



PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND TAIWAN: A SUCCESSFUL BRIDGING TOOL?

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the causal and correlational dynamics of parliamentary diplomacy between Malaysia and Taiwan within the context of non-state low-asymmetric relations and against the background of the One China Policy. The article reveals that while formal diplomatic relations are constrained, both have utilised parliamentary diplomacy to foster bilateral economic and cultural exchanges, and even political exchanges, thereby, enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation. Through a qualitative analysis of parliamentary debates and official statements, this article found that Taiwan's parliamentary diplomacy prompted Malaysian parliamentarians to express solidarity with Taiwan. The different cases demonstrated either causal or correlational relationships in the interactions. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on the role of parliamentary diplomacy in international relations, suggesting that it can serve as a strategic bridging tool for countries navigating complex geopolitical landscapes.

Keywords: Malaysia-Taiwan relations, parliamentary diplomacy, Dewan Rakyat, One China Policy, foreign policy

INTRODUCTION

When Malaya attained independence in 1957, the Malayan government chose not to follow Britain's policy of recognising the People's Republic of China in 1950. Instead, it opted to remain neutral on the issue of China's dual representation. In November 1964, the Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the Taipei authority) established a consulate office in Kuala Lumpur, which was upgraded to a Consulate-General in 1969. This Consulate-General was dissolved after Kuala Lumpur established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the Beijing government) in May 1974. Since then, the One China Policy has become Malaysia's cardinal foreign policy concerning China and Taiwan.

The termination of consular relations did not signify the end of bilateral relations between Malaysia and Taiwan. To maintain economic relations and avoid violating the One China Policy, both parties decided to establish unofficial ties (Chen 2002). From the 1960s to the 1980s, both Malaysia and Taiwan endeavoured to develop their economies. The rapid industrialisation and modernisation of Taiwan's economy led to its recognition as a "Little Asian Dragon", a term

coined by Vogel (1993: 13), marking it as the first of the smaller Asian economies to achieve an industrial breakthrough. On the other hand, Malaysia experienced its worst racial riots on 13 May 1969. The tragedy not only shattered social trust between the Malay and Chinese communities but also severely disrupted economic development. As a result of the tragedy, Malaysia implemented the New Economic Policy in 1971, aimed at restructuring social wealth and promoting domestic industrialisation (Jomo 2016). In this context, Taiwan sought to leverage its newfound economic capabilities to expand its political influence in non-diplomatic countries, while Malaysia actively pursued Taiwanese investments and looked to emulate the successful economic development models of the Little Asian Dragon.

Despite the constraints imposed by the One China Policy on interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan, both sides found room to manoeuvre. While political interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan are prohibited by the One China Policy, “there is no obstacle for individual Malaysians to travel to Taiwan, conduct personal affairs, engage in trade, or conduct other general business matters” (Parliament of Malaysia 1974: 1706–1796). In short, people-to-people exchanges and economic cooperation are permitted under the policy. To a certain extent, Malaysian national and state leaders are also allowed to visit Taiwan in a personal capacity and in a low-profile manner.

In July 1988, then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad visited Taiwan secretly. In response to a parliamentary question, then-Foreign Minister Abu Hassan bin Haji Omar stated that Wisma Putra had no record of Mahathir’s visit to Taiwan (Parliament of Malaysia 1988a). Additionally, then-Deputy Foreign Minister Abdullah Fadzil bin Che Wan informed the parliament that Mahathir did make a private visit to Taipei to promote Malaysia to Taiwanese investors. He said that:

The visit was conducted without publicity to avoid speculation based on the One China Policy adhered to by the government. It is important to emphasise that the Malaysian government recognises Taiwan as part of the People’s Republic of China. Regarding this matter, I would also like to clarify that based on the understanding reached with the People’s Republic of China in 1974, there are no provisions restricting Malaysia from maintaining friendly relations at the people-to-people level and engaging in trade and economic activities that do not involve official diplomatic relations. The Honourable Member is undoubtedly aware that the Chinese government does not oppose our stance. (Parliament of Malaysia 1988b: 5932–5933)

Given the strong emphasis on economic aspects in Malaysia-Taiwan bilateral relations, scholars have predominantly focused on this dimension (Chow 1996; Ku 2000; Yeoh et al. 2018; Soon 2023). However, this narrow focus fails to capture the full scope of their bilateral relations. Given that Taiwan and Malaysia have different needs and limited opportunities to advance their diplomatic relationship, parliament, often overlooked by the academic community, has emerged as an important indirect channel for both sides to maintain communication. However, it was Taiwan that has been more actively utilising parliamentary diplomacy to gain support from Malaysian parliamentarians. Interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan via parliamentary channels are described as parliamentary diplomacy (*Central News Agency* 2024). In light of this, parliamentary interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan raise several key questions that have not been addressed by scholars: What is parliamentary diplomacy between Malaysia and Taiwan? How has the initiative of Taiwanese parliamentary diplomacy influenced the behaviour of Malaysian parliamentarians?

Apart from addressing the research questions, this study argues that parliamentary diplomacy has been instrumental in sustaining political interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan, despite

the limitations imposed by the One China Policy. It has also become a successful bridging tool for Taiwan to exert influence on Malaysian political elites. This article selected the post-Cold War period (1991–2020) as the analytical time framework because this was when Taiwan significantly increased its investments in Malaysia, resulting in steadily increasing interactions between both sides (Ku 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parliamentary Diplomacy

The literature on parliamentary diplomacy is extensive regarding its practices in the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) but is limited when it comes to Southeast Asia. This literature review will cover two main themes: the definition of parliamentary diplomacy and its practice in Malaysia and Taiwan.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), parliamentary diplomacy is considered an element of parliamentary cooperation, which includes parliamentary diplomacy, interparliamentary cooperation, and technical cooperation (Hamilton 2010). Beetham (2006: 172–173) explains that:

A diplomat is an envoy of the executive branch and represents the positions of the State. Members of parliament, however, are politicians who hold political beliefs which may or may not coincide with their respective country's official position on any given issue. This allows parliamentarians a margin of flexibility that is denied to the diplomat. They tend to bring a moral dimension to international politics that transcends narrow definitions of the national interest, particularly in their principled support for democracy and human rights. Time and again, we have seen that this flexibility allows parliamentarians to debate more openly with their counterparts from other countries and to advance innovative solutions to what may seem to be intractable problems.

Beetham (2006: 173; 175) further contends that “parliamentary diplomacy is used to promote political dialogue during conflicts in neighbouring countries and within their region” and that it does not need to be an interaction “exclusively between parliamentarians. It can also entail members of parliament visiting a country for meetings with authorities and entities to consult in solving conflicts and problems”. However, Beetham's focus on conflict resolution may not be entirely suitable for the interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan because both countries are not in conflict.

Stavridis (2002) tracked the evolution of parliamentary diplomacy and opined that international parliamentary activities could consist of:

MPs' missions abroad and participation in transnational parliamentary bodies; visits by other MPs and parliamentary delegations to parliaments and other institutions (national or transnational); questions (written and oral), reports, and other studies on foreign affairs that take place within a parliamentary body; the activities of transnational parliamentary bodies; and parliamentary participation in the monitoring of elections in third countries.

Parliamentary diplomacy is not a supplement or an alternative to governmental diplomacy because parliamentarians from different political parties often adopt foreign policy lines that differ from the official stance (Stavridis 2002). In a later work, Stavridis and Jančić (2017: 6) defined parliamentary diplomacy as:

Individual or collective action by parliamentarians aimed at catalysing, facilitating and strengthening the existing constitutional functions of parliaments through dialogues between peers on countless open policy questions across continents and levels of governance.

Meanwhile, de Boer and Weisglas (2007: 93–94) defined parliamentary diplomacy as:

The full range of international activities undertaken by parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between countries, to assist each other in improving the control of governments and the representation of a people, and to increase the democratic legitimacy of inter-governmental institutions.

Enhancing democracy and the constitutional functions of parliament are their main concerns, but this focus differs from the scope of this article.

Sabic and Huang (2021: 22–23), who have extensively investigated Taiwan’s parliamentary outreach, defined parliamentary diplomacy as “activities of parliamentarians as well as other actors that engage with other parliamentarians at all levels of international cooperation”. For them, a person must be democratically elected to be regarded as a parliamentarian. They opined that:

An actor in parliamentary diplomacy can thus be an individual, a national parliament, or any type of international parliamentary institution, as well as any individuals and institutions from the executive branch, such as a president, a prime minister, or a ministry responsible for foreign affairs... (interactions between actors can take) many different shapes and forms. They can meet, regardless of their status (it does not matter whether these actors are from universally recognised or non-recognised states), in order to identify mutual problems and seek solutions to them by using advocacy, persuasion, negotiations and so on. (Sabic and Huang 2021: 22–23)

Nevertheless, the effort of foreign scholars limiting the definition of a parliamentarian to a democratically elected representative is too narrow and unsuitable for the Malaysian case because all the Senators of Malaysia are not elected representatives; they are either appointed by the King or State Legislative Assemblies. Domestically, then Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat (2018–2020), Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof (2020a: 169–170), contended that the Speaker has been tasked with performing second-level diplomacy and was:

[e]xpected to maintain contact and relations of comity with foreign ambassadors and legislatures, and promote and strengthen the formation of friendship groups between the Malaysian Parliament and foreign legislatures. By convention, the Speaker is the ex officio chairman of the friendship groups.

Md Yusof (2019: 3) acknowledged that:

[a]s state-to-state diplomacy is not always effective or successful, “parlomacy” may be an innovative means to defuse crises and build political trust over the longer term. Parliamentarians can intervene in areas that traditional diplomats cannot venture into.

The incumbent Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, Johari Abdul, has different views on this matter. For him, parliamentary diplomacy means that parliament takes responsibility for supporting any effort taken by the executive branch in foreign affairs, such as helping the prime minister explain certain issues to foreign leaders (*Bernama* 2023). However, the late Mutang Tagal, President of the Dewan Negara (Senate), did not echo Johari Abdul’s opinion. For him, parliamentary diplomacy involved interactions between Malaysian parliamentarians and foreign guests, allowing

parliamentarians to collaborate on legislation and framework initiatives addressing global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, human rights, and trade. By sharing knowledge and expertise, parliamentarians could develop more informed, comprehensive solutions to complex issues and assist in the process of scrutinising, reviewing, and considering legislation in the Dewan Negara, as well as developing inter-parliamentary and international relations as a whole (Parliament of Malaysia 2024). From the Malaysian Foreign Ministry's perspective, parliamentary diplomacy means upholding the interests of the country, and parliamentarians are often invited to join the Malaysian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly to highlight Malaysian positions and interests during networking sessions (Parliament of Malaysia 2007). The statements by Mohamad Ariff, Johari Abdul, and Mutang Tagal are insufficient to illustrate the full picture of parliamentary diplomacy. An empirical examination is needed to fulfil this task. The next section will focus on discussing how parliamentary diplomacy is practised in Taiwan and Malaysia.

Parliamentary Diplomacy in Taiwan

In terms of Taiwanese case studies, significant literature by Xin (2005), Shih (2008), Lin (2010), Lin (2019), Sabic and Huang (2021), and Diao and Zhou (2023) has focused on interactions between Taiwan and the US, Japan, and European countries. Several key features emerged from these studies: the US, Japan, and the EU are more advanced than Taiwan in terms of national power, technology, and international influence. Consequently, Taiwan has looked to these countries for assistance in diplomatic recognition, technology, military support, and financial aid. The non-state relations between Taiwan and these countries are asymmetric, with Taiwan in a significantly disadvantaged position. Similarly, the non-state relations between Taiwan and Malaysia are also asymmetric. However, Taiwan enjoys advantages in military, technology, and financial aspects, except for diplomatic recognition. In simple terms, Taiwan has low asymmetric relations with Malaysia, while it has high asymmetric relations with its key allies. This article will be the first to analyse the low non-state asymmetric relations between Malaysia and Taiwan.

In Taiwan, the National Assembly, Legislative Yuan and Control Yuan are collectively referred to as Parliament. This body is responsible for supervising the executive branch in implementing administrative orders and participating in the decision-making of domestic and foreign policies. Among these, the Legislative Yuan holds the authority to decide on declarations of war, peace agreements, treaties, and other significant national matters. According to the constitution, the conclusion of treaties and declarations of war must be proposed by the Executive Yuan and approved by the Legislative Yuan. If the Legislative Yuan disagrees with the major policies of the Executive Yuan, it can resolve to request changes. This constitutional provision grants the Parliament authority over foreign policy, making parliamentary diplomacy an integral part of Taiwanese diplomatic efforts to counter the Beijing government's containment policy. Interactions between parliamentarians can compensate for the lack of official exchanges, and the formulation and implementation of foreign policies in democratic countries are greatly influenced by the Parliament. Strengthening interactions between parliamentarians can help enhance national interests (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1988).

Sabic and Huang (2021) pointed out that parliamentary diplomacy was not monopolised by the Legislative Yuan alone; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the President of Taiwan were also key players, working together in an institutional triangle relationship. More precisely, the President formulated foreign policy and collaborated with the President of the Legislative Yuan through the Foreign Ministry. Uniquely, the Foreign Ministry established the Office of Parliamentary Affairs, which comprises the Parliamentarian Liaison Section and the Parliamentary Service

Section, to prepare activities for parliamentarians and work with the heads of committees and leaders of friendship groups in the Legislative Yuan. This unusual arrangement resulted from Taiwan's international status as a poorly recognised and unrepresented state, necessitating collaboration between the executive and legislative branches to ensure the successful execution of parliamentary diplomacy (Sabic and Huang 2021).

Regarding the objectives of parliamentary diplomacy practised by Taiwan, then President of the Legislative Yuan (2016–2020), Su Jia-chyuan, stated that parliamentary diplomacy has become a window of opportunity to break through the diplomatic isolation imposed by the Beijing government on Taiwan's non-diplomatic allies. The Legislative Yuan can influence other parliaments to table motions or bills urging their executive authorities and governments to speak out for Taiwan. Case studies have shown that by visiting foreign parliamentary friendship groups and parliamentarians, Taiwanese parliamentarians have managed to persuade foreign parliaments to show solidarity with Taiwan. By inviting foreign parliamentarians to visit Taiwan, those from countries practising a cabinet system may serve as ministers in the future. After visiting Taiwan, they will learn more about the country and become its best spokespersons (Su 2018). Notably, Lin (2010) argued that foreign parliamentarians giving parliamentary speeches and cosponsoring bills are also important actions practised by parliamentarians to articulate their positions and influence their counterparts. Lin (2010) suggested that these parliamentary speeches should be examined according to their content to evaluate their influence on parliamentary behaviour.

According to Wang Jin-pyng, then President of the Legislative Yuan (1999–2016), Taiwanese parliamentary diplomacy consisted of four components: the reception of foreign dignitaries, overseas visits, participation in international organisations' meetings, and the establishment of bilateral parliamentary liaison committees (*Legislative Yuan Newsletter* 2010). However, Lin (2019) explained that Taiwanese parliamentary diplomacy was conducted in seven forms: (1) engaging foreign parliamentarians and dignitaries in Parliament; (2) receiving foreign parliamentarians and dignitaries; (3) overseas visits; (4) inviting foreign leaders and speakers to address Parliament; (5) participating in international organisations; (6) establishing bilateral parliamentary liaison committees; and (7) conferring the Medal of Honour for parliamentary diplomacy to foreign dignitaries. Notably, the involvement of the President and the Foreign Ministry in parliamentary diplomacy, as well as the conferment of the parliamentary diplomacy medal, are unique features.

Parliamentary Diplomacy in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the Parliament consists of the Dewan Rakyat, Dewan Negara, and the King. Although the formulation of foreign policy is a prerogative of the executive branch as stipulated under the federal constitution, Parliament can still exert its constitutional influence by tabling and voting down on motions or bills related to foreign policy. Historically, foreign affairs have been a focus area for the Malaysian Parliament. Between 1959 and 2019, parliamentarians tabled 11 substantive motions, 23 adjournment motions, 1 subsidiary motion, and 37 adjournment speeches related to foreign affairs (Lam 2023).

In analysing interactions between Malaysian parliamentarians and foreign affairs, Tam (2020) contended that bipartisan parliamentarians often formed cross-party caucuses and friendship groups to influence government policy. Notably, the Malaysian Pro-Democracy Myanmar MPs Caucus and the parliamentary caucus on the Trans-Pacific Partnership were established to show solidarity with the oppressed people of Myanmar and to scrutinise the multilateral trade pact,

respectively. According to Tam (2020), the Malaysian friendship groups are cross-party and organise meetings and exchange visits to foster better understanding and relations with other parliaments. As there were no standing orders governing the conduct of these groups, activities were often conducted in an informal setting, allowing members to “articulate their views on issues that directly affect the people and communities even in difficult contexts or when discussing sensitive issues” (Tam 2020: 399). Additionally, Malaysian parliamentarians actively participated in international parliamentary organisations, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, and Asian-Pacific Parliamentarians’ Union, to assert Malaysian positions on international platforms. As of July 2024, there were nine Malaysian parliamentary friendship groups formed to improve ties with parliaments from Southeast Asia, East Asia, South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, Europe, America, Oceania, and Africa (Parliament of Malaysia 2023).

Notably, while these works highlight the growing importance of parliamentary diplomacy, they did not investigate parliamentary diplomacy between Taiwan and Malaysia, one of the influential ASEAN countries. Furthermore, although there is literature on the Taiwanese case by Western, Chinese, and Taiwanese academics, the Malaysian practice has not been studied. As a result, this represents a significant gap awaiting scholarly attention. An elaboration of the conceptual framework is provided in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

Conceptualising Parliamentary Diplomacy between Malaysia and Taiwan

After Kuala Lumpur revoked consular relations with Taiwan in 1974, the Malaysian Friendship and Trade Centre and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office continued non-political interactions, such as economic, cultural, agricultural, educational, and technical cooperation. Certainly, Taiwan desired more interactions with Malaysia, including political engagements. Compared to engagements between the executives, parliamentary engagements are considered less provocative to the Beijing government. This is because Beijing understands that the formulation and execution of foreign policy is a prerogative of the executive authority of Malaysia, and parliamentarians are not able to alter foreign policy. In the Malaysian context, parliamentarians consist of frontbenchers and backbenchers. The former holds executive office, while the latter focuses solely on legislation. It is understood that the One China Policy applies to the frontbenchers, who are not allowed to engage with Taiwanese officers in an official capacity, while the backbenchers are not bound by this policy. In essence, parliamentary diplomacy, which is political engagement in nature, serves as a bridge between both sides. The interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan are illustrated in Figure 1, showing that bilateral interactions are isolated by the One China Policy.

Parliamentary diplomacy with Taiwan was conducted in a very careful and low-profile manner in Malaysia. Although the Legislative Yuan records show notable bilateral exchanges between both sides, Malaysian official parliamentary records do not reflect this. For example, the Taiwanese record shows then Vice President of Legislative Yuan, Hung Hsiu-chu and Foreign and National Defence Committee members visited the Malaysian Parliament on 8 April 2013, but it was not reflected in the Malaysian parliamentary record (*The Parliament Quarterly* 2013a). However, reflections on Taiwan’s visits by Malaysian parliamentarians can still be noted during floor debates. By cross-referencing Taiwan and Malaysian parliamentary records, one can observe the interactions of parliamentary diplomacy that took place between both sides.

This article suggests that the behaviour of Malaysian parliamentarians might be influenced by visits to Taiwan at the invitation of Taipei authorities. Since Taiwan is economically and technologically more advanced than Malaysia, it is expected that Malaysian parliamentarians would advocate for learning from Taiwan's successful models, ranging from technology to agriculture. Parliamentarians who sympathise with Taiwan might question the rationale behind Malaysia's One China Policy. Additionally, if a parliamentarian subscribes to Taiwan's influence, they may accuse China of being provocative in the region. However, it is important to note that not all parliamentarians who have visited Taiwan would exhibit such behaviours, and those who have not visited Taiwan might also display similar behaviours. Other variables, such as personal preferences or external factors, might contribute to the outcome, but the article does not include them. The behaviour of Malaysian parliamentarians is considered the dependent variable, while visits to Taiwan conducted under bilateral parliamentary diplomacy is the independent variable (as shown in Figure 1).

Generally, the terms "Parliament" and "Parliamentarian" refer to Malaysian federal and state legislative authorities, as well as lawmakers from the Dewan Rakyat, Dewan Negara, state legislative assemblies, and lawmakers from the Republic of China's Legislative Yuan. Specifically, "Member of Parliament (MP)" is a dedicated term for the Dewan Rakyat, "Senator" for the Dewan Negara, and "State Assemblyperson" for the State Legislative Assembly.

There are several parliamentary procedures that enable Malaysian parliamentarians to exert their influence. Among these, tabling or voting down motions and bills are the most substantial actions for parliamentarians, while giving parliamentary speeches is considered less effective. The importance and conduct of parliamentary questions, debates, motions, bills, and petitions will be examined as follows.

First, parliamentary questioning is described by Balakrishnan (2020: 275) as "an instrumental device in advancing the oversight function of legislatures" that can compel "information from the government on its policy positions and administrative actions." If deployed judiciously with or against the right ministers in the right circumstances, parties can assert their ownership of, or advantage in, particular policy issues (Balakrishnan 2020). In the Dewan Rakyat, a parliamentarian is allowed to table ten oral and five written questions to relevant ministers during every parliamentary sitting.

Second, joining floor debates or giving speeches is sometimes regarded by certain parties as mere rhetoric. However, some parliamentarians deliver speeches or intervene in floor debates "to highlight perceived flaws in government policy and to offer suggestions to improve a bill" and "use parliamentary speeches to attract media attention and to promote their preferred policy positions to the public" (Proksch and Slapin 2015: 6). The desired outcomes for parliamentarians are twofold:

First, debate may affect policy outcomes as MPs try to persuade colleagues of the superiority of their position or present new policy alternatives; second, speech allows MPs to stake out a position and communicate it to their parties and to voters...(parliamentary debates) include a careful consideration of all policy alternatives, broad participation, and careful reasoning to arrive at a consensus, (with the hope that) their speeches change the minds of their colleagues. (Proksch and Slapin 2015: 20)

Third, although rarely used, parliamentary petitions are a powerful tool for "introducing subjects from outside the House and could be used for obstructing other kinds of business", according to Erskine May (2024), the Westminster parliamentary democracy bible. In the context of the

Dewan Rakyat, each parliamentarian is allowed to read out a petition if granted permission by the Speaker, but no voting will be conducted on the petition (Smith and Balakrishnan 2021).

Fourth, there are two types of motions: substantive and subsidiary motions. Substantive motions “contain a self-contained proposal on a substantive question (and not on ancillary or procedural matters) that is drafted to express a decision or opinion of the House” (Smith and Balakrishnan 2021: xiv). Subsidiary motions “are essentially procedural and dependent on either other motions or the order of business of the day”, and do not solicit a decision or opinion of the House (Md Yusof 2020b). Fifth, every Malaysian parliamentarian is entitled to table a private member’s bill. If the parliamentarian is granted leave by the house, the bill will enter legislative proceedings and become law once it has passed all legislative processes (Hamzah 2020). Sixth, besides seeking to pass motions, bills, or petitions, parliamentarians can exert their influence by voting down government motions or bills. If the government wants to avoid having its motion or bill voted down, it will cooperate or negotiate with non-government parliamentarians to secure enough votes. By the Westminster convention, if the government of the day loses its supply bill, it should tender its resignation or dissolve parliament (Elder 2018).

In summary, if a parliamentarian wants to show solidarity with Taiwan, they can table a motion, a private member’s bill, or a petition in the Dewan Rakyat, as well as ask parliamentary questions and give speeches. Among other actions, theoretically, if a parliamentary motion or private member’s bill that defies the One China Policy is passed in either or both houses, it will break the One China Policy. This is illustrated by the two red arrows in Figure 1.

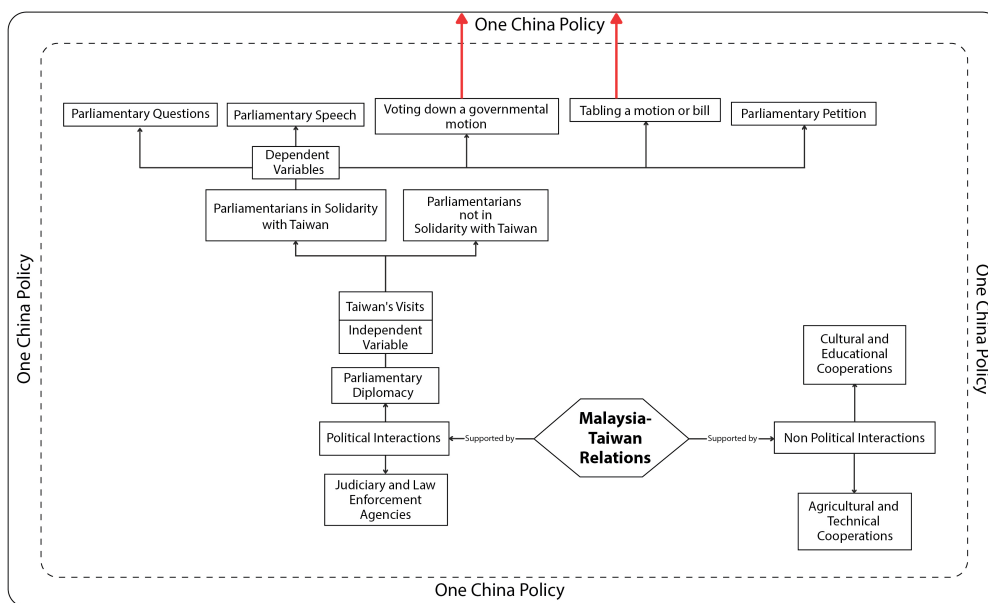


Figure 1: The political and non-political interactions between Malaysia and Taiwan.

It is important to clarify that throughout the period from 1991 to 2023, several key events related to Taiwan, such as the recognition of Taiwanese tertiary certifications, investments, and industrial pollution caused by Taiwanese firms, gained significant attention from parliamentarians. Since these three issues relate to domestic vernacular education movements, normal foreign direct investment, and environmental concerns, the article decided to exclude them from the investigation to focus on analysing political and foreign affairs-related issues.

Correspondingly, information from the official records of the Legislative Yuan and the Malaysian Parliament was collected. This information was cross-referenced and analysed with the *Penyata Rasmi* (Hansards) of the Dewan Rakyat. And, a qualitative interpretation of the cross-referenced information was conducted in line with the research questions.

RESULTS

The first finding is that Taiwan's Legislative Yuan established an Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association between Taiwan and Malaysian parliamentarians from 2009 to 2024. This is part of the Legislative Yuan's traditional practice to consolidate and improve communication between Taiwan and foreign parties (Legislative Yuan 2024). The original name of the association included the Republic of China, but after the Democratic Progressive Party assumed the presidential office in 2016, the pro-independence authority substituted the Republic of China with Taiwan to highlight localism. The incumbent Chair of the association, Lo Mei-ling, is a former Malaysian who grew up in Malacca. Lo stated that the association is committed to enhancing bilateral understanding and deepening economic, educational and cultural exchanges and cooperation between Malaysia and Taiwan (*Central News Agency* 2024). Yet, Malaysia has not established a similar parliamentary group reciprocally (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1: Taiwan and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association

Establishing date	Taiwan and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association	Chair
20 February 2024	Taiwan and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association	Lo Mei-ling
13 March 2020	Taiwan and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association	Chung Chia-pin
20 May 2016	Taiwan and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association	Hsiao Bi-khim
13 April 2012	Republic of China and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association	Hsu Shao-ping
12 January 2009	Republic of China and Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association	Chu Fong-chi

Sources: Compilation of data from *The Foreign Relations Yearbooks 2009–2018, Republic of China* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1988–2018), *The Parliament Quarterly* (2000–2016) and *Legislative Yuan Newsletter* (2010).

The second finding is that although no Medal of Honour for Parliamentary Diplomacy has been conferred on any Malaysian parliamentarian, two different awards have been given by separate authorities. In March 2016, the MP for Bintulu, Tiong King Sing, was conferred the Friendship Medal of Diplomacy by the Foreign Ministry. In 2021, the Speaker of the Pulau Pinang State Legislative Assembly, Law Choo Kiang, received the Distinguished Taiwan Alumni Award from Taiwan's Ministry of Education (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia 2021). Although this was not an initiative of the Foreign Ministry, it is considered part of parliamentary diplomacy because Law was awarded in his capacity as Speaker.

The third finding is Malaysian parliamentarians have been consistently invited by the Taipei authorities to visit Taiwan, as illustrated in Table 2. According to Taiwanese records, members of the Dewan Rakyat, Dewan Negara, and State Legislative Assemblies have visited the Legislative Yuan. Notably, then Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, Mohamed Zahir Ismail and Deputy Speaker Ong Tee Keat as well as Speakers of the State Legislative Assemblies from Selangor and Pulau Pinang were distinguished parliamentarians invited by the Taipei authorities to visit Taiwan.

It is important to note that not all Malaysian parliamentarians were invited to visit the Legislative Yuan; some were invited to visit the executive branch, attend international or domestic events organised by central or local authorities in Taiwan. For instance, then MP for Sri Aman, Jimmy Donald Lim, was invited to attend the 2003 International Austronesian Conference, while then Senator Pok Mok Hua and Tan Cheng Tee were invited to attend the inauguration of President Chen Shui-bian in 2004 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003; Office of the President Republic of China 2004).

The article categorises the visits of Malaysian parliamentarians according to their political party affiliations and the number of visits per parliamentarian, as shown in Figure 2 and Table 2. From 1992 to 2023, the results indicate that United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) parliamentarians were the most frequent visitors, followed by those from the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), Malaysian People's Movement Party (GERAKAN), People's Justice Party (PKR), Sarawak Peoples' Party (PRS), United Progressive Kinabalu Organisation (UPKO), Sarawak United Bumiputera Heritage Party (PBB), Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), United Sabah Party (PBS), and Sarawak United Peoples' Party (SUPP).

UMNO, being the dominant ruling party in Malaysia, naturally had the highest number of visits. MCA, as the second dominant party, is a Chinese ethnic-based party with historical connections to the Kuomintang, making it logical that their parliamentarians were also frequently invited by Taiwan. Secondly, it can be inferred that upholding democracy or ideology was not Taiwan's primary concern. UMNO and MCA, which formed the backbone of Barisan Nasional (National Front Party) that ruled Malaysia from 1957 to 2018, were known for their authoritarian governance (Nadzri 2018). Instead, Taiwan practised pragmatism by engaging with political elites who had significant influence over the ruling parties at the time. Thirdly, DAP, known for its democratic struggle (Khoo 2003), ranked third. It is noteworthy that the multiracial DAP is actually a Chinese ethnic-dominated party. Taiwan's invitations to DAP may have been motivated by solidarity with democracy advocates and ethnic considerations. Lastly, the Taiwanese authorities invited nearly all key political parties to visit Taiwan, although there was a greater emphasis on the ruling parties compared to the opposition (as shown in Figure 2).

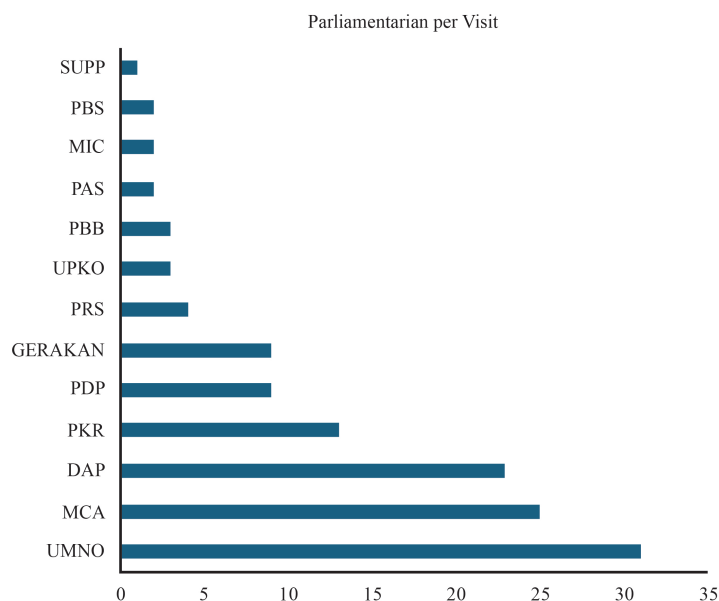


Figure 2: Parliamentarian per visit to Taiwan.

The fourth finding pertains to the responses of Malaysian parliamentarians. Those who had visited Taiwan exhibited three behaviours: (1) they mentioned their visit experiences and urged the government to learn from Taiwan's successful experiences; (2) they simply urged the government to learn without mentioning their visits; (3) they did not mention either Taiwan's visit or successful experiences at all (as shown in Tables 2 and 3). By cross-referencing the records of the Legislative Yuan and Dewan Rakyat, Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar, Robert Lau Hoi Chew, M. Kulasegaran, Tan Kee Kwong, and Rozman bin Isli have been empirical examples of parliamentarians who mentioned their visits to Taiwan and urged the government to learn from Taiwan's successful models. Liang Teck Meng, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Tan Yee Kew, and Wilfred Madius Tangau, who also visited Taiwan, urged learning from Taiwan without mentioning their visits.

Several parliamentarians went further to question the One China Policy practised by the Malaysian government. Ahmad Husni commented, "China and Taiwan are two sovereign states. Despite China regarding Taiwan as part of China and treating each other as enemies..." (Parliament of Malaysia 2002c: 52). When debating the amendment to the Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution) Act 1994, Wan Junaidi remarked that Taiwan was not a state and part of China but a disputed territory because China could not represent Taiwan in dealing with international maritime pollution management and claims: "In such a situation, perhaps we can say that Taiwan is a state" (Parliament of Malaysia 2005: 41).

Among Malaysian parliamentarians, Tiong King Sing was the most outspoken and frequently visited Taiwan. His frequent visits to Taiwan may be explained by his role as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to East Asia from 2014 to 2018, and to China from 2020 to 2022, under the administrations of Najib Razak, Muhyiddin Yassin, and Ismail Sabri. During a floor debate session on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, while acknowledging the One China Policy, he urged his colleagues and the government to recognise the importance of robust economic collaboration with Taiwan (Parliament of Malaysia 2015b). Tiong remarked that in matters of boosting economic collaboration with Taiwan:

We cannot keep on mentioning the One China Policy every day. The One China Policy is confined to politics. Our country is working on economic efforts; please don't involve the One China Policy and turn it into politics. (Parliament of Malaysia 2015b: 30)

Furthermore, Tiong utilised the parliamentary questioning process to support Taiwan's economic outreach to Malaysia. On 18 November 2014, he was granted the opportunity to ask the first parliamentary question regarding the plan and progress of forming the Economic Cooperation Agreement (ECA) for investors and entrepreneurs from Malaysia and Taiwan. The Minister of the day answered Tiong's question in detail. On 29 October 2015, Tiong asked a parliamentary question related to the operational details of foreign banks in Malaysia. In a supplementary question, he asked the Deputy Finance Minister why Taiwan was not allowed to establish a bank in Malaysia to facilitate bilateral investment. He commented that Malaysia should inform China that the One China Policy should be confined to the political sphere and should not obstruct Taiwan's banks from operating in Malaysia (Parliament of Malaysia 2015d: 16–17). A month later, Taiwan's CTBC Bank established an office in Kuala Lumpur (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia 2015). Additionally, Tiong urged the government to learn from Taiwan's successful agricultural model during a floor debate on 18 March 2014. His question drew the attention of then Agricultural Minister Ismail Sabri, who responded on 26 March 2014 that Malaysia would consider Tiong's suggestion. Due to Tiong's outspoken solidarity efforts, he was awarded a Friendship Medal of Diplomacy by Taiwan's Foreign Ministry in March 2016.

Additionally, Nur Jazlan and Azmin Ali were the parliamentarians who highlighted the threat posed by China's military modernisation and expansion. Nur Jazlan made his parliamentary comments on 27 March 2006, while Taiwanese records indicate that he was received by the President of the Legislative Yuan, Chiang Pin-kung, on 5 May 2005. Azmin Ali pointed out China's military threat on 16 March 2015, but Taiwanese records show that he visited Taiwan on 27 April 2017 (Legislative Yuan 2017). In the first case, the chronological order suggests that Nur Jazlan might have been influenced by Taiwan, whereas the second case's timeline does not suggest such an influence (as shown in Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: Malaysian parliamentarians' visits to Legislative Yuan or Taiwan, 1994–2023

Year	Date	Malaysian parliamentarians' visits to Taiwan Legislative Yuan/Taiwan	Party
2023	29 Nov	Speaker of Selangor State Legislative Assembly Lau Weng San visited Legislative Yuan.	DAP
2021	15 Sep	Ministry of Education, Taiwan conferred the Distinguished Taiwan Alumni Award to the Speaker of Pulau Pinang State Legislative Assembly Law Choo Kiang.	PKR
2018	5 Jun	MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
	24 Jun	MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
	Unspecified dates	MP for Kampar Thomas Su Keong Siong, MP for Kota Melaka Khoo Poay Tiong, MP for Segambut Lim Lip Eng, MP for Kluang Wong Su Qi, MP for Kuching Yii Lee Wuen, MP for Taiping Teh Kok Lim, Speaker of Selangor Assembly Ng Suee Lim, Speaker of Perak Assembly cum MP for Bruas Ngeh Koo Ham, Speaker of Pulau Pinang Assembly Law Choo Kiang, State Assemblywoman for Kuala Kubu Bharu Lee Kee Hiong.	DAP, PKR
2017	Unspecified dates	Speaker of Pulau Pinang Assembly Law Choo Kiang, Senator Koh Chin Han, MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PKR, MCA, PDP
	27 Apr	MP for Batu Chua Tian Chang, MP for Bayan Baru Sim Tze Tzin, MP for Petaling Jaya Selatan Hee Loy Sian, State Assemblywoman for Bukit Lanjan Elizabeth Wong Keat Ping, State Assemblyman for Batu Caves Amirudin Shari, State Assemblyman for Sungai Pinang Teng Chang Khim, MP for Gombak cum State Assemblyman for Bukit Antarabangsa Azmin Ali, MP for Tebrau cum State Assemblyman for Bukit Batu Puah Wee Tse, State Assemblyman for Sijangkang Ahmad Yunus Hairi.	PKR, DAP, PAS
2016	28 Mar	MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing was conferred the Friendship Medal of Diplomacy.	PDP
	Unspecified dates	MP for Cheras Tan Kok Wai, Senator Hou Kok Chung, Speaker of Pulau Pinang Assembly Law Choo Kiang.	DAP, MCA, PKR
2015	25 May	Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng received the Prime Minister's special envoy to East Asia cum MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
2014	16 Dec	Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng received the Prime Minister's special envoy to East Asia cum MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
	Unspecified dates	MP for Ipoh Barat Kulasegaran, MP for Labuan Rozman.	DAP, UMNO

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Table 2: (continued)

Year	Date	Malaysian parliamentarians' visits to Taiwan Legislative Yuan/Taiwan	Party
2013	17 Dec	Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng received the President of World Zhang Clan Association cum MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
	Unspecified dates	MP for Bentong Liow Tiong Lai, MP for Ayer Itam Wee Ka Siong, MP for Labis Chua Tee Yong, MP for Iskandar Puteri Lim Kit Siang.	MCA, DAP
2012	19 Apr	Taiwan–Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association President Hsu Shao-ping received 10 Members of Parliament from Pakatan Rakyat including MP for Cheras Tan Kok Wai, MP for Bukit Bintang Fong Kui Lun, MP for Bandar Kuching Chong Chieng Jen, MP for Petaling Jaya Selatan Hee Loy Sian, MP for Kelana Jaya Loh Gwo Burne and MP for Kota Kinabalu Hiew King Cheu.	DAP, PKR
	29 Oct	Vice President of the Legislative Yuan Hung Hsiu-chu received President of MCA Chua Soi Lek.	MCA
	11 Dec	Taiwan–Malaysia Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association President Hsu Shao-ping received MP for Pulau Nur Jazlan, MP for Hulu Selangor P. Kamalanathan, MP for Tenggara Halimah Mohamed Sadique, MP for Simpang Renggam Liang Teck Meng and MP for Batang Sadong Nancy Shukri.	UMNO, MIC, GERAKAN, PBB
2011	Unspecified date	MP for Alor Gajah Fong Chan Onn.	MCA
2010	2 Mar	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Tseng Yung-chuan received MP for Lanang Tiong Thai King and others.	SUPP
	21 Apr	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Tseng Yung-chuan received MP for Bukit Gantang Mohammad Nizar bin Jamaluddin and others.	PAS
	29 Jul	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Tseng Yung-chuan received MP for Batu Sapi Edmund Chong Ket Wah and others.	PBS
	Unspecified dates	MP for Bagan Lim Guan Eng, MP for Arau Ismail bin Kassim, MP for Ranau Siringan bin Gubat, MP for Simpang Renggam Liang Teck Meng.	DAP, UMNO, UPKO, GERAKAN
2009	21 Dec	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Tseng Yung-chuan received MP for Lipis Mohamad Shahrum bin Osman, MP for Kanowit Aaron Ago Anak Dagang, MP for Hulu Terengganu Mohd Nor bin Othman, MP for Silam Salleh bin Kalbi.	UMNO, PRS,
	17 Jan	MP for Gelang Patah Tan Ah Eng.	MCA
	12 Apr	MP for Tanjong Manis Norah binti Abdul Rahman.	PBB
	11 Jun	MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
	9 Aug	MP for Tanjung Malim Ong Ka Chuan, MP for Tebrau Teng Boon Soon.	MCA
	15 Dec	MP for Kota Tinggi Syed Hamid Albar, State Assemblyman for Guar Chempedak Ku Abdul Rahman.	UMNO
2008	8 Sep	Chairman of the BN Backbenchers Club and MP for Bintulu Tiong King Sing.	PDP
	14 Dec	MP for Seputeh Kok Suh Sim.	DAP

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Table 2: (continued)

Year	Date	Malaysian parliamentarians' visits to Taiwan Legislative Yuan/Taiwan	Party
2007	17 Jul	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Chung Jung-Chi received MP for Segambut Tan Kee Kwong and others.	GERAKAN
	9 Aug	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Chung Jung-Chi received MP for Kuala Terengganu Razali Bin Ismail and MP for Kuala Krai Mohamed Razali Bin Hj. Che Mamat.	UMNO
	13 Aug	MP for Tuaran Wilfred Madius Tangau attended 2nd Democratic Pacific Union Convention.	UPKO
2006	9 Dec	MP for Tangga Batu Idris Haron, MP for Batu Pahat Junaidy Abdul Wahab, MP for Petra Jaya Fadillah Yusof attended Democratic Pacific Union Conference.	UMNO
	Unspecified dates	MP for Gopeng Ting Chew Peh.	MCA
2005	5 May	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Chiang Pin-kung received Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee of Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club cum MP for Kemaman Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Nur Jazlan, MP for Bukit Gantang Tan Lian Hoe and Senator S. Vijayaratham.	UMNO, GERAKAN
2004	3 Nov	Vice President of Legislative Yuan Chiang Pin-kung received MP for Santubong Wan Junaidi.	PBB
	Unspecified dates	MP for Bagan Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, MP for Lipis Amihamzah Ahmad, Senator Vijayaratham, MP for Bandau Maximus Ongkili, MP for Beluran Ronald Kiandee, MP for Tanjung Aru Yee Moi Chai, MP for Batu Pahat Junaidy Abdul Wahab, MP for Machang Sazmi Miah, MP for Hulu Langat Markiman Kobiran, MP for Batu Kawan Huan Cheng Guan, MP for Puchong Lau Yeng peng, Senator Pok Mok Hua and Tan Cheng Tee.	UMNO, MCA, GERAKAN, PBS
2003	Unspecified dates	MP for Bagan Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, MP for Lipis Amihamzah bin Ahmad, State Assemblyman for Machap Haji Abdul Hamid bin Haji Abd Rahman, MP for Tanjung Aru Yee Moh Chai, Senator Hajah Azizah binti Mohd. Dun, MP for Seputeh Kok Suh Sim, MP for Cheras Tan Kok Wai, MP for Batu Ng Lip Yong, MP for Rasah Goh Siow Huat.	UMNO, MCA, DAP, GERAKAN
	16 Jan	MP for Sri Aman Jimmy Donald Lim attended Asia Pacific Security International Forum.	PRS
	24 Nov	MP for Sri Aman Jimmy Donald Lim attended 2003 International Austronesian Conference.	PRS
2002	8 Dec	MP for Sri Aman Jimmy Donald Lim and MP for Tuaran Wilfred Madius Tangau attended Austronesian Forum.	PRS, UPKO
2001	Unspecified dates	MP for Klang Tan Yee Kew, MP for Sepang Seripah Noli Syed Hussin, MP for Arau Mastika Junaidah Husin, MP for Alor Gajah Abu Seman, MP for Subang K.S. Nijhar, MP for Kluang Hoo Seong Chang, MP for Jelutong Lee Kah Choon, MP for Beluran Ronald Kiandee.	MCA, UMNO, GERAKAN
2000	21 Sep	Vice President of Legislative Yuan YAO Eng-Chi received MP for Rasah Goh Siow Huat and others.	MCA
	6 Jun	Vice President of Legislative Yuan YAO Eng-Chi received Malaysian Parliament's non official Law and Foreign Relations Committee.	
	Unspecified dates	MP for Gopeng Ting Chew Peh, Lim Guan Eng.	MCA, DAP

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Table 2: (continued)

Year	Date	Malaysian parliamentarians' visits to Taiwan Legislative Yuan/Taiwan	Party
1999	31 Jan	Deputy Speaker of Dewan Rakyat Ong Tee Keat.	MCA
	14 Mar	Deputy Speaker of Dewan Rakyat Ong Tee Keat.	MCA
1995	Unspecified date	MP for Alor Setar Chor Chee Heung.	MCA
1994	4 Oct	Speaker of Dewan Rakyat Mohamed Zahir Ismail.	UMNO
1993	13 Jan	MP for Seremban Yim Chee Chong.	MCA
1992	10 Dec	MP for Rasah Wong See Wah.	MCA

Sources: Compilation of data from *The Foreign Relations Yearbooks 2009–2018, Republic of China* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1988–2018), *The Parliament Quarterly* (2000–2016) and *Legislative Yuan Newsletter* (2010).

Table 3: Malaysian parliamentarians' speeches related to Taiwan in Dewan Rakyat, 1993–2019

Year	Date	MP	Descriptions
1993	20 July	Fong Kui Lun	In solidarity with Taiwan by asking how Taiwan would react to Mahathir's China visit.
1994	15 Nov	Foo Piew Kok	In solidarity with Taiwan by reminding peers not just focus on China and forget Taiwan.
1998	1 Dec	Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar	Learn from Taiwan's technological success after visiting Taiwan.
	2 Dec	Robert Lau Hoi Chew	Learn from Taiwan's science policy after visiting Taiwan.
2000	15 Feb	Ahmad Husni bin Mohd	Learn from Taiwan's successful Small and Medium Industry and Information Technology models.
2002	18 Jun	Robert Lau Hoi Chew	Learn from Taiwan's research and development policy after visiting Taiwan.
		Abdul Fatah bin Haji Haron	Learn from Taiwan's successful agricultural model.
	17 Oct	Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar	Learn from Taiwan's talent recruiting policy.
	24 Oct	Ahmad Husni bin Mohd	China and Taiwan are two sovereign states, but China regards Taiwan as part of its provinces.
2003	17 Sep	Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi	Learn from Taiwan's successful research and development policy.
2004	15 Sep	Abdul Rahim bin Bakri	Malaysian representative in Taipei talked about China and Taiwan issue.
	28 Sep	Wilfred Madius Tangau, Muiyiddin Yassin	Learn from Taiwan's successful agricultural models.
2005	20 Jun	Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar	China could not represent Taiwan in international maritime pollution management and the latter could be regarded as a state in this sense.
2006	27 March	Nur Jazlan	Malaysia should worry about China's military threat.

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Table 3: (continued)

Year	Date	MP	Descriptions
2014	18 March	Tiong King Sing, Liang Teck Meng	Learn from Taiwan's agricultural model.
	26 March	Agricultural Minister Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob	Replied that Malaysia looked into agricultural cooperations with Taiwan.
	15 Oct	M. Kulasegaran	After attending Asia Pacific Parliamentarian Union Forum, Kulasegaran opined that Malaysia should learn from Taiwan's successful healthcare model and elevate bilateral relations.
		Tan Kee Kwong	During the visit to Taiwan, Tan was briefed by the Legislative Yuan President about Taiwan's successful economic model.
		Rozman bin Isli	After attending Asia Pacific Parliamentarian Union Forum, Rozman opined that One China Policy has obstructed Malaysia to elevate bilateral economic relations with Taiwan.
2015	18 Nov	Tiong King Sing	Making Taiwan as the first parliamentary question.
	16 March	Azmin Ali	Malaysia should worry about China's military threat.
	19 Mar	Tiong King Sing	One-China policy should be confined to political field while economic cooperations between Malaysia and Taiwan should be exempted from it.
	9 Jun	Tiong King Sing	One-China policy should be confined to political field while economic cooperations between Malaysia and Taiwan should be exempted from it.
		Liang Teck Meng	Invited to visit Taiwan and was told by Taiwanese businessmen that Taipei wanted to sign Economic Cooperation Agreement with Malaysia.
	29 Oct	Tiong King Sing	In parliamentary questioning, he said One-China policy should be confined to political field while economic cooperations between Malaysia and Taiwan should be exempted from it.
	19 Nov	Tiong King Sing	Learn from Taiwan's successful technological model.
2016	16 Mar	Liang Teck Meng	Defending Taiwan's Kuokuang petrochemical investment in Pengerang.
2017	13 Mar	Nga Kor Ming	One-China Policy should not become an obstacle limiting cooperations between Malaysia and Taiwan in tourism, business and economic development.
2018	4 Apr	Liang Teck Meng	Defending Kuokuang's petrochemical investment in Pengerang.
2019	16 Oct	Tan Yee Kew	Learn from Taiwan's successful agricultural model.

Source: Compilation of data from *Penyata Rasmi of Dewan Rakyat* (Parliament of Malaysia 1974–2024).

CONCLUSION

In the context of the low asymmetric non-state relations between Malaysia and Taiwan, several conclusions can be drawn from the four findings. First, no Malaysian parliamentarians tabled any motions or bills, nor did they vote down government motions to show solidarity with Taiwan. This indicates that neither political parties nor individual parliamentarians are fully committed to supporting Taiwan's causes to repeal the One China Policy. Second, several Malaysian parliamentarians demonstrated solidarity with Taiwan during parliamentary debates, including those who had and had not been invited to visit Taiwan under the Taiwanese initiative of

parliamentary diplomacy. Among them, Tiong King Sing, Ahmad Husni, and Wan Junaidi were particularly outspoken in support of Taiwanese causes. At one point, Wan Junaidi and Ahmad Husni questioned the rationality of the One China Policy, mainly because the Beijing government cannot represent Taiwan. In addition, Tiong King Sing implied that the policy should not extend to economic cooperation between Malaysia and Taiwan. It is unclear whether Ahmad Husni had been invited to visit Taiwan, but Wan Junaidi and Tiong King Sing were regular visitors. Third, it may be difficult to argue that all outspoken parliamentarians were influenced by Taiwan to show solidarity with Taiwan. However, Wan Junaidi, Robert Lau Hoi Chew, M. Kulasegaran, Tan Kee Kwong, and Rozman bin Isli used their experiences from visiting Taiwan to support their suggestions for the Malaysian government to learn from Taiwan's successful cases, indicating a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Additionally, according to the chronology, Nur Jazlan, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Tan Yee Kew, and Wilfred Madius Tangau visited Taiwan before publicly urging their colleagues and the government to learn from Taiwan or be cautious about China's military buildup, suggesting a correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Tiong King Sing was a unique figure who relentlessly advocated for Taiwanese causes, earning him a Taiwanese medal.

When revisiting the previously stated research questions, the findings indicate that parliamentary diplomacy is a manifestation of parliamentarians' participation in foreign affairs based on party or government lines. This involves undertaking a full range of international activities to promote political dialogue between countries, thereby, increasing mutual understanding, learning, and catalysing, facilitating, and strengthening the existing constitutional functions of parliaments, as seen in the case of Malaysia. Despite numerous instances of Malaysian parliamentarians showing solidarity with Taiwan, which were political in nature, these acts did not attract any diplomatic protests from the Beijing government. In other words, parliamentary engagements between Malaysia and Taiwan have successfully evaded interference from the One China Policy. Given its effectiveness and influence, this explains why it was chosen over other forms of engagement.

Lastly, the findings strongly suggest that Taiwan's parliamentary diplomacy, which is the independent variable, effectively motivated or caused outspoken and Taiwan-friendly Malaysian parliamentarians to drive parliamentary debates, the dependent variable, centred around Taiwan's causes, making Taiwan a regular subject of parliamentary debate in the Dewan Rakyat. To a great extent, parliamentary diplomacy is a bridging tool for Taiwan, and it has been successful in the Malaysian case. Notably, the substantial findings shed light on future studies that can concentrate on conducting comparative studies to investigate high or low non-state asymmetric relations between Taiwan and other countries.

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NOTE

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