

**Speech for the German Marshall Fund:
Taiwan Trilateral Forum**

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Thank you very much, Bonnie, for the kind introduction, and for inviting me to speak at the forum today. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Marshall Plan and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the German Marshall Fund. Considering these milestones, I want to take this opportunity to thank the GMF for hosting this forum every year since 2018, and for giving us a platform to share our experiences with like-minded partners. I believe that exchanges like these embody the inclusive and altruistic spirit of the Marshall Plan.

Those who know Taiwan well understand that Beijing frequently attempts to close off our access to international fora. However, the GMF has worked tirelessly for the past 5 years to welcome Taiwanese voices into the transatlantic conversations. This is highly appreciated. There is one thing I know for certain: with the support of our friends and allies, Taiwan cannot be silenced. We will keep on speaking out on our shared values, and work with you to jointly safeguard freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Dear friends, we find ourselves at a critical point in history.

We have long established the rules-based international order, which lies at the core of our collective peace and stability. But circumstances are changing, and the order is under serious threat. We see this with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting humanitarian crisis and economic consequences such as inflation, food and energy shortages. As we speak, bombs and missiles continue to rain down on the civilian targets and the critical infrastructure. Most of the people there are now enduring their life without heat and power. The conditions are likely to get worse as the weather gets colder.

Peaceful solution to international disputes, the most important principle of the UN Charter, agreed upon by the international community to prevent war has been totally ignored by Vladimir Putin. Avoiding civilian targets is also the long established international legal requirement in the conduct of war. Yet the world continues to see crimes being committed by Russian troops in Ukraine. We joined the condemnations and sanctions against Russia because it is the right thing to do. We can't pretend not seeing what has happened.

You may be curious why a Taiwanese foreign minister talks about the war in Ukraine often. Well, Taiwan cares about it because we think it should not have happened under the rules-based international order. No matter how

rich and powerful a country is, it has no right to annex another in total disregard of their will and sovereignty. And any unilateral change of status quo particularly by force is unacceptable. Furthermore, the war atrocities have also hit us hard, as we see the footages of many civilians being brutally murdered, and schools, hospitals, churches, and residential areas being destructed. Average Taiwanese strongly expressed their desire to help in a synchronized act with the government. The popular sentiment for Ukraine in Taiwan is strong and enduring. We have joined hands with the Europeans and other like-minded partners to provide humanitarian support to Ukraine, and we will continue to do so.

We know this is the best way Taiwan can contribute to upholding the rules-based international order. We understand this order can only be maintained when all actors, big and small, are committed to it. And if Taiwan desires to be included in international organizations, we have to act as a responsible member. As you can tell, Taiwan today is looking at the world beyond its immediate vicinity. Discussions with the GMF and other friends in Europe have already brought Taiwan much closer to Europe.

Nevertheless, Taiwan also needs to stay vigilant over the environment and events closer to home. After all, they

affect us directly. The PLA military exercises in early August is one thing we can't ignore, as they were the most direct and serious military threat against Taiwan ever. We saw missiles fired, large air and sea exercises conducted near Taiwan, violating the median line of the Taiwan Strait, which has safeguarded the status quo and peace and stability in the area for decades. In addition, we have also experienced cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and economic coercions. It seemed that the PLA was practicing its playbook of invading Taiwan.

The PRC activities bear similarities to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The PRC ignored the most fundamental UN principle just as Russians. The PRC also has the military might to inflict heavy damage upon Taiwan. The leaders of the two large authoritarian countries taunted the glory of the states and have sought expansion. On the surface, Russia and the PRC are both dangerous. But in terms of seeking to overturn the rules-based international order, China has both capacity and motivation.

A more powerful PRC, motivated to its expansion and to change the rules-based international order, is a serious challenge for democratic Taiwan. As the PRC emerges from the 20th Party Congress, the world noticed the stern languages in the work report delivered by Xi Jin-ping.

Other than words, the personnel arrangement of the loyalists monolithically is prone to misjudgement and miscalculation. Moreover, the investment in and the preparation for military actions continue. This could be a recipe for disaster, with Taiwan at the epicenter.

We are very concerned over the evolving situation, and we are trying to make investments in our own defense, particularly in asymmetric capability. We also work with the US to ensure Taiwan's readiness in deterrence. In addition, please be assured that our foreign and cross-strait policy will continue to be moderate and responsible, just as what President Tsai has been well known for all these years. We don't want war, which means devastation for many. And to us, the best way to prevent war from our end would be to prepare for defense but to give China no excuses to invade.

For our European friends, perhaps there is a need to look beyond the cross-strait perspective to know what is at stake and act accordingly. Here I would like to stress what is at stake is not just Taiwan, but our values and the rules-based international order as a whole.

The PRC has long been interested in the East China Sea. It now sends official ships to disputed waters almost on the daily basis. Its military patrol in the area is almost as

frequent as in the Taiwan Strait. Sometimes it would even conduct unsafe, unprofessional, and provocative behavior against the aircraft carrying out UN surveillance missions to signify its sovereignty claim over the East China Sea.

If the East China Sea is to our worry, the situation in the South China Sea is even worse. It continues to build military bases against the 2016 international arbitration, and lay claims of the whole body of water against the UNCLOS. In addition, the PLA naval fleet also carries out long-range exercises far beyond the first island chain. Some of its spy ships even sneak up on Australia. The security agreement signed between China and Solomon Islands serves as a testament to China's ambition over the Pacific. And if the Pacific is not enough, how about China's string-of-pearls strategy to secure control of potential naval bases in Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Djibouti, while leaving a trail of heavy debt? And how about China's exercise of influence in Africa and Latin America?

In the last few years, we have also seen China weaponizing trade for its political and diplomatic objectives. Just look at what happened to Canada, Australia, Taiwan, and Lithuania. It is to say that China has profited from the rules-based international trade, but now tramples upon trade rules.

The UN was established to prevent war and to ensure peace and stability in the world. But now China misinterprets UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 to legitimize its threat of the use of force or future military actions against Taiwan, trampling upon the most important tenets of the United Nations.

Here I would like to argue that Taiwan might be a focal point of China's military coercion, but Taiwan is not the only objective of the PRC's expansion. It wants people to pay attention only to Taiwan and ignore its real global ambitions. It seems to me that the longer cross-strait tension continues, the easier it becomes for China to quietly extend its dominance in other areas.

To me and to the people of Taiwan, a critical issue, other than Taiwan under threat, lies in authoritarianism. In this regard, we should continue to ask ourselves whether we can accept the way people in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong are treated, or mistreated by the PRC regime. If not, we should stop the authoritarianism from expanding further.

Taiwan, just like Ukraine, is right on the front line of the tug-of-war between democracy and authoritarianism. As the two authoritarian powers collude with each other, the threat the democracies face is no longer European or Asian.

In fact, the two fronts are now interconnected. If we are not able to save Ukraine, China will be emboldened to take more actions. And if China is in control of Taiwan, Europe will feel the heat from an emboldened Russia.

On this matter, I would like to commend the EU and some European countries for adopting their Indo-Pacific strategies to connect Europe and Asia socially, economically, and even on security matters. We in Taiwan have been working hard correspondingly to enhance our relations with Europe with tangible results. Let's continue to work with each other, to enhance the rules-based international order and to safeguard our shared values and interests. Most importantly, we need to continue to work with each other to curb the further expansion of authoritarianism. If democracies want to prevail, to stand insolidarity with one another is the only path forward. Thank you.