Migration between Southeast Asia and Taiwan: Trends, Characteristics and Implications

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Abstract

The migration of human resources between Southeast Asia and Taiwan is significant, indicating a close bilateral relationship. This study takes the perspective of economic development to examine the migration flows, aiming to explore the migration impacts of differences in societal development. Based on the Taiwan-Southeast Asia relative development status, the study further theorizes the possible migration trends between the two places. Empirically, the investigation focuses on major types of migration from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam to Taiwan, including contract workers, immigrant spouses, professionals and the skilled, as well as students. The Taiwan to Southeast Asia migration covers mainly those migrants induced by Taiwanese investment. According to available information, the migration between Taiwan and Southeast Asia is rather asymmetric, with the Southeast Asia to Taiwan flows far more important than the counter flows. This fact indicates an advantageous position for Taiwan to cultivate relations with the migrant sending nations. It also provides a niche for every source country to work closely with Taiwan in migration management and migrant protection, for the interests of both the places of origin and destination.

Keywords:
International Migration, Migration and Development, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Asymmetric Interaction

Introduction

With the trend of globalization and the improvement in transportation and communication technology, the number of people who can afford and are willing to migrate to other countries has substantially increased. The size of international migrants in the world increased by 37 percent and reached 214 million from 1990 to 2010. The big volume of cross-border migration provided with various development opportunities to both the source and the host countries. It also brought brand-new challenges to all nations involved in this process. Nowadays, the migration of population and the labour force has become a normal and permanent feature of most countries. As a result, the relationship between migration and national development has been regarded as

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highly correlated. (Athukurola, 2006; IOM, 2008)

Taking off circa mid-1960s and going through the early process of development in the 1970s, the Taiwan economy entered the stage of a mature economy with the emergence of surplus capital and shortage of workers in the 1980s. Consequently, Taiwan has since then become a target destination for workers from neighbouring less developed nations, who were looking for overseas employment opportunities. In the meanwhile, the source countries of workers in SE Asia are destinations of Taiwanese investment. With the investment, some capital-assisted professionals and skilled workforce such as business managers, production engineers, and market specialists, as well as their dependents were relocated to SE Asia. This movement represents a counter-flow of the labour migration from SE Asia to Taiwan.

Since the 1990s, the international migration between SE Asia and Taiwan has gained momentum. This is particularly true in the part of migration to Taiwan, including contract workers, immigrant spouses, and foreign students. There are many significant changes in the size, composition, and characteristics of each type of migration. The trends and changes are important to SE Asia as a whole, and to major sending countries in particular. This fact has also received a great deal of attention from international organizations concerned about migration.

Following the introductory section, this paper will discuss briefly the background of migration flows between SE Asia and Taiwan. Afterwards, the presentation will focus on (1) the migration of SE Asians to Taiwan, and (2) the migration of Taiwanese to SE Asia. The first part includes the four groups of contract workers, immigrant spouses, students, and professionals. The second part deals mainly with the capital-assisted migrants. The paper will conclude with a summary of major findings and some discussions on the implications of human interactions, in terms of migration, for regional cooperation and integration.

Economic Development and Human Migration

Due to differences in the level and speed of development among countries, the returns to the two major production factors (i.e., labour and capital) vary substantially from markets to markets. In order to obtain higher expected returns, the two production factors tend to move across countries. As a result, international labour migration (ILM) and foreign direct investment (FDI) have been integral parts of economic development. (Tsai and Tsay, 2012, 2004).

As clearly indicated above, globalization is a facilitating factor of international migration of both labour and capital. In the past few decades, the accelerating movements of products (goods and services) and production factors (labour and capital) in the world represent solid evidence of globalization. Both ILM and FDI are phenomena induced by the market equilibrating forces. It had been experienced by many Western developed countries. Similarly, the large scale of ILM and FDI movements that have been occurring in East and SE Asia since the mid-1980s also reflects the results of the market mechanism.

According to the existing literature (e.g. Athukurola, 2006; Perkins, 2014; Tsay, 2003), Japan is often taken as the leader of the East Asian experience in economic development since 1960s. The first tier of followers includes the four Asian Dragons of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, while the ASEAN-4 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand) and China are regarded as the second tier countries. Vietnam could be seen as a newcomer to join the second tier. Even though the level of development in Vietnam remains low, its growth rate has been rather high since the open-up of the economy in 1986. The third tier followers will surely be Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar on the mainland Southeast Asia. With the surge of FDI inflows, the three economies are expected to grow quickly in the near future.

In the development process of East and SE Asian counties discussed above, the direction of FDI in the 1960s to the mid-1980s was mainly from Japan to the four Asian Dragons. From the late 1980s onward, the four Dragons joined Japan in investing in the ASEAN-4 countries, China and Vietnam. The FDI flows have naturally induced some capital-assisted migrants. They consist chiefly of the professionals in manufacturing production and business management as well as their accompanying dependents.

In terms of labour migration, Japan has been resistant in receiving unskilled workers despite the emergence of clandestine foreign labourers around 1980. The majority of foreign workforce in Japan has been with the legal status of students, trainees, and Japanese language learners. Among the Asian Dragons, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong opened their labour markets to foreign workers in the late 1980s or 1990s, whereas South Korea did not do so until 2000. Opposite to the direction of capital flows, the migration of blue-collar workers from ASEAN-4 (except Malaysia) and Vietnam to Asian Dragon countries is very significant. The volume is substantial and the rate of increase is high (IOM, 2008; Tsai and Tsay, 2004; Tsay 2002).

In the mid 1980s, Taiwan entered the stage of labour shortage due to increases in national income as well as changes in demographic and economic structures, which in turn led to the emergence of foreigners illegally working for low-skilled jobs. Moreover, with the Taiwanese currency (New Taiwan Dollar) appreciated by some 40 percent in 1985-1990, the per capita income gap between Taiwan and some SE Asian nations reached 10-20 times, furthering the surge of SE Asian workers to Taiwan. By the end of the 1980s, the number was estimated at 50-125 thousand (Tsay, 1992). This big number of clandestine foreign workers brought great pressure to the Taiwanese authority to consider various responses, including the policy option of importing workers from abroad (Tsay, 2007, 1995a, 1995b).

In the late 1980s, the completion of several major public construction projects in Taiwan was seriously delayed due to lack of workers. As a result, the government granted in 1989 an *ad hoc* permission to import construction workers from Thailand to meet the need. Soon after that, the Employment Service Act of 1992 provided the legal base for labour importation and Taiwan formally started the policy of opening up its labour market to contract workers from SE Asia. Initially, the source countries were limited to Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Vietnam was added to the list in 1999 and quickly became an important one. In the meanwhile, the number of Malaysian workers decreased rapidly to become insignificant, due to its domestic economic development. (Tsay, 2007, 2002). In the following section, the presentation will be mainly on contract workers from the four major providers of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. By the end of 2014, the total number of imported workers reached 550 thousand, not including the undocumented ones.

Since the mid-1980s, many Taiwanese men have married SE Asian ladies and taken their brides to settle down in Taiwan. There are of course demographic and socio- economic factors behind this marriage migration (Tsay, 2008, 2004). The majority of the immigrant spouses from SE Asia are young females, with high capacity and strong incentives to work in Taiwan. Despite the fact that they are disadvantageous in Taiwan labour market, most of them are very aggressive in participating in economic activities, and willing to take the low end jobs (Tsay, 2008, 2007). Based on this fact, the immigrant spouses are similar to the contract workers, in the sense that they also reflect the development gap between Taiwan and SE Asia. Through marriages, the young SE Asian ladies are able to obtain the most direct and effective channel to have the legal status for working in Taiwan. The purpose of migration is clearly to pursue better economic life conditions and to obtain higher job opportunities and pay. By this way, the immigrant spouses could realize their individual (or family) economic expectations of their migration (Tsay, 2015).

At the end of 2014, the number of immigrant spouse from Southeast Asia has reached 140 thousand. The major source countries are Vietnam (2/3), Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia. The first four countries are exactly the providers of contract workers to Taiwan. This overlapping in places of origin indicates a high degree of similarity in the nature of the two different types of migration to Taiwan. The total number of contract workers and immigrant spouses has surged to 690 thousand in 2014. Not only are they important contributors to economic development in Taiwan, but also are important participants in major social activities. For many aged and disabled Taiwanese in particular, they are key care providers and household helpers.

Migration from Southeast Asia to Taiwan

Contract workers

In the late 1970s and the first half of 1980s, the out-migration of SE Asian workers was mainly from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, heading for the Middle East countries. From the mid-1980s, however, the demand for foreign workers in the Arab nations decreased substantially due to the decline of oil prices and the outbreak of the Gulf War. In the meanwhile, the currencies of Japan and the four East Asian Dragons appreciated significantly after the signature of the Plaza Accord in 1985. As a result, the Southeast Asian workers started to bound for Japan and the Asian Dragon countries, where economic development was very impressive. Among the new destinations, Taiwan was particularly attractive due to the big increase in manufacturing production costs and the sharp appreciation of New Taiwan Dollar (Tsay, 2002, 1995b; Martin, Mason and Tsay, 1995).

As shown in Fig. 1A, the number of Southeast Asian workers in Taiwan has continuously increased since the opening up of Taiwanese labour market in the early 1990s. The rate of increment was relatively much higher during the periods of Kuo Min Tang (KMT – Chinese National Party) government (before 2000 and after 2008) than those of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government (2000-2008). The number was 2,999 in 1992, accounting for only 0.18% of the labour force in Taiwan. It jumped up quickly to 189,051 in 1995 and then almost doubled to 326,515 in 2000. In 2010, the number reached 379,653, representing for 3.7% of Taiwan labour force. It is clear that Southeast Asia has become an important source area of human resources for Taiwan. In 2000, the national composition of the contract workers reveal that Thailand is the dominant country (44%), to be followed by the Philippines (30%), Indonesia (24%), and Vietnam (2.4%). In the past decade, however, the number of Indonesian workers increased sharply and continuously, as Fig. 1B clearly depicted. Consequently, the latest available data as of April 2015 (Tables 1, 1A and 1B) reveal that Indonesia has taken the lead in terms of market share (42%), Vietnam was the second (28%), while the corresponding figures for the Philippines and Thailand dropped to 20% and 10%, respectively.

As shown in Tables 1, 1A and 1B, the number (stock) of Southeast Asian contract workers in Taiwan is 572,555 at the end of April 2015. About 60 percent of them are employed in the industrial sector (with very high concentration (95%) in the manufacturing industry), while the remaining 40 percent in the service sector (Table 1A). The industrial sector consists of the agriculture and fishery industry, the manufacturing industry, and the construction industry. The service sector covers mainly the health care providers for the aged and the disabled as well as a small number of household service workers.

Figure 1A: SE Asian Contract Workers in Taiwan by Nationality, 1991-2015

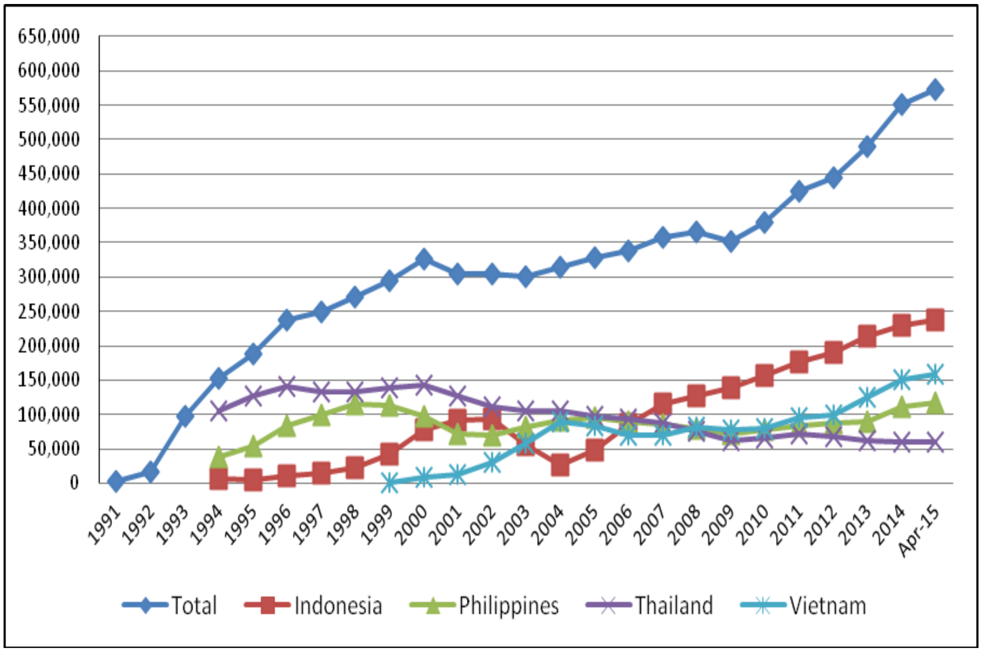
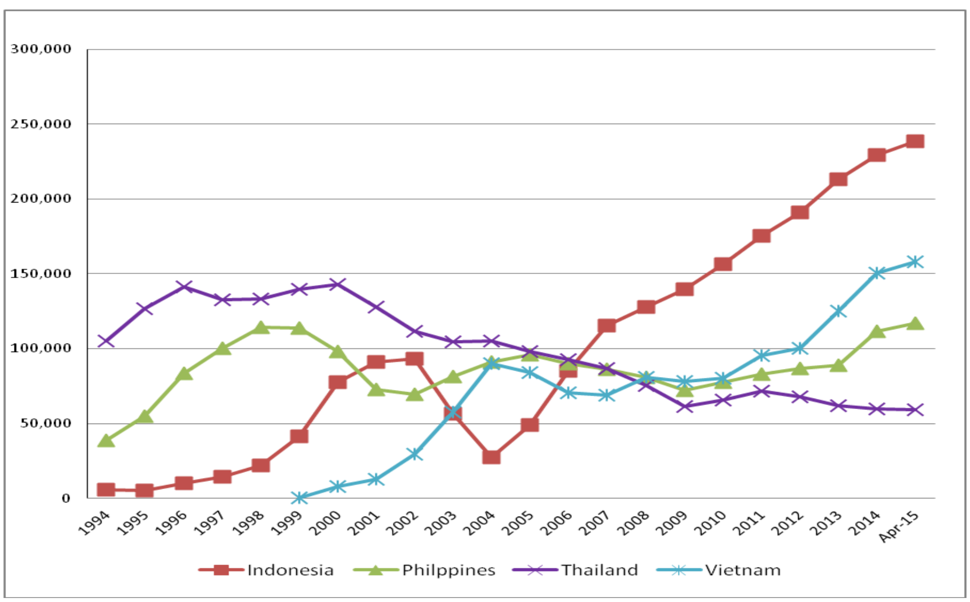


Figure 1B: Contract Workers for Individual Countries, 1994- 2015



Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015

Table 1: SE Asian Workers in Taiwan by Sector and Nationality, April 2015

Sector \ Nation	Total	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
Total	572,555	238,298	116,960	59,021	158,270
Industry Sector	344,706	57,510	90,720	58,385	138,088
Agr.+Fishery	10,491	8,955	1,439	19	78
Manufacturing	328,198	47,249	89,264	55,426	136,256
Construction	6,017	1,306	17	2,940	1,745
Service Sector	227,849	180,788	26,240	636	20,182
Health Care & House Services	227,849	180,788	26,240	636	20,182

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015

Table 1A: Sector Composition (%) of SE Asian Workers by Nationality, April 2015

Sector \ Nation	Total	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
Sum (Number)	100.0 (572,555)	100.0 (238,298)	100.0 (116,960)	100.0 (59,021)	100.0 (158,270)
Industry Sector	60.2	24.1	77.6	98.9	87.2
Agr.+Fishery	1.8	3.8	1.2	0.0	0.0
Manufacturing	57.3	19.8	76.3	93.9	86.1
Construction	1.1	0.5	0.0	5.0	1.1
Service Sector	39.8	75.9	22.4	1.1	12.8

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015

Table 1B: Market Share of SE Nations in Taiwan's Foreign Workers by Sector, April 2015

Sector \ Nation	Total	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
Sum (Number)	100.0 (572,555)	41.6	20.4	10.3	27.6
Industry Sector (Number)	100.0 (344,706)	16.7	26.3	16.9	40.1
Agr.+Fishery (Number)	100.0 (10,491)	85.3	13.7	0.2	0.7
Manufacturing (Number)	100.0 (328,198)	14.3	27.2	16.9	41.5
Construction	100.0	21.7	0.3	48.9	29.2

(Number)	(6,017)				
Service Sector	100.0	79.3	11.5	0.3	8.9
(Number)	(227,849)				

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015

Each of the agriculture (including fishery) and construction industries employs only 1.8 and 1.1 percent of the total foreign workers. The data on sector composition of the contract workers by nationality further reveal a clear distinction for Indonesian workersfrom other nationals. Indonesians are highly concentrated in the service sector (76%), while workers from the other three countries are mostly engaged in the industrial employment (Table 1A). For the industrial sector, the data in Table 1B reveal that Vietnamese is the biggest group (market share of 40%), while Filipinos ranked the second (26%). Each of the Thai and Indonesian groups accounts for only 17 percent of the foreign workers in the industrial sector. This ranking holds true when only the manufacturing industry is considered. On the contrary, Indonesians dominate the market of the service sector (79%) while the market share of Filipinos and Vietnamese is 12 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Table 2 presents the gender composition of Southeast Asian workers in Taiwan, which is highly related to the industrial composition of the workers as discussed above. For the 572,555 SE Asian workers as a whole, the proportion male is 42 percent. In other words, more than a half (58%) of the total SE Asian workers in Taiwan are females. For individual countries, the smallest group of Thais has the highest percent male (83%), to be followed by the 63 percent of Vietnamese, while that of the biggest group (Indonesians) is the lowest (22%). When the employment sector is considered, the gender composition has changed significantly. The percentage of males is 70 percent for all the SE Asian workers in the industrial sector. This sector includes mainly the manufacturing industries (95%), and a small portion of the construction and fishery industries. All countries except the Philippines have high male proportion ranging from 72 to 89 percent. The corresponding figure for the Philippines is 46 percent due to the fact that more Filipino females than males are employed in the electronic manufacturing industries. On the contrary, the service sector which consists of mainly personal care for the aged and the disabled, is highly dominated by female (99%), as expected. Only minimum variation is observed among SE Asian countries. The number of Thais working in the service sector is trivial, accounting for merely 1 percent of the total.

In short, Taiwan started to import contract workers from Thailand in 1989 to meet the need of national public construction projects. With the Employment Service Act of 1992, Taiwan formally opened her labour market to the selected SE Asian countries. Initially, only Indonesians, Malaysians, Filipinos and Thais were admitted to work in certain qualified industries in construction and manufacturing. However, the industrial limitation was rapidly relaxed in the 1990s. By the end of the last century, the importation schemes had covered virtually all kinds of manufacturing and construction industries (Tsay, 1995b). As a result, the total number of foreign workers jumped from 3,000 in 1992 to 190,000 in 1995 and 326,000 in 2000. They took over the 3K (or 3D – dirty, difficult and dangerous) jobs left by Taiwanese workers.

Table 2: Gender Composition of SE Workers in Taiwan by Nationality and Employment Sector, April 2015

Nation / Sector	Total	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand	Vietnam
Total (person)	572,555	238,298	116,960	59,021	158,270
% Male	42.4	21.9	35.7	82.7	63.2
Industry Sector	344,706	57,510	90,720	58,385	138,088
% Male	69.9	88.9	45.6	83.5	72.2
Service Sector	227,849	180,788	26,240	636	20,182
% Female	99.2	99.4	98.4	88.1	98.7

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015

The number of SE Asian workers in Taiwan was kept rather stable in the first decade of the 21st century (351,000 in 2009). However, the proportion working in the industrial sector decreased, while the percentage in the service sector increased due to the rapid population ageing in Taiwan. Since 2009, the size of foreign workers has surged up again probably because of the difficulties encountered by the manufacturing industries during economic downturns. It is clear that the international relations between Taiwan and each of the four SE Asian countries have been on the rise, as evidenced by the trend of labour migration. In the meanwhile the relative importance of individual labour sending nations has changed substantially. Indonesia is now the biggest provider of workers (esp. care takers) to Taiwan, to be followed by Vietnam and the Philippines. Thailand, the lead country in the 1990s, now provides only 10 percent of the total contract workers in Taiwan.

Immigrant Spouses

International marriages had not been common among Taiwanese until the mid-1990s. With the lift of the Martial Law in 1987 and the trend of economic globalization, an increasing number of Taiwanese men went abroad to find brides in China and SE Asia, and then brought them back to settle down in Taiwan (Tsay, 2004). Between 2001 and 2014, the Taiwanese household registration data (Table 3) reveal that more Taiwanese men than women got married (2,008,943 v.s. 1,714,825), and more males than females married to non-Taiwanese (348,576 v.s.

54,458). As a result, the proportion female of the 403,034 immigrant spouses is as high as 86 percent. Their major places of origin are China (56%) and SE Asia (33%). The records reflect the fact that in the past 14 years many Taiwanese men married to Chinese and SE Asian ladies. The brides tended to be much younger and less educated than grooms (Tsay, 2004). In the 1990s, the inter-married males were mostly disadvantageous in terms of age, socio-economic status, or even physical conditions. In recent years, however, the negative selectivity of grooms in the inter-marriage has gradually diminished.

Table 3: Grooms and Brides Registered in Taiwan, 2001-2014, by Nationality

All Nations	Taiwan	Non-Taiwan	China	Hong Kong & Macau	SE Asia	Others
			Total			
4,126,802	3,723,768	403,034	227,141	7,026	131,632	37,235
100.0%	90.2%	9.8%	5.5%	0.2%	3.2%	0.9%
			Grooms			
2,063,401	2,008,943	54,458	10,976	3,360	9,529	30,593
100.0%	97.4%	2.6%	0.5%	0.2%	0.5%	1.5%
			Brides			
2,063,401	1,714,825	348,576	216,165	3,666	122,103	6,642
100.0%	83.1%	17.9%	10.5%	0.2%	5.9%	0.3%

Source: Department of Household Registration, Ministry of the Interior, 2015

Table 4 provides further information on the original nationality of the immigrant spouses residing in Taiwan at the end of 2014. China (including Mainland, Hong kong and Macau) accounts for about two thirds of the total immigrant spouses, while the share of SE Asian nations is 28 percent. Among the SE Asian countries, Vietnam is the biggest provider (65%), to be followed by Indonesia (20%), and then Thailand (6%), the Philippines (6%), and Cambodia (3%). In addition to the direct effect on the population size and composition, the immigration of foreign spouses could have various impacts on the host society of Taiwan. For example, the immigrant spouses from different cultural backgrounds could have adjustment difficulties due to differences in personal life and family experiences. These impacts and problems represent one kind of holistic social fact that the immigrant spouses, their family members and the general public of Taiwan have to face and deal with together.

Table 4: Number of Immigrant Spouses in Taiwan by Nationality, End of 2014

Country	Number	%	As % of SE. Asia
Total	498,368	100.00	
SE. Asia	140,061	28.10	100.00
Vietnam	91,004	18.26	64.97
Indonesia	28,287	5.68	20.20
Thailand	8,467	1.70	6.05
Philippines	8,021	1.61	5.73
Cambodia	4,282	0.86	3.06
China	337,028	67.63	
China Mainland	323,358	64.88	
Hong Kong & Macau	13,670	2.74	
Others	21,279	4.27	

Source: Information Network of the Ministry of the Interior, 2015.

The yearly data in Table 5 on marriage registration and foreign spouses show some major changes during 2001-2014. As mentioned earlier, international marriages became more and more common in Taiwan in the mid and late 1990s. Before that, the percentage of inter-marriages in the total marriages was around 5 percent or less. The proportion went up rapidly in the 1990s and reached 27 percent in 2001. Table 5 shows a peak of 32 percent of the proportion in 2003. It dropped to 24 percent in the next year, and then to 15.5 percent in 2010. In 2013 and 2014, only 13 percent of the total registered marriages in Taiwan are with foreigners.

The numbers on foreign spouses by nationality in Table 5 clearly reveal that the decline in inter-marriages is due to both the decline in marriages with Chinese (from around 30,000 to 10,000) and the decrease in marriages with SE Asians (from around 18,000 to 5,000). On the contrary, there are substantial increases in marriages with people from Hong Kong and Macao (about 3 times) and from the rest of the world (about 50%). The declining trend of immigrant spouses indicates, at least on the surface, an evident slow- down in the hot fashion of international marriages occurred in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Nevertheless, the current level of 13 international marriages per 100 total registered marriages remains high for Taiwanese as seen from the historical records in the early 1990s.

The immigrant spouses, especially those females from SE Asia, have enhanced the existing multicultural configuration in Taiwan. They also affected the processes of social reproduction and economic production, because of the closeness between the marriage market and the labour market. In the case of international marriages, the relationship is further influenced by the state policy and the social relation of production (Huang and Yeoh, 1999). The female immigrant spouses in Taiwan have served not only the need of reproduction of the society, but also the need of economic production of the country. On the one hand, they gave births and played the multiple roles of wives, mothers, and daughter-in-laws. On the other hand, they filled up the gap of labour shortage in the production system. The immigrant spouses usually took jobs in the secondary labour market which are characterized with low pay and low status. At the same time, the immigrant spouses have been deep in the society and families of Taiwan. They could be significant players in the human interactions between Taiwan and their countries of origin.

Table 5: Number of Total Marriages and Foreign Spouses by Nationality, 2001-2014

Year	Total Marriages (A)	Foreign Spouses		Foreign Spouses by Nationality			
		No. (B)	(B)/(A) (%)	China Mainland	H.K. M.K.	SE Asia	Others
2001	170,515	46,202	27.10	26,516	281	17,512	1,893
2002	172,655	49,013	28.39	28,603	303	18,037	2,070
2003	171,483	54,634	31.86	34,685	306	17,351	2,292
2004	131,453	31,310	23.82	10,642	330	18,103	2,235
2005	141,140	28,427	20.14	14,258	361	11,454	2,354
2006	142,669	23,930	16.77	13,964	442	6,950	2,574
2007	135,041	24,700	18.29	14,721	425	6,952	2,602
2008	154,866	21,729	14.03	12,274	498	600,9	2,948
2009	117,099	21,914	18.71	12,796	498	5,696	2,924
2010	138,819	21,501	15.49	12,807	525	5,212	2,957
2011	165,327	21,516	13.01	12,800	663	4,887	3,166
2012	143,384	206,00	14.37	12,034	679	4,784	3,103
2013	147,636	19,492	13.20	10,829	713	4,823	3,127
2014	149,287	19,701	13.20	10,044	942	5,466	3,249

Source: Information Network of the Ministry of the Interior, 2015

Professionals and the Skilled

Comparing to the 570 thousand contract workers at the end of April 2015, the number of foreign professionals and the skilled in Taiwan is rather small. According to the data on person-times of effective employment permits (Table 6), the corresponding figure for the professionals and skilled is no more than 28,668. In terms of category of application, the biggest group is the professionals and skilled jobs (including CEO/Managers of MNC and FDI companies), accounting for over 60 percent of the total. The second biggest group is teachers (mainly English) in regular and cram schools (27%). In terms of national composition of the professionals and skilled, Table 7 shows a heavy concentration of Japanese (29%) and Americans (19%). Among the SE Asian countries, Malaysia has the largest share of 6.6 percent, to be followed by the Philippines (4%). The share for each of Indonesia and Singapore is around 2 percent, while the proportion for Thais is barely 1 percent.

The fact that not many SE Asian professionals and the skilled are working in Taiwan deserves great attention for the host country. On the demand side, Taiwan as a semi-periphery country in the world system is not easy to attract professionals and technicians from other semi-periphery countries, not to mention core countries. Usually, they come with FDI from their countries. Yet the global FDI flows have bounded mainly for the huge market of China and the relatively low labour cost SE Asian nations in recent years. On the supply side, the development of higher education is still at an early stage in many Southeast Asian countries. For these reasons, Taiwan has been working aggressively to attract SE Asian students to pursue advanced studies in Taiwan with a hope that some of them will work as professionals in Taiwan in the future. The next sub-section will further elaborate this endeavour.

Table 6: Person-times of Effective Employment Permits Issued between April 2014 and April 2015 by Category of Application

Category of Application	End of Apr. 2014	End of Apr. 2015	((2)-(1))/(1) (%)
Total	27,676	28,668	3.58
Professional + Skilled Jobs	14,862	15,565	4.98
Teachers in cram schools	5,187	5,069	- 2.27
Teachers in schools	2,730	2,615	- 4.21
Religion, Art and Performance Jobs	1,408	1,825	29.62
CEO/Managers of FDI Companies	2,059	2,196	6.65
Taking contracts	1,384	1,348	- 2.60
Coaches + Athletic Jobs	46	50	8.69

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015.

Table 7: Number of Applications and Employment Permits of Foreign Professionals and the Skilled by Nationality, 2004-April 2015

Nation	Cumulative Application	Cumulative Employment Permits	Effective Employment Permits	Effective Permits (country %)
Total	397,629	383,562	28,668	100.00
Japan	90,964	88,978	8,439	29.43
USA	67,453	65,207	5,501	19.19
Canada	27,688	26,712	1,165	4.06
UK	20,180	19,654	1,116	3.89
Philippines	15,485	14,870	1,143	3.98
Malaysia	15,622	14,551	1,884	6.57
South Africa	11,721	11,299	531	1.85
Korea	13,137	12,646	909	3.17
Germany	11,299	11,041	449	1.57
Russia	10,029	9,826	479	1.67
India	10,100	9,633	1,081	3.77
Australia	7,763	7,523	422	1.47
Thailand	8,404	7,833	265	0.92
Hong Kong	8,731	8,203	694	2.42
France	7,637	7,382	569	1.98
Indonesia	6,664	6,414	632	2.20
Singapore	6,213	5,909	542	1.89
Others	58,239	55,881	2,847	9.93

Source: Ministry of Labor, 2015

Foreign Students

Before the 1980s, the focus of internationalization of higher education was placed on culture and student exchanges. Due to accelerating globalization and the market-oriented considerations, the internationalization of higher education started in late 1980s to take the political-economic approach and to emphasize the importance of economic development and national competitiveness. At the same time, the degree of internationalization in higher education was taken as an important indicator of international competitiveness. As such, a major consideration for many countries to internationalize higher education has been on how to attract foreign students and to help these talents find employment in the host societies.

The Taiwan government has since 2004 adopted various policies to encourage local students to pursue higher education abroad and initiated many programs to facilitate students to be more internationalized. At the same time, the government also launched the policy of recruiting students from abroad to take higher education in Taiwan. One of the major endeavours is the set up of the Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education of Taiwan (FICHET) in 2005 and its ESIT (Elite Study in Taiwan) project put out in 2008. However, it is a fact that the export of higher education services is embedded in the power structure of the world system. It would be difficult for Taiwan, as a semi-periphery country, to sell higher education services to the core countries, or even to other semi- periphery nations. The relatively possible destinations of the export would be the neighbouring periphery states. Consequently, the education export programs of Taiwan have almost completely targeted at the developing countries in SE Asia.

There are other reasons for Taiwan to focus on the SE Asian markets of higher education. They include: (1) low rate of enrolment in the tertiary schools (average gross rate of < 20%) in these countries, (2) geographic proximity and cultural similarity to Taiwan, (3) a big number of ethnic Chinese population, and (4) solid relations in economic activities with Taiwan, including trade, investment, and labour migration. Taiwan has been expecting to act as an international incubation center for the high-level manpower of SE Asia. The final aim is to be more integrated with the SE Asian community. For this reason, Taiwan would like to strengthen the interactions with SE Asian countries through academic exchanges and the training of professionals and the skilled workforce. An initial step toward this end is to increase the recruitment of Southeast Asian students to Taiwan for pursuing higher education.

According to official statistics of the past ten academic years (Table 8), the major source countries of SE Asian students in Taiwan are Vietnam (24,629), Malaysia (18,674) and Indonesia (17,841). These three countries together account for 85 percent of the total SE Asian students (72,464). The size of Vietnamese students was below 1,000 in the first two academic years, but increased rapidly since then to be over 3,000 in the last five years. The rate of increase has also been high in the case of Malaysia, while the number of Indonesian students remains more stable. The increasing trends shown in Table 8 reflect some results of the efforts that Taiwan has made since the early 2000s in attracting students from SE Asia. There are, of course, still rooms for further improvement, as the numbers for some countries remain either very small or not much increasing.

Table 8: Southeast Asian Students in Taiwan by Nationality, 2005~2015

Year / Nation	2005~2006	2006~2007	2007~2008	2008~2009	2009~2010	2010~2011	2011~2012	2012~2013	2013~2014	2014~2015	Total
Myanmar	80	57	79	47	33	17	17	14	7	47	398
Cambodia	29	57	36	24	14	6	8	5	3	2	184
Indonesia	1,394	1,555	1,658	2,056	1,492	1,524	1,706	1,923	2,183	2,350	17,841
Laos	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	2	6
Malaysia	425	671	872	1,001	1,560	1,961	2,286	2,722	3,420	3,756	18,674
Philippines	164	197	252	302	313	292	336	338	411	430	3,035
Singapore	22	45	71	67	103	99	122	109	140	132	910
Thailand	332	379	487	549	637	760	848	814	972	1009	6,787
Vietnam	671	836	1,276	1,779	2,592	3,282	3,687	3,706	3,428	3,372	24,629
Total	3,117	3,797	4,731	5,825	6,744	7,943	9,011	9,631	10,565	11,100	72,464

Source: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education

Table 9 presents data on SE Asian students in Taiwan by gender and area of specialization for the 2013-14 academic year. Among the total 11,100 SE Asian students in Taiwan, slightly more males (53%) than females (47%), and a quarter of the total enrolled in Mandarin language programs (1,111 males and 1,701 females). The proportion of students engaged in pursuing higher education degrees is over 70 percent, representing a significant increase in the recent years. In the early 2000s and before, about a half or more of the SE Asian students came to Taiwan mainly for learning Mandarin. The higher percentage of students enrolled in degree programs means an improvement in the internationalization of higher education (Huang, 2006). In other words, Taiwan has made progress in the export of educational services to some developing nations in SE Asia.

The total number of degree students (close to 8,300) is rather evenly distributed by gender, but unequally spread out in terms of area of specialization (Table 9). Slightly over two thirds of them major in the fields of humanities, social sciences, and business, while the rest in natural sciences and engineering. As expected, the former group is consisted of more females (58%), while the later group is more represented by males (65%). For individual countries, Indonesia is distinctive in having a high percentage of non-degree language students. Among the degree students, Indonesians are also unique in having more studying natural sciences and engineering than studying social sciences and business. On the contrary, Malaysians are characterized with a very low proportion of language students (2.3%), but a high concentration in social sciences and business among the degree students. To a less extent, degree students from Vietnam are also more enrolled in the fields of social sciences and business.

Human Migration from Taiwan to Southeast Asia

Capital-assisted Migration

With economic globalization, Taiwan has attracted a big number of migrant workers and spouses from SE Asia in the past two decades. The sending countries of the migrants have also been destinations of outward FDI from Taiwan. In fact, Taiwan started to invest substantially in the ASEAN-4 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand), China and Vietnam in the mid-1980s. There are two important contributing factors: (1) the sharp appreciation of Taiwan currency after the Plaza Accord of 1985, and (2) the relaxation of tight foreign exchange regulations in 1987. In 1994, 1997, and 2002, Taiwan initiated three waves of "Go-South Policy" in order to reduce the concentration of investment in China and to avoid the over-dependence on Chinese economy.

Table 9: Number of Southeast Asian Students in Taiwan by Gender and Specialization, 2013~2014 Academic Year

Country Gender	Area of Specialization					
	Total	Mandarin Language	Humanities + Social Sciences	Business, Law, Services	General Science, Engineering	Life Science
Total	**11,100***	**2,812**	**2,552**	**3,104**	**1,974**	**655**
Male	5,172*	1,111	997	1,359	1,434	271
Female	5,928*	1,701	1,555	1,745	540	384
Myanmar	**47**	**42**	**1**	**2**	**-**	**2**
%Male	34.0	35.7	-	-	-	50.0
Indonesia	**2,350**	**976**	**213**	**445**	**564**	**155**
%Male	44.9	41.0	25.8	39.1	65.2	36.8
Malaysia	**3756**	**85**	**1619**	**1,180**	**600**	**262**
%Male	52.9	42.4	44.0	53.1	83.7	42.0
Philippines	**430**	**292**	**16**	**43**	**64**	**15**
%Male	52.3	51.7	50.0	41.9	65.7	40.0
Singapore	**132**	**32**	**76**	**10**	**5**	**9**
%Male	28.8	31.3	23.7	40.0	80.0	22.2
Thailand	**1,009**	**461**	**135**	**219**	**80**	**114**
%Male	34.5	35.1	30.4	26.9	48.8	41.2
Vietnam	**3,372**	**922**	**491**	**1,208**	**661**	**90**
%Male	44.6	36.6	33.0	39.6	72.5	53.3

Note: * including 2 females from each of Cambodia and Laos

Source: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, 2015

In the meanwhile, SE Asian countries adopted more open policies toward FDI and provided various incentives to attract foreign capital. As a result, Taiwanese investment in SE Asia increased significantly. With the capital flows, a certain number of management specialists and production engineers and technicians, as well as some of their dependents, moved to the capital receiving countries. They formed a counter flow of the migration of contract workers and immigrant spouses from SE Asia to Taiwan.

The size of the capital-assisted migrants from Taiwan to SE Asia has never been clearly known. It is believed that the number became substantial around 1990 and reached 100,000 in the 1990s (Wang, 2003). In 2001, it was estimated that the number of Taiwanese businessmen ("Tai Shang") in SE Asia is about 300,000 (Chen, 2012). However a high percentage of them entered the destination countries with (short term) visitor visas. As a result, the volume of "Tai Shang" in SE Asia was estimated as small as 50 to 60 thousand (Ku, 2006). The geographic distribution of the "Tai Shang" has significantly changed over time, reflecting the shift of investment areas. Initially, Malaysia and Thailand were the major receiving countries, to be followed by Indonesia and the Philippines. In recent years, Vietnam has overtaken other SE Asian countries due to lower wage level. Indonesia and the Philippines are the next important new destinations, while the number of "Tai Shang" in Thailand and Malaysia has been stabilizing.

It is indeed a serious limitation in migration studies that Taiwan does not have adequate data on migration of her nationals to other countries. As the constitution protects the right of free movement of the people, no information on country of destination, status of visit, and length of stay abroad can be collected after Taiwanese citizens have exited Taiwan. However, it is clear that the number of capital-assisted migration from Taiwan to SE Asia is rather substantial, probably in the range of a few hundred thousand to almost a half million. With the continuing inflows of Taiwanese capital, the size of the capital-assisted migration to SE Asia will keep growing (Song, 2012; Peng, 2008).

Student Migration

Traditionally, the general direction of student migration is mainly from the less developed countries (LDCs) to the more developed countries (MDCs), or between MDCs. In recent years, the number of MDC students to study in LDCs has started to increase. According to the data on student visas in Table 10, the number of Taiwanese students going to study abroad increased from 29 thousand in 1999 to 52 thousand in 2014. However, the destination of the student migration out of Taiwan in 1999-2014 is highly concentrated in American countries (52%), to be followed by European countries (25%), Oceania (13% mainly Australia and New Zealand) and Asia (10%, mainly Japan). Southeast Asia accounts for only 1.3 percent of the total student migration from Taiwan. Among the 7,680 students went to study in SE Asia, Singapore is the top receiving country (3,624), while the number for each of Thailand (1,564) and Malaysia (1,170) is much smaller. The remaining SE Asian countries received only a few Taiwan students (Vietnam and the Philippines), or no students at all (e.g., Indonesia).

Table 10: Number of Student Visas Issued to Taiwanese by Destination, 1999~2014

Nation	1999-2003	2004-2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Total	154,162	176,545	33,629	33,881	32,346	57,859	49,219	52,031	589,672
Asia	12,027	14,334	3,912	4,313	3,963	7,192	6,948	8,964	61,653
SE Asia	**2,808**	**1,708**	**95**	**150**	**170**	**273**	**290**	**2,186**	**7,680**
Philippines	418	-	-	-	-				418
Singapore	2,184	1,440	-	-	-				3,624
Thailand	206	268	95	150	170	214	214	247	1,564
Malaysia						59	76	1,035	1,170
Vietnam								904	904
America	80,244	93,896	17,914	18,705	16,936	28,167	26,133	24,516	306,511
Europe	46,529	52,693	7,150	6,830	7,555	9,101	7,479	8,984	146,321
Africa	236	111	8	21	-	-	-	-	376
Oceania	15,126	15,511	4,645	4,012	3,892	13,399	8,659	9,567	74,811

Source: Ministry of Education, 2015

Table 11 presents data on student migration between Taiwan and SE Asian countries in 1999-2014. It is evident that the Taiwan-SE Asia interaction in terms of student migration is highly asymmetrical, with the size of SE Asian Students in Taiwan more than 11 times the number of Taiwanese students in Southeast Asia as a whole. At the national level, all countries except Singapore are characterized with net student migration to Taiwan. The size of the net migration is particularly large for Indonesia (26,212) and Vietnam (25,326), to be followed by Malaysia (18,383) and Thailand (6,386).

Table 11: Student Migration between Taiwan and Southeast Asian Countries, 1999~2014

Country	SE Asians in Taiwan	Taiwanese in SE Asia	Net Migration
Myanmar	667	-	667
Cambodia	202	-	202
Indonesia	26,212	-	26,212
Laos	9	-	9
Malaysia	19,553	1,170	18,383
Philippines	3,843	418	3,425
Thailand	7,950	1,564	6,386
Vietnam	26,230	904	25,326
Singapore	1,006	3,624	-2,618
Total	85,672	7,680	77,992

Source: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, 2015.

Concluding Remarks

Historically, Taiwan has been a society of migrants. In many time periods, immigration was an important component of the population growth in Taiwan. In the past three decades, Taiwan experienced rapid social changes, economic development, political democratization, and demographic transition. As a result, Taiwan entered the stage of labour shortage and attracted migrant workers from SE Asia. By April 2015, the total number of SE Asian contract workers in Taiwan is 570 thousand. Indonesia is the lead sending country, while Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand are also key providers. The workers have efficiently filled up the labour shortage and contributed significantly to the economic and social development in Taiwan. Their time and efforts deserve to be highly appreciated.

From the mid-1990s, more and more SE Asian females married to Taiwanese and migrated to Taiwan, with the hope of getting higher standard of living and better working conditions and rewards. At the end of 2014, the number of immigrant spouses reached 140 thousand. The major source countries are Vietnam (2/3) and Indonesia (20%). The countries of origin of the immigrant spouses and the migrant workers are virtually the same. The female immigrant spouses mostly got married at rather young ages. They have high rates of participation in economic and family activities and contribute significantly to household work, care for children and the aged, and family business. Many of them even supplement their family income by working as wage earners in the labour market. The immigrant spouses have played an important role in their own family lives as well as in the economy and society of Taiwan (Tsay, Cheng and Huang, 2012).

The labour migration and the marriage migration discussed above represent important human interactions between Taiwan and major SE Asian countries in the past 2-3 decades. The two types of migration also account for the major part of immigration to Taiwan except that from China. In 2001-2010, the number of immigrants (excluding those from China) almost doubled (from 470,000 to 820,000). Migrant workers (all SE Asians) and immigrant spouses (90% are SE Asians) together account for 90 percent of the total increment in population inflows to Taiwan. It is clear that SE Asian countries have played key roles in the human interactions between Taiwan and other countries. This particular relationship should be well appreciated and properly utilized.

With the globalization of higher education, Taiwan has made great efforts to attract student migration from SE Asia in the past decade. Between the academic years of 2005-06 and 2014-15, the total number of SE Asian students in Taiwan is over 72 thousand. The list of major sending countries is almost exactly the same as that of migrant workers and immigrant spouses. The student migration has just added a new key dimension to the existing interactions between Taiwan and the places of origin of migrants in SE Asia.

Compared to migrant workers and immigrant spouses, or even foreign students, the number of professionals and the skilled from the whole world to Taiwan has been small and stayed at slightly over 20 thousand. The proportion from SE Asia is only 16 percent, mainly from Malaysia and the Philippines while the number from each of Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand is less than 1,000. There is plenty of room for improvement in this area. It is hoped that the recent increase in SE Asian students in Taiwan will bring some of them to stay and work in Taiwan.

Due to differences in the level of economic development, the human migration from Taiwan to SE Asia is much less popular than that of the opposite direction. One major component of the Taiwan-SE Asia migration is the capital-assisted migrants (Tai Shang). It is believed that the number of "Tai Shang" is in the range of 50 to 60 thousand. The total number of Taiwanese (including dependents) in SE Asia could be 2 or 3 times that of "Tai-San." There are a few thousand Taiwanese students in SE Asia, some of them are in fact dependents of "Tai Shang" The size of student migration from Taiwan to SE Asia is much smaller than the flow of SE Asian students to Taiwan.

In summary, the human interactions in terms of migration between Taiwan and SE Asia in the past 2 to 3 decades are highly asymmetrical. For each type of migration, the main flow of SE Asians to Taiwan is much more significant than the flow of the opposite direction. The most important type is the migration of contract workers, who are admitted to Taiwan based on employment. Even for the marriage migration, job considerations are also often observed in various cases and mentioned by many immigrant spouses. To some extent, the marriage migration can be seen as a special type of labour migration. In Taiwan, the majority of workers and spouses from SE Asia can realize their migration expectations. They also efficiently solved the problem of severe labour shortage in Taiwan. The result is good for all parties including the individuals (workers and spouses as well as their families), the employers, as well as the sending and receiving countries.

The asymmetry in human migration between SE Asia and Taiwan means an advantage to Taiwan in managing bilateral relations with each of the labour source countries. For example, Taiwan is one of the most important host countries of out-migrants from SE Asian countries. Taiwan receives 25-30 percent of the total number of workers sent out by Vietnam. The corresponding figure for Indonesia is about 20 percent while that for the Philippines is 4 percent. For Thailand, Taiwan used to receive as high as 60 percent of the total Thai labour export. With the decline of Thai workers going abroad in general and to Taiwan in particular, the proportion has declined to the current level of below 40 percent. The remittances that the SE Asian workers took back home from Taiwan have contributed significantly to the improvement of economic status of their family members. The inflow of remittances is also a key component of foreign income for the labour sending countries.

It is a fact that Taiwan has made great efforts in improving the systems of recruiting, managing, and utilizing the contract workers from Southeast Asia. There are still some shortcomings, nevertheless, in the design of various programs and in their enforcement. Consequently, there are still cases of illegal brokers, labour exploration, and mistreatment and abuses. There are also quite some numbers of workers running away from their contracts. These irregularities have resulted in problems of worker protection and social safety. All the difficulties could be much easier solved with appropriate cooperation between the labour sending countries and the host society of Taiwan. The international community has been urging the establishment of some regional mechanisms to enhance smooth operations of international labour migration (IOM, 2008). If the rights and benefits of migrants, and migrant workers in particular, could be properly protected, the cross-border movement of people would benefit individual migrants, sending and receiving countries, simultaneously.

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Note

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