

Formulate Successful Strategies for the Nation and Generations to Come^{*}

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Ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

It is my great pleasure to attend the inaugural meeting of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University, today both as its honorary president and as a veteran diplomat. Many of you are experts and eminent scholars in international and strategic studies, with whom I had the privilege to get acquainted and work over the past decades because of my diplomatic career. I drew a lot of great inspiration from you in the past, and now that I am retired from the position of state councilor, I will have even more time to seek your advice.

First of all, I would like to extend sincere congratulations on the inauguration of the IISS of Peking University. Over the years, the university has accumulated rich experience in the study and teaching on international affairs, and has carried out productive cooperation with institutions specializing in this field around the world. It has trained a large number of talents in foreign affairs not only for China but also for many other countries. The founding

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of IISS will be of great help to our effort to promote international and strategic studies in China and build think tanks with Chinese features.

I believe at the core of the IISS lies the word “strategic”. Strategy is something big and decisive. To a certain extent, a right strategy is the prerequisite for a successful undertaking, a prosperous country and a strong nation. If we take a look at Chinese history, there are many examples. King Hui of the Qin Kingdom (reigned 338-311 B.C.), for instance, annexed the Sichuan region to its south, thus laying the geopolitical and material foundation for his kingdom’s eventual unification of China and the establishment of the first imperial dynasty Qin in 221 B.C. Emperor Hongwu of the Ming dynasty (reigned 1368-1398), however, deprived China, then one of the leading countries of the world, of the opportunity to modernize itself through a “close-door” strategy that he chose to implement. If we cast our eyes beyond China and to the globe, we can find that, after the United States became the world’s largest economy in the 1890s, it chose to stay focused on its own development instead of external expansion, which paved the way for its replacing the United Kingdom officially as the world’s dominant power after the Second World War. On the contrary, the militaristic path of aggression and expansion followed by Japan and some other countries drove themselves and the whole world beyond the point of no return.

Strategy is an important means of aligning domestic politics with foreign policy. It is often used by major countries to form synergy and build public support. A strategy means a direction. The notion of Sea Power, as we are all familiar with, still has an impact on how some countries think and behave even today. During the Cold War, the United States, as a superpower, followed a set of strategies at different stages, and its ultimate goal remained unchanged: to confront and compete with the Soviets with all the resources and all the means until the downfall of the Soviet Union. Entering the new century, in view of the changed international circumstances and new needs, the United States, under President George W. Bush’s watch, declared a “War on Terror” and pursued a strategy of democratic transformation in the Greater Middle East, whereas President

Barack Obama came up with his strategy to “pivot” toward the Asia-Pacific in 2011. Dr. Brzezinski has also called for a strategy to create a “Greater West” in recent years.

Strategy is something built on a deep reservoir of thoughts and rich practical experience in China. The Chinese civilization provided ample ground for master strategists to emerge one generation after another. As far back as in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.), Sun Zi had underlined the importance of good strategies with his famous epigram: “The highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy’s strategies and plans”. In the long span of Chinese history, grand strategists include both some emperors and commoners alike. The thoughts of masters like the first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (reigned 140-87 B.C.), Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty (reigned 626-649), Emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty (reigned 960-976), Genghis Khan of the Yuan Dynasty (reigned 1206-1227), Zhang Liang who helped Emperor Gaozu to found the Han Dynasty and the witty adviser Zhuge Liang in the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280), still serve as an inexhaustible source of nourishment for the Chinese nation and enrich the treasury of world civilization. Guizhou, located in southwestern China, is my home province. Liu Bowen, the famous adviser who helped Emperor Hongwu to found the Ming Dynasty, used to predict: “Jiangnan (regions south of the Yangtze River) are nice and developed as they have thousands of rivers, while Yunnan and Guizhou are remote and backward as they are separated by hundreds of mountains. But alas, if you revisit these places after 500 years, Yunnan and Guizhou will be better than Jiangnan”. The fast growth momentum in southwestern China today leaves us without any doubt and full of admirations of Liu’s strategic vision.

Those who don’t think about the long run are not capable of considering the short run; who don’t bear in mind the overall situation are not capable of managing one single area. This has been the case since ancient times. As a major country with a rich cultural legend and an incessant history of thousands of years, China is now in an important period of important strategic opportunities that will witness the realization of the two centennial goals we have set for ourselves, and the great renaissance of the Chinese nation. The

18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) mapped out strategies for China's development in the five areas of economy, politics, culture, society and ecology, and reaffirmed China's commitment to peaceful development and the win-win strategy of opening up. Given such a historical backdrop, the decision to establish the IISS at Peking University and strengthen strategic studies could not have come at a better time. Particular attention has to be paid to the word "strategy," which demands a long-term and holistic approach as well as solid measures of implementation.

The establishment of IISS today is just a beginning. As we move forward, colleagues here at Peking University will have to make unremitting efforts to not only formulate good plans at the decision-making level but also do a good job of implementation on the ground. Such efforts will decide how far the IISS can go in the future. As true in all cases, everything is difficult at the start. The inaugural steps we take today are thus critical as we need to ensure a good outset in the first two to three years of the IISS and lay a solid foundation for its long-term growth. To this end, I wish to share with you the following observations and suggestions.

First, we must pay attention to real research achievements, not bubble reputation. How to become a top-notch think tank? In my view, the starting point and mission of an institution determine how far and how long it can go. A good starting point will give an institution a broad vision and perspective, while a great mission will give it clear goals to work on. I believe the main products of a think tank are its ideas and policy recommendations. Therefore, if the IISS at Peking University is to turn itself into a new type of think tank with Chinese characteristics, it should not only have to carry out solid basic research, but also keep a close eye on the changing international and domestic landscape and translate research results into policy recommendations in a timely fashion, so as to provide intellectual support to the central government in its decision-making and foreign policy formulation process. Given the trend of our times, the highly fluid international situation and vibrant diplomatic undertakings in particular, we could no longer afford to "enjoy our solitary state" to conduct pure academic research.

The IISS, if it is to survive, thrive and prosper, needs a broad vision focusing on how to formulate successful strategies for the nation and generations to come. To do this, it must make good plans and carry out serious study on the real big issues.

Second, we should be open and inclusive. What are the most important resources of the 21st Century? The answer is talent. Research shows that since the financial crisis in 2008, due to their attraction to a large number of hi-tech talents, some cities in the Sun Belt stretching across South and Southwestern United States have managed to maintain fast growth despite the economic headwinds. This demonstrates how necessary and important it is to have talented people around if we are to succeed in what we do. How can the IISS at Peking University attract the best minds of international and strategic studies to its team, then carry out high-quality research and produce the best policy options? It must call for a good institutional arrangement which not only makes the IISS attractive to the smart people within the Peking University, but also to those in China and beyond, so that the potential of the talents can be fully tapped.

As a research institute based at Peking University, a renowned institution of higher learning, the IISS, in my view, should also shoulder the responsibility of education to train men and women for profession. As we often say, a university is good not because of its campus, but its faculty. In the 1930s and 1940s, the caves of Yan'an nurtured a large number of leading cadres of the CPC. The People's Republic of China started from hard and crude conditions in Xibaipo (the village that stationed the Central Committee of CPC and the headquarters of the PLA from May 1948 to March 1949). The shabby cottage classrooms of the Southwest Associated University (a union of Peking University, Tsinghua University and Nankai University during the Chinese people's War of Resistance against Japan), despite the wanton bombing by enemy planes, trained a large number of talents in a wide range of disciplines. We are now lucky to have much better conditions, but at the same time, the need to train more talents for national development and diplomacy has never been as pressing as today. Our country is approaching the central area of world stage earlier than expected, for

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which we are not prepared well in many aspects. The insufficient reserve of talents is an especially noticeable weakness. It is thus our hope that the IISS at Peking University will make some fruitful explorations in attracting and producing high-caliber talents with global vision and a strategic perspective.

Third, we need to stay bold and innovative to ensure sustainable development. I asked one of my American friends a question when I met with him a couple of days ago: what is the secret behind the success of the United States in just more than 200 years since its independence? He told me, if there is indeed such a secret, then it must be innovation. I think he has made a good point there. Innovation is what keeps a country and an organization full of vitality. As a newly established institution, the IISS at Peking University needs to make pioneering and innovative efforts in such respects as organizational structure, substance and methodology of research, the formation, assessment and application of research results, and the attraction and training of and logistic support to talented people. Only by so doing will the institution stay vibrant and achieve sustainable development in the long run.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the IISS at Peking University on its inauguration once again. I hope, with the support and collaboration of departments concerned and people from across sectors, the IISS will evolve into a high-level institution that is competitive, influential and appealing to others, and eventually become an intellectual platform with an impact both at home and abroad.

Thank you.