



## Personal Experiences: “Eternal Belief”

### “THE MOST MEMORABLE IS HANGZHOU”

Hangzhou is a renowned historical and cultural city and a center of business and trade in China. Famous for Bai Juyi, a leading Chinese poet in the Tang Dynasty, and Su Dongpo, a popular poet in the Song Dynasty who spent time in Hangzhou, as well as the West Lake and the Grand Canal, Hangzhou has a fascinating history and rich and enchanting cultural heritage. Hangzhou is also an innovative and vibrant city with booming e-commerce. Just click the mouse in Hangzhou, and you connect the whole world. Hangzhou is also a leader in ecological conservation. Its green hills and clear lakes and rivers delight the eye on sunny days and present a special view on rainy days. Hangzhou is imbued with a charm unique to the south of the Yangtze River that has been fostered over many generations.

I spent 6 years working in Zhejiang Province and was personally involved in its development endeavor. So I am familiar with everything here, its land and its people. In China, there are many cities like Hangzhou which have gone through great changes and achieved tremendous development over the decades. Millions of ordinary Chinese families have changed their lives through hard work. When they are added up, these small changes have become a powerful force driving China’s development and progress. What we see here in Hangzhou showcases what has been achieved in the great course of reform and opening up upon which China has embarked.

- A New Starting Point for China's Development, A New Blueprint for Global Growth—Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the B20 Summit (September 3, 2016).

### *Commentary*

“Scenic splendor southeast of River Blue, and capital of ancient Kingdom Wu, Qiantang is as flourishing as ever.” Hangzhou is one of the six ancient capitals in ancient China. It was the capital of the state of Wuyue during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. Here, Liangzhu culture, Wuyue culture, Southern Song culture, and Ming–Qing culture have formed a complete series of cultural developments, which have not only left numerous places of interest but also nurtured many talents in literature and writing. Bai Juyi composed more than 3,600 poems during his lifetime, among which more than 200 are on the landscape of West Lake. He defended and dredged the lake and re-dredged the six wells, so that the civilians could live by the lake in peace and enjoy their work. This also established the physical feature of West Lake, which he described as follows: “facing the city while hugged from behind by mountains.” Su Dongpo, who created the delicacy “Braised Dongpo Pork” and is known for the famous line, “West Lake may be compared to the Xi Shi (one of the renowned Four Beauties of ancient China), whether she is richly adorned or plainly dressed,” capitalized upon swamps and turnip grass to build a long causeway crossing the lake from north to south. With six bridges and nine pavilions, the causeway was covered with peach, willow, and hibiscus trees, making West Lake a feast for the eyes. The history of Hangzhou is a history of a city that achieved distinction through West Lake and prospered due to the Beijing–Hangzhou Grand Canal. Well suited for sea transportation and inland navigation, Hangzhou has flourished in commerce since ancient times, and it developed into a megacity with a population of more than one million as early as the Southern Song Dynasty. Today, it has become a central city of the Yangtze River delta, serving as the economic center, cultural center, and science and education center of Zhejiang Province.

In 2002, Xi Jinping began to head the administration of Zhejiang Province. In the next 5 years, he developed an indissoluble bond with Hangzhou. It can be said that Xi Jinping is not only a witness of the changes in Hangzhou but a promoter of Hangzhou's great development. In 2003, shortly after he assumed the role of Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province,

he led a special investigation in Hangzhou and urged the construction of a cultural province. After that, he published an article entitled *To Strengthen the Protection of West Lake Culture* in the special column "Fresh Ideas of Zhejiang" of *Zhejiang Daily* under the pen name "Zhexin". The article stated that "West Lake is immersed in historical stories and instinct with culture," and stressed that "Hangzhou should play a leading role and do better in protecting cultural relics, extending the city context and carrying forward the historical culture." After West Lake became open to the public free of charge, he made three suggestions to the management department of the lake. First, the public toilets by the lake should be open for free 24 × 7. Second, rubber tires should be installed at the bow of the pleasure boats to protect the bridge openings from being damaged by the passing boats. Third, the benches should be placed at certain intervals in the scenic areas. He considered that "Many lovers like strolling along West Lake. If the benches are set too close, they will feel uncomfortable." It is thus evident that Xi Jinping conducted a thorough investigation of Hangzhou.

"To cure a disease, one should treat its root causes; to fix a problem, one should target its source." While the world economy is entering a new era of "mediocrity", how can we reinvigorate the "lake"? At the Opening Ceremony of the B20 Summit, Xi exemplified China's great development with Hangzhou's success story. This not only inspired the world's confidence in the economy but also conveyed a message to the G20: "When added up, small changes will become a powerful force driving our development and progress," and only if we join hands, can we "ensure that growth and development [will] benefit all countries and peoples and the livelihood of all people."

If we were to say that the G20 Antalya Summit held in 2015 made an accurate assessment of the health of the world economy, then the B20 Hangzhou Summit in 2016 came up with an integrated prescription to address both the symptoms and the root causes. To this point, Xi proposed four key words: innovative, open, interconnected, and inclusive. The reason why this "Chinese Plan", rooted in China's reform and opening up practice, is able to boost confidence in the world economy and win a broad consensus in the international community is, as Xi has noted, "It is a pursuit not to establish China's own sphere of influence but to support the common development of all countries. It is meant to build not China's own backyard garden but a garden shared by all countries."

## THE CHANGES IN LIANGJIAHE VILLAGE

Toward the end of the 1960s when I was in my teens, I was sent from Beijing to work as a farmer in the small village of Liangjiahe near Yan'an of Shaanxi Province, where I spent 7 years. At that time, the villagers and I lived in “earth caves” and slept on “earth beds”. Life was very hard. There was no meat in our diet for months. I knew what the villagers wanted the most. Later I became the village’s party secretary and began to lead the villagers in production. I understood their needs. One thing I wished most at the time was to make it possible for the villagers to have meat and have it often. However, it was very difficult for such a wish to come true in those years.

At the Spring Festival early this year, I returned to the village. I saw blacktop roads. Now living in houses with bricks and tiles, the villagers had Internet access. Elderly folks had basic old-age care, and all villagers had medical care coverage. Children were in school. Of course, meat was readily available. This made me keenly aware that the Chinese Dream is after all a dream of the people. We can fulfill the Chinese Dream only when we link it to our people’s yearning for a better life.

- Speech at the Welcoming Dinner Hosted by Washington Local Governments and Friendly Organizations in the United States (September 22, 2015).

### *Commentary*

At the foot of the mountains on the Northern Shaanxi Plateau, more than 60 km away from Yan'an, there is small village called Liangjiahe. At the beginning of 1969, the small village ushered in a special team—an educated youth team that included Xi Jinping, who was barely 16 years old at the time, and 14 other teenagers from Beijing Bayi High School. They came to Liangjiahe on foot, and this marked the start of Xi’s 7 years of farming life.

Life was tough on the loessland. At that time, there was no electricity in the village, and Xi had to live with five other educated youths in an “earth cave” and sleep on an “earth bed”. In the earth cave, he was bitten all over his body; thus, he had no other way to eliminate the fleas but to dust insecticide under the bed mat. At the very beginning, he was incapable of

even the most basic farm work such as digging, growing corn, and cutting wheat, thus he followed and learned from the villagers. In those years, Xi performed all types of hard labor and barely rested—carrying manure, hauling a coal cart, farming, and building dykes. The villager Zhang Weipang recalled, "It was a rough time for Xi Jinping, as rough as we villagers lived."

Life was also full on the loessland. The farming life in Liangjiahe enhanced Xi's perseverance, making him "able to walk 5 km on the mountainous path with two dangling baskets filled with almost one hundred kilograms of wheat on a shoulder-pole," and it taught him various skills such as "making noodles, steaming dumplings, pickling cabbage." The village gave him a stage upon which to display his talents. Growing into a capable and hardworking young man in the eyes of the villagers of Liangjiahe, Xi was called "a tough boy" by the locals. By gaining their trust, he was elected Village Party Secretary. Reading from a newspaper that some villages in Sichuan Province were pioneering in gathering cooking gas, he immediately traveled to Sichuan at his own expense to learn from their experience. After returning to Liangjiahe, he led the villagers in building a methane tank for gathering cooking gas, the first in northern Shaanxi, helping the villagers solve the difficulties they faced in terms of cooking and lighting. In a bid to prevent erosion, he led the farmers to reinforce the riverbank in the slack season of winter. Every time, he took the initiative to stand barefoot in the icy water to break the ice and clear the dam foundation. In addition, he helped the village to find a mill and a tailor shop, and he organized a cooperative of blacksmiths, which improved the locals' lives.

After being recommended for enrollment at Tsinghua University in 1975, the villagers lined up to bid him farewell, many of whom wept at his parting. They even presented him with a framed certificate that read, "A Good Secretary for the Poor and Lower-middle Peasants," which conveyed their respect for him. On the eve of the Spring Festival in February 2015, Xi Jinping, as navigator of the 1.3 billion Chinese people, revisited Liangjiahe. On the occasion of the reunion with the villagers with whom he had lived and struggled, Xi said with emotion, "Although I left that year, I left my heart here."

As the president of a large country and standing in the middle of the world stage, Xi Jinping introduced China to the world without magnificent description or statistical figures but only through his own story—one between him and the most significant village in his life. Such thinking stems

from Xi's constant "original aspiration". What happened in Liangjiahe was but a microcosm of the progress China has made.

Never forget why you started, and you can accomplish your mission. Seven years of toiling alongside the villagers allowed Xi to grow and to hold his faith more firmly. He once recalled in an article, "I arrived at the loessland as a 15-year-old teenager, who was slightly lost, and I left as a 22-year-old man with determined aspirations and self-confidence." Such transition was promoted by his constant original aspiration that gestated on the Northern Shaanxi Plateau: to serve the people, to be of one mind with the people, to bear hardships with the people, and to work together with the people. Liangjiahe is the place where he came to understand the words "the people", and Liangjiahe's villagers, for whom he has never stopped pining, are the people who enlightened him as to the meaning of those words.

### A NIGHT SPEECH AT YINGTAI

To understand today's China and predict tomorrow's China, one has to know China's past and culture. Modern Chinese people's thinking and the Chinese government's strategy of national governance are steeped in traditional Chinese culture. The Chinese people have cherished national independence, unity, and dignity since ancient times. The Chinese government must comply with the people's will, firmly safeguard national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, maintain ethnic solidarity and social stability, and unswervingly pursue the path of peaceful development. China and the US have different national conditions, history and culture, and development paths, and they are in different phases of development. The two countries should understand and respect each other and live in harmony by focusing on similarities and allowing divergences. It is inevitable for the two countries to have some divergences, yet this is not the mainstream of the bilateral relations. Both governments should serve as stabilizers and properly handle related divergences.

- Speech at a meeting with President Barack Obama at Zhongnanhai (November 11, 2014).

*Commentary*

In the evening in Zhongnanhai, the lake water rippled, and the tree shadows flickered. Xi Jinping greeted Obama in front of Yingtai, and the two heads of state shook hands warmly and exchanged greetings. On Yingtai Bridge, the two heads of state leaned on the railing overlooking the pavilions scattered around under glorious lights. Xi Jinping briefed Obama on the history of Yingtai, which has witnessed the vicissitudes of China for centuries. Xi Jinping said that knowing the modern history of China is of great importance to understanding contemporary Chinese people’s ideals and paths of development.

Xi explained to Obama that Yingtai was built during the Ming Dynasty, and during the Qing Dynasty, it served as the emperor’s business office and a place to escape the summer heat and host receptions. Yingtai witnessed many historic events. The Qing Emperor Kangxi made policies to pacify civil strife and recover Taiwan from the Ming loyalists. Emperor Guangxu, who launched the Hundred Days of Reform when the dynasty began to fall into decay, was imprisoned there by the Empress Dowager Cixi after his modernizing reform failed. Obama replied that China and the US shared that aspect of history—that reform nearly always encounters resistance and demands courage to push forward.

It was an unforgettable night. In the moonlight, the two heads of state strolled while chatting with great interest. The scheduled 90-min banquet lasted nearly 2 h, and the 30-min tea break lasted nearly 1 h. When Xi Jinping said, “Let’s go to dinner. I do not want to have my guest chat with me in hunger,” Obama said, “I would like to talk to you about a few more questions.” The wonderful dialog made Peter, Obama’s official photographer who sniffled all night due to the cold weather, reluctant to go indoors. Five hours passed by in a flash. The meeting in Yingtai did not end until after 11 pm due to the prolonged discussion. Just before parting, Obama summed up his feelings, saying, “Tonight, I have obtained an unprecedentedly comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the history and conception of governance of the CPC as well as your thoughts.”

The talk at Yingtai was a continuation of the open-ended informal summit at the Annenberg Retreat in California. Why did Xi relay the history to Obama in the cold wind? Because only by learning about China’s history from its suffering and fighting against aggression to becoming a rising nation on the way toward development, can one understand why China

assiduously pursues the centenary dream of national rejuvenation. Only by gaining insight into the exploration, struggle, and decisions made by China to stand firmer and stronger among the world's nations can one understand why the Chinese people choose Marxism, choose the CPC, and choose the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Simply put, "Knowing the modern history of China is of great importance to understanding today's Chinese people's and their development path." The night talk at Yingtai focused on history, but the subject was not history itself. The aim was to discuss the present—to build a new model of major-country relations between China and the US. From "the retreat meeting" to "the talk at Yingtai" and then to "the autumn reunion in the White House", the presidents of China and the US are jointly writing a new chapter in the history of international relations through communication, dialog, and mutual trust.

### APEC BLUE

These days, the first thing I do in the morning is to check the air quality in Beijing, hoping that the smog won't be too bad, so that our distinguished guests will be more comfortable while you're here. Fortunately, with the efforts of our people and the cooperation of the weather, the air quality in Beijing in the recent couple of days is much better than before. Well, this may be a premature conclusion, but I do hope and pray that the weather tomorrow will turn out just fine! The improved air quality, which is not easy to secure, is the result of the combined efforts of nearby provinces and cities and relevant government agencies. I want to say "thank you" to all those who have helped to make it a reality. And I want to thank the APEC meeting for prompting us to be even more determined to protect the environment. We will do a better job at protecting the environment in the future. Some people refer to the clear Beijing sky these days as "APEC blue" and say it is beautiful but temporary, and it will be gone soon after the APEC meeting. I hope and believe that, with persistent efforts, APEC blue will be here to stay.

- Toast at the Welcome Dinner of the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting (November 10, 2014).



*Commentary*

Xi Jinping has coined many new phrases such as “where did the time go”, “pretty strenuous,” and “APEC blue”. These popular phrases are like an array of hyperlinks; a click on any of them will produce a vivid story.

Notwithstanding the multiple rounds of attacks of smog in October 2014, Beijing’s sky was blue in early November. The monitoring data showed that the air quality in Beijing was at an excellent level from November 1 to 12, except for the 4, when the air was slightly polluted. During that period, the APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting was held in Beijing. Thus, Chinese netizens coined the phrase “APEC blue”. Although the phrase was somewhat one of ridicule, it embodied the people’s expectation of the blue sky.

In fact, to ensure the APEC meeting’s good air quality, the Chinese government implemented measures such as closing factories and exerting production restrictions on factories in North China and the surrounding areas, enforcing odd–even day vehicle prohibition in some cities, giving government workers in Beijing the week off, and conducting intensive supervision. In a sense, it was the special measures issued in the special period that turned the sky above Beijing blue. Some netizens questioned this: “Is it a bit formalistic to shut down the factories, turn off the boilers and give Beijing a week off?” However, Xi Jinping deliberated on the matter, “It is actually an attempt to promote collaborative governance by capitalizing on the opportunity derived from the APEC. Through joint remediation by multiple provinces and municipalities, we eventually reduced pollution emissions by more than 30%. This helped us accumulate ideas about the beneficial experience for both the adjustment of the industrial structure and the industrial layout in the future. These were pragmatic efforts that were done not only for the meeting.”

Immediately after the APEC meeting, Xi traveled to Brisbane to attend the G20 Summit. On the plane, when the accompanying reporter referred to the popular phrase, “APEC blue”, Xi offered a dialectical remark: “A bad thing could turn into a good thing.” He added, “After we realized the harm of smog and reached a consensus, we made active efforts to eliminate smog. This process aroused and enhanced our awareness of environmental protection. Is it not a good thing?”

As Mr. Lu Xun said, “Only the one who dares to face the problem has the courage to think, to speak out, to carry out initiatives and to take the

consequences.” Xi Jinping’s speaking of “APEC blue” of his own accord on such an important occasion as the APEC meeting incarnated his style of governance, “not to sidestep conflicts and not to conceal problems,” and he even conveyed a response to the people’s expectations and showed the world his resolution to lead the government to curb environmental pollution together with the people.

In early 2014, Xi Jinping especially took up smog elimination when he made an investigation into Beijing. He stated, “We should intensify efforts to control air pollution. The primary task of tackling smog pollution and improving air quality is to control PM2.5. We must take major measures from multiple perspectives. For example, we should reduce the use of coal, strictly control the growth of car ownership, adjust the industrial structure, strengthen environmental management, carry out inter-regional coordinated pollution prevention and control, and promote the control of environmental pollution by law. We should also focus on the critical fields, strictly carry out index assessment, strengthen supervision over environmental law enforcement and seriously conduct responsibility investigation.”

### GULING IN HIS HEART

In the spring of 1992, when I was working in Fuzhou city in Fujian province, I came across an article titled “My Guling” in a newspaper. It told a story about an American couple who tried but failed to revisit a place called Guling in China, which had a special place in their heart. Milton Gardner, the husband, was a Professor of Physics at the University of California. In 1901, his parents took him to China, and he had a happy childhood in Guling, Fuzhou, which left him with unforgettable memories. In 1911, the family returned to California. In the decades that followed, Milton Gardner longed to revisit his childhood home. However, he could not make it due to failing health. In the final days of his life, he kept uttering “Kuling, Kuling”. His wife had no idea where this Kuling was, but still she went to China several times, hoping to find the place that meant so much to her late husband. However, her efforts were in vain until finally a Chinese student in the United States helped her locate Guling. After I read their story, I immediately contacted Mrs. Gardner through the relevant departments and invited her to visit Guling. I met her 4 months later in August 1992 and arranged for her to visit the place her husband had missed so much. There, she met nine childhood friends of Milton Gardner,

all in their 90s, and she listened to them reminiscing about the past. It was a happy occasion. Mrs. Gardner was so excited that she finally fulfilled her husband’s last wish. And she said that she would cherish this bond of friendship between her husband and the people of China because after seeing for herself the beautiful Guling and the warmth of the Chinese people, she now understood why her husband had been so deeply attached to China. I am sure there are many such touching stories between our two peoples. We should further strengthen our people-to-people exchanges and build even stronger public support for mutually beneficial China–US cooperation.

- Work Together for a Bright Future of China–US Cooperative Partnership—Speech at the Welcoming Luncheon Hosted by Friendly Organizations in the United States (February 15, 2012).

### *Commentary*

Guling, a place in Milton’s heart, is a symbol of a longstanding friendship. However, half a world from each other, Guling and Muscatine came to have a connection in this speech. Having happened 20 years prior, the anecdote about Guling told by Xi Jinping is an epitome of the China–US friendship that is well established and vigorously developing. Through this touching story, Xi told the world that the engagement and support of the people are always the basis of friendship among nations.

Xi Jinping’s expressed eager expectations for cultural and people-to-people exchanges and regional cooperation between China and the US. After Mrs. Gardiner’s visit to Guling, Xi Jinping sent her a letter of congratulations, in which he said, “I believe, through the article titled “My Guling” by Mr. Zhong Han and published in the *People’s Daily*, the touching story about your husband will widely spread in Fuzhou and even further. It will encourage more people to continue to make efforts to enhance the friendship between our two peoples.” When Xi later visited the US for his trip to Muscatine in 2012, he told his old friends, “The development of China–US relations did relies on the enthusiastic engagement and vigorous support of the people of the two countries. And the advance of the mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples will determine the future of our bilateral relations.”

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