

## **World Peace Forum's Responsibilities for International Security**

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World Peace Forum, sponsored by Tsinghua University and co-sponsored by the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA), was held in Tsinghua University on July 7-8, 2012. As the first high-level non-governmental international security forum hosted by China, it attracted wide-ranging attention from all sides and was universally recognized by international media. According to the post-forum statistics, 37 media from 21 countries in addition to China made active and positive coverage of this forum, particularly the address by Mr. Xi Jinping, Vice President of China. At a time when disputes over East Asian Ocean was heating up and the "China threat" fallacy was running rampant in the Asia-Pacific region, the World Peace Forum hosted by China was widely recognized by international media. In the perspective of public diplomacy, this is an international phenomenon worth studying.

**Original Intention of the Forum**

Tsinghua University established the School of Contemporary International Relations in October 2010. It invited former State Councilor Mr. Tang Jiaxuan to be the Honorary Dean of the school. At the inaugural meeting, Mr. Tang stated that think tanks should not only carry out research on public diplomacy but also put public diplomacy into practice. He said to the effect that a think tank in the diplomatic area should not engage in research behind closed doors; it should open its door, “bring in and go global”, strengthen contacts and interactions with governmental organs and all sectors of society, and carry out active public diplomacy.

Inspired by Mr. Tang, Tsinghua University and the CPIFA held a seminar on how Chinese think tanks should carry out public diplomacy. Mr. Yang Wenchang, President of CPIFA, chaired the seminar. Personnel from the two sides held heated discussions on how to carry out public diplomacy and reached consensus on sponsoring a world peace forum. The participants generally believed that in 2008 China surpassed Japan in GDP in terms of exchange rate and became the second largest economy in the world. This not only uplifted the international community’s anticipation for China’s bigger role in the world economy, but also unavoidably lifted the world’s expectation of China’s more obligations in international security affairs. Psychological studies found that expectation

violation leads to dissatisfaction and grievances. This tenet implies that if China cannot live up to the greatly enhanced international expectation for China's commitment in undertaking more obligations for international security, the dissatisfaction and grievances of the outside world would increase considerably. This common understanding became the ideological basis for sponsoring the World Peace Forum.

Experiences in international relations tell us that the position of strength of major countries have a positive correlation with the number of international conferences they sponsor. Before WW II, Europe was the center of international politics, hence the place for most of the international security conferences. After WW II, the U.S. became the strongest country. The United Nations newly established after WW II selected the U.S. as its seat. Since then, the U.S. has been the country holding more international security conferences than anywhere else in the world. Apart from the international security conferences of the UN, the U.S. ranks the first in terms of the total number of international security conferences held by various organizations and agencies in the U.S. Along with China's rise, the center of gravity of the world has started to shift from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Therefore, the impact of the Shangarila Dialogue held in Singapore has begun to surpass the impact of the Munich Security Policy Conference held in Germany.

The process of China's rise has been one in which the growth of economic strength prevailed over the growth of military strength. The sequence of growth of strength has led to the fact that the standing of China's economic strength far exceeds the standing of its military strength in the international arena. Along with the uplifting of the standing of China's economic strength to a global economic power, China has been hosting numerous international economic forums. In addition to the Bo'ao Forum, Various central economic functional departments, local governments and associations in the economic sector have held countless international economic forums of different categories. Along with the growth of China's cultural soft strength in recent years, various kinds of governmental and non-governmental international cultural forums springing up like mushrooms have been held in China. In contrast, not many international security forums have been held in China. Even if there were a few multilateral international security conferences, they were not open to the media. Face with this fact, Tsinghua University and the CPIFA decided to put into practice public diplomacy in the international security area. An international security forum shall be sponsored by Tsinghua University, co-sponsored by CPIFA and organized by the School of Contemporary International Relations of Tsinghua University. After more than one year's preparations, the World Peace Forum came

into being.

### **Process of Sponsoring the Forum**

The forum is identified as a non-governmental, high-level and global international security ideological forum. This identity has determined the nature and purposes of the forum.

As a non-governmental security forum, it needs to meet the three following requirements: One, non-governmental personages should constitute the main body of the forum. Among the guests participating in the first session of the forum were 23 leaders of foreign think tanks from 20 countries, 28 leaders of Chinese think tanks and 50 research fellows from universities and academies. Two, the forum should be open to the media, foreign media in particular. The forum is a kind of public diplomacy, which needs to be open to the public. At this session of the forum, the opening ceremony at which Chinese leaders made addresses, three plenary discussions and four group discussions were open to the media. In addition, the forum organized six press briefings on special subjects for media's collective interviews with foreign ex-statesmen and leaders of Chinese think tanks. Taking part in the coverage of this session of the forum were 64 media, of which 37 were foreign, and 138

correspondents. Three, the forum should use non-governmental funds. The economic assistance of this session of the forum all came from the Wang Xuelian Education Fund, which was specially established by Beijing Jialian Group for the establishment of the School of Contemporary International Relations of Tsinghua University.

As a high-level security forum, guests making addresses and taking part in discussions should have the experience in making high-level security policy decisions. Attending this session of the forum on the Chinese side were Vice President Xi Jinping, Former State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and 8 current or former decision makers for international security policies. Foreign participants included former Peru President Garcia, former Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi, former Pakistani Prime Minister Aziz, former French Prime Minister de Villepin, former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, former Russian Security Council Secretary Ivanov, former Secretary of EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and former Secretary General of EU Council & High Representative of EU CFSP Solana, as well as former foreign ministers of ROK, Peru and Pakistan Sung-Joo Han, Garcia Belaunao and Riaz khokhar. In addition, 34 foreign ambassadors to China and 3 deputy heads of diplomatic missions attended the forum.

As a global security forum, it should meet two requirements. One, each continent and each major region of the world should have guests to attend and address the forum, to voice different regions' different concerns for and views about international security. Different categories of foreign guests attending this session of the forum came from 41 countries, with representatives from each continent. Two, the subjects under discussion should consist of not only global issues but also regional issues, with issues in all major regions included. The subjects under discussion at three plenary meetings were all global: "current international security situation", "direction of international security cooperation" and "major-country relationship v. international security". Group discussions took into consideration different regions' different concerns on the security issue. The subjects under discussion were comprised of traditional and non-traditional security issues, with emphasis on common security issues in regions with more problems than elsewhere. The 18 subjects under group discussions were: "trend of development of the world security situation", "building a new type of relations between major countries to promote world peace", "international security cooperation amidst international economic crisis", "impacts of religions and political reform on international security", "cooperation between developed countries and emerging economies", "reducing the impact of ideological differences on international security", "security cooperation

mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region”, “conflicts in the Middle East and the way out for conciliation”, “the role of regional security mechanisms in regional conflicts”, “responsibilities for maintaining international security”, “international cooperation in the non-traditional security area”, “prevention and management of international security crises”, “social development and international security”, “the UN role in international security affairs”, “China’s development path and world peace”, “cooperation on non-nuclear proliferation”, “security of energy resources” and “international cooperation on networking security”.

As a forum of security ideas, it calls for diversification of concepts and ideological innovation. Ten days before the opening of the forum, the secretariat of the forum held a news briefing, making public the goals and purposes for sponsoring the World Peace Forum. As was clearly stated at the news briefing, the forum is dedicated to achieving goals at three levels: At the high level, it aims at putting forward new concepts and new ideas for study in the international strategic area and reach consensus through the platform of this forum. At the medium level, it aims at a situation whereby “a hundred schools of thought contend” by putting forward their respective new concepts, even if consensus can probably not be reached on these new concepts. At the low level, it aims at enhancing the awareness about international security and popular care for



safeguarding world peace through the meeting. After the closing of the forum, there was another news briefing on the universal viewpoints and different ideas at the forum.

### **International Impacts**

The first session of the World Peace Forum attracted wide-ranging attention from the international community. It was not at all surprising that Chinese media made a positive coverage of such a high-level global security forum sponsored for the first time by domestic non-governmental organizations. What was important was that numerous foreign media, including some media harboring biased views about China, made positive coverage of the forum's activities. The international community fully recognized such an international security forum sponsored by China for the first time.

Foreign media focused on the five principles for international security cooperation put forward by Vice President Xi Jinping at the forum, praised China's policies on seeking world peace, commitment of seeking no hegemony and safeguarding regional peace, as well as its proposition on putting forward creative new thinking and new ways for safeguarding international security. *Agence France Presse*, in its article

“Leader-in-waiting says no need to fear China”, laid stress on Vice President Xi Jinping’s statement that Beijing would never impose its will on the rest of the world and instead wanted to “abandon the old mindset” and strive for global peace. This report was reprinted or broadcasted in full by *Radio Netherland Worldwide*, India’s *Economic Times*, *Times of Oman*, *Oman Observer*, *Free Malaysia Today*, Singapore’s *Asia One*, *Channel News Asia*, *BBC*, *Australian Association Press*, India’s *Asian Age* and Qatar’s *Gulf Times*. The gist of a report by *China Daily* about “Xi Urges World to Seek Peace Together” was used by many foreign media, including Thailand’s *Asia New*, Malaysian *Sin Chew Daily* and India’s *Indian Times*.

Owing to different preferences, foreign media also selected different focuses for their reports. For instance, an article in Malaysian *Sin Chew Daily* said: he stressed that “China has always been committed to building good-neighborly relations. China is committed to the principle of building amicable relations and partnerships with neighboring countries, in an effort to foster a regional environment featuring peace and stability, equality and mutual trust, and win-win cooperation. China will continue to firmly uphold peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.” “China will continue to seek appropriate settlement of the differences and frictions with relevant countries and, on the basis of firmly defending

national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, work together with neighboring countries to maintain the stability of their relations and of the region.” India’s *ZEE News* reported, “Beijing: Faced with stiff challenges posed by small maritime neighbors over disputed islands in the South China Sea, China today said it will not impose its will on others and sought joint efforts to tackle issues relating to regional security and stability.”

The positive coverage of the first session of World Peace Forum by foreign media is reflected not only in their recognition of China’s international security policies, but also in their recognition of the addresses made by foreign guests participating in the forum. For instance, the Philippine *Philstar* reported that Chinese and US scholars participating in the seminar shared similar views on building a new type of relations between major countries. Chen Jian, Dean of School of International Studies at Renmin University of China said: “Common interests are the basis for forging a new-type relationship between major powers amid the current international situation featuring economic globalization, political multi-polarization and social informationization. Under the new trends, major powers are less likely to conflict with each other as violently as they did during the first and second world wars. Major countries should respect each other’s sovereignty, territorial

integrity, and legitimate security concerns.” Douglas Paal, Vice President for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, echoed Chen’s argument. He said: “Big powers have to try to accommodate each other’s interests in order to establish new relations between them. We are going to have lots of issues where we have differences of approach, but we’ll nonetheless have to work together because we have interests engaged. People should not make too big an emphasis on ideological and political differences, stressing practical cooperation is more important.”

*ASIA News* of Thailand reported that “dialogue and negotiation are better options to solve the regional disputes than conflicts or military means, according to Malaysia’s Badawi, referring to the escalated tensions in the South China Sea recently.” “China’s position on South China Sea has been ‘clear and consistent’, according to Wu Shicun.” Malaysian media *Bernama* had the following interpretation of Badawi’s statement: “ASEAN could be the best tangible representation of the enduring spirit of cooperation and community needed to achieve world peace, said Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.” “Although ASEAN member states have differences, even disputes, and were not always of the same sound from time to time, but their commitment to the association was unwavering and would ensure that and differences would not interfere with the regional common good.” “ASEAN was not self-centered and concerned only with

its own security, but had created conditions for peace beyond the region as well as through its relation with dialogue partners including China, India, Russia and the United States.” This report was re-carried in full in the Malaysian *Borneo Post* and Jordanian *The Star*.

In my communication with foreign guests at the forum, I myself got very similar impressions as reports by international media. Foreign guests attending the forum universally recognized the positive significance of this seminar, believing that this meant China would be prepared to undertake more responsibilities for international security. This was perhaps the principal reason for the participating guests and international media to recognize the first session of World Peace Forum.

### **Ideological Contributions**

The first session of World Peace Forum did not release any joint document but reached some consensus.

The biggest consensus reached at this session was that the participating guests approved the “Win-Win for All” keynote. Vice President Xi Jinping’s viewpoint that “A country which pursues its own development, security and well-being must also let other countries pursue their

development, security and well-being” won extensive recognition. Many guests believed that the significance of World Peace Forum lies in the fact that it has enhanced the sense of security for all countries instead of a few countries. Many participants expressed this kind of view: There has been no outbreak of war or large-scale military conflicts in large countries and regions in the world, but the people, with a low sense of security, generally feel they are not safe. Therefore, only by aiming at enhancing the sense of security of all countries, will the forum embody the principle of “Win-Win for All”.

The second consensus reached at the forum was that all countries need innovative ideas and innovative ways to safeguard international security. The issue of international security is no longer limited to traditional security. Non-traditional security threats are increasing and the people are generally not familiar with them. Guests from India, Australia and ROK believed that non-traditional security threats constitute a grave problem in today’s world. They are complex in types, multiple in forms, inter-connected with each other and therefore merit serious attention. The diversification of security threats is becoming a new characteristic of international security. Former Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi listed a series of causes for the emergence of threats and the sense of threats. For instance, internal political instability leads to external military

confrontation; political stability is broken when vulnerable nations and religions, lacking the right to say, seek channels for solution beyond the original political framework; the economic recession of one country, while threatening its own security, poses threats to other countries' security; the younger generation, under economic pressures, form extremist world outlook and tend to change the status quo through violence, etc. The participants generally believed that the existing methods for safeguarding international security obviously cannot meet the more and more new security threats we've never experienced. Therefore, we need to safeguard international security in a creative way. Former Russian Security Council Secretary Ivanov fully agreed with this view. He said that Russia did not support the Western policies on the Syrian issue, but this did not mean that Russia had got a completely safe plan and only meant that the Western methods would only play a negative role instead of a positive role. Russia suggested innovative ways to deal with the unique situation in Syria.

The third universal viewpoint I heard at the forum was that the maintenance of world peace and international security call for collective cooperation. The viewpoint set forth by Vice President Xi that "in face of complex and diverse security challenges, no country can stay immune or achieve the so-called absolute security on its own" was enlightening to

many people. Participants made assessment of the current international security mechanisms and believed that most of them are controlled by a minority of countries and a collective role can hardly be brought into play. Even the United Nations has the defect that important subjects on security under discussion are dominated by a minority of countries, in spite of the fact that the number of UN member states is increasing.

In addition, a consensus of the guests from developing countries could be heard at the forum, i.e. development is interrelated with security. The viewpoint set forth by Vice President Xi that “we must seek security on the basis of development” was recognized by the leaders of think tanks of many developing countries. Scholars from Malaysia, Kyrgyz, Pakistan and Nigeria held that the main cause of frequent outbreak of conflicts in some countries and regions is under-development of economy or disequilibrium of economic development. Absolute poverty constitutes the main cause of people’s security problem. Economic disequilibrium intermingled with corruption provides the extremists with an opportunity and enable the spread of internal conflicts, organized crimes and terrorism. They praised China’s thinking on promoting security through development. They believed that social and economic development is an important means to eliminate security threats.



In conclusion, the first session of World Peace Forum has opened a new spectacle for innovative thinking on international security. With the support of strategic thinkers from various countries, this forum can be expected to become a global platform for innovative ideas on international security.