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China-ASEAN Relations in Higher Education: An Analytical Framework

Abstract China's dramatic economic rise has tended to overshadow other wider perspectives on the developing China and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) relationship, including in higher education. The article examines contemporary relations between China and ASEAN, set against the longer term development of cultural and trade relations. It is argued that, notwithstanding current territorial disputes, and a history of discrimination against ethnic Chinese in several parts of ASEAN, prospects for a deepening of relations in higher education remain strong. Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam are selected as three instances of the developing relationship in higher education and some of the links traced, with the former assessed as best placed to take advantage of its China relations in higher education. The developing sense of regionalism is seen as likely to further enhance China-ASEAN relations in higher education.

Keywords China, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), regionalism, history, higher education, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam

Introduction

Just as with outside perceptions of China more generally, China and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) relations tend to be seen through the prism of economics. At best, this represents an unfortunate compression of a much richer, more longstanding set of relations. While economics is certainly an important dimension, this one-eyed view ignores the longstanding history of relations between the two, the diverse and complex array of bilateral relations with China among ASEAN member states, a developing China-ASEAN regional architecture, the changing regional security situation occasioned by China's rise, the wider significance of the substantial Chinese diaspora in South East Asia, and

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the much richer array of contemporary connections, that certainly includes higher education.

Economic Relations

That said, there is no doubt that recognition of China's economic rise, together with growing China-ASEAN economic complementarity, has helped propel deeper relations, including in higher education. China's much-appreciated intervention in the aftermath of the regional currency crisis of 1997–1998, offering a major loan to Thailand and helping to raise loans for Indonesia, was widely noted in the region, as were President Hu Jintao's repeated statements of "China's peaceful rise," paralleled by China's formal assent to the ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Co-operation, and Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, in 2003 (Vaughan & Morrison, 2006; Whitney & Shambaugh, 2008; Cheow, 2004, May 3). The US\$ 3 billion provided in aid by China in the aftermath of the terrible regional tsunami of 2004 was also appreciated, as have been further soft loans to ASEAN member states, and partial funding for key development projects (Hirono, 2010; Laksmana, 2011).

The China-ASEAN Free Trade Area that came into effect in January 2010 offers great potential to ASEAN member states, particularly in areas such as farm produce, mechanical processing, and marine products, but also in service sector trade, including tourism, finance, and higher education. The rise in service sector trade is but one artifact of the growth of the Chinese middle class in recent years, now estimated at around 12 percent of the total population, or around 160 million (Kharas, 2011). The spectacular growth of Chinese outbound tourism in recent years, for example, has been paralleled by a desire to explore the neighborhood, with ASEAN member nations being major beneficiaries. Of the top ten destinations for Chinese tourists in 2011, four were from ASEAN. Of the overall total of 70.25 million trips taken by Chinese outbound tourists, Malaysia hosted 1.74 million, Thailand 1.52, Vietnam 1.14, and Singapore 1.0 million (Xin, 2012, April, 13–15). Indonesia is in a good position to double its current total of tourists from China (Li, 2012). China is also becoming an important tourist destination for ASEAN members, with 4.98 million visits registered in 2008 (Tong & Chong, 2010, p. 7). In turn, this burgeoning trend is spurring demand for associated services, including higher education services and Chinese language training, in those countries. ASEAN is now a distinct and growing priority for China's higher education policy, and part of its wider ambition to boost its projection of soft power within the region. A notable example consists of China's Confucius Institutes, that are spreading in its ASEAN neighbors: 12 in Thailand, seven in Indonesia, three in the Philippines, two in Malaysia, two in

Myanmar, one in Singapore, one in Cambodia, and one in Laos (Yang, 2012). Nonetheless, as will be seen below, nationalism plays its part in restricting foreign incursions, including within the growing service sector. Two contrasting examples occurred in 2012 in the banking industry: In Indonesia, a proposed takeover of Indonesia's *Bank Danamon*, by Singapore's DBD Group Holdings, raised nationalist hackles (in the former), while at the same time, Singapore announced it would grant full banking licenses to two Chinese Banks (of which one would act as a clearing house for yuan-denominated transactions), under the umbrella of the China-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (Pesek, 2012; Singapore to give full license, 2012, July 7). In turn, China promised to expedite all applications by Singapore banks for the establishment of branches and sub-branches in China.

Overall, ASEAN's trade with China surpassed that of Japan in 2011, to become China's third-largest trading partner, rising 24 percent over the year to US\$362.3 billion, after the USA at US\$447 billion and the EU at US\$567 billion (Bao, 2012, April 20). An indication of growth is that in 1990 total bilateral China-ASEAN trade had been estimated at US\$39.5 billion, and US\$139.9 billion in 2006 (Welch, 2011b, p. 40; see Fig. 1). Of this growth, energy is a vital component: Chinese investment in the energy sectors in Singapore, Myanmar, and, Cambodia is substantial (Maricris, 2012, August 10). Equally, while China is already Indonesia's largest trading partner, for example, huge Chinese investment in Indonesia's oil and gas sector is a major feature of the relationship, notwithstanding the fact that the latter did not resume formal diplomatic ties with China until 1990, and that they have a history of "ambivalence" (Laksmana, 2011). Bilateral trade surpassed US\$40 billion in 2010, with Indonesian concerns about a trade deficit of over US\$5.5 billion leading to it exempting almost 400 categories of goods from the 2010 CAFTA (Laksmana, 2011). According to Zhang Wei, Vice-Chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, the fact that trade with ASEAN is growing much faster than with the EU or the USA (each currently beset by significant economic headwinds that are unlikely to end in the shorter term; Lowrey, 2012, August 19) means that ASEAN is set to overtake the other two within the coming years (although this is only likely to occur if there is little or no growth in China-US trade, and an actual decline in China-EU trade; Sutter & Huang, 2012): "Thanks to zero tariffs, preferential trade policies, and geographic advantages, both the increasing speed and scale of that trade will be in the forefront globally, and ASEAN will become China's No 1 trading partner by 2015" (Zhang as cited in Bao, 2012, April 20). This trend will doubtless be enhanced if China decides to join the recently announced ASEAN Framework on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), as some indications suggest (Wu & Mealy, 2012, June 26).

At the same time, however, as all ASEAN economies realize, this increased dependence on the strength and resilience of the Chinese economy presents

something of a risk, particularly to resource-based economies such as Indonesia. According to the East Asia Forum, China contributes up to 80 percent of developing East Asia's GDP (Rahardja & World Bank, 2012), which means that the current slowdown in China translates into direct effects on SE Asian economies. A re-orientation towards service sector trade, and higher value production, could potentially mitigate such effects.

Fig. 1 China-ASEAN Total Trade, 1994–2009

Source: “*China-ASEAN free trade area in 2010. A regional perspective* (EAI Background Brief No. 519),” 2010, by S. Y. Tong & C. S. K. Chong. Singapore: East Asia Institute, National University of Singapore, p. 4.

Territorial Disputes

What makes this all the more remarkable is that it occurs against a background of territorial disputes between China and some of its ASEAN neighbors (Bowring, 2012, June 8; Severino, 2012, August 17). China, it should be recalled, is bounded on its southern border by several Southeast Asian states: Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), and Laos, while also sharing sea borders with all of the Southeast Asian countries, with the exception of Burma. As recently as 2011, China was involved in disputes with both the Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea, while 2012 saw a further maritime confrontation between China and the Philippines, and the passage of a law in Vietnam asserting sovereignty over the Chinese *Nansha* and *Xisha*, that led to sharp Chinese criticism (Bowring, 2012, April 22; Torode, 2012, April 19; Bowring, 2012, June 8; China gets tough, 2012).

Notwithstanding close ties, growing trade and more integrated economies, and

a sense among some ASEAN member states that China's rise may help reduce their dependence on the US, there is still a degree of reserve and hedging on the part of South East Asia, with respect to China's rise (Osborne, 2006; Wang, 2005, Whitney & Shambaugh, 2008; Taylor, 2012, May 11). China is assessed by some as pursuing twin paths: the first a more robust assertion of its claims in the disputed areas, the other emphasizing "win-win" diplomacy, the continuance of enhanced trade and cooperation, and openness to discussions on a code of conduct, "when the time is ripe" (Sutter & Huang, 2012).

Anti-Chinese Sentiments

A further element complicating China-ASEAN relations is ethnic. Longstanding concerns about Chinese minorities in several ASEAN member states, notably their disproportionate importance in national economies, have also been expressed in intermittent outbreaks of violence directed against local Chinese groups. Such incidents began several centuries ago, as the history of Chinese settlement in South East Asia reveals. In more recent times, the aggressive campaign against the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) in Indonesia in 1965, at the time the second largest Communist party in Asia, was precipitated by an attempted *putsch* in 1965 that many Indonesians suspected had support of both local Chinese, and Beijing. The *putsch*, that resulted in the killing of six generals, unleashed bloody reprisals against the PKI across Indonesia. Of the hundreds of thousands of victims, some were simply killed due to their Chinese origin (Farram, 2010, p. 392; Suryadinata, 2003; Wang, 2005), resentment at suspected Beijing's support for the PKI, and perceived attempts to lure local Chinese into greater loyalty to the Chinese regime. Indonesia-China diplomatic relations, formally re-established only in 1990, have long been affected by a widespread view of ethnic-Chinese Indonesians as "the other": "a separate 'race' with a different religion and special economic privileges, unwilling to change and only concerned with its own well-being" (Laksmiana, 2011). Anti-Chinese riots occurred as recently as 1998, in Jakarta, Medan, and other cities, while bilateral relations, frozen by President Suharto in 1967, did not fully recover until the short-lived Presidency of Abdurahmin Wahid, inaugurated in 1999 (Conboy, 2002).

In Malaysia, bloody riots erupted between Chinese Malaysians and ethnic Malays (known as *Bumiputras*) in 1969. Longstanding Malaysian policies conferring preference upon ethnic Malays, including quotas on Chinese Malaysians in higher education, (now acknowledged by one of its major proponents as ineffective), were supposedly to compensate for the under-representation of ethnic Malays in the domestic economy. These

anti-Chinese sentiments have at times erupted into violent riots targeting Chinese minorities in both Malaysia and Indonesia, including incidents in higher education. In Indonesia, such riots occurred at the same university (Trisakti) in 1965, and again in the dying days of the Suharto regime in May 1998, when six students were shot dead, followed by larger anti-government riots, some directed against Chinese communities, that resulted in the rape of ethnic Chinese women, and over 1,000 deaths, many burnt alive (Welch 2011b, pp. 33–34; Pramudatama, 2012, May 13; Refuge Research Tribunal, 2006). Vietnam, too, which as recently as 1979 was engaged in war against China, has again seen anti-Chinese demonstrations in 2011 and 2012 in response to rising maritime tensions between the two (Nguyen, 2012).

In this context, it should be remembered that ASEAN, established in 1967 during the Cold War, was in large part founded as a bulwark against rising Communism in the region, notably what was then perceived as Chinese expansionism (Jarvis & Welch, 2011, p. 3), although this did not prevent intermittent conflicts between China and Vietnam. Indeed, it was this same anti-communist sentiment, at least in part, which meant that Vietnam only joined the ASEAN club in 1995. It is also pertinent to point out that, in the case of Indonesia, Chinese Indonesians made up a substantial proportion of PKI members, and their loyalty was seen as at least questionable, by many, in a situation where anti-Chinese sentiments were at times being inflamed for domestic political purposes.

A Longstanding History of Relations

In fact, however, relations between the Chinese Dragon, and the dynamic Tiger Cub economies of current South East Asia are at least two millennia old. According to one of the major scholars of the relationship, intra-regional trade began around the third century BCE, and was extended in the Three Kingdoms period and again during the Tang dynasty (618–906), although it was not until much later that it grew significantly (Wang, 2000). Historical records indicate trade with current day Vietnam, Cambodia, Java, and Sumatra during the first millennium, voyages of exploration from China to Southeast Asia during the third century, significant contact between Buddhists in China and counterparts in Southeast Asia during the fifth and sixth centuries, and later concourse among Muslim communities in China and what is now Indonesia (Chang, 1988; Gelber 2007; Welch, 2012a; 2012b). Some efforts were more expansionist: during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), for instance, Kublai Khan sought to extend China's territory and influence to the region, notably Java.

Trade and exploration were in both directions. Ancestors of today's Malays

and Indonesians were active seafarers in the region in the fifth century BCE, while,

The Malay-speaking Hindu-ised Cham seagoing empire of central Viet Nam dominated South China Sea trade until it was conquered by the Vietnamese about the time that European traders began to arrive in Asia, while trade between Champa (present day southern Viet Nam) and Luzon was well-established long before the Chinese drew their 13th century map. (Bowring, 2012, June 8; see also Heidhues, 2001, pp. 25–26)

In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, for example, Chinese traders, including non-Han Muslims, settled in current Vietnam, Cambodia, around the Gulf of Thailand, and in Java and Sumatra. In the early fifteenth century, the Chinese emperor gave his protection to the port of Malacca, thereby legitimizing Chinese settlement in what is now Malaysia. Its ruler, Paramaswara, after supposedly travelling to China, married one of the emperor's daughters, and then returned to Malacca with his new wife, and retinue of over two hundred retainers. A weakened government in Beijing from the 1620s to the end of the Ming dynasty in 1644 provided further opportunities for traders, often Hokkien, or Fujianese, to explore the region. Records of the time indicated thousands living in Java, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Malay Archipelago. The peak of Hokkien migration to ports of Southeast Asia in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, was paralleled by massacres of Chinese settlers in Manila and Batavia (the former name for Jakarta; Reid, 2008).

But perhaps the most famous episode remains shrouded in mystery, since imperial records were destroyed not long after the event. Six centuries ago, in the early Ming dynasty, famed admiral Zheng He was charged by Emperor Chengzu with charting the Western Sea, in the region now known as South East Asia. Admiral Zheng led seven voyages, involving dozens of ships (some as long as 400 feet), and some 27,000 crew, between 1405 and 1433, bringing brocade and other fabrics, as well as celadon and Chinese enamelware, to some of the countries of the region, while bringing back building materials and other articles. A Muslim, Zheng would have felt comfortable among the Muslim cultures of what are today Malaysia and Indonesia, but the significance of his voyages was much larger and more enduring, as the historian Richard von Glahn confirmed:

“Zheng He reshaped Asia.” Maritime history in the fifteenth century is essentially the Zheng He story and the effects of Zheng He's voyages. For instance, Malacca, on the Malayan peninsula, and Zheng He's most important port after those in China, in the fifteenth century became the great port and hub of a trading network that extended across Southeast Asia and up to China. (Gunde, 2004)

Epistemic Routes

Trade in ideas, however, just as important as trade in goods, is at least as long duration. And this movement of ideas strongly reshaped higher learning within the region. As early as the end of the Period of the Warring States (c. 220 BCE), when Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified China, the country's territory extended to the Red River Delta, in current Vietnam. Chinese poetry, astronomy, medicine, and arithmetic were influential in much of what is now northern Vietnam, as was Confucianism, which over the course of centuries became the major form of higher learning in the region, as a visit to *Van Mieu*, the Temple of Learning/Literature in Ha Noi (refurbished some time ago, compliments of American Express) will confirm (Gelber, 2007, p. 52; Welch, 2010, pp. 197–199). The *Four Books* and *Five Classics* became the curriculum centerpiece of higher learning in what is now Vietnam during the Tang dynasty (618–907), which proved to be something of a Confucian revival. Vietnamese scholars also travelled to major centers of higher learning in what is now China, while Confucian learning was long practiced in Vietnam's higher education institutions (HEIs). When Vietnam (called Nam Viet by the Chinese) broke away and became quasi-independent around the time of the fall of the Tang dynasty, some Chinese stayed, rather than return to China.

So strong was his influence that Confucius was traditionally revered in Vietnam as “the teacher of Ten Thousand Sovereigns:”

As for the recruitment of officials, examinations based on Confucianism, as applied in China, were organized... for more than eight centuries (from 1075 to 1919) in Vietnam... South Viet Nam, (before the reunification of the country) remained particularly faithful to his thought, especially in the domain of moral education. (Yang, 1993, p. 6)

As noted above, contacts between Buddhists in China and what is now South East Asia date from the sixth century CE. Islam represented another epistemic bridge between what is now China and ASEAN. Although poorly researched, centers of Islamic learning in current South East Asia have long been connected to China (Chang, 1988; Gelber, 2007; Welch, 2012a; 2012b). The Cham Empire, in parts of what is now Vietnam and Cambodia, may have represented one tributary spreading Islam within the region. Many were Muslims, and the Cham prized literacy highly. The Silk Road and maritime Silk Road represented other regional tributaries that contributed to concourse between Muslims (Heidhues, 2001).

The Chinese Diaspora in South East Asia

Longstanding Chinese settlement in parts of South East Asia, and the disproportionate weight exercised in several regional economies by ethnic Chinese minorities (Yeung, 1999), is paralleled by very differing proportions of Chinese within ASEAN member states, from perhaps 1.5 percent in Vietnam, to over 25 percent in Malaysia, and more than 60 percent in Singapore (see Table 1). While estimates vary, some sources suggest that around 16 million ethnic Chinese live in the ASEAN region (Chang, 2008; Welch, 2012a). Research from elsewhere suggests that Chinese identity among the worldwide diaspora of perhaps 35 million or more (some estimates are of as much as 50 million) remains strong, at least among the current generation, and that the increasingly highly-educated overseas Chinese communities (*huaqiao*) are not merely interested in, and proud of, China's development, but also wish to contribute (Yang & Welch, 2010; Welch & Zhang, 2008). Across ASEAN, however, it is not merely proportions of ethnic Chinese that differ significantly within national populations. In Singapore, for example, Chinese is one of four official languages, but is widely spoken. This is much less the case in Malaysia, and much less again in Vietnam. In the latter, where according to a respected local economist, "All the streets in Vietnam are named according to generals and emperors that have been fighting against the Chinese invasion for 2000 years," there is still cultural resistance to learning Mandarin (Pak, 2012). In Malaysia, by contrast, around one quarter of the population (some 7 million) are ethnic Chinese, of whom over 95 percent choose to send their children to one of Malaysia's 1,293 Chinese primary schools, and almost 140 Chinese secondary schools (Azizan, 2012).

Table 1 The Dragon and the Tiger Cubs

Country	Population (millions) in 2011	% Chinese	GDP per Capita, PPP (US\$) in 2011	Development Status, HDI Rating, in 2011	FDI to China (US\$ million) in 2008	FDI from China (US\$ million) in 2008	GDP Growth in 2011
China	1,346	100*	8,400	Developing. 687	—	—	9.24%
Malaysia	28.9	25 +	15,600	Middle. 761	247	46 #	5.14%
Singapore	5.2	75	59,900	High. 866	4,435	1,551	4.89%
Vietnam	87.9	1.5	3,300	Developing. 593	2	120	5.89%

Sources: "FDI to Malaysia," (n.d.), by ASEAN Japan Centre. Retrieved September 13, 2012, from <http://www.asean.or.jp/en/asean/know/statistics/5.html>; "Country comparison: GDP per capita (PPP)," (n.d.), by CIA. Retrieved September 13, 2012, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>; "2011 World Population Data Sheet," (2011), by PRB. Retrieved September 13, 2012, from www.prb.org/pdf112011population-data-sheet_eng.pdf; East Asia Institute 2010, Congressional Research Service (2012).

Note. * Approximately 8.5 percent of the population are from China's 55 designated minorities; # Malaysian data 2009.

One Dragon, Three Tiger Cubs

So, history matters. Culture matters. Ethnic ties matter. Changing security allegiances matters. Nationalist sentiments continue to matter. And, clearly, political ideologies matter, including those of the great powers. How do these intertwined elements play themselves out, in current China ASEAN relations, especially in higher education?

In order to make such an assessment manageable, three ASEAN member states were selected for analysis: Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Singapore, while by far the smallest of the three, represents a prosperous, highly-developed nation-state, with a well-developed infrastructure, and strong ambitions within the region, including China. Around 60 percent of its populace are of Chinese origin. Malaysia represents a middle-income ASEAN state, with a population that, at around 29 million, is somewhat larger than that of Taiwan of China or Australia. With an ethnic Chinese populace comprising around 25 percent, it too has ambitions within the region, including the promotion of its higher education sector, but with less financial clout, and with a less-developed infrastructure (including in higher education) than Singapore, to do so. Vietnam, with by far the largest population of around 88 million, has the least well-developed higher education system, as part of an overall profile that places it within the lower-income range. Arguably, it has the most complex history of China relations of all three, with a war in 1979 at one extreme of the longstanding relationship. Ethnic Chinese now make up no more than 1.5 percent of the overall population.

Singapore is often seen as a strong, even authoritarian state, while Malaysia, too, has largely been ruled by a single party over recent decades. In both cases, there are significant signs of change. Vietnam, a sister in socialism to China, has often followed broadly similar policies, including in higher education, albeit maintaining a strongly independent stance. It, too, is showing signs of change, since at least *DoiMoi*, the process of reform and “reconstruction” instituted in 1986, almost a decade after China’s Reform and Opening-up. In both Malaysia and Vietnam, ethnic Chinese exercise a disproportionate influence within the overall economy; in the former case, this was paralleled by longstanding pro-Malay policies, while Vietnam has not been without some anti-Chinese sentiments, at times. All four states are members of the World Trade Organization, with China having joined in 2001, and Vietnam in 2007. CAFTA that became operational in January 2010, “will have significant trade and development implications for South East Asia, (especially if member states are able to) pool resources and combine markets to forge a comprehensive economic partnership with China” (Tong & Chong, 2010, p. i). Bilateral China-ASEAN trade increased more than tenfold between 1995 and 2008 (from US\$20 billion to US\$223 billion), especially after China’s accession to WTO membership in 2001. By

2008, China had become ASEAN's third largest trading partner (after the EU and USA), while ASEAN was China's fourth largest. Bilateral investment has increased, but still constitutes a small proportion of the total inflow of FDI to both China and ASEAN (Welch 2011b; Tong & Chong, 2010, p. i). While ASEAN prospects as a whole are to a significant degree affected by the extent of its integration, different ASEAN member-states face differing opportunities and challenges, based on their levels of development and history with China.

Regional Trade in Higher Education Services

For all four, key elements of the external environment affect both their domestic economy, and higher education system. Of these, the rise in service sector trade constitutes a significant trend (UNCTAD, 2004; Welch, 2011b). Within the region, for example, FDI flows to service sector industries in ASEAN accounted for 50.5% of total ASEAN FDI in 2008 (ASEAN, 2009, pp. 12–13).

Parallel with the rise in service sector trade worldwide, and in the Asian region, trade in higher education services is also growing. While the worldwide total trade in higher education services was (under-) estimated by the OECD at around US\$30 billion in the late 1990s, more current estimates set the figure for trade in education services at US\$2.2 trillion (Ng & Tan, 2010; ADB, 2012). Although growth in services worldwide grew at a rate double that of agriculture for example, between 1990 and 2000, growth rates in developing countries were much faster than in more mature economies, where the service sector already often accounts for around two-thirds of the economy (Welch, 2011b, p. 44). The move to enshrine education as part of service sector trade under the Global Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) marked a further step in construing education as a tradable commodity, but also enables the more precise tracking of trans-national forms of educational delivery of services (see Table 2).

While data is far from perfect, and statistics are collected on different bases, a recent Asian Development Bank analysis estimated that, while earnings from trade in higher education services still favored the wealthier and English language systems, significant (and much faster) growth was evident in Asia. Of total trade in education services, earnings from trade specifically in higher education services for 2008 was estimated at US\$ 15.5 billion for the USA, US\$11.2 billion for the UK, US\$8.0 billion for Australia, and US\$3.1 billion for Canada (Asian Development Bank, 2012, pp. 37–38; Welch, 2011a). But with 260,000 international students enrolled in its higher education system, earlier estimates of Chinese income of US\$1billion+ are likely to have been conservative, while Malaysia's overall international enrollments in higher education of 86,900

in 2010 are also yielding significant income, *inter alia*. Singapore, too, whose international enrollments in higher education rival those of its much larger neighbor Malaysia, also derives significant income from this trade, among other benefits, despite offering numbers of scholarships (Asian Development Bank, 2012, pp. 37–38; Welch, 2011b, pp. 82–89). Already, income from international enrollments comprises 3.3 percent of Singapore’s economy, with plans to increase this to 5 percent in the coming years (Ng & Tan, 2010; Welch 2011b, pp. 82–89). Vietnam, with few international students enrolled, and at least 15,000 of its own enrolled overseas, is a net importer of higher education services (Welch, 2010).

Table 2 Modes of Provision of Cross-Border Educational Services (GATS)

Mode	Explanation	Examples	Size and Potential
Cross-Border Supply	The service, rather than the person, crosses the border	Distance education, Education Software Virtual Ed. (incl. corporate training)	Small, but growing swiftly, with considerable growth potential, esp. via ICT
Consumption Abroad	The consumer moves to the country of the supplier	Students who study in another country	Currently, largest share of international education
Commercial Presence	The provider uses or establishes facilities in a second country	Local university, or satellite campus Private providers, including language and IT	Growing phenomenon, strong likelihood of growth
Presence of Persons	Persons travelling to a second country, to provide a service	Professors, teachers, educational consultants	Given rising professional mobility, also likely to grow strongly

Source: “The dragon, the tiger cubs and higher education: Competitive and cooperative China-ASEAN relations the GATS era,” 2011, by A. Welch. In D. S. L. Jarvis & A. Welch (Eds.), *ASEAN industries and the challenge from China* (pp. 39–122). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Standing of Higher Education Systems

The relative standing of each higher education system also differs significantly. The much-cited Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), developed by a team at China’s Shanghai Jiaotong University (SJTU), “... shows that, other than Singapore, no Southeast Asian higher education system has a single university ranked in the top 500 of the SJTU list. Overall, the PRC has 22 HEIs listed among the top 500 on the ARWU list...” (Asian Development Bank, 2012, p. 34).

In large part, China’s increasing presence among leading HEIs is a product of deliberate and long-range planning. China’s 211 and 985 programs, for example,

deliberately aimed to foster world-class universities, by funneling impressive amounts of additional resources to a select top tier of HEIs (Welch & Hao, in press). The results, while mixed, are impressive (Yang & Welch, 2012; Asian Development Bank, 2012, p. 35). Singapore, too has invested very substantially in building top-tier HEIs, including via its Global Schoolhouse program, aiming to turn Singapore into a “Boston of the East.” This includes successfully bidding for entire research teams from overseas, in specified priority areas, to re-establish themselves in Singapore, with substantial support, as well as enticing a number of major research universities from the global North to establish branch campuses in Singapore. While Malaysia lacks either the wealth or advanced infrastructure of Singapore, its ambitions are hardly any less. It recently deemed one of its universities (*Universiti Sains Malaysia*, or USM), an APEX (Accelerated Programme for Excellence) institution, with additional funding of RM 25 million (US\$8 million, or RMB 50.9 million) in 2008. This was matched by a stated goal, set by the government, of competing with the world’s best HEIs. Greater autonomy over staff, management, fees and recruitment was to be accompanied by higher expectations: specifically, to be among the top 200 of the ARWWU within five years, and top 100 or perhaps even top 50, by 2020; ambitious targets, indeed. Vietnam’s plans for “model” universities, part of its Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA), involves deploying loans from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to develop multi-disciplinary international research universities, with foreign partners who invest in their development. Vietnam, which has had at least one full-fledged overseas university (Australia’s RMIT) for some time (Welch, 2012b), plans to develop several further HEIs that are modeled on developed country HEIs. The Vietnamese-German University, a strategic initiative with Germany, already exists in Ho Chi Minh city, as does the University of Science and Technology in Hanoi, a strategic partnership with France. As with Malaysia, these new institutions have expectations of greater autonomy from central government control (Asian Development Bank, 2010; 2012).

China-ASEAN Relations in Higher Education

It is important to reiterate that bilateral and multi-lateral collaborations in higher education consist of much more than trade, and are influenced by the complex and dynamic histories, cultures and international relations of the partners that were sketched above. At the same time, the four modes outlined in the following chart provide a useful means to track collaborative and competitive higher

education relations between China and the three selected ASEAN member states.

Before turning to the specific forms of collaboration between the ASEAN 3 (the 3 refers to the 3 ASEAN case studies: Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia) and China, it is important to note the important trade agreements, framework agreements and consortia that link China and ASEAN in the higher education arena. Of the former, CAFTA, listed above, is key. Among framework agreements are APEC's Human Resources Development Working Group, that includes China, Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, while regional consortia include the ASEAN Universities Network (AUN) where in 2009 a decision was made to establish an ASEAN 3 university network, that would encourage cooperation between ASEAN and Chinese universities, in key areas such as ASEAN and East Asian Studies. By 2010, the ASEAN-China Rectors conference was able to report successful collaboration with ASEAN by Sun Yat-Sen (*Zhongshan*) University, Yunnan Agriculture University, and Soochow University. The Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) comprises 42 Asia-Pacific university members, including institutions from China, Singapore and Malaysia, but not Vietnam (Welch, 2011b, pp. 80–81). A third consortium, UNIVERSITAS 21, embraces 24 member universities, including National University of Singapore (NUS), and Fudan University, and Shanghai Jiaotong University, from China. Unsurprisingly, the profile of the three ASEAN member states differed significantly, within a context in which in both China and ASEAN, hierarchy remains of longstanding high cultural value. Overall, while ASEAN students remain less than 20 percent of total international enrollments in Chinese universities, numbers are growing fast. Based on meetings of China-ASEAN Ministers of Education initiated in August 2010, the "Double 100,000 Plan" was adopted as part of the Guiyang Declaration. This ambitious plan would see 100,000 Chinese and ASEAN students enroll in each other's universities, respectively, by 2020. In 2010, China offered 3,337 scholarships to ASEAN scholars, of a total of 50,000 ASEAN students enrolled in Chinese universities (China-ASEAN cooperation, 2011). In 2004–2005, this comprised 2.75 percent of the total scholarships offered by China, which planned to raise the number of scholarships to ASEAN students to 10,000 by 2020. By 2010, 70,000 Chinese students enrolled in ASEAN universities (China-ASEAN cooperation, 2011). Data for 2006, showed 1,743 Malaysian enrollments in Chinese universities, 1,392 from Singapore and 7,310 from Vietnam (Welch, 2011b, pp. 74–75). By 2011, a total of 31 ASEAN universities had signed 135 cooperation agreements with 47 Chinese universities (China-ASEAN education, 2011).

Of the three ASEAN member states, Singapore was found to have the most substantial relations with the Chinese higher education system. The fact that

approximately three-quarters of its population are of Chinese origin, and 90 percent of its domestic university students, provides a firm foundation, notwithstanding differences of political ideology between the two states. Solid commercial relations, and Singapore's longstanding, substantial presence in regional service sector trade, including its impressive Global Schoolhouse initiative, noted above, is another pillar supporting higher education links with China. Indeed, China continues to be a significant priority for Singapore's universities. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the respective ministries of education in 2002, and including a student and staff exchange programme, provided another firm base, while Singapore and China each offer training programs for each other's officials (Singapore's NTU, 2009).

For Malaysia, middle income status, a population that is one quarter of Chinese extraction, and an ambitious programme of developing an Eduhub, that attracts both regional and trans-regional students, has translated only imperfectly into strong China relations in higher education. Of the total of almost 87,000 international enrollments in Malaysian universities for 2010, 10,214 were from China (slightly higher than enrollments from Indonesia, and fewer than from Iran). The far more entrepreneurial private sector accounted for almost 80 percent (8,046) of the China total, which would seem to undermine to an extent the actual commitment of the Malaysian government to recruit Chinese students into its public sector universities, notwithstanding having mounted educational expos in China in recent years.

For Vietnam, its long and complex history of China relations includes the major and enduring influence of Confucianism, including in higher education. Its HDI status (see Table 1) is lowest of the four nations under review, and its peripheral status within the global knowledge network translates into generally dependent relations with Chinese higher education. More Vietnamese students study at Chinese universities than the reverse, a situation that is broadly paralleled by scholarships. This however, does not do justice to the much closer relations between institutions on either side of the border, the so-called "quiet achievers" (Yang, 2012) in China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan. Training of Vietnamese civil servants and teachers is offered by both, which each enrolled several thousand students in their regional HEIs by around 2008, with several thousand students from Guangxi studying in ASEAN countries. Vietnam hosted the largest number. In Yunnan, links are equally diverse and dense, including 3+1 programs with ASEAN countries and joint degree programmes with Vietnam. Hundreds of Chinese language teachers have been trained at Yunnan University and Yunnan Normal University, to work in ASEAN countries (Yang, 2012).

Table 3, summarizes the relations across the three ASEAN member states, according to the four GATS modes in Table 2.

Table 3 China-ASEAN Cross Border Educational Services, a Summary

	Mode I	Mode II	Mode III	Mode IV
Singapore	NTU Management Training (by distance)	Chinese students at Singapore universities <i>Singapore students at Chinese universities</i> <i>Tsinghua Executive Program</i>	NUS FUDAN (Shanghai College) NUS PEKING (IMBA) <i>SJTU NTU (MBA)</i>	NTU Management Program (in Shanghai)
Malaysia		Chinese students at Malaysian universities <i>Malaysian students at Chinese universities</i>	INTI college (Beijing Campus)	
Vietnam		VNU language courses for Chinese students Chinese students at Vietnamese universities <i>Vietnamese students at Chinese universities</i>		<i>Chinese consultants training Vietnamese</i>

Source: “The dragon, the tiger cubs and higher education: Competitive and cooperative China-ASEAN relations the GATS era,” 2011, by A. Welch. In D. S. L. Jarvis & A. Welch (Eds.), *ASEAN industries and the challenge from China* (pp. 39–122). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Note. Italics indicate Chinese exports; non italics indicate Chinese imports.

Conclusion

A number of points arising from the above analysis bear further reflection. Of these, hierarchy and stratification is a key point. Singapore’s greater wealth and highly-developed infrastructure left it best positioned to extend its relations in China’s higher education system, while at least the top tier of China’s universities are keen to cooperate with universities such as Singapore’s NUS. Malaysia’s position is complex, with its ambitious plans to extend its regional presence stymied to an extent, by a history of discrimination against Chinese Malaysians, at least in public sector HEIs. Vietnam’s relatively less-developed higher education system and levels of infrastructure positions it least well to take advantage of collaboration initiatives, as does to some extent its intermittently difficult relations with its large and troubling neighbor; but at the same time, there are important local initiatives by quiet achievers on both sides of the border that should not be neglected. There is much more to be learned about such important but lesser acknowledged initiatives, including in the private sector,

which remains comparatively under-researched.

Clearly, there is significant potential for further growth in China-ASEAN collaboration in higher education, with potential benefits for both sides. ASEAN member states are positioning themselves as best they can to take advantage of the China market, including in educational services, as China seeks to extend its soft power regionally, including via the numerous Confucius Institutes.

At the same time, this raises issues of the quality and definition of regionalism in this context. As a number of authors have pointed out, ASEAN regionalism is as yet less developed and lacks the more robust institutional architecture that characterizes European regionalism. In some respects, the gap between the impressive declarations made at various ASEAN forums, and the strength of actual achievements, remains substantial (Welch, 2012a). Jayasuriya has argued that much of the existing analysis of South East Asian regionalism, including at times by ASEAN member countries themselves, has been both triumphalist, and too focused on "... formal regional 'institutions,'... to the detriment of the understanding of the domestic political mainsprings of regional governance" (Jayasuriya, 2003, p. 199). Simply put, ASEAN's regional initiatives largely lack the more established character of their EU counterparts, thereby limiting the capacity of what has been called regulatory regionalism (Jayasuria, 2003; 2010). Secondly, the complex and longstanding set of relations between the Dragon and the Tiger Cubs problematizes the definition of region. While ASEAN may be well enough understood as a region, notwithstanding the limits indicated above, the developing architecture of China-ASEAN relations raises the question of whether the term may legitimately be applied to China and ASEAN. As ASEAN trade barriers continue to be reduced, including in the services sector, and existing free trade agreements with China extended, as well as higher education partnerships, people-to-people exchanges and cultural relations more generally (Williams, 2012, p. 10, 17), it is arguable that the developing sense of China and ASEAN as a region, will deepen, notwithstanding occasional reverses, territorial disputes, and nationalist sentiments. If so, the potential for deeper and wider relations in higher education is great; and in turn, such relations can also assist in breaking down barriers of understanding. More research cooperation on common issues such as environment, and marine research would be mutually beneficial, and deepen people-to-people exchanges (Sutter & Huang, 2012). More ASEAN students studying in Chinese universities, and more Chinese students enrolled in universities in ASEAN member states are also only likely to assist such trends.

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