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Discussion Paper

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**The Experience and Prospect of Cooperation between the Two Sides
across the Straits in International Affairs**

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I. New Ideas, Achievements and Experiences in Cooperation between the Two Sides across the Straits in International Affairs

The year 2008 witnessed that cross-Straits relations had entered into a new stage of peaceful development after almost twenty years of difficulties, marking a historic turning point and initiating a period of strategic opportunity. Regarding external affairs, leaders on the two sides both initiated new ideas and proposals. In 2006 through 2007, Ma Ying-jeou proposed the *modus vivendi* diplomacy (*huolu waijiao*), that is, engagement, economy, elasticity, and equality. In his 2008 inauguration address, Ma Ying-jeou mentioned “reconciliation and truce” in both cross-straits and international arenas for the first time. Francisco H.L. Ou, who was in charge of external relations, later explained it further as “cross-Straits truce, and diplomatic co-prosperity”. Its objective is to expand substantial relations with relevant countries and regions, mainly including the US, Japan, South-East Asian and European countries. This idea firstly aims to improve cross-Straits relations as a starting point to change the prospect that the two sides across the straits are competing against each other; secondly to extend the achievements and experiences of the improvement of cross straits relations to the areas of external affairs, and create win-win scenarios in international arenas; thirdly to expand Taiwan’s external space while not undermining cross straits relations; and finally to further achieve *détente* in cross straits relations on the basis of the obtained international space.

Hu Jintao also delivered his six-point proposal on December 31, 2008. The new thoughts concerning cross straits cooperation in international affairs include: firstly to establish cross-straits mechanisms for closer economic cooperation, and to explore feasible approaches to the dovetailing of the common development of both economies with the economic cooperation mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region, and secondly to safeguard national sovereignty, and consult on external issues. Hu Jintao said, “We are consistently committed to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of our Taiwan compatriots abroad. Our overseas embassies and consulates should strengthen their ties with our Taiwan compatriots and sincerely aid them in solving their practical difficulties. We understand our Taiwan compatriots’ feelings on the issue of participation in international activities and we pay particular attention to solving relevant issues. For the two sides of the Straits, to avoid unnecessary internal strife on external affairs is conducive to furthering the overall interests of the Chinese nation. Further consultations can be conducted, as needed, on the prospect of Taiwan’s people-to-people economic and cultural interactions with other countries. Regarding the issue of Taiwan’s participation in the activities of international organizations, fair and reasonable arrangements can be effected through pragmatic consultation between the two sides, provided that this does not create a situation of ‘two

Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan.' Settling the Taiwan question and realizing the complete reunification of the country is an internal affair of China and is not subject to interference by any foreign forces.”

Taiwan's international space has increased significantly due to the new thinking on cross-straits peaceful development. The participation of Lien Chan, honorary chairman of KMT, in APEC meetings, has promoted the level of politicians who participate in such meetings. And Hu-Lien meetings on the sidelines of every APEC summit show cross-straits cooperation in international affairs. In 2009, Taiwan in the name of “Chinese Taipei” became an observer of the World Health Organization (WHO). Taiwan in 2009 held the World Games and the 21st Summer Deaflympics respectively in Kao-hsiung and Taipei. In 2008, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Government Procurement Committee adopted Taiwan's accession to the GPA. At the end of 2009, Taiwan became a member of “International Association of Prosecutors” (IAP), a special consulting body of the United Nations. In 2010, Taiwan participated in the World Expo Shanghai with three pavilions, which were all highly appraised and welcomed. Taiwan is currently negotiating with Singapore and New Zealand on signing Free Trade Agreements.

Though it has been only 4 years, a lot of progress has been achieved in expanding Taiwan's international space and cooperation in international arenas within the framework of one-China sovereignty. The experiences and lessons are of instructions for theory developments and practices.

Firstly, the leaders, think tanks and elites should adhere to the basic consensus of the one-China principle.

Secondly, only when cross-straits relations develop peacefully, and when the two sides reach consensus or implicitly agree on the issue of international space, will Taiwan's maneuverability become broader, and will Taiwan be able to more smoothly participate substantially in international affairs.

Thirdly, progress on the issue of international space is the result of pragmatism, flexibility, joint consultation, and mutual equity and respect.

Fourthly, the sides across the straits will have to have favorable interactions with other countries and international organizations. Though cross-straits relations are China's internal affair, and should not be intervened in by external forces, yet within the context of globalization, the two sides should have favorable interactions with the international community, and even should consult and cooperate with various countries and international organizations. The favorable interactions in the previous four years have produced the expected effects, and practices should be used for guiding future interactions.

II. The “1992 Consensus” should be upgraded.

There is still big leeway in expanding international space within the framework of sharing sovereignty, and the coming four years will be worthy of expectation. On the mainland side, consultations on external affairs mentioned in “Hu’s six-point proposal” have not yet started, and many issues of the agenda need to be implemented except some single cases. The mainland government and people are extremely concerned that fait accompli or the impression of “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan” will be created in the world. On the side of Taiwan, the people on the one hand expect to expand international space and are not satisfied with realities; on the other hand, they are worried about and afraid of cross-Straits political dialogue. Within such a context, the Taiwan authority feels difficulties at every step forward, and does not dare to negotiate with the mainland on political issues. But the issue of international space is exactly the most serious political one.

To solve the dilemma, the two sides must make efforts in theory renovation within the framework of “one-China” principle, and upgrade “1992 Consensus” to a higher level so as to adapt it to the changing international situation and the realities of the volatile cross-straits relations.

Personally, I would argue that for upgrading the “1992 Consensus”, we can do the following:

Firstly, the statement and understanding of the “1992 Consensus” should be “two sides across the Straits within one China” (*liang’an yizhong*). The Hong Kong negotiation between ARATS and SEF mainly intended to address the difference of understanding between the two sides. The core of the difference lies in who represents China. Though the two sides kept differences in the definitions, they shared the same understanding that there is “one China”. That is the “1992 Consensus”.

The “1992 Consensus” should include three factors: firstly, the two sides across the straits should make joint efforts to achieve unification; secondly, both sides should stick to the principle of “one China”; thirdly, the two sides can have different perceptions about “one China”, and the political definition of “one China” should not be addressed while routine matters are being addressed. But because of the troubles made by Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, there appeared in Taiwan for some years the kind of social atmosphere denying the “1992 Consensus”. In the last four years, though the “1992 Consensus” was reestablished as the political foundation of cross-Straits peaceful development and mutual trust, yet the full connotation of the “1992 Consensus” is far from being reassumed. The three factors were actually simplified as only one, that is, the “different definition” of “the Republic of China”. The mainland side has doubts whether Taiwan is really practicing the thesis of “two states” or not. It might be true that cross-Straits relations are currently at the stage of peaceful development, and peaceful

unification has not been listed on the agenda, but we should at least emphasize the last two factors, and should not avoid the principle of “one China”. The “1992 Consensus” should be upgraded to the level of “two sides across the Straits within one China”. This should be no problem. Even Chen Shui-bian used to say that he had no reason to oppose when Frank Hsieh proposed “one China in Constitution”. Ma Ying-jeou also emphasizes that it should be no problem to stick to the “one China” principle from the dimension of “Constitution”. Certainly, each side has its own “Constitution”, but agrees on the “one China” principle. Any denying and opposing of “one China” principle should be against the “Constitution”.

Secondly, the “1992 Consensus” should be reinterpreted to include the issues about international space within the framework of shared sovereignty.

Thirdly, the two sides across the straits should establish new mechanisms for equal consultation, and deal with practical problems in a flexible and pragmatic way. The two sides could establish new functional dialogue groups, or new mechanisms within the framework of ARATS-SEF mechanism. Whatever means, it should be recognized that the new mechanisms should be one part of cross straits political dialogue, and import part of a political dialogue. Obviously, hesitation for political dialogue while expecting political achievements will cost Taiwan both time and opportunity, which will make the solution of problems more difficult and slower. Regarding the channels, the two sides certainly can choose the second track, or track 1.5, or other tracks.

III. The prospect of Taiwan’s Expanding international space

Based the upgraded “1992 Consensus”, Taiwan’s international space can be substantially increased in the following ways. Firstly, the two sides across the straits could increase cooperation and share resources in external affairs while avoiding internal strife. This will especially benefit Taiwan people since far more countries recognize the People’s Republic of China. The two sides already have cooperation in protecting and evacuating Chinese nationals in emergencies, but due to misgivings between the two sides, this kind of cooperation is only limited in the area of basic human safety. In the future, such cooperation should help the people across the straits to exchange with local people. ECFA and other economic agreements will help the enterprises of both sides to expand business overseas. Institutions of both sides positioned abroad could share information about investment environment, jointly explore opportunities, and protect interests. The two sides could jointly hold Chinese culture exhibitions, movie and TV shows and stage performances, and sports games. The institutions of both sides can also provide better assistance and service for students, tourists and other kinds of persons travelling abroad.

Secondly, it is increasingly possible to connect cross-straits joint development with Asian-Pacific regional economic cooperation mechanisms, and channels will be increasingly available. In Asian-Pacific cooperation mechanisms, China's mainland is an indispensable partner, and the mainland could make special arrangements for Taiwan's participation upon consultations with Taiwan and other members. In some mechanisms, Taiwan can send lower level officials under the proper names to participate in specific and functional matters. The mainland and Taiwan can also initiate new regional cooperation mechanisms. If Taiwan's concerns of "not having equal status (*bei aihua*)" and of "being united (*bei tongzhan*)" are reduced, if the mainland's concerns of "Taiwan's legal and implicit independence" are weakened, cross-straits relations and regional cooperation will become mutually enhancing.

Thirdly, the mainland could strengthen the dialogue with Taiwan, and help Taiwan gradually to participate in activities of international organizations. Those organizations that Taiwan participates in should be functional ones relevant to Taiwan's actual interests and livelihood. Taiwan can be an observer or quasi-member in proper name. After a longer period of time, Taiwan's presence in international community will be greatly increased.

Finally, the two sides can also explore new areas, projects and means for cooperation in external affairs. In some big events like world games and world Expo, the two sides have actually had friendly cooperation with pragmatic arrangements. In the future, the two sides should jointly apply for international sports, cultural, educational and social events so as to create collective memories for both sides. The two sides across the straits can also jointly apply for protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage to UNESCO, for example, the icon of Mazu. The two sides can also have joint international conferences, seminars and exchanges. These will not make either side feel unequal; instead, they will create win-win prospects.

It is only when cross-straits relations enter into the stage of peaceful unification, the problem of China's international space can be finally resolved, and Taiwan people will truly enjoy the dignity of being Chinese. Currently, the two sides across the straits, both at official and people levels, should push forward cross-straits relations in the favorable direction, resolutely fight against Taiwan Secessionism, prevent the general trends from being disrupted by external forces, and help the people across the straits participate in cross-straits and international cooperation. That will lead to a bright future.