

Speech at the 18th Shangri-La Dialogue

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2 June, 2019

It gives me great pleasure to attend the 18th Shangri-la Dialogue. I would like to thank Dr. John Chipman for inviting me here and thank the Singapore government, the Ministry of Defense in particular, for the warm hospitality. I would also like to congratulate His Excellency Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on his excellent keynote address the other day. This is my first attendance at the Shangri-la Dialogue as China's defense minister. I am here for mutual confidence, cooperation and peace. I am glad to speak on China and International Security Cooperation.

I. Humanity is at a crossroad. Building a community with a shared future for mankind is the right path forward and the trend of the times.

The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. Destabilizing, uncertain factors and challenges continue to rise. President Xi Jinping's great vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind is the answer to harmonious coexistence of people across the world, the effective solution to global problems and the right path towards world peace and human progress. We take note that the US expounded on its perspective on regional affairs yesterday. We believe that any such perspective should take into account the common security and interests of regional countries. No approaches to regional issues should resort to military blocs, nor should they undermine the interests of others. We hold different views with the US side on several issues, and firmly oppose its wrong words and actions concerning Taiwan and the South China Sea. Now let's think about the following questions:

First, which should we choose, peace and development or conflict and confrontation? Peace and development remain the call of our times and the trend

of history. However, global and regional hotspots flare up one after another and the risk of conflict and war persists. What is the cause for regional wars and conflicts, the spread of terrorism, the chaos in the Middle East and the refugee crisis in Europe? Who are behind all these and what is the root cause? These are the questions to be reflected on. Some deliberately create division and hostility, provoke confrontation, meddle with regional affairs, interfere in internal affairs of others, and frequently resort to arms. Whose interests on earth do they serve and whose do they harm?

Second, which should we choose, openness and inclusiveness or isolation and exclusiveness? See the world with an open and inclusive mind, and there will be friends and partners everywhere. See the world with a narrow and exclusive mind, and there are only enemies and adversaries. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, lately we see a growing backlash against globalization and a surge of protectionism. A certain country champions unilateralism, puts its own interests before others, withdraws from international treaties and organizations. Aren't there many countries suffering from the willful infringement and sanctions?

Third, which should we choose, win-win cooperation or zero-sum game? Win-win cooperation makes the pie bigger and brings more benefits to all. However, zero-sum game makes no winner and harms the interests of both sides. Currently, over 150 countries and international organizations have proactively joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Not long ago, over 6,000 delegates from 150 countries and 92 international organizations gathered in Beijing for the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. People can tell what is right.

Fourth, which should we choose, mutual learning among civilizations or arrogance and prejudice? A few days ago, China successfully hosted the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations. We believe that human civilizations are and should be colorful, equal, inclusive and willing to learn from each other. Not a single civilization should be worshiped or belittled. There

are scars and tragedies in the history of human civilization which do not go away, to name only a few, the enslavement of Africans, the expulsion of native American Indians, the colonization in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the killing of Jewish people. Unfortunately, some people recently pick up the decadent idea of “clash of civilizations”. As racist and narrow-minded as it is, this is not right. How can we tolerate such a regress of history?

II. Facing complex and volatile international security situation, the Chinese government and armed forces stay committed to regional and world prosperity and stability.

Those who are familiar with China’s modern history must know that the country was once poor and weak and went through enormous misery. The Chinese people know only too well the value of peace and the cruelty and destructiveness of war. Over the years, some have been recklessly hyping up, exaggerating and dramatizing the “China threat theory”, partly due to the lack of understanding of China’s history, culture and policies, but more likely due to misunderstanding, prejudice, or even a hidden agenda.

China sticks to the path of peaceful development. Such a commitment is underpinned by China’s socialist system, the independent foreign policy of peace, and the cultural tradition that values peace and harmony. China shall follow the path of peaceful development, which is a solemn commitment to the people of China and the world. This has been written into the *Constitution of the Communist Party of China* and the *Constitution of the People’s Republic of China*, thus reaffirmed as the will of the CPC and the state. If this is not even convincing enough for some people, then we don’t know what they would believe? Over the past 70 years since the founding of the P.R.C., China has never provoked a war or conflict, nor has it ever invaded another country or taken an inch of land from others. In the future, no matter how strong it becomes, China shall never threaten anyone, seek hegemony or establish spheres of influence. History has proven and will continue to prove that China will not

follow the beaten path of big powers seeking hegemony when it grows strong. Hegemony does not conform to China's values and national interests.

China adopts a military strategy of active defense. China's military strategy adheres to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-strike response. It stresses that "we will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked". **China develops its military entirely for self-defense.** The purpose is to defend the country and provide the people with a peaceful working environment, and ensure that our people are free from the disasters of war and enjoy a better life. We have never bullied or preyed on others, and we shall not let others bully or prey on us either. **China develops its military to cope with security threats.** Similar scenario can be found in the past when China had to develop nuclear capabilities of its own under nuclear threat. **China's defense expenditure is reasonable and appropriate.** China enhances national defense in order to meet the legitimate needs to defend its own security as well as contribute to the world force for peace.

The Chinese military is dedicated to safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests. The PLA is the people's force under the leadership of the CPC. The PLA has fought many battles and is not afraid of sacrifice. In face of aggression, coercion or hardships, it has stridden forward from victory to victory. The more severe the pressure and difficulties are, the stronger and braver the Chinese people become. Adversity only brings our nation greater solidarity and strength. As the lyrics of the Chinese national anthem go, "Arise, all those who do not want be enslaved. Let's build the new Great Wall with our flesh and blood." Faced with daunting and complex security challenges, the PLA vows not to yield a single inch of the country's sacred land, but it shall not seize anything from others either. The PLA has no intention to cause anybody trouble, but it is not afraid to face up to troubles. Should anyone risk crossing the bottom line, the PLA will resolutely take action and defeat all enemies.

The Chinese military stays committed to safeguarding regional and world

security and stability. China is an active supporter of UN Peacekeeping Operations. It is the largest troop contributor among the permanent members of the UN Security Council and a major contributor of funds. We have established a peacekeeping standby force of 8,000 troops that is ready to be deployed. For years, China has been active in promoting bilateral and multilateral security cooperation. The China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination has been running at a high level. The state-to-state and military-to-military relations between China and the US remain generally stable, despite twists and difficulties. We have strengthened the sense of shared destiny with ASEAN countries, deepened traditional friendship with India, Pakistan and other South Asian countries, maintained peaceful coexistence and good-neighborliness with surrounding countries, and built good relationship with the countries and militaries of Africa and Latin America. In October this year, China will host the 9th Beijing Xiangshan Forum. We welcome defense and military leaders and scholars from all over the world to attend the Forum.

III. While striving for common prosperity in the Asia-Pacific, we must respect the core interests and accommodate the security concerns of all.

China advocates that all countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community. We should respect and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of one another. China understands and respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries, and supports the social systems and development paths they independently choose. China is not able to progress in isolation from the rest of the world; the world also needs China to prosper. We in China do not covet the interests, nor envy the development, of others. However, we shall never give up our legitimate rights and interests. No country should ever expect China to allow its sovereignty, security and development interests to be infringed upon. As for the recent trade friction started by the US, if the US wants to talk, we will keep the door open. If they want a fight, we will fight till the end. As what the general

public of China says these days, “A talk? Welcome. A fight? Ready. Bully us? No way.” I would like to further illustrate China’s position on a few issues you may be interested in.

First, on Taiwan. The Taiwan question bears on China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Not a single country in the world would tolerate secession. I visited the US last year. American friends told me that Abraham Lincoln was the greatest American president because he led the country to victory in the Civil War and prevented the secession of the US. The US is indivisible, so is China. China must be and will be reunified. We find no excuse not to do so. If anyone dares to split Taiwan from China, the Chinese military has no choice but to fight at all costs for national unity. Hereby, I have a message for the DPP authorities and the external forces. First, no attempts to split China shall succeed. Second, foreign intervention in the Taiwan question is doomed to failure. We took note that the US side mentioned the *Taiwan Relations Acts* in yesterday’s speech. Is it of Taiwan or the US? Is it a Chinese law or an international law? We can find no justifiable reasons for the US to interfere in the Taiwan question by its domestic law. Third, any underestimation of the PLA’s resolve and will is extremely dangerous. We will strive for the prospects of peaceful reunification with utmost sincerity and greatest efforts, but we make no promise to renounce the use of force. Safeguarding national unity is a sacred duty of the PLA. If the PLA cannot even safeguard the unity of our motherland, what do we need it for?

Second, on the South China Sea. The current situation in the South China Sea is improving towards greater stability. It is attributed to the common efforts of the countries in the region. However, there are always people trying to rake in profits by stirring up troubles in the region. Before the Dialogue, I paid a visit to Vietnam and Singapore and reached broad consensus with Gen. Ngo Xuan Lich and Dr. Ng Eng Hen on maintaining the stability in the South China Sea. I have a few questions concerning the issue to discuss with you.

First, who on earth is threatening security and stability in the South China Sea? Over 100,000 ships sail through the South China Sea each year.

None has been threatened. The problem, however, is that in recent years some countries outside the region come to the South China Sea to flex muscles, in the name of freedom of navigation. The large-scale force projection and offensive operations in the region are the most serious destabilizing and uncertain factors in the South China Sea.

Second, who would benefit and who would suffer from the chaos in the South China Sea? In case of chaos in the South China Sea, we, the regional countries, are the ones to take the blunt. What are the purposes for certain countries to send military vessels and aircraft all the way from afar to the region? Aren't there enough examples that some big countries intervene in regional affairs, make troubles, walk away and leave a mess behind?

Third, should the stability in the South China Sea be maintained by countries in the region or outside the region? China and ASEAN countries have made positive progress in negotiating the *COC*. We hope that relevant parties will not underestimate the wisdom and ability of regional countries to properly handle differences and maintain peace. However, we welcome constructive suggestions from all countries.

Fourth, is China's construction on its South China Sea islands and reefs militarization? It is the legitimate rights of a sovereign state to carry out construction on its own territory. China built limited defense facilities on the islands and reefs for self-defense. Where there are threats, there are defenses. In face of heavily armed warships and military aircraft, how can we stay impervious and not build some defense facilities?

Third, on the DPRK nuclear issue. China is committed to denuclearization, peace and stability of the Peninsula and to a negotiated solution through dialogue and consultation. In recent years, the Chinese side has made active efforts in promoting peace talks and played an irreplaceable and constructive role. We hope that the US and the DPRK will accommodate each other's concerns with cool heads and patience, work towards the same goal and resume

the dialogue for peace at an early date. The US and the DPRK should follow the dual-track approach and combine denuclearization with the establishment of a peace mechanism. We hope that the international community will positively respond to the legitimate concerns of the DPRK, trigger the reversible clause of the UN Security Council resolutions in due course, push for a declaration on the end of the war, and actively build trust among all parties.

Fourth, on China-US relations. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the US. Despite all the ups and downs, China-US relationship has been steadily growing in the past 40 years. The most valuable lesson we have learned from the 4-decade-long relationship is that cooperation benefits the two sides while confrontation hurts both. Looking forward, the two countries should follow the consensus by the two heads of state and promote a China-US relationship featuring coordination, cooperation and stability. Through continued communication, the militaries of the two countries have agreed on many important issues. **First, in terms of implementing the consensus of the heads of state,** the two militaries agreed on building their relationship a stabilizer for the overall relations. **Second, we agree on maintaining regular communication on the strategic level.** The day before yesterday, I had a candid and practical discussion with Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining communication and to develop a constructive military-to-military relationship. **Third, in terms of managing risks and preventing conflicts,** the two sides recognize that military conflicts or even a war between them would bring disasters to both countries and the world. It takes two to cooperate, but only one to start a fight. We hope that the US side will work with us towards the same goal, follow the principles of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and steer the China-US relations in the right direction.

The achievement China has made in the past 70 years since the country was founded is not a windfall or a handout from others. Neither was it made by engaging in military expansion or colonial exploitation. Instead, the country has developed through its people's hard work, wisdom and bravery as well as the

win-win cooperation with the world since reform and opening-up. At present, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, China enjoys political stability, social cohesion and steady economic growth. Blessed with peace, harmony, prosperity and good governance, the country is making progress on all fronts. The Chinese people are committed to realizing the Chinese Dream of great national rejuvenation. The Chinese military is ready to work with the armed forces of other Asia-Pacific countries to jointly respond to challenges, promote the building of an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future and safeguard peace and stability in the region.