

# Challenges in Fostering People-to- People Ties: China Studies in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asia Studies in China

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# People-to-People Ties

## Cooperation Priorities in the Action Plan

- “They should promote policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds as their five major goals”
- “People-to-People Bonds”: “People-to-people bond provides the public support for implementing the Initiative. We should carry forward the spirit of friendly cooperation of the Silk Road by promoting extensive cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges and cooperation, media cooperation, youth and women exchanges and volunteer services, so as to win public support for deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation.”

# The Role of Academic/Intellectual Studies

- Foundation of a deep understanding of a different society
- Chinese scholar He Zhaotian, “treat others as ‘others’”
- Requirement of the new knowledge and understanding
- In Southeast Asia –China Studies in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Studies in China

# Southeast Asian Studies in China

- Lack of understanding of the works of Chinese scholars in SEA, mainly because of language.
- Traditional strengths: border history, ancient history, overseas Chinese studies, etc.
- Critical issues: (1) lack of experts in local languages within then academia
- (2) lack of field research
- (3) concentration of Southeast Asia Studies in southern universities
- (4) Sino-centric view or consciousness

# China Studies in SEA

- With the exception of Singapore, overall still very much underdeveloped
- Four groups of countries: (1) Singapore, (2) Vietnam, (3) Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, (4) Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei
- Singapore: the most well developed, fully integrated with global discourses on China Studies and with Chinese scholars, strong reliance on foreign-originated world-class scholars

- Vietnam –quantitatively the largest, but the quality is very difficult to evaluate, given most studies are published in Vietnamese
- Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand – lack of personnel, narrow focus on issues (mostly bilateral relations), language, and so on.
- Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar –very little academic studies on China

# Policy suggestions

- For China's academics, to go beyond the traditional strengths
- Integrating language studies with area studies
- Professorial Chairs funded by SEA governments in Chinese universities
- Translations into Chinese the works of SEA philosophers, scholars, intellectuals, etc.
- SEA doctoral students in China –more research on domestic China's issues

The End