

# **Protecting Sovereignty and Democracy, Maintaining Peace in the Taiwan Strait**

Opening Remarks for the "International Conference on PRC's Power Shift and Governance"

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October 28, 2022

Chairman Ding of the Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies (CAPS), Secretary General Yang, Professor Huang, distinguished scholars and experts, ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

I'm honored to speak to you on today's conference, which addresses the power transition of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and development of its governance. Discussion of this topic is particularly meaningful at a time when the CCP had just concluded its 20th National Congress. With this speech, I would like to share some observations on this topic.

**First, the development path of a rising mainland China is an issue faced by the whole world.**

As expected, the 20th CCP National Congress pronounced the extension of Xi Jinping's tenure and Xi's authority as the leader of the party, government, and military. Meanwhile, the event laid out the direction of mainland China's future development. Forty-some years following mainland China's "reform and opening-up" policy, it has gained tremendous overall strength. However, as suggested in the report of the 20th CCP National Congress, mainland China is now faced with many complexities, difficulties, bottlenecks, and predicaments. Mainland China's strong-nation development path is one marked by an absence of democratic governance and hence a lack of checks and balances. Moreover, this path cannot effectively reduce risks to poor decisions or failed management. This has caused great uncertainty in mainland China's development prospects and sparked agitation and restlessness in the region. Beijing's strategic intentions have far-reaching implications on the geopolitics around the world. In light of China's new power structure, our concerns have deepened over whether China's policy direction is in line with its pledges regarding realizing people's democracy, developing a free economy, abiding by the rules-based international order, shouldering its responsibility to world peace, and sharing benefits fairly. In this

process, it is even more crucial for the international community to lead the way as an exemplar of universal values.

**Second, the CCP's pressure campaign against Taiwan prevents the cooling of cross-Strait and regional tensions.**

Stability in the Taiwan Strait is critical to the peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. In recent years, Beijing has steadily stepped up its military intimidation, political suppression, and economic coercion against Taiwan in response to the changes in regional developments and its so-called "historical missions." This August, the CCP launched targeted military exercises against Taiwan in violation of international law. These exercises were aimed to encroach on Taiwan's sovereignty and security and have since drawn global concerns and awareness of the CCP's expansionist ambitions threatening regional prosperity and security. The 23 million people of Taiwan have already resolutely rejected the CCP's obstinate "one China" principle and "one country, two systems"; meanwhile, we espouse the commitment that "the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should not be subordinate to each other" as it reflects the objective truth and cross-Strait status quo for the past 73 years. We have long advocated that the key to resolving political differences is never any forceful imposition of unilaterally set political endgames, political frameworks, or military invasion; rather, it takes the two sides treating each other with rationality, equality, and mutual respect in their joint quest for a peaceful and pragmatic solution. This is a matter mainland China needs to work on.

**Third, Taiwan's tenacity, democracy, and resilience make for a reliable force in maintaining regional peace.**

The basis of cross-Strait relations is peace and equality. The Beijing authorities should face up to the fact that the Republic of China (ROC) exists; they should also respect and understand the commitments of the 23 million people in Taiwan for the development of cross-Strait relations. For over 70 years, Taiwan has risen head-on to a myriad of challenges with our strong resilience; as a result, we have grown into a democratic and confident country and become an indispensable and responsible stakeholder of the international community. The Taiwan society is marked by its openness and diversity, but the Taiwan people are determined to uphold our bottom line, namely to safeguard our democratic institutions. The people of Taiwan are committed to defending our sovereignty, dignity, and democratic way of life, on which we will not condone any encroachment. The ROC government is highly resolved to maintain the peaceful status quo of the Taiwan Strait. We stand firm on the "Four

Commitments" and vow to strengthen our "Four Resiliences." We also ensure that our cross-Strait policies are rational and non-provocative, resolute and unwavering. We will continue to bolster our self-defense capabilities; we will also work with the international community to respond prudently to developments of the situation. This approach aligns with the interests and expectations of all parties in the region.

**Fourth and in conclusion, the two sides should join hands to seek a path towards peaceful coexistence.**

Maintaining cross-Strait peace and stability is the shared responsibility of the two sides. We hope that the other side can move beyond its outdated political framework and demonstrate its open-mindedness in improving cross-Strait relations. To this end, we call on mainland China to take action in the following regards:

**First, we urge mainland China to lay down arms and maintain peace and stability.** The key to peace is to reverse the mindset of handling problems with force. Beijing should stop its saber-rattling as it only deepens the gap between the two sides and raises tensions in the region. An armed confrontation is absolutely not an option for our two sides, nor is it to the benefit of the people. We call on mainland China to resolve differences through a constructive dialogue without preconditions. We also urge mainland China to shoulder its shared responsibility of maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait.

**Second, we look forward to the resumption of orderly and healthy exchanges to enhance mutual understanding.** In a few days, it will be the 35th anniversary of the opening-up of cross-Strait exchanges. On this basis, both sides should uphold the principle of "putting the people first" and resume normal exchanges. This will help enhance our mutual understanding, allow us to pragmatically handle issues pertaining to people's rights and interests in these exchanges, and protect people's welfare. Taiwan has gradually relaxed restrictions for exchanges. We hope that mainland China can progressively adjust their regulations to meet the international trend so the two sides can resume healthy and orderly exchanges and create room for positive interaction.

Finally, at this time of rapid change, both globally and regionally, I would like to thank the distinguished scholars and experts joining us today from Taiwan and abroad for their advice and suggestions. I wish today's conference the fullest success and good health to you all. Thank you!