



# UPSCALING TAIWAN STUDIES IN ASIA

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## ABSTRACT

This themed issue examines Taiwan as a burgeoning hub of epistemic innovation and regional connectivity in Asia. While Taiwan Studies has gained visibility through institutions in the West, its scope, in terms of literary wealth and intellectual infrastructure, within Asia remains underdeveloped. Drawing from six interdisciplinary contributions, the issue challenges geopolitical overdetermination by foregrounding Taiwan as an autonomous source of theory, practice, and regional engagement. By integrating domains such as soft power, development diplomacy, labour migration, and strategic deterrence, the themed issue articulates Taiwan's regional embeddedness and conceptual relevance. This editorial introduction critiques inherited disciplinary frames and proposes a situated, Asia-centred recalibration of Taiwan Studies. The objective is not only to map Taiwan's positionalities but also to reposition the field as a vital node in Asia's intellectual, normative, and developmental landscape.

**Keywords:** Taiwan Studies, Asia, epistemic autonomy, knowledge production

## INTRODUCTION

Area studies serves as an interdisciplinary field, aiming to comprehensively understand the social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics of specific countries or regions. Within this framework, Asia emerges as an increasingly strategic and intellectually rich subject of inquiry, a continent marked by profound historical depth and immense diversity spanning from the shores of the Red Sea to the islands of Japan. The continent encompasses a wide range of geographies inhabited by varied populations with distinct languages and, most importantly, distinct knowledge systems. Asia's epistemic ecosystem is wide-ranging and continuously evolving, shaped by indigenous knowledge systems as well as transregional intellectual exchanges involving Latin America, Europe, Australia, and Africa.

Universities and research centres throughout Asia conduct meticulous and systematic studies on East Asian countries, such as Japan, China, and Korea, thereby, making meaningful contributions to the broader field of area studies. However, the institutionalisation of area studies historically evolved in response to geopolitical realignments following World War II and the concurrent

emergence of the United States (US) as a global superpower (Child and Barnes 2019). In the aftermath of the war, the US recognised the strategic imperative of acquiring knowledge about vast and culturally distinct regions to advance scholarly understanding and inform foreign policy and national security decisions.

Relatedly, China studies gained prominence during the Cold War, shaped by the anxieties of the “Red Scare” and the ideological battle between capitalism and communism (Svetličič 2020). Consequently, sinology, the study of Chinese language, history, and culture, was foregrounded as a central component of East Asian studies. Taiwan’s role within this discursive formation began as offshoot research, rather than as an independent, interdisciplinary field of study. As a result, epistemologically, Taiwan occupied a peripheral position within mainstream area studies. Concurrently, like every other area of studies, Taiwan studies sociology of knowledge centres in the Western countries began focusing on the optics of anthropology, colonialism, and history. This later led to the popularisation of Taiwan studies through several organisations, including the North American Taiwan Studies Association (NTSA), the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS), the Japan Association for Taiwan Studies (JATS), French Taiwan Studies, and several others. A total of 45 resource centres promoting Taiwan studies have been established worldwide since 2012 through the National Central Library (NCL) based in Taipei, Taiwan (National Central Library 2023).

Although Taiwan studies has gained traction in the West, its academic development within Asia remains limited. Against this backdrop, I have developed this themed issue with a focus on upscaling Taiwan studies in Asia. Much work needs to be done regarding the frames what is Taiwan? Why Taiwan is a significant international player in the global community? Furthermore, given that Taiwan is now seen as a subject of intrinsic interest, Taiwan studies must be expanded beyond a political dimension and focus on Taiwanese traits. By adding a different layer of optics, including looking beyond conceptual fallacies and operational flaws, this prevents marginalisation. The fallacies pertain to the disciplinary focus, subject matter, terms, and policy relevance. At the same time, the flaws include a lack of theoretical understanding and multidisciplinary perspectives, as well as a reliance on macro-level research, scarce fieldwork, limited language skills (Mandarin), and event-driven research agendas (Derichs et al. 2020).

Additionally, geopolitical tensions between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the US significantly influence the discourse surrounding Taiwan, creating recurring obstacles of geopolitical over-determination. Much global attention on Taiwan is filtered through the lenses of cross-strait relations or the broader US-China rivalry. While these dynamics are undeniably important, overemphasis on Taiwan’s geopolitical position tends to overshadow other dimensions of Taiwanese society, politics, and culture. Reducing Taiwan to a mere pawn in great-power rivalry rather than recognising it as a topic of inherent academic interest restricts scholarly investigation and public discourse. This frequently results in Taiwan being used as an instrumental tool for making judgments about China or the US-led liberal order. Consequently, Taiwan’s military readiness and diplomatic standing receive more attention than domestic issues (An 2018), such as labour disputes, environmental activism, indigenous rights movements, international migration, or human rights advocacy.

What appears particularly noteworthy in assessing the Taiwan studies theme issue is the field’s ongoing negotiation between its aspirations for autonomy and the structural legacies that still tether it to reactive frameworks. While it may seem that Taiwan studies remains defined in opposition to China studies and Western theoretical paradigms, this oppositional stance has

often been a strategic necessity rather than a disciplinary deficiency. However, a shift toward theoretical innovation is underway, with Taiwanese scholars drawing on their own socio-political experiences, such as democratisation under duress, transitional justice, and strategic ambiguity, to articulate frameworks that have global resonance. Nevertheless, the field's knowledge production continues to be shaped by Western theories, raising valid concerns about epistemic dependency. However, this can also be seen as methodological hybridisation, wherein Taiwan's unique political condition enriches and adapts global concepts to produce situated knowledge. The same can be said of the regional integration debate. At the same time, Taiwan's contested sovereignty poses undeniable constraints on research partnerships and scholarly mobility, while simultaneously opening a space for theorising sovereignty, recognition, and regionalism in novel ways. Far from undermining its comparative value, this exceptional status compels Taiwan studies to confront and offer insights into emergent questions of legitimacy and inclusion in international relations. Thus, rather than showcasing diversity for its own sake, Taiwan studies is beginning to cohere around the analytic possibilities embedded in its structural precarity, turning perceived limitations into critical leverage for building affirmative, Asia-centred epistemologies.

Correspondingly, this themed issue attempts to bridge the disciplinary neglect and foster the scholarship on Taiwan studies as a subject of intrinsic epistemic value. The marginality stems from concepts of sovereignty, where ideas, narratives, and discourses must emanate from politically sovereign entities, particularly in international relations (Barkin and Cronin 1994). And due to Taiwan's special status as an unrecognised *de facto* independent democratic entity, it is understudied, limiting vivid discussions and debates (Huang and Li 2023). The foundational aim and positioning of this themed issue, which is an attempt to upscale Taiwan studies in Asia, is not to present a comprehensive pan-Asian scholarship in one issue, but to initiate a regionally embedded conversation anchored in empirical density and conceptual openness. The Southeast and South Asian focus reflects two strategic logics: first, these subregions represent the frontline of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP); and second, they are where Taiwan's non-diplomatic engagements through education, labour migration, industrial cooperation, and development aid have been most active and understudied (Glaser et al. 2018). Thus, while limited in spatial spread, the issue offers conceptual depth in Taiwan's evolving regional presence. Additionally, the theoretical conceptualisation is not a single meta-framework; the issue deliberately curates the analytical diversity of interdisciplinary scholarship to locate Taiwan studies as a pluralistic field capable of hosting multidisciplinary inquiry. The attempt of this themed issue is not to represent a final word on Taiwan studies in Asia. Instead, it serves as a theoretical and empirical incitement, an invitation to reframe Taiwan not as a peripheral anomaly but as a dynamic hub in Asia's intellectual, diplomatic, and developmental imaginaries. Future issues must broaden geographic and disciplinary coverage. But what this issue offers are a foundational regionally grounded, methodologically diverse, and epistemologically intentional platform for amplifying Taiwan's scholarly relevance across Asia.

Structured along a domestic and global thematic matrix, the contributions to this themed issue examine Taiwan's internal transformations in conjunction with its international engagements. This involves testing and integrating comparative methods, cross-regional analysis, and macro-theories, incorporating original and local discourses from Taiwan that transcend political borders to provide explanations and solutions to issues with regional and global implications. On the domestic front, the manuscript examines themes such as soft power in higher education, the politics of labour and migration, and emerging forms of parliamentary diplomacy. These inquiries offer a granular understanding of how Taiwan negotiates its identity, resources, and institutional capacities within its borders. On the global axis, contributions investigate Taiwan's

regional diplomacy, its implementation of the NSP, and its evolving development cooperation strategies in the post-COVID era. Together, these perspectives reveal how Taiwan is both embedded in and helps reshape Asia's regional and global orders. In assembling this themed issue, the aim is threefold: first, to underscore the significance of Taiwan as a multidimensional actor within Asian and global affairs; second, to address the existing gaps in knowledge and scholarship by fostering original, interdisciplinary research; and third, to catalyse the institutional expansion of Taiwan studies within Asian academic settings. By moving beyond the narrow confines of state-centric narratives, this themed issue invited scholars from Asia, experts on Taiwan, to engage with Taiwan not merely as a case, but as a conceptual site, a generative space for rethinking democracy, development, diplomacy, and identity in Asia.

### **THEMATIC CONTRIBUTION ACROSS DIPLOMACY, SOFT POWER, LABOUR, AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS IN ASIA**

The themed issue begins with the article titled “Higher Education and the Realist Core of Soft Power: A Comparative Study of Major and Small States” by Wei En Tan, which examines higher education diplomacy between Taiwan and Malaysia, deconstructing the romanticism of soft power by embedding it within realist paradigms. The article presents a robust critique of Nye's idealist framing, instead arguing for the material and structural determinants of educational diplomacy. Taiwan's ability to appeal to ethnically Chinese Malaysian students through cultural proximity, while constrained by resource limitations and Chinese counter-offensives, becomes a window into how middle powers must constantly navigate identity, economy, and sovereignty in asymmetric international system. The focus on Malaysia enriches Taiwan studies with Southeast Asian relevance, demonstrating that Taiwan's educational exchanges are not merely policy tools but are embedded within transnational identity politics, demographic politics, and strategic balancing. This article is relevant because it aligns with the broader goals of the themed issue. It not only reinforces the idea of Taiwan as an actor of epistemic significance but also integrates theoretical realism into the analysis of education diplomacy—a domain often seen through normative or liberal internationalist lenses. Tan's comparative framework analysing Taiwan, Singapore, and China enables a grounded exploration of how national power, rather than ideals alone, shapes outcomes in higher education diplomacy. For instance, the material capacities of the US explain its superior performance in attracting international students, not merely its cultural appeal. Taiwan, with more limited resources and formal recognition, relies on educational outreach to cultivate unofficial ties with nations like Malaysia, thereby, transforming higher education into a diplomatic tool. The significance of Tan's argument for the advancement of Taiwan studies in Asia lies in its demonstration of how theoretical debates can be enriched by grounded empirical studies on education diplomacy. The article provides one of the most persuasive illustrations of how Taiwan's soft power must be theorised in relation to complex realities—economic capital, institutional quality, and diplomatic room for manoeuvre. It proposes that in Asia's hierarchical order, Taiwan's education diplomacy operates at the intersection of aspiration and limitation, showing resilience not because it dominates but because it adapts.

The second article by Iannone, Kinasih, and Wahyudi touches upon political economy, critiquing the structural embeddedness within transnational value chains. This article's inclusion in the themed issue is not only timely but also methodologically significant: it places Taiwan studies in conversation with world-systems theory, labour migration scholarship, and Marxist critiques of global capitalism. The inclusion of Indonesian migrant fishers in Taiwan's distant-water fishing industry contributes to a balance to the themed issue by underscoring the complex entanglement

of Taiwan's domestic and global roles. This piece foregrounds the interconnectedness of Taiwan's labour economy with Southeast Asia, situating the island not only as a sovereign democratic actor but also as a participant in global capitalist structures that extend into the seas. By centring on Indonesian migrant fishers, the article encourages scholars to engage with Taiwan as a layered and multifaceted society. Crucially, the article aligns with the issue's broader goal of decentring Taiwan studies from purely geopolitical or elite-focused narratives. Indonesian labourers are not framed as victims alone but as active participants navigating legal and economic structures. Their presence in the Taiwanese fishing industry challenges readers to consider Taiwan's regional position from the standpoint of labour and migration, dimensions that often remain underexplored in area studies. Notably, the article provides a rare insight into how semi-peripheral economies, such as Taiwan, mediate between core demands and peripheral labour supply. It thus enables Taiwan studies scholars to engage in comparative research on migration regimes, labour brokerage, and the political economy of the sea fields, gaining global scholarly traction. Instead of presenting a singular national narrative, this article highlights Taiwan's multiple positionalities, affirming that a richer understanding of Taiwan must include the perspectives of those who contribute to its economic sectors under challenging conditions.

The inclusion of the third article on parliamentary diplomacy between Malaysia and Taiwan provides a complementary lens that deepens the themed issue's focus on Taiwan's agency in regional affairs. This parliamentary diplomacy article focuses on Taiwan's subtle assertion of political presence through informal yet strategic channels. Thus, it sews an arc across the social and political spectrum. Lam's article examines the evolution and mechanics of Taiwan-Malaysia parliamentary diplomacy in the shadow of the One China Policy. It shows how Taiwan has leveraged parliamentary diplomacy not merely to circumvent diplomatic isolation, but to cultivate cross-border solidarities rooted in democratic engagement and pragmatic cooperation. The study meticulously details the visits, exchanges, and deliberative dialogues between Malaysian and Taiwanese parliamentarians, revealing the emergence of a robust, if unofficial, infrastructure of political communication. These engagements often initiated by the Legislative Yuan and facilitated by Taiwan's executive apparatus provide Taiwan with a platform to influence Malaysian elites and foster mutual learning in domains such as education, agriculture, and technology. Significantly, this article contributes to Taiwan studies by framing Taiwan not only as a site of democratic resilience but also as a creative actor capable of leveraging constitutional tools, such as the Legislative Yuan, to advance regional diplomacy. The Malaysian case, characterised by cautious but sustained parliamentary engagement, demonstrates that Taiwan's influence in Asia is not limited to its high-profile alliances with the West but extends into ASEAN through tailored, culturally sensitive modes of interaction. This article also resonates with the issue's overarching goal to expand the geographies and modalities of Taiwan studies. By documenting Taiwan's outreach as a country having strong ties to China, the article challenges the binary assumptions about allegiance in Asia. It complicates narratives of Taiwan's isolation by showcasing how secondary channels, such as parliamentary diplomacy, can and have served as vectors of influence, learning, and soft power.

Furthermore, this contribution anchors Taiwan's diplomatic behaviour in institutional practice rather than abstract theory. The Legislative Yuan's proactive role, combined with the engagement of Malaysian lawmakers, underscores how legislative actors shape and reflect foreign policy in democracies. The piece highlights not only Taiwanese ingenuity in diplomatic form but also the receptivity and agency of Southeast Asian states in their selective responses to Taiwan's outreach. It effectively maps a reciprocal and evolving field of sub-state internationalism.



The inclusion of the fourth article, “The Cross-strait Relations and the Intersecting Projectiles of Power and Integrations in the Asia Pacific” by Aravind Yelery, marks a pivotal contribution to the global turn in Taiwan studies. Situated at the juncture of strategic regionalism, integration theory, and cross-strait asymmetries, this article adeptly captures the complexities of Taiwan’s place in the Asia-Pacific and how its diplomatic, economic, and technological trajectories recalibrate global narratives on sovereignty, integration, and deterrence. This article takes a long-term, big-picture view to help us understand Taiwan not just as a local player, but as an important force shaping global economic and security systems. Yelery’s exploration of “re-Taiwanisation”, a concept marking Taiwan’s resistance to mainland China’s Sinicisation project, presents a timely analytical frame that foregrounds Taiwan’s agency in strategic decoupling and regional diversification. By demonstrating how Taiwan employs its technological asymmetries (notably in semiconductors and global value chains) to create structural deterrence, the article enriches Taiwan studies with an interdisciplinary edge, bridging international relations theory, economic statecraft, and Asia-Pacific integration.

Additionally, the article critically examines regional economic frameworks, such as regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP), and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), through the lens of Taiwan’s exclusion and resistance strategies. In doing so, it situates Taiwan’s strategic diplomacy not as reactive, but as part of a recalibrated Indo-Pacific vision in which Taiwan actively shapes the tempo of integration. The NSP, as elaborated in the article, is more than a diplomatic campaign; it is an infrastructural and normative shift that links Taiwan with ASEAN, South Asia, and beyond, challenging China-centric interpretations of Asian integration.

This article is vital to Taiwan studies for two additional reasons. First, it amplifies the concept of “asymmetric interdependence” (Krumbein 2023) as both a constraint and an opportunity in cross-strait and regional affairs. Taiwan’s ability to leverage its vulnerabilities, economic reliance, and diplomatic marginalisation into strategic strengths reflects a sophisticated balancing act often underrepresented in mainstream international relations literature. Second, the article offers a comprehensive historiography of Taiwan’s cross-strait policy transitions from the Chen Shui-bian to the Tsai Ing-wen administrations, highlighting both continuity and transformation in Taiwan’s integration strategy. Thus, thematically it extends the scope of the themed issue into the global strategic terrain, linking the domestic dimensions of democracy and labour to external vectors of power and deterrence. It advances Taiwan studies as a field uniquely positioned to illuminate the fault lines and innovations in post-hegemonic Asia. As Taiwan continues to navigate a contested geopolitical landscape, this article highlights the importance of grounding Taiwan’s global rise in scholarly inquiry. By embedding Taiwan’s experience within the broader dynamics of decoupling, economic statecraft, and power asymmetries, the article challenges the notion that Taiwan is merely a passive object of global power contests (Marandici 2025). Instead, Taiwan is revealed as a strategic actor that recalibrates economic and political alignments across Asia. In doing so, it extends Taiwan studies beyond cultural and identity discourses into the strategic core of Asian international relations.

The fifth article, titled “Soft Power in Taiwan’s NSP: Assessing the Flagship Programme for Industrial Innovation and Cooperation” by Karl Lee Chee Leong, constitutes a pivotal scholarly intervention in Taiwan studies, particularly in reorienting regional academic discourse toward sectoral economic diplomacy and soft power projections under the NSP. By examining the Flagship Programme for Industrial Innovation and Cooperation (IIC), this article provides an empirically grounded, analytically sophisticated, and policy-relevant exploration of Taiwan’s soft power manoeuvring across South and Southeast Asia. This approach simultaneously enriches

the theoretical corpus on soft power while addressing a longstanding void in Taiwan studies concerning sector-specific operationalisation of economic diplomacy. This article is highly significant for Taiwan studies because it departs from conventional macro-level evaluations of Taiwan's NSP. Rather than limiting the analysis to abstract assessments of foreign policy orientation or normative claims of people-centric diplomacy, the article develops a conceptual model that operationalises Nye's framework of soft power through Taiwan's technological and knowledge-driven industrial partnerships. It situates Taiwan's industrial diplomacy in empirical terrain by selecting three carefully contextualised case studies—Taiwan-Thailand smart city cooperation, Taiwan-India semiconductor collaboration, and Taiwan Excellence marketing in Malaysia and Vietnam. These cases serve not merely as illustrations but as mechanisms for theorising Taiwan's differentiated engagements with NSP states based on their policy flexibilities, economic complementarities, and strategic receptivity. Analytically, the article offers a timely corrective to one-dimensional assessments of Taiwan's foreign economic policy, which are often overly focused on grand strategy or PRC-related constraints. It situates Taiwan as a proactive normative agent capable of initiating transformative regional partnerships through targeted industrial interventions. This repositioning is particularly valuable within the broader context of global IR, where the study of smaller and non-sovereign actors remains marginal. Karl's work thus not only contributes to Taiwan studies but also speaks to a larger methodological project of decentring dominant state actors in international relations research. In the context of upscaling Taiwan studies in Asia, this article performs three critical functions. First, it recalibrates Taiwan's agency from a diplomatically isolated actor to a regional innovator in industrial diplomacy. Second, it offers a replicable analytical framework that future scholars can adapt to assess other flagship programmes under the NSP or in different regional contexts. Third, it bridges the disciplinary gaps between international relations theory, area studies, and industrial policy, thereby, exemplifying the kind of interdisciplinary engagement necessary for Taiwan studies to evolve as a mature, policy-relevant field.

At its core, Taiwan's evolving identity in international relations has often been constrained by its contested sovereignty. Yet, its active deployment of soft power through development cooperation is gradually reshaping its global profile. The sixth article, titled "Taiwan's International Cooperation Development in the Post-COVID Era: Perception and Challenges in the Global Arena", by Sadia Rahman, makes a compelling and timely contribution to Taiwan studies by mapping Taiwan's development diplomacy as both a strategic and normative tool. Situated at the intersection of political communication and liberal institutionalism, the article analytically unpacks how Taiwan leverages foreign aid to foster diplomatic support, global visibility, and soft power projection despite geopolitical constraints. In doing so, the article makes a significant contribution to the upscaling of Taiwan studies within the Asian academic and policy discourse. The scholarly advancement of this article lies in its dual-level framing, historically grounded in Taiwan's transition from aid recipient to emerging donor, and theoretically anchored in liberal institutionalist paradigms. By foregrounding the role of the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), the article provides a sectoral lens that is often absent in broader Taiwan studies. It positions the ICDF not simply as a functional foreign aid agency, but as a mechanism of political communication and strategic soft power. This reconceptualisation strengthens the analytical maturity of Taiwan studies in Asia. This integration of aid diplomacy suggests an imbalance in the literature, where either the focus is excessively on Taiwan's hard security or development cooperation is treated as apolitical.

The article's significance lies in its ability to blend empirical rigour with policy relevance. It utilises extensive document analysis, historical mapping, and post-COVID data to chart Taiwan's evolution of foreign aid across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It demonstrates that Taiwan's

aid, while officially apolitical, has political implications. Not only does it improve Taiwan's image in the recipient states, but it also serves as a soft balancing tool against Beijing's aggressive diplomacy. By showing how the ICDF operates in fragile geopolitical environments offering technical cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building, the article evidence how Taiwan's aid fills gaps left by China's often transactional Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. Thus, the article provides a counter-narrative to the China-centric understanding of aid politics in Asia, asserting Taiwan's relevance in the regional development landscape. Another critical contribution is the article's nuanced treatment of Taiwan's diplomatic fragility. Rather than framing Taiwan as a passive victim of Chinese coercion, the analysis captures the active agency of Taiwanese policymakers in expanding their diplomatic footprint through non-traditional means. The ICDF's work with vulnerable microstates, its partnerships with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and its innovative focus on micro small and medium enterprises resilience and climate adaptation reveal a proactive, norm-driven foreign policy that aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This underlines the normative legitimacy Taiwan seeks in global governance beyond recognition and aligns Taiwan studies with contemporary global debates on inclusive development and minilateral diplomacy. Furthermore, the article contributes to upscaling Taiwan studies in Asia by providing a replicable research framework that can be applied to analyse Taiwan's engagement across sectors and regions. Its interdisciplinary integration, merging development studies, international relations theory, and public diplomacy demonstrates the richness and policy relevance of Taiwan studies beyond the traditional Taiwan-China binary. The argument that Taiwan can be repositioned in global health and sustainable development dialogues, despite its exclusion from institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO), offers new directions for inclusive governance scholarship. By proposing creative diplomatic innovations such as the "Observer Plus" model and regional working group participation, the article goes beyond critique to offer implementable solutions. This aligns Taiwan Studies with actionable policy research, an essential criterion for its sustained relevance in Asian academic and policymaking circles.

## FINAL REMARKS

The themed issue on Taiwan studies is more than a thematic convergence. The thematic curation of this themed issue directly addresses how Taiwan can be studied not merely as a diplomatic anomaly or strategic fault line, but as a complex, multidimensional actor that generates theoretical and empirical insights across various domains. It marks an epistemic recalibration in how Taiwan is studied within and beyond Asia. By structuring the issue along domestic and global themes ranging from soft power and labour politics to industrial innovation and post-pandemic development cooperation it collectively advances Taiwan as a generative site of inquiry, rather than just being limited to a geopolitical pawn. This approach decisively moves Taiwan studies away from overdetermined paradigms centred on cross-strait conflict or US-China rivalry, but positions it within interdisciplinary, policy-relevant, and theoretically grounded research trajectories. More crucially, this themed issue situates Taiwan as a lens through which the broader dilemmas of Asia, such as decolonising knowledge, negotiating asymmetry, or advancing inclusive governance, can be interrogated.

Each article in the issue offers a distinct lens to illuminate Taiwan's internal transformations and external engagements. Collectively, these contributions deconstruct the narrative of marginality and reconstruct Taiwan as a site of knowledge production. More importantly, they offer grounded models and comparative frameworks that are methodologically transferable and regionally relevant, enabling scholars across Asia to engage Taiwan studies not as an exceptional



case, but as a conceptual anchor for analysing democracy, development, and diplomacy in Asia. Thus, the themed issue is built upon to fulfil its purpose of advancing knowledge, stimulating debate, and fostering scholarly innovation around Taiwan as an essential component of Asia's intellectual future.

## NOTE

- \* Sadia Rahman, lecturer at the Department of International and Strategic Studies, Universiti Malaya, is the guest editor of the Theme Issue on Upscaling Taiwan Studies in Asia. Rahman has been a recipient of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Taiwan Fellowship and the Ministry of Education Doctoral Scholarship from the Republic of China (Taiwan) government, both of which reflect her outstanding contributions to the study of international affairs. Additionally, while pursuing her doctoral degree, her research on human rights and democratic governance was recognised with a research grant from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, further demonstrating her dedication to advancing knowledge in critical areas of global justice. In 2021, Rahman was honoured with the Outstanding Student Award by the Republic of China government. Her scholarly work extends beyond academia, engaging with policymakers, institutions, and civil society. Correspondingly, as an active researcher, Rahman has experience in rigorous research, an interdisciplinary approach, and a commitment to impactful scholarship that bridges theoretical inquiry with real-world policy challenges.

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