

Welcoming Comment to the European Parliament Members Assistants Delegation July 27, 2011

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Michael Hahn, Adviser Presidency Service and members of the European Parliamentarian assistants delegation, good morning. My name is Da Hsuan Feng and I represent my boss, Academician Lih J. Chen (陳力俊) to welcome you to our campus. Academician Chen expressed his deep regret for not being able to be here to greet you himself. Being in Sichuan Province, China attending a cross-shores presidents conference, he is unable to be here because he has not mastered the skill of “omnipresence!”

Your delegation’s youthfulness, in energy and in age, reminded me many years ago when I was working with a United States Congressional member the

Honorable Curt Weldon, who was at the time chairman of the Congressional Arms Services Committee. I noticed that the many assistants he and his fellow Congressional members had were also young, energetic and idealistic.

I cannot tell you how excited we are in Tsing Hua University to have the honor and opportunity to welcome you here. There are at least two fundamental reasons for our exuberance.

First, for too many years, the attention of Taiwan's academic communities, if not Taiwan in general, is on North America. In fact, it is United States. This is not surprising since a very high percentage of our faculty and administrators in universities (and I am no exception) received our excellent education in the US. Hence by that fact, much of our professional and personal connections are with the US communities.

However, in the 21st century, as the world becomes “flatter and flatter,” as Thomas Friedman would say, I think it would be foolhardy of us in Tsing Hua University not to expand our horizon and deep cultural understanding westward (*a la* western Asia and Europe) and southward (*a la* Southeast Asia.) In fact, President Chen has bestowed me the portfolio to develop a 21st century “global strategy” for Tsing Hua which would specifically include developing meaningful relationships with the people, its culture, political habits and history, of these regions.

I have noticed that most of you were barely in your teens, if not younger, at the point when the Berlin Wall collapsed. Hence, I believe as a research university with global aspiration, Tsing Hua University should serve as a platform for our students to link up with Europeans of your generation, who represents the leadership of Europe in this new century and has little or no knowledge of what Europe was like prior to the transformation. You start afresh and carry no baggage of the past!

Your presence here today is a clear reminder to us that in developing a European strategy, Tsing Hua University should not only be concentrating on the outstanding academic institutions which Europe has, but on how to educate the next generation

of Asian students the ability to appreciate, in fact to understand, the mindsets of Europeans of your generation.

Second, I just returned from Southeast Asia. The visit gave me a startling understanding of the transformational nature of Asia. Indeed, it is clear that soon, and I mean within the next decade or two, the geographically fragmented Asia Pacific and Southeast Asia will be linked together with new transportation infrastructure. In this paradigm, it is not difficult to foresee a fundamental transformation of the landscapes of economy, politics and intellectual. It is also not difficult to imagine there will be diminishing importance of national boundaries.

To this end, I believe that Europe, especially the creation of European Union, can shed some light on the future of Asia Pacific in the 21st century. Your “real life” experience in creating a “borderless” region of many nations could be fascinating, if not fundamentally important, for Asians.

In 2007, just before I left the United States to take up a position in Taiwan, I gave a talk in US National Academy of Sciences. The title of my talk was “*India, China and United States: What could/may happen in 21 century?*”

In this speech I ended with the comment

“...Finally, I cannot help but think a little “blue-sky” at this point of my speech. If we look around the globe in the 20 century, perhaps the most interesting political and economic development is Europe. Before WWII, countries in Europe with profoundly different cultures, languages and political systems had major conflicts. Wars between these nations were bloody and protracted. Yet, after WWII, with Marshall Plan from the United States and with the recognition that “united we stand,” EU was created. So, can one think that in the 21 century, there could actually be an AU, or Asian Union? After the French and Germans, who were bitter enemies before and during WWII, decided to be proactive parts of EU, and with US closely aligned with the concept, EU was created! So, can one not have nations in Asia, encouraged by the two giants India and China, working closely with US, to form AU? Imagine that perhaps one day in the future a person can actually hop on a bullet-train in Seoul, Korea for Mumbai without having to show once his/her passport to anyone! Imagine the economic explosions and expansions, for the region and the globe that can come from such a scenario. Imagine the

improvement of the “quality-of-life” for all people in the world if Asia Pacific and South Asia, with more than half of the world’s population, propelled by India and China, and assisted by United States, become AU in the 21 century!

Imagine!....”

I hope that with your visits to Asia in general, Taiwan in particular, this could be another tiny step towards this vision.

Once again, thank you and your colleagues so much for taking the effort to come to visit Tsing Hua University. As Clark Gable’s final comment in the movie Casablanca, I hope

“...this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship!”