

Speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies^{*}

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President John Hamre,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

Good afternoon!

This is my second time in the United States after my retirement more than three years ago, and I missed my American friends a lot. Over the time, the world has seen fast and big changes. That is why I am here to exchange ideas with you and learn more from the wise brains.

I wish to share with you some of my observations on the world, on China and on China-US relations.

I. ON THE WORLD

As we look around, we find some places in our world in a state of chaos and far from being tranquil. For instance, West Asia and North Africa, despite favorable endowments for development, have instead been caught in persistent turmoil with rampant extremist and terrorist forces. In the center of Europe, Ukraine

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has unexpectedly become a new source of turbulence that has repercussions worldwide, and one cannot see when the crisis will be resolved. Europeans who have lived for decades in prosperity and tranquility have experienced multiple shocks never seen before, including the shocking “Brexit” just a few days ago. In a place as tranquil as the South China Sea, the situation is not calm and the temperature is rising. The United States that many people have longed for also witnessed shootings, terrorist attacks and mass street protests.

These have made some people think that our planet is in a grim and hopeless state. But my belief is that, as a whole and in essence, the world’s mainstream is still for peace, development, cooperation and progress. The major trend is positive, and the prospect for mankind is a bright rather than a dark one.

Why do I say so? This world has remained peaceful on the whole without any new world wars 70 years since the end of World War II. The Ukrainian crisis has not dragged the US, Europe and Russia into a large-scale war. During the post-war decades, the world economy has developed rapidly, and the wealth of mankind has increased impressively, although inequality remains a big problem. The global economic and financial crisis in 2008 has not stopped the momentum of scientific and economic development. The G20 was born as a response to the endeavor of countries to seek common progress. As Western developed countries continue to enjoy high-level development, a great number of large and medium-sized developing countries have risen, significantly expanding the space of human development, and offering opportunities for higher-level development of all countries, developed ones included. Major countries have reached agreement with Iran on the difficult and complex nuclear issue, setting a precedence of solving the nuclear issue without resorting to war. The Chinese and US presidents met in Sunnylands three years ago and reached consensus on building a new model of major-country relations, opening a new and revolutionary chapter in the history of major-country relations.

Today what people see and feel is no longer conflict and confrontation between two major political, economic and military

blocs in the world. In some places, the sense of alliance is gradually being taken over by the growing awareness of common interests and a community of shared future. People no longer blindly believe in one single path and model of development. Instead, more countries are exploring paths of development that suit their national conditions. All political systems, ideologies and values are being tested by history, and the international order and system are undergoing gradual reform and improvement. My friends, aren't these parts of the major historical trend of a progressing human society?

As a result, our political leaders, strategists and scholars still need to deepen their thinking and studies on these positive and major trends as well as the negative factors. We should have a clear understanding of both the positive and negative factors in the world situation, and find ways to move it towards the better direction. As long as we make concerted efforts with new ideas and new approaches, there will be a better prospect for global governance. As a country that is responsible to both itself and the world, China is not only determined to run its own affairs well, but also ready to work with the US and other countries to make due contribution to the governance of our world.

II. ON CHINA

First, what is China's top priority?

We are fully aware that China remains a developing country. For a long time to come and even when China's second centenary goal is met, the level and quality of its development will still lag far behind that of the United States, not to mention the per-capita level of prosperity. So our top priority today is to avoid the middle-income trap and build a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Recently I went to Guangdong, one of China's most developed provinces, where I saw development remained a challenging task. If this is the case, you can easily imagine what it is like for Guizhou province, my hometown, where six million people are still living in poverty. That tells why development remains China's long-term task, and we are soberly aware of this

reality. So, my American friends, please do not overestimate or make yourselves uneasy about China's development. As we see it, people in a state of calm are most intelligent. Please feel at ease, eat well, sleep well and raise your kids well. As I see it, it should be a long-term strategy for the US to focus on developing cooperation with China.

Now, what do we Chinese want to do and what are we doing?

China is part of the world. It is a country of nearly 1.4 billion people under the leadership of the Communist Party, and the second largest economy in today's world. Its people are in a journey along the path blazed by their predecessors, and in a long march led by generations of Chinese leaders. Indeed, China has achieved a lot and has found a socialist path which is uniquely Chinese. But our exploration is still going on and must continue. We know this is a profound, arduous and complex endeavor. We know that to succeed, we must have enormous courage, extraordinary strength and a strong leadership. If China fails to act or run away from our responsibility, things will go very wrong, not just for us, but also for you. Whether China can handle its affairs well, whether the Party and the country can govern smoothly, and what kind of domestic and foreign policies China will follow bear on the future of China and even the world. We are clearly aware of our huge responsibility, and we are determined to overcome all difficulties to run our country well and make due contribution to global governance. To that end, we will free our mind and seek truth from facts, so that with a correct knowledge of all the major changes in China and beyond, we will also be able to adapt to them and get more things done.

Then, what are the things to be done? In my mind, they include the following:

First, we work all out on Party governance and discipline. Corruption is punished with extraordinary courage and intensity. This is to ensure cohesion between the Party and the people, and to turn the people's dream for a better life into reality. We will lift the remaining 70 million people out of poverty within a few years, and secure enduring stability, prosperity, order and unity for the country. A chaotic and disunited China will lead to trouble for

Asia and the world. Should that happen, just imagine how many refugees would come to your shores. Of course, you can rest assured that China is not the former Soviet Union; it will forge ahead, like a giant ship, in the course of peaceful development; and this ship will not capsize. Today is exactly the 95th anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CPC). We have been through so much in the past 95 years, and here we are today, undaunted. We simply ask you not to bring us more problems, because that will also mean problems for yourself. Of course, we are not perfect, nor impeccable, and we welcome all well-intentioned criticism and advice, because we understand that all efforts, no matter how great they are, always have room for improvement.

Second, we work in unprecedented scale and intensity to deepen reforms in the political, economic, military, social, legal, cultural and ecological fields. We will open up wider to the outside and maintain medium to high economic growth, and fairness and equity in a progressing society, so as to bring benefits to the people of China, Asia and the world. People of my generation, who have witnessed the entire process of China's development since the founding of the People's Republic, understand deeply that reform and opening up is the only way for China's development. Whoever chooses otherwise will be condemned by the people. After the 18th National Congress of the CPC, President Xi Jinping has personally served as the chief of the leading group on deepening reform. More than 330 reform measures have been proposed, over 180 have been adopted over the past two years, and more than 100 will be adopted this year. Reform of this magnitude has never been seen in China's history, nor in other parts of the world. However, the outside should not expect China to copy the US model, though we will learn from the useful experience of the US and other countries.

Third, we follow unswervingly the path of peaceful development and will never seek hegemony. We do not seek alliances or hegemony; we do not interfere in others' internal affairs, overthrow their governments or resolve disputes by force. China will not be another US or what the UK, Japan and Germany used to be. We are committed to equal and mutually beneficial

cooperation with all countries, especially our neighbors. We are committed to upholding international justice and contributing to the international order and system. We are actively involved in finding solutions to global and hotspot issues and undertaking more international responsibilities commensurate with our own strength and capability. We are committed to building a new model of major-country relationship with the US featuring non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and working with all countries to build a community of shared interest and future for the mankind. Perhaps some people do not entirely trust my words. Some still have doubts about China's strategic intention, skeptical about the nature of China's foreign policy. Let me say this honestly: China's foreign policy has maintained its consistency and continuity, and of course, there are innovative developments. But for all countries, including the US, progress will be impossible if a country's younger generation does exactly the same thing as their predecessors.

I must emphasize that China's rise, in essence, is the Chinese nation's self-salvation and revival after enormous suffering. China has been victimized by hegemony and power politics since the Opium War. Even today, China is yet to achieve reunification, and its territorial sovereignty is being undermined. We never bully others, and we just hope that we will not be bullied any more, and our sovereignty, security and development interests be respected. We never want to dominate Asia or the world. Our only lofty goal and "ambition" is to lift our people out of poverty, and bring them a life of peace, decency and dignity. I trust our American friends who have long enjoyed a comfortable life can well understand this, and support us in handling our affairs well, because at the end of the day, this is a strategic investment for you to serve your own good.

Friends,

Going forward, mankind faces many challenges as well as major opportunities. There is no doubt that, in the 21st century, a better-governed China enjoying enduring prosperity and stability and committed to peaceful development is an opportunity, not a challenge, for the US and the world. Please don't miss this historic opportunity.

III. ON CHINA-US RELATIONS

First, has US policy towards China been a success or failure?

I have noticed that the recent China policy debate in the US boils down to some fundamental questions: Was it right or wrong for the US to establish and develop relations with China? Is the China policy of dialogue, cooperation and engagement followed by successive US administrations from both parties a success or failure? During the debate, those with insight from various sectors in the US fully recognize the strategic decision of the government to normalize diplomatic ties with China and the tremendous strategic interests arising there from. They fully acknowledge the positive China policy carried out by successive US administrations from both parties and its huge success. Today, bilateral cooperation is almost all-encompassing. Such are our intertwined interests and interdependence that we cannot live in isolation from each other. Our dialogues cover nearly everything in the sky, on the earth, at sea, in the electromagnetic world, and even those envisioned in the science fiction story, *The Three-Body Problem*. Our cooperation has not only borne fruit for China and the US but also changed the world. Without the peaceful environment created by our steadily growing relationship, the Asia Pacific would not have enjoyed 30 years of development and prosperity. The significant progress in China-US relations over the past 40 years is attributable to the hard work of the two peoples under the leadership of generations of Chinese leaders and eight US presidents. Some say that US policy towards China has failed. What is their argument? Is it because the policy has failed to change China or to hold back its rise? It is wrong to have set a goal like this in the first place, and such a goal is doomed to failure. Taking the socialist path under the leadership of the CPC is a decision made after several failed attempts in other directions in our history at the cost of many lives. It is the choice of our people after repeatedly weighing different options. I have said many times that, unlike the Soviet Union, we will not seek hegemony or expansion, and we will not collapse. The Chinese people's pursuit of a better life is unstoppable and should not be stopped. The Americans have every right to pursue a good life, the

best life for that matter. The Chinese people have the same right. No matter how well it develops, China will not replace the US, but will only be its biggest and most helpful partner in the world. To put it simply, we have been through a lot to bring China-US relationship to where it is now, so we must cherish it, nurture it, and go all out to develop it. And we need to protect it in a way that we protect our eyes and lives.

To press ahead on the way forward, we must fully acknowledge the journey we have traveled. British statesman Winston Churchill once said, “The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.” How we approach history will determine what kind of a future history will give us in return.

Second, for China-US relations to move ahead, we must blaze a new trail.

Recently on another occasion, I pointed out two basic facts of the 21st century: no one can replace the US as the No.1 in the world, and no one can stop China’s peaceful rise or rejuvenation. Whether the US will be able to achieve its strategic goals depends on itself. This is also true for China. The important thing is for the two countries to properly handle their relations. What does “properly handle” mean? It means to blaze a new trail for building a new model of major-country relations featuring non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. This is not a scheme of the Chinese. It is a common understanding built up gradually through consultation in a decade of strategic dialogue, a process that is open and aboveboard. It is a strategic decision made and confirmed repeatedly by the leaders of the two countries in their meetings. It is a general framework that will ensure the sustained and steady development of China-US relations. It is a priceless asset to both sides. China will stay committed to building such a relationship. We trust that the current US administration and the ones to come will all keep good faith, remove distractions and overcome difficulties, and work with China to advance this relationship. If some people insist on choosing conflict and confrontation, I am sure they will be strongly opposed by the Chinese and American people.

Some are not quite fond of “mutual respect”. One needs to know

that mutual respect is a basic principle for cooperation. It is not a luxury that one has to ask from the other side, but a necessity for interpersonal and state-to-state relations. China is not proposing mutual respect as a code word for equal powers with the US. We have not accepted the concept of G2 proposed by the US. We do not want G2 or equal powers with the US. Some American friends are worried that, if they agree to mutual respect, they will have to respect China's core interests related to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Shouldn't these core interests be respected after all?

Third, for China-US relations to keep making progress, we must make continued efforts on several fronts.

First, there must be more candid and in-depth dialogue and communication at the top and various other levels. This is particularly important and necessary as the world today is turbulent and some people have greater anxieties and suspicions. Dialogue will help reduce and remove misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misjudgment, identify common ground, increase trust, and prevent us from doing stupid things. Second, cooperation must be our focus. On bilateral, regional and global issues, the two sides enjoy enormous potential and space for cooperation. We must make hard efforts to expand cooperation and deliver impressive results. We will show our two peoples and the world that China and the US truly have a new relationship that features win-win cooperation, not conflict or confrontation. It will generate confidence and strength, increase the positive factors and reduce the negative ones in this relationship. Third, differences and disputes must be well managed. China is different from the US in many ways. This is not bad news for the US. It can even be a good thing. It is better not to force uniformity. China-US relations have grown more multi-faceted today. With more cooperation, more differences are to be expected naturally. If our relationship does not develop, perhaps there will be fewer differences and disputes. But doing nothing and falling back to estrangement will be the biggest problem of all. Most of the issues we have today should be viewed in the context of a growing relationship and handled in a positive manner through the further development of the relationship. We must address

them appropriately in a sensible way through communication and consultation and avoid turning them into destructive and explosive factors that jeopardize the overall relationship. Fourth, there should be more exchange of experience in how to govern political parties and the country. In today's world, no matter what kind of political system is in place, the governance of political parties and the country is becoming an increasingly challenging, important and urgent matter. China's Communist Party and your Republican and Democratic parties are leading two big countries of different systems. We are each following our own path and cannot change what the other is doing. You will not turn the White House into Zhongnanhai, and we will not build a White House in Zhongnanhai. But our two sides can exchange experience in party and national governance. The ancient silk road that connected the East and West on land and sea not only carried goods and technologies but also brought about interactions between different cultures and civilizations. In history, the West learned from China's imperial examination system and the concept of meritocracy. Today, we learn from the West's market economy in our reforms. There is no end to mankind's explorations in improving social system. Capitalism has been practiced in the US for over 200 years. While there are considerable achievements, some acute and thorny issues have also built up. We have practiced socialism for only about 60 years, and we are also faced with an arduous task of reform. While remaining independent and self-reliant in our respective endeavors, we should also respect and learn from each other, exchange our experience, and draw from each other's strengths. This is the best thing to do.

Friends,

Whenever I think about the future, I will say to myself that China and the US must avoid big problems in their relations. What will our children and grandchildren do if such problems occur? What are we working for as diplomats? We are working for our children's happy life in the sunshine of peace, aren't we? Recently, my family welcomed a new member, my grandson. I heard that Mrs. Hillary Clinton, who was my dialogue counterpart, also got a grandson lately. Most of us here have our own beloved children.

For them, let us work together to build the new model of major-country relationship between our two countries, to protect our children and grandchildren, and not let them fall into the pitfall of conflict, confrontation or even war.

Thank you.