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**Seeking Development Mode of New Cross-Strait Relations**

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# Seeking Development Mode of New Cross-Strait Relations

## My Thoughts on the Peaceful Development of Cross-Strait Relations

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The world today is in a new era of economic globalization, political multi-polarization, and information network development. The international political and economic landscape and the game of power are undergoing significant and profound changes. During its unstoppable rise, China is facing both rare opportunities and severe challenges. In an era of global village when a variety of factors are intertwined and mutually influential, any attempt to push the two parts of China under the jurisdiction of different regimes and different social systems towards reunification will be an unprecedentedly difficult and complex effort. As there are no previous successful cases nor guiding theories readily available, the realization of unification requires the wisdom and creativity of the whole nation.

Meanwhile, after more than six years of rapid development, cross-strait relations have also reached a new stage of all-out exchanges and cooperation. Currently, cross-strait relations have moved from their infancy to a period of consolidation and deepening. The “Nine-in-One” election in 2014 and the 2016 general election will soon take place in Taiwan. In the face of these new events, both sides of the Taiwan Strait should pay serious attention to the issue of setting up a new, institutionalized mode of cooperation to ensure the right direction and growth momentum of the development of cross-strait relations, a mode that can effectively lower risks and deal with the challenges therein. To set up a mode of new cross-strait relations, first and foremost, it is necessary to have a comprehensive and correct understanding of the initiative of peaceful development of the current cross-strait relations proposed by the mainland side, the status quo of the relations and what basic tasks they are facing. Only then can both sides enhance mutual trust and gradually develop a sustainable institutionalized development mode.

### 1. A few points of understanding important thoughts for the peaceful development of cross-strait relations

The development of cross-strait relations, I believe, have witnessed a historic turning point in 2008, and have since embraced a new scenario largely thanks to the introduction of the new thought of peaceful development of cross-strait relations (hereafter referred to as “the Thought”) proposed by the Chinese mainland, and a series of new Taiwan policies. Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou also shares the credit, as he positively responded to the policies of the mainland and implemented mainland’s policies of peaceful cooperation and opening. It is no

exaggeration that the two sides have been working together to pave the way for the peaceful development of cross-strait relations. But it must be noted that the important thought of peaceful development of cross-strait relations that Hu Jintao proposed on December 31, 2008 to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publishing of the Letter to Taiwan Compatriots played a critical role. This theoretical innovation has given incentive to the innovation in the practice of development of cross-strait relations. Since then, with reference to the new situation and features of the development of cross-strait relations, the new generation of CPC collective leadership with Xi Jinping as general secretary proposed a new series of theories and initiatives, and they sent the Thought to a new level and effectively promoted the cross-strait relations. I think that the Thought has some special features as mentioned below:

*1.1 The Thought is noted for its nationalistic character and people-orientedness.*

The thought of peaceful development seeks to solve the Taiwan issue in the broad framework of realizing the development of the whole nation and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, or as Mr. Xi put it, "the two sides are a family, and they should realize the Chinese Dream together." His proposal sees the peaceful development of cross-strait relations as an integral part of the process to achieve national rejuvenation. The Chinese mainland side raised the proposal not just for the sake of reunification, but for the revitalization of the whole nation and the well-being of the people on both sides of the strait; it transcends the partisan and personal interests, and wields the peaceful development of cross-strait relations and peaceful reunification together with the overall national development strategies and national rejuvenation. The peaceful development means to pave the way for China's reunification, while the reunification is meant to facilitate the peaceful development at a higher level. Meanwhile, the Thought is also noted for its people-orientedness and addresses the concern of the people, recognizing the leading role of the people on both sides; it calls on the people on both sides to jointly promote the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations, and confirms that they should share its fruits together.

*1.2 It focuses on "practice" and "development".*

Any productive cross-strait relations thought and theory must be a result from long-term practice, and it should be an ideology or solution recognized by both sides and forward-looking, rather than unilaterally formulated or invented wishfully and imposed on the other side. In fact, the Thought was proposed on the basis of past work of communications with Taiwan in the past 30 years, and its advocacy of peace and win-win cooperation has won recognition of most Taiwanese public. The positive impact has been evidenced by the great

achievements in the development of cross-strait relations in the past six years. The Thought comes from practice, and should make headway in the course of practice; it should not be seen as a stereotyped doctrine, but as an open-ended and all-inclusive system of ideology that is subject to constant improvement and perfection. I am convinced that, as the new guiding principle of communication with Taiwan in the new era, the Thought will manifest increasing vitality and impetus in practice in the future.

### *1.3 It reflects characteristics of the two sides and the essence of the one-China policy.*

By saying the characteristics of the two sides of the strait, I mean that the Thought and the policies of the framework of peaceful development were entirely based on the actual conditions of the world, of China and especially, of the development of the cross-strait relations. It is not a carbon copy of any foreign theory or subject to any stereotype, but has distinctive feature of its own, which fully reflects the Chinese people's wisdom and creativity. The Thought also reflects the essence of the one-China policy, an assertion that is mainly reflected in its innovative proposal for safeguarding the one-China framework. The framework not only adheres to the one-China principle as the bottom-line, but also provides room for the two sides to seek common grounds and accommodate differences and to reasonably address cross-strait political relations. Therefore, although we should learn everything useful from theories around the world and follow the international mainstream value judgments in advancing the process of peaceful development of cross-strait relations, we should never give up the principle that the two sides belong to one country to mechanically copying existing theories; we should not do any move of self-restraint. The new theories must be the result of the thought emancipation of the Chinese people, and they must be feasible and effective.

## 2. The current stage of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations

From a strategic point of view, the awareness of the current stage of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations in China's reunification process right now and in upcoming years and the nature of this stage is critical to the overall planning of the development of cross-strait relations and identifying milestones and tasks.

### *2.1 In a medium-and long-term, cross-strait relations will remain in the primary stage of development before the peaceful reunification of the country in the next few years or an even longer period.*

The so-called primary stage refers to the period during which the two sides achieve reconciliation and cooperation, and build mutual trust in a step-by-step

manner, namely, through comprehensive two-way direct links. The two sides build a platform of engagement, provide conditions and mechanism for cooperation to build the emotional ties between the Taiwanese and mainland Chinese people and enhance their connections based on common interests, accelerate the process of cross-strait economic and social integration, enhance strategic mutual trust and finally complete the construction of the framework of peaceful development of cross-strait relations and sign a peace agreement, which suggests a milestone of the medium stage.

In the primary stage, the Taiwan side faces many factors of constraint, and its motivation of cooperation with the Chinese mainland are largely due to the objective need to deal with its internal and external pressures, rather than an objective pursuit of common political goals, hence the passivity. Utilitarian features and limitations of the Taiwan authority will lead to uneven, asymmetrical, and unstable nature of the cross-strait exchanges and cooperation in political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields. Meanwhile, cross-strait political relations are affected by deep-seated contradictions due to existing differences, and are subject to the impact of electoral politics on the island; an ineffective control of the scenario by the two sides or the ascension to power of the pro-independent DPP will give added twist to the already sensitive and fragile cross-strait relations in the initial stage.

Given the positioning and the feature of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations in the primary stage, both sides need to clearly understand that the promotion of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations is an arduous, long-term and complex task. Both sides should have enough confidence and patience; they should act calmly and tactfully rather than recklessly. It is critical to stick to the ultimate goal of reunification. As long as the direction is correct, every step forward will bring both sides closer to the goal. As for the speed of development, I think that so long as it complies with the status quo of the cross-strait relations and the aspirations of the people, any speed can be reasonable and acceptable; on the contrary, any premature move to hasten achieving the result will backfire, or result in a higher price than otherwise.

## *2.2 In the short-term, cross-strait relations are faced with a transitional period given the second half of Ma Ying-jeou's second term and the two important upcoming elections.*

On November 29, 2014, the largest-ever Nine-in-One election (to determine nine local public posts in one voting) will be held, whose result will have critical impact on the "general election" in 2016. The difference of the presidential candidate that wins the election will lead to a difference in the cross-strait policy, and this will in turn subject cross-strait relations to a different prospect. If the anti-independence Kuomintang, a party that champions the "1992 consensus", remains

in power, it will undoubtedly help promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations. However, due to the current economic downturn in Taiwan and the poor governance of the Ma Ying-jeou government, the KMT authorities have not fared well in Ma's second term. This, compounded with the deliberate opposition of the Democratic Progressive Party and secret obstruction of the United States, as well as the rise of the "subjective consciousness" in Taiwan, weakened Ma Ying-jeou authority's motivation to promote cross-strait relations; in the face of the election and to win more votes, Ma's policy tends to be conservative and hesitant.

On the other hand, past experience in the elections and the recent change to the public opinion remind the Kuomintang authorities that the development of relations across the Taiwan straits is the highlight of its administration, and it is also an impetus of the Taiwanese economy and the source of administrative satisfaction. In this context, how far the Taiwan authorities can go in the development of cross-strait relations depends on whether they can have the strong will to make the right choice, and get maxim benefit from the improved cross-strait relations. In the upcoming one year and a half, given the dogfight between the blue and green camps in Taiwan and the influence of two important elections, the Taiwanese authorities will face more difficulties in its internal affairs, which will add to the difficulty of the promotion of the development of the cross-strait relations; it is a severe challenge for policy makers on both sides of the strait to seek opportunities in the crisis.

### *2.3 From the perspective of cross-strait cooperation, the development of cross-strait relations have outlasted their infancy and entered a stage that poses a thorny mix of issues.*

After six years' of great development, cross-strait relations have entered a new phase and are facing many difficulties lying ahead. If we make no progress or make little progress, the relations will face a drop-back. Therefore, the two sides have to establish new thinking in order to develop and keep up with strategic mutual trust, and manage to build a new development mode of cross-strait relations. Key points of such new thinking include: in terms of practice, both sides should make decisions on bilateral rather than unilateral basis; in terms of ultimate goal, both sides should seek win-win results rather than "zero-sum" ones; in terms of development stage, they should be process-oriented rather than hasten to immediate result; in terms of target, they should pin more hopes on the people rather than solely on the Taiwanese authorities; in terms of attitude, they should change from confrontation to good-will cooperation. Thus, with our patience, confidence, and goodwill, ideologically we can have more impetus and motivation for the development of cross-strait relations, to make sure that the development of cross-strait relations can withstand the test of various uncertainties and difficulties,

and prevent the pro-dependence DPP from making a U-turn of the cross-strait relations.

### 3. The fundamental task of promoting the development of cross-strait relations in the next few years

In view of the above analysis on the positioning of the stage of peaceful development of cross-strait relations, I believe that its general trend can be summarized as "steady progress with all-round development", namely, the peaceful development of cross-strait relations will gather increasing momentum; we should continue to lay a solid foundation, stay on the right track and keep up with the development, promote the institutionalization of cross-strait relations, thus to create positive conditions for building a framework for the peaceful cross-strait relations and to seek substantial progress.

#### *3.1 We should emphasize further exchange and cooperation in non-political fields.*

The report of the 18th CPC National Congress proposes to "consolidate and deepen the political, economic, cultural and social basis of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, and create more conditions for the peaceful reunification of China," an assertion that has pointed out the future direction and major tasks of the Taiwan-related work of Chinese mainland. It shows that the promotion of cross-strait exchanges and cooperation in various fields will remain to be the main feature and fundamental task in the next stage of the development of cross-strait relations. Given the restriction of many factors, cross-strait relations will mainly be executed in non-political fields as they were in the past. The reasons are two-fold: on one hand the current cross-strait cooperation in economy and trade, culture, education, science and technology and other areas remains in the primary stage, and it is necessary for us to build on the achievements and improve the level of cooperation; on the other hand, given the lack of sufficient political trust on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, it is much easier to seek further cooperation in non-political fields than launching political negotiations hastily. More importantly, in his second term, Ma Ying-jeou shows no obvious willingness of political negotiations; he prioritizes economic issues over political ones, advocates the separation of economic issues from political ones or even stays away from political issues. Therefore, making further progress in cross-strait economic cooperation, seeking more common benefits of the Taiwan and mainland people and strengthening cross-strait cultural and educational ties through exchanges and building people-to-people emotional affinity will be the least inadequate choice.

### *3.2 It is a challenge for both sides to create conditions for cross-strait political dialogues.*

Given the weak position of the Ma Ying-jeou-led administration before the 2016 "general election" and the upcoming election season in Taiwan, it is not likely for both sides to start political dialogues and negotiations. In fact, the mainland side is not seeking immediate start of this issue. Yet I would like to emphasize that, although it is still premature to launch official talks, it is nevertheless an inevitable issue in the next stage of the cross-strait relations. Taiwan authorities should not deliberately sidestep or delay the talks, or keep waiting passively without doing anything concrete.

Be it the KMT or the DPP, or a think-tank scholar on any side, anyone involved should make serious, innovative efforts to study the thorny issues that may cripple the development of cross-strait relations, and create the environment and conditions for political dialogues, so as to make more and more Taiwanese people realize that Taiwan will not be marginalized in cross-strait dialogues, be annexed, or be treated in the same way as Hong Kong, and any move to engage with the mainland will not come at the expense of the interest of Taiwan. The present political talk is not about reunification but aims to remove the obstacles to the exchanges and cooperation between the two sides. The Taiwan authority should be courageous and wise enough to explain the issue with full confidence, so as to have Taiwanese people reach general consensus about these issues and create a good atmosphere.

Of course, the effort to promote the political dialogues should be well paced and carried out in a step-by-step manner. It should be executed with steady progress on the basis of mutual consultation; both sides should do the right things at the right time.

I propose that, when both sides handle the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, they should take into consideration that the current cross-strait relations are still in the initial stage, so that they should not be over-ambitious or act rashly, but push forward the process steadily; give priority to easy issues and tackle the difficult ones in a later stage. While solving political deadlock, they should **make full use of the innovative and inclusive "one-China framework"**, try to find connection points between the two sides, and increase their common grounds. It is an important theoretical innovation that both sides should jointly safeguard the "one-China framework": this initiative raised by the mainland merits the attention of the Taiwan authorities.

The initiative upholds the principle of "one country"; the heart of the matter is that both sides of the strait belong to one country, and cross-strait relations are not relations between countries. The "two sides, one country" principle reiterates the unity and indivisibility of the national sovereignty of China. Yet it is also a pragmatic initiative, as it can accommodate all suggestions that theoretically do

not run counter to the "one-China" principle and practically do not split the country. As a result the capacity and flexibility of the "one-China" principle are increased, creating more room and motivation for both sides to seek connection points and have more political common grounds: It is a rational solution that manifests the sincerity and goodwill and can help the two sides work together in the direction of perfection. The experts and scholars on both sides have a responsibility to give more connotations to the "one-China framework", maximize the benefit of its inclusiveness and flexibility, so that both sides can find a mutually acceptable solution.

All in all, at the current stage and in the next few years, the development of cross-strait relations should continue to adhere to the principle of "steady progress, quality-oriented, and all-round development", and be pushed forward in a steady manner. Being steady should be the premise and the condition: We should avoid any artificial turmoil, but it does not mean we should stay where we are or even drop back, as progress, quality and the all-round nature are the underlying basic requirements of development. In other words, in the future, the development of cross-strait relations should look forward and move forward, and focus on the quality and effect. The economic and political cultural and educational cooperation in various fields should be done in a comprehensive manner and mutually beneficial. Cross-strait political relations should not come at the cost or cripple the development in other fields. Exchange and cooperation should follow the will of the people on both sides of the Taiwan straits; we should seize the opportunity, maintain our aspiration, rather than wait passively doing nothing significant.