartnership, #SMEs, #Investments, #TradeRelations, #PhilippinesTaiwanEconomy
Cultural Exchange	Cultural soft power, cultural exchange, art and education, East Asian culture, Philippine diaspora, Taiwanese culture	#CulturalSoftPower, #CulturalExchange, #ArtAndEducation, #EastAsianCulture, #PhilippineDiaspora, #TaiwaneseCulture
Technological Collaboration	Technological advancement, semiconductors, AI, innovation, tech partnership, Taiwan technology	#TechEngagement, #TechnologicalAdvancement, #Semiconductors, #AI, #Innovation, #TechPartnership, #TaiwanTechnology
Diplomatic and Political Constraints	Diplomatic challenges, political constraints, Philippines-China relations, Philippines-Taiwan diplomacy, government policy, international diplomacy	#DiplomaticChallenges, #PoliticalConstraints, #PhilippinesChinaRelations, #PhilippinesTaiwanDiplomacy, #GovernmentPolicy, #InternationalDiplomacy

The table lists five main themes that emerge from the interview data: Awareness of the One China Policy, Economic Relations, Cultural Exchange, Technological Collaboration, and Diplomatic and Political Constraints. Each of the themes reflects a different concern in the dynamics of Philippines-Taiwan relations in the context of One China policy. As an example,

Awareness emphasizes participants' understanding of the policy and political impacts, while Economic Relations denotes business partnerships, SME collaborations and trade resilience even amid geopolitical conflicts.

Awareness of the One-China Policy keywords and hashtags:

One China policy: The central concept being discussed.

Policy awareness: Highlights the respondents' understanding or lack thereof regarding the policy.

International relations: Explores the effects on diplomatic ties between countries.

Political impact: Reflects how political actions and decisions are influenced by the policy.

Philippines-Taiwan relations: Directly addresses the bilateral relationship and its nuances.

#OneChinaPolicy: Tracks discussions centered on the policy itself.

#PolicyAwareness: Captures levels of understanding among individuals and groups.

#InternationalRelations: Highlights the global diplomatic context.

#PoliticalImpact: Focuses on the political ramifications.

#PhilippinesTaiwanRelations: Summarizes impacts on the specific bilateral relationship.

APPENDIX C

Table 2. Result of the word frequency analysis for the relevant codes of the interview transcription.

Code	Frequency
Philippine-Taiwan relations	31
Soft power	54
One-China policy impact	37
Cultural diplomacy	55
Economic partnership	44

From the interview transcription, the phrases on the table were words that were most frequently spoken by the interviewees. Questions related on the topic made them come up with ideas and answers from the research questions. Cultural diplomacy, which was spoken about fifty-five times helped me to narrow down the data I need for my analysis section. While the coding frequency method was a useful tool to specifying and making sure that my participants are on track, it did not really provide direct answers for my research questions.

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