

Building Shared Values and Benefits to Usher in a New Cross-Strait Era

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Chairman Ding, Distinguished Scholars and Experts, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

I am very honored to be invited to attend this international symposium held by the Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies (CAPS). I would like to thank the eminent scholars and experts of mainland Chinese affairs who join us from around the world at this time, less than a month after the close of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP). During today's highly meaningful discussions, we will jointly look, from various angles, at the power changes, developments, and future trends following the 19th National Congress of the CCP. I would like to present a few observations and some background on the cross-Strait policy position of the government of the Republic of China (ROC).

1. Opportunities and challenges as the world faces mainland China's rise

The 19th National Congress of the CCP established the governing team in mainland China for the next five years. It also set the course of mainland China's domestic and foreign policy in various fields. Mainland Chinese leader Xi Jinping presented a phased development goal of turning the Mainland into a modern power with a strong army over the next 30 or so years. He also attracted global attention by expressing an ambition to further establish a new international order, export "Chinese Wisdom" and "Chinese Solutions." As everyone knows, mainland China's overall strength has been steadily and rapidly growing in recent years. The

Mainland is now the world's second largest economy and has the world's third-strongest military. In recent years, the Mainland has steadily expanded its political and economic influence in the world under the banner of the "Chinese Dream" of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Since the 19th Party Congress, the world has been asking: Will this increasingly powerful giant of mainland China and its growing strength present opportunities for global growth and shared interests? Or will it challenge the world with a changing overall strategic landscape? They are thought-provoking questions.

We have no interest in revisiting the tired "China threat theory." We also sincerely hope to see a more prosperous, stable, wealthy, civilized, democratic, and open mainland China. We welcome the Mainland's progress on the path of institutional reforms toward becoming a member of the international community: one that shoulders its responsibility to maintain global and regional peace and stability. We also believe this will contribute to the positive development of cross-Strait relations. The CCP is the largest political party with the most centralized power. How will it resolve social contradictions at home? How will it develop its legitimate interests externally while establishing the so-called "community of common destiny for all mankind"? The world watches in high anticipation. We believe that the operation of this huge system requires mechanisms of check and balance if it is to honor and shoulder its commitments to the people and regional political and economic security as it develops. The international community needs to look objectively at the changing power arrangement in mainland China and analyze the Mainland's real development intentions and strategic trends. As mainland Chinese leader Xi Jinping has said, we should not stint to give helpful advice to mainland China. In past cross-Strait interactions, Taiwan has actively played this role.

2. Reform and the people form the basis for ushering in a new era of cross-Strait relations

At the 19th Party Congress, Xi Jinping announced to the world that the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics had entered a new era. He highlighted mainland China's sense of superiority and confidence in its development path and systems. He also emphasized that the principal contradiction in mainland China's society has become "the people's ever-growing needs for a better life, and the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development." He admitted that the people of mainland China have growing demands for democracy, rule of law, fairness, justice, safety and the environment. This shows that the authorities in Beijing recognize the demands of the people and can adjust to the times.

We are also concerned whether the Mainland authorities will resolve this contradiction through reform; and we believe that Taiwan's unique development experience in Chinese society and process of exchanges and interaction could provide a path for dealing with these issues. Such mutual inspiration could invigorate the development of civil society and usher in a new vision and outlook for social exchanges between the two sides.

In his report at the 19th Party Congress, Xi Jinping expressed "respect for the existing social system and lifestyles in Taiwan." We see this in a positive light. However, he also reiterated the established policy of "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems." As there is absolutely no market for this in Taiwan, I'm afraid this could also be a "principal contradiction" in the development of cross-Strait relations, one that will need to be faced, discussed, and handled by the two sides. As it adopts new thinking on internal developments, the Mainland should also discard its framework from an earlier time and approach a new era of cross-Strait relations with innovative thinking and goodwill.

Although the two sides have different social systems and development paths, they face common issues and challenges brought by globalization and the changing regional situation. Their values are also gradually finding common ground. Xi Jinping mentioned "people-centered" several times at the 19th Party Congress. He emphasized that the people's desire for a better life is the goal he strives to realize. On October 25, 2015, during the presidential campaign, President Tsai Ing-wen said that, her administration would be "people-oriented and people-centered," emphasizing that the people's expectations and needs should be of first importance to those in power.

At the same time, both sides are now focused on internal reforms. Since taking office, Xi Jinping has deepened reforms in mainland China and vigorously cracked down on corruption. These actions will continue after the 19th Party Congress. In the year or so since taking office, President Tsai has also steadily advanced numerous domestic reforms for the future development, economic transformation, judicial impartiality, and intergenerational justice in efforts to resolve long-standing problems.

The leaders on both sides of the Strait have the people in their hearts and the determination and courage for reform. Hence, they should also have the breadth of mind and foresight to change the unsustainable past model of interaction. They should also put the people's well-being, rights, and interests at the core and plot a new future development course for cross-Strait relations. The "people" and "reform" can serve as the greatest common

factor and the basis for the development of cross-Strait relations, communication, and dialogue.

3. Building the next thirty years cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation on pragmatism and goodwill

President Tsai announced the cross-Strait policy stance of the ROC government in her inaugural address. She emphasized that her respect for the historical fact of the certain joint acknowledgement and understanding achieved during the meeting between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) in 1992. She said that she will continue to promote peaceful and stable development of cross-Strait relations on the existing political foundation. She also said that cross-Strait affairs would be handled based on the ROC Constitution, the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, and other relevant legislation. Over the past year, Taiwan has been committed to maintaining the peaceful and stable status of cross-Strait relations. This accords with security interests of parties in the Asia-Pacific region and is affirmed by the international community. We have worked hard to maintain the operation of the 21 cross-Strait signed and implemented agreements and other existing mechanisms. We hope that cross-Strait relations can function smoothly on the existing basis and track of cooperation and exchange. This policy position is unchanged.

Since May 20 last year, mainland China has restricted Mainland tourist and student travel to Taiwan due to political considerations. It has also adopted military and diplomatic pressure tactics against Taiwan. This is deeply regrettable. Through its political interference, the Mainland has allowed cross-Strait ideological differences to affect the originally friendly exchanges in the private sector and limit opportunities to narrow the psychological divide between the two sides. Beijing's self-imposed restrictions and lack of communication have also heightened opposition between the two sides. Despite this, the ROC government has maintained the greatest flexibility. Moreover, President Tsai has repeatedly stressed that Taiwan's goodwill and commitment will not change and that Taiwan will neither revert to the old path of confrontation nor bow to pressure.

We believe that mainland China should face up to the fact of the existence of the ROC. It should pragmatically regard the cross-Strait status quo, respect and understand the views of the Taiwanese people on promoting the development of cross-Strait relations and

adherence to democracy. It should also embrace forward-looking thinking and seek space for common benefit and cooperation. This is the only way to create win-win cross-Strait relations. How should the cross-Strait relationship develop in the new era? It is a question the two sides need to jointly face and answer together.

Thirty years have passed since cross-Strait exchanges began. During this time, economic, trade, cultural, educational and social exchanges and cooperation between the two sides have grown in diversity. Such ties have also underscored the closeness of cross-Strait links and brought happiness and gains to the people on both sides. Building on this foundation, the two sides should fully develop the vitality of their private sectors, establish friendly and regular exchanges between government authorities, and show pragmatism and goodwill by not setting any political preconditions. In this way, they can write a new and more brilliant chapter for cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation for the next 30 years.

4. Conclusion— Jointly seeking a new model for cross-Strait interaction through communication and dialogue

The futures of the world, the Asia-Pacific region, and cross-Strait relations have always been closely related to developments in mainland China. The international community should exert its influence to link the principles of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law with development in mainland China so the Mainland can integrate its development with universal values and advance toward becoming a fully modern society.

At a time of dynamic changes in the world and in internal and external developments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, I would like to again call on mainland China to seize the current opportunity for the two sides to put aside their political disputes, act pragmatically, show "new ideas, new initiatives," and promote cross-Strait dialogue and communication. Taiwan is ready to extend goodwill with both hands and jointly seek a new model for cross-Strait interaction with the other side. We hope that the international community will further support and encourage Taiwan's policies so that we can maintain the status quo of cross-Strait peace and stability with greater confidence. Next year marks the 40th anniversary of mainland China's reforms and opening up. We hope that, at the beginning of this new era, Beijing can show the same courage of reform and new ways of thinking in cross-Strait relations. This would enable the two sides to build a solid bridge of goodwill and mutual trust to advance in the same direction. It would reap benefits for the people on both sides and serve as the best example of shelving disputes and peaceful co-existence in the Asia-Pacific

region in these tumultuous times. I believe that both sides of the Strait and all parties in the Asia-Pacific region share this interest and expectation.

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said: "To improve is to change." Perhaps we can gain some inspiration from these words. Both mainland China and Taiwan hope to improve cross-Strait relations, so we must have the courage to change and turn ideas into concrete action.

Finally, I would like to again thank all of the distinguished scholars joining us today and wish the symposium the greatest success! Thank you!