

**OPENING REMARKS AT THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON**

**“RELATIONS ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAIT:  
RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE  
DEVELOPMENT”**

**Advancing Steadily and Consolidating Foundations for Sustainable  
Peace**

Opening Remarks at the International Symposium on "Relations across the  
Taiwan Strait: Retrospective and Prospects for Future Development" by

***Andrew Hsia***

**Minister, Mainland Affairs Council of the Republic of China**

July 13, 2015

Copyright: Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies of the Brookings  
Institution, Washington D.C., USA – Publication Date: 2 August 2015 on  
RIEAS web site: [www.rieas.gr](http://www.rieas.gr) – Athens, Greece.

*Director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies of the  
Brookings Institution Dr. Richard Bush, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good  
day!*

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) is honored to hold this conference again  
with the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution  
and the Association of Foreign Relations. This is my first visit to Washington  
since becoming minister of the MAC. I would like to take this opportunity to  
exchange with you firsthand experience and views on recent developments in  
cross-strait affairs.

**I. Status quo in the Taiwan Strait, Undergirded by an Ultra-Stable  
Framework**

Since taking office in 2008, President Ma Ying-jeou has vigorously promoted a  
Mainland policy centered on "peace and prosperity." Maintaining the status  
quo in the Taiwan Strait is supported by the majority of the people in Taiwan. It  
is also the core of the ROC government's Mainland policy. But what, exactly,  
is the "status quo" of the Taiwan Strait? Since 1949, Taiwan and the Mainland  
have been divided by the Taiwan Strait and governed separately, with neither  
side exercising jurisdiction over the other. The ROC government is adamant in  
maintaining the cross-strait status quo of "no unification, no independence,  
and no use of force" under the ROC Constitution framework and consolidating

the ROC sovereignty. It is also committed to preserving peaceful and stable development across the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, on the "1992 Consensus" basis of "one China, with respective interpretations," cross-strait official interactions and institutionalized negotiations have served to safeguard the interests and well-being of the public. They have also paved the way to broader cross-strait exchanges and contacts in various spheres. And they have created conditions for Taiwan's steady development. This is the status quo of the Taiwan Strait, one that enjoys 75% support from the Taiwanese people, among which include candidates in the upcoming future presidential election.

An important question, however, is: how can the cross-strait status quo be maintained? Looking back at vicissitude of cross-strait ties, it is clear that the status quo of peace and stability achieved under the Ma administration was not pulled out of thin air. It was built on an interlinked, complementary and truly feasible "ultra-stable framework for peace." Maintaining this status quo has, moreover, depended on the existence of four solid cornerstones.

**The first of these cornerstones is the "1992 Consensus" of "one China, with respective interpretations."** Crucial to this consensus is its insistence on the ROC sovereignty and on Taiwan's dignity. The term "1992 Consensus" was coined in 2000. Some people are reluctant to accept this term, but the significance of the "1992 Consensus" and historical facts at that time must be respected. The consensus is also one that both sides can accept, underlying the mutual trust vital to maintaining the stable status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

**The second cornerstone is made up by core principles of "institutionalization" and "constructiveness" that push forward cross-strait relations.** The ROC government is committed to promoting "institutional" and "constructive" cross-strait ties, promoting institutionalized cross-strait negotiations, and official and private contact. These are stabilizing factors in normalizing interactions and "upgrading" the stability of cross-strait relations.

**The third cornerstone is President Ma's "Three Pillars for National Security."** These are formed by three lines of defense, namely "the use of cross-strait rapprochement to realize peace in the Taiwan Strait," "the use of viable diplomatic methods to establish more breathing space in the international community," and "the use of military strength to deter external threats." They ensure cross-strait peace and national dignity and security.

**The fourth cornerstone is formed by the four principles in handling cross-strait relations.** These are: "putting Taiwan first for the benefit of the people," maintaining the cross-strait status quo of "no unification, no independence, and no use of force," adhering to an interaction mode based on "mutual non-recognition of sovereignty and mutual non-denial of authority to govern," and applying the democratic mechanisms of "national need, public support, and legislative oversight" as the four benchmarks in the handling of cross-strait affairs and sequential promotion of cross-strait interaction and exchanges.

## **II. Reaping the Fruits of Cross-Strait Peace and Deepening Taiwan-US Strategic Relations**

Over the past seven-plus years, the two sides, based on an "ultra-stable framework for peace," have started institutionalized negotiations on economic, trade and security issues to advance the interests and well-being of the people on both sides, protect the security of Taiwan's society, and promote Taiwan's economic development. More importantly, the two sides have, via the liaison and communication mechanism launched last year between the MAC and the Mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), begun to normalize official contact. This marks an important milestone in the development of cross-strait relations. It has also lifted cross-strait ties to the greatest level of peace and stability in 66 years.

Currently more than eight million people cross the Taiwan Strait each year for tourism, business, visits, and other exchange and contact purposes that foster mutual understanding. Moreover, the number of Mainland students studying in Taiwan has increased in the past seven-plus years by nearly 40-fold, from 823 to over 32,000. Cross-strait internet users and students discuss current affairs and share points of view across geographical barriers. Taiwan has made an impact in its interactions with the rapidly changing Mainland China through its unique way of life and the qualities of its pluralistic society. These interactions have borne and conveyed the values of democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law to guide the Mainland towards institutional reforms.

The results of improved cross-strait relations and positive interaction in recent years have also spilled over to Taiwan's external affairs. They have given Taiwan more latitude for international participation. They have also earned Taiwan plaudits from the international community. US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel has on several occasions praised the improvement and progress in cross-strait relations under the Ma administration. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Susan Thornton also emphasized in a recent speech that both sides should endeavor to establish a foundation for sustained peace and stability.

Therefore, as we work to promote and maintain cross-strait peace and prosperity, we are also deepening the strategic relationship between Taiwan and the US, consistent with the strategic interests of the US in the Asia-Pacific region.

There are, of course, some who worry if Taiwan has not inclined too much towards China. I'd like to emphasize, however, that the Mainland's rise has presented a new international situation and order that has prompted many major countries, as well as the surrounding region, to successively adjust interaction strategies and strengthen political and economic relations with the Chinese mainland. Taiwan, as the Mainland's next door neighbor, is particularly unable to ignore this change. Over the past seven years, Taiwan has strengthened trade and economic interactions with the Mainland. However, its economic dependence on the Mainland has fallen from the pre-2008 level measured by the data on cross-strait trade exchanges, cross-strait investment, offshoring and other criteria. In terms of cross-strait political affairs, Taiwan has stood firm in its insistence on sovereignty and dignity.

### **III. Internal and External Outlook, Turning Challenge into Opportunity**

Nearly 70 years of division and separate governance across the Taiwan Strait have created differences in ways of life, systems and values between the two sides. More than seven years of effort have progressively advanced cross-strait awareness and understanding, but fundamental and intractable political differences remain. The two sides are still unable to establish real mutual trust, which has led to occasional friction between the two sides when dealing with high political issues, and has also extended to conflicts on issues of security and international participation. It is also the fundamental factor that has always created estrangement, suspicion and psychological opposition between the two sides.

The Mainland has never understood why its expressions of goodwill to Taiwan have failed to win the hearts of the Taiwanese people. Public opinion surveys commissioned by the MAC show that up to 60% of the Taiwanese people feel that the Mainland is unfriendly towards Taiwan. Many of my friends around the world tell me that the Mainland's confidence is growing, but personally, I think the Mainland is actually fearful facing an uncertain future and afraid that it might lose all that it has gained. This has prompted it to constantly adopt safeguards and precautions that frequently touch on "deep water regions" and "sensitive areas" between the two sides. This is also the key factor that has caused the recent setbacks and tensions in cross-strait interactions.

One example is the Mainland's attempt to break the intangible and tangible boundaries across the Taiwan Strait. The Mainland has recently rolled out a series of unilateral measures aimed at Taiwan (such as the establishment of the M503 air route, implementation of visa-free treatment and card-formed "Mainland Travel Permits" for Taiwan residents, passage of Taiwan-related provisions under the National Security Law, and proposals to "ensure the practice of 'one country, two systems' and advance China's reunification in accordance with the law"). This has met with outcries in Taiwan. The Mainland leader has made statements saying that "mountains will shake;" they have adopted the principle of "first cross-strait, then international," placed roadblocks at every turn to block Taiwan's participation in NGOs relevant to the people's livelihood, regional economic integration participation, and bilateral FTA negotiation with other countries. This has inevitably been a cause of concern and disappointment to the people of Taiwan. As such, the Mainland's contradictory initiatives in response to developments in Taiwan have, in some respects, had the unintended effect of widening the psychological distance between the two sides. This has created the predicament of a self-fulfilling prophecy in which "the more one cares, the easier it is for one to lose."

I am convinced that these challenges and difficulties can only be resolved with stronger confidence on both sides. Tensions and conflicts have inevitably appeared in the past 20-plus years of cross-strait relations, however, relations will ultimately return to the "moderate path" of putting the people's well-being first. Regardless of how the situation evolves, the "welfare of the people" must be considered, and the Mainland must also fulfill its responsibilities to maintain

cross-strait peace. I would like to offer four suggestions for pragmatic development work, at the same time call out to the Mainland:

1. Institutionalized cross-strait negotiations must not stall and the benefits created for the people's well-being must not be retracted.
2. Official interactions must be strengthened under principle of integrity, and communication must be based on sincerity and goodwill.
3. Cross-strait exchanges must be sincere; political objectives and calculations must be put aside for the two sides to truly be of one mind.
4. The world is one family. Taiwan, as a peacemaker, cannot be excluded from international affairs and marginalizing Taiwan will only lead to alienation and resentment.

#### **IV. Conclusion: Our Expectations for Cross-Strait Relations**

Facing a complex terrain ahead and in the coming year of President Ma's administration, the government will persist in the following important work with the goal of creating happiness and benefit for the people:

1. The utmost effort will be made to maintain peace and stability of cross-strait relations.
2. The government will promote institutionalized cross-strait negotiations and convene the 11th round of high-level cross-strait talks. It will also strive to reach an early consensus on issues such as trade in goods and on the SEF-ARATS establishment of reciprocal institutions, expand benefits from the twenty signed agreements in effect, and fully carry out congressional oversight and communication with the public.
3. The government will work to complete policy acts that protect the welfare and interests of the people on both sides, such as the rights and interests of Mainland students and spouses, and expand in-depth intellectual exchanges between the people of both sides;
4. The MAC is planning to visit the Mainland in the second half of this year. We will also strengthen the effective operation of the communication and liaison mechanisms with the TAO;
5. The government will actively participate in the international community and regional economic organizations.

Looking to the future, we will consolidate the cornerstones for an "ultra-stable framework for peace" in order to persevere forward on a sure-footing. In this process, we hope that the Mainland will face the ROC seriously, respect Taiwan's dignity and public opinion, and not hesitate in facilitating cross-strait work, but rather further build momentum. In addition, the ROC is grateful to the US government and private sectors for their long-standing support to Taiwan. The deepening of Taiwan-US relations and the US's affirmation of Taiwan's cross-strait policy contribute to consolidating peaceful and stable

development across the Taiwan Strait, while at the same time, it also strengthen the US strategic layout in the East Asia Region.

Finally, I would like to wish this conference full success. Thank you!