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The 7th Broadyard Workshop  
The Donald Trump Phenomenon and  
a New Understanding of the US

June 2, 2018

INSTITUTE OF AREA STUDIES PEKING UNIVERSITY

**Academic Bulletin**

**The Seventh Broadyard Workshop – The Donald Trump  
Phenomenon and a New Understanding of the US  
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The Seventh Broadyard Workshop (博雅工作坊) of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS), on the theme “The Donald Trump Phenomenon and a New Understanding of the US,” was held at the Yingjie Exchange Center on June 2, 2018. Ten experts and academics from universities and research organizations including Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, participated and had heated discussions over related topics.

Prof. Qian Chengdan, director of PKUIAS, briefly introduced the institute, which was followed by speeches from ten experts in American studies. The workshop had three sessions with different themes. The topic for Session I, hosted by Prof. Wang Xi from PKU’s Department of History, focused on domestic and international politics in the Trump era.

**Session I: Domestic and International Politics in the Trump Era**

Prof. Da Wei at the University of International Relations made the first speech, entitled “Globalization, the Trump Phenomenon and Sino-US Relations.” He briefly reviewed the

reasons behind the Trump phenomenon, saying that there have been many discussions on this subject in academia in the past few years, and various kinds of arguments have emerged. They generally focused on the internal conflicts in the US, such as conflicts between rural and urban regions and between old and new immigrants. Prof. Da Wei opined that the development of neo-liberalism in the US has hit bottlenecks at three levels. First, the geographical expansion of the US has reached its maximum limit. At the same time, great powers such as China and India have begun to develop rapidly. Therefore, a new complexity has emerged on the global stage. Second, there has been no major breakthrough in science and technology in the past few decades, so it is almost impossible to rely on technological progress to solve social conflicts. The third bottleneck is a lack of system innovation. Competition with socialist countries during the Cold War forced the US to carry out internal reforms in its system, which led to its victory in the Cold War. But such reforms ceased with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The US currently is unable to break through these three bottlenecks. However, the strong voice of American people is demanding social system reforms. The election of President Barack Obama was an attempt by Americans to seek change. Although the factors behind Trump's election in 2016 are not easy to decipher, his election did indicate that that Americans are still looking for reforms, and that they were not satisfied with the changes made

under Obama.

With regards to the relationship between the Trump phenomenon and the US national strategy, Dai Wei opined that Trump's election doesn't mean the end of liberal internationalism. In past decades, the US has been the world's largest market, its largest investor, and its largest technology exporter. It has played the role of the engine of the world economy and shouldered the responsibility of maintaining the security of the international community, while continuing to export a set of liberal internationalist values. In the face of the problems currently encountered, there are a series of questions coming from the US society. Is maintaining the order of liberal internationalism consistent with the interests of the US? Is it necessary for the US to lead the world to protect its own interests? How should the US treat a country like China that cannot be assimilated by American values?

In fact, the US had begun to treat China as an opponent in the early 21st century. However, due to the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration had to consider Islamic extremists as its primary enemy. Now the US has treated China as an obvious opponent. Since it can't assimilate China, it can only treat China as an opponent. China is regarded by the US as a country which is the hardest to assimilate and it is becoming increasingly different from the US, which makes the US more and more wary of it. Da Wei introduced the concept of "different countries



under the same system.” He explained that it is a big test for different countries under the same system to live in peace and develop together. The two countries are closely related economically, and China and the US are getting closer in their economic output. However, they feel uncomfortable and incompatible with each other. According to the US, China should become the same as the US, but if China cannot be assimilated, China should be decoupled from the US. At present, the US has imposed restrictions on high-level exchanges and personal exchanges with China as well as on visas for Chinese overseas students, which shows that the US is reducing its engagement with China.

The US feels that if it cannot assimilate China, it is necessary to keep a distance from it. The recent trade war is also a reflection of this problem. This phenomenon of “different countries under the same system” which is facing the US and China poses a huge challenge to the US. China and the US are in the same international order, and their existence in and influence toward each other are very large. Two countries with very different systems have to communicate and survive together, which will naturally cause strong discomfort. He also mentioned that Trump has created some unpredictability, but by doing so, it will consume the credibility of the US and will cause great harm to US hegemony in the long run. The US provision over a long period of a safe and stable international environment for other

countries is actually a public product of world politics. But the uncertainty brought by Trump after he took power has brought anxiety to the international community. The rotation of ruling parties in the US has led to a lack of consistency in its policy, which also damaged the international reputation of the US. Obama took office and turned against Bush; Trump took office and opposed Obama. Although uncertainty can bring tactical advantages, in the long run, it still damages the national credibility of the US.

Prof. Wang Lixin from PKU's Department of History, made the second speech entitled "The Trump Phenomenon and the Decline of Liberal Internationalism." From the perspective of liberal internationalism, he analyzed Trump's personal success from a diplomatic aspect, as well the range of measures taken by Trump after his taking office. As the mainstream diplomatic ideology of the US, liberal internationalism has long dominated the design of US foreign policy. The founder of the liberal internationalism was President Woodrow Wilson. Before and after World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull revised and developed the theory and reconstructed the international order based on the ideology of liberal internationalism.

The basic content of liberal internationalism includes two aspects.

First, the US, as a newly emerging power, should not

maintain its national interests by forming alliances or constructing a so-called “balance of power” as Europe did. Instead, it should rebuild the international order in accordance with American values, or the basic principle of freedom. At the same time, the US should require the opening of international markets, free trade, and the implementation of democracy and human rights within the country, as well as have international cooperation in the field of international security, achieving international security. These three points are interrelated. An open market and free trade can achieve economic prosperity, which can help promote democracy and human rights. A country that implements democracy and promotes human rights would deal with international disputes in peaceful ways, which makes the country a partner, not an opponent of the US. Therefore, the security of the US is maintained and its reputation is improved.

The second main idea of liberal internationalism is that the US should abandon isolationism, actively participate in international affairs, and lead the world to promote the establishment and maintenance of internationalism. Therefore these two ideas, a product of liberal principles and international diplomacy, are known as liberal internationalism. This set of ideas led to the reconstruction of the international order after World War II and shaped US foreign policy during the Cold War. During the Cold War, the US combined liberal internationalism with realism and successfully dragged down the Soviet Union.

The influence continued until after the Cold War, with neoconservative diplomatic ideas formed during the George W. Bush administration. Achievements of liberal internationalism include:

First, the increase of the number of democratic countries, which Samuel Huntington referred to as the second and third waves of the democratization. After the World War II, Germany and Japan achieved political democracy and economic prosperity, becoming peaceful powers and allies of the US.

Second, a prosperous world economy and development in emerging markets. Capitalism led to development for a long time after World War II, while emerging markets such as China and India also developed.

Third, violence has been reduced and the world has maintained peace for an extended period. Prof. Wang Lixin quoted *The Better Angels of Our Nature* by Prof. Steven Pinker from Harvard University as saying that organized violence was greatly reduced after World War II, and there were almost no wars among great powers. He also quoted *The Long Peace* by Prof. John Gaddis from Yale University.

The achievements of liberal internationalism have caused the US to be arrogant and self-contented. Liberal internationalism began to decline after the US launched the Iraq war after the September 11 attacks, and it also encountered major setbacks over recent years.

First, after the Iraq war, the use of force to export democracy has brought enormous disaster and chaos to the Middle East. On the whole, democratization has been fading in recent years, and some countries, such as Turkey and Hungary, which had made progress in the process of democratization, are now returning to authoritarianism. According to a report by the US NGO Human Rights Watch, democracy is now in a crisis. Second, globalization damaged the economic security and prosperity of the US, and intensified its domestic economic difficulty and disparity. Aspects of this include the financial crisis in 2008, capital outflows, the transfer of factories overseas, the loss of jobs, and the emergence of The Rust Belt. All of these factors have caused dissatisfaction among the public and provided the voter base for Trump's election.

The influx of illegal immigrants into Europe and the US and the spread of terrorism have led to security dilemmas. The important goal of liberal internationalism is to guarantee the security and interests of the US. Globalization has to some extent undermined this goal. In addition, Americans believe that economic prosperity failed to bring democracy in China. The US supported China to enter the WTO and to a certain extent is happy to see China's rise. However, the US believes that the development of globalization has not prompted China to develop toward democratization, and China has not evolved into a democratic system as they expected, but has increasingly

become a geopolitical and ideological opponent of the US. This kind of development in China is not in the interest of the US and may even become a threat. Therefore, globalization proves that some basic ideas of liberal internationalism may be wrong. The failure of and frustration with liberal internationalism provided the basis for Trump's coming to power.

This is manifested in the following two aspects:

First, the relative decline of US power has weakened its ability and willingness to export democracy overseas. Second, the collapse of the consensus on liberal internationalism in the US with more and more people, both elites and the general public, disapproving the export of democracy to overseas. This collapse and the rise of populism were triggered by factors including damage to the US economy by globalization, the influx of immigrants, etc.

The emergence of the Trump phenomenon has weakened the foundation of liberal internationalism, which is "American exceptionalism." More and more people have realized that the US is only an ordinary country, not a country that is qualified to export freedom and democracy. After taking office, Trump abandoned liberal internationalism and implemented principled realism, which is reflected in the following aspects:

Economically, the US shifted from free trade and globalization to promoting economic nationalism, and emphasizes the supremacy of US interests.

With regards to security, the US emphasizes the growth of its power rather than collective cooperation. It pursues Jacksonian nationalism, and practices unilateralism in global governance, including its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, etc.

The US is half-hearted in continuing playing the role of a world leader. It has given up part of its leadership while at the same time trying to decrease its responsibility in the security field, asking NATO, Japan and South Korea to increase military spending. Prof. Wang Lixin quoted a former national security official of Trump government, Michael Anton, as saying, “Democracy is a precarious flower. It will not grow just anywhere.” This quote indicated that Trump is not interested in promoting democracy and human rights overseas. Such a standpoint has accelerated the decline of liberal internationalism.

Prof. Wang Lixin also looked into the future of liberal internationalism. He believed that it would not disappear or die. Liberal internationalism is rooted in American traditions and values. It embodies the unique diplomatic style of the US and is closely linked to the characteristics of the country. Once the domestic problems in the US are resolved and the time is ripe, liberal internationalism will continue to be the mainstream diplomatic ideology of the US, or even once again dominate US foreign affairs.

Zhang Yeliang, a research fellow at the China-US Relations Research Center of Tsinghua University, explained the Trump phenomenon from the perspective of Trump's ruling philosophy. The title of his speech was "'Deconstructing the Administrative State': The Goals of Trump's Conservative Domestic Policy." The conception of "Administrative State" originates from American political scientist Dwight Waldo's *The Administrative State: A Study of the Political Theory of American Public Administration*, which was published in 1948. The book was highly controversial after its publication, but the concept of the "administrative state" was illuminating, describing a situation in which a country's government functions were expanded significantly. The administrative department occupies an important position, and administrative organization and operation become especially important.

Zhang Yeliang opined that since the beginning of the era of progressivism, the administrative state grew in the New Deal and Great Society period, while in the Carter and Reagan eras, the implementation of "deregulation" hindered the development of the administrative state. In the Clinton period, the administrative state was re-developed, and it was unprecedentedly expanded in Obama era. This is the basic development situation of the administrative state before Trump took office.

In the history of the US, conservatism often attacked and



accused liberalism of expanding the administrative state when liberalism controlled the government. Conservatives sometimes even claim that liberals disobeyed the constitution. The reasons for the conservatives' opposition to the administrative state are as follows:

First, the administrative state violates the principle of separation of powers. The US constitution mentions little about the administration of the president. The legitimacy of the administrative state, as a later concept, is questioned by conservatives.

Second, the administrative state impairs the free enterprise system. Conservatives believe that the administrative state's supervision of economic activities shackles the free enterprise system of the US.

Third, administrative officials have narrowed American people's scope of freedom in life, so therefore the administration state infringes on freedom and is in opposition to the constitution.

Fourth, the administrative state does not conform to the conservatives' concept of a small government.

Reagan had a famous saying: "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." The *Federal Register*, a daily publication that makes available to the public the rules, regulations, and other legal notices issued by federal administrative agencies, has grown in length annually,

which shows an increasingly expanded size of the US government. This growth is usually criticized by conservatives. In the last year of Obama's administration, the *Federal Register* expanded to 185,000 pages. Similar things also happened to the *Internal Revenue Code*. There are approximately 220,000 trained supervisors in the US, exceeding the number of French troops. In 2016, the US spending on supervision and supervisors amounted to \$63 billion.

Conservatives believe that the growth of federal institutions has imposed a huge cost burden on US enterprises and consumers, so after Trump came to power, the White House chief strategist Stephen Bannon, who has been removed from this role, proposed the "deconstruction of the administrative state" at the 2017 Conservative Political Action Conference. Bannon summarized his proposal in three aspects: protecting national security and sovereignty, promoting economic nationalism and deconstructing the administrative state. Bannon strongly advocated the relaxation of federal supervision, the cessation of federal autocracy, and the abolition of the international system of free trade which was formed after World War II. In Bannon's view, these systems and regulations were outdated and needed to be abolished because they harm US interests.

Trump himself did not use the term of "deconstruction of the administrative state," but since his election in 2016, a series

of measures he took in the areas of taxation, immigration, climate, and so on are in line with Bannon's opinion, so "deconstruction of the administrative state" can be used to explain Trump administration's policies. "Deconstruction of the administrative state" is also in line with the anti-establishment and anti-elite ideas in Trump's ideology. Trump promised to cut 75 percent of the federal mechanism during his presidential election campaign in order to relieve the burden that the Obama administration imposed on enterprises. Only one week after his election, Trump issued a series of administrative orders, including the announcement of the withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on the day of his inauguration, in order to abolish the orders previously issued by the Obama administration. Trump once said he would push back the expansion of the administrative state. This statement can be used to interpret his ruling philosophy.

Trump abolished the Dodd-Frank Act, which was enacted during Obama's administration. It was the iconic policy from the Obama administration for financial restraint after the financial crisis and was considered the most comprehensive and severe financial reform bill since the Great Depression. In addition, Trump nominated to the Supreme Court Neil Gorsuch, who was confirmed by the Congress, restoring a majority of conservatives in the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Trump drastically trimmed administrative agencies and actively promoted government

reform in order to achieve the purpose of “deconstructing the administrative state.”

Associate Professor Diao Daming from the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China, gave a speech entitled “American Political Ecology since Trump’s Governance,” in which he talked about his new understanding of American politics and culture during this period. He compared the shock waves caused by Trump to watching fossils in a lab, and seeing a living Tyrannosaurus rex. The election of Trump can be regarded as both a “cause” and “result.” Diao Daming opined that from the point of view of seeing Trump’s election as a “result,” even if Trump was replaced by Hillary Clinton or Mike Pence, the current US situation beset with difficulties both at home and abroad would not change. The 2016 presidential election marks the ending of moderate liberal’s ruling cycle. A transformation in US society from focusing on cultural and ethnic labels to focusing on economic and hierarchical labels is also a challenge to the political parties’ ruling conceptions. The three faces of the Republican Party are the Bible, guns, and business. A fourth aspect, how to integrate contemporary Republican Party supporters’ political propositions, is an issue that the Republican Party has to consider in the future. For the Democratic Party, the direct reason for Hillary Clinton losing the election is her loss in the rust-belt states and the dark blue states. This is not a reason personally related to Clinton. Instead, this

trend already existed during the Obama administration.

Obama was the only president in the history of the US who was reelected with fewer voters and electoral votes than when he was elected for the first time.

The regions he lost in his second term were the regions which cost Clinton the election.

Although some scholars believe that with an increase in the number of ethnic minorities, elections will be more and more favorable to the Democratic Party, Diao Daming believes that it is hard to say whether it will be more beneficial to the Democratic Party in 2050. From the perspective of intergenerational replacement, the election of Obama in 2008 was the 1940s generation represented by George W. Bush being replaced by the 1960s generation represented by Obama. This was reversed in the 2016 election, with the 1940s generation represented by Trump replacing the 1960s generation. The current political ecology is problematic. From the perspective of a public relations strategy, the various forms of new media which appeared in the 2016 elections ostensibly promoted the expression of different voices, but empirically, they solidified and polarized the ideas of liberals and conservatives, and at the same time made the traditional political parties' propaganda machine malfunction. The previous phenomenon of elevating politicians to the level of stars or even gods has become increasingly rare in the new polarized media environment.

From the point of view of seeing Trump's election as a "cause," the impact of Trump's election on American politics can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. Since Trump took office, his core circle has been constantly changing. In fact, it can be regarded as a process of outsiders' continuous adaptation and integration to Washington. He has witnessed three changes: the struggle over the goal; the struggle over the route; and the struggle about the implementation, including how to do it and who should do it.

Trump may benefit from these struggles because he can maintain his dominance. However, he has many problems that cannot be resolved, including his family's participation in White House politics, which is different from Robert F. Kennedy, who served as the US Attorney General during John F. Kennedy's administration. With regards to Trump's recent low poll ratings, Diao Daming did not think it would greatly affect Trump's administration or his future election, because Trump had had low poll ratings even before he took office, and the low ratings simply reflected the political polarization in the US. As for Trump's "business thinking" that people often refer to, Diao Daming opined that although many of Trump's practices seem to be unreliable, they are all legal and at the same time a retreat. On foreign-related issues, a retreat requires the US to pay part of the price by itself, but at the same time other countries also have to pay a price. Since the US is a major country, other countries

need to negotiate with it. In addition, Trump prefers to deal with countries bilaterally and link all issues together to solve at once. Instead of taking a multilateral approach to get all countries to solve a single issue together, he uses a bilateral approach and tries to link issues such as withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal to other bilateral issues. Meanwhile, Trump will repeatedly bargain and solve problems at a cost he thinks is acceptable. However, the continuous bargaining may consume the US, and end up as effective as the boy who cried wolf. As for Trump, crying wolf for 1,000 times may help achieve his goal, and the US is strong enough to bear him crying wolf 10,000 times. However, each cry leads to some loss to goodwill based on the country's spirit of fair dealing. Trump is willing to absorb these losses.

The next discussion session focused on Prof. Wang Lixin's expectations about the prospects for liberal internationalism. Prof. Qian Chengdan, Prof. Wang Xi and Prof. Da Wei all asked about the emergence of the Trump phenomenon and whether the decline of liberal internationalism is an anomalous phenomenon. Prof. Wang Lixin responded that the reason why he believed liberal internationalism will rise again is related to the political culture and political tradition of the US. It is deeply rooted in American values and will not disappear. Most Americans agree with this concept. There will be no Americans who oppose the US promoting democracy and human rights overseas. The only

issue is what price is worth paying to do this.

Liberal internationalism shaped US foreign policy in the 20th century. During this period, there were peaks and troughs. Currently, liberal internationalism has passed its zenith and is on the wane. It suffered major setbacks and has seen a low ebb, but it will never disappear. Instead, it will be revived when the time is ripe. Diao Daming opined that under the big tent of “liberal internationalism,” there are great differences in different periods. Different governments promote liberal internationalism at different costs. During the Obama period, the promotion was relatively restrained. The promotion strategy from Trump is obviously even more contractive. Liberal internationalism of course will not die. The problem is what its version will be when it dominates the US foreign policy next time. Its return is full of possibilities. When asked about the prospects of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by the audience, Wang Lixin believed that the relationship between the US and NATO is not only a security alliance. NATO still existed after the Soviet Union disintegrated and the end of the Cold War, and will continue to exist in the future. The clashes between the US and its allies belong to the category of a family quarrel, and there is no fundamental disagreement between them. They are only small quarrels and internal tensions, but not a clash between attitudes toward opponents or even enemies. Therefore, the constant friction and disputes between the US and its allies



during the Trump administration are normal.

In a Q&A session, Associate Professor Liu Yu from the Department of Political Science, Tsinghua University, opined that the very rough labels of globalization and anti-globalization may hide more problems than they reveal, so it is necessary to discuss in detail what kind of globalization Trump objects to, rather than ending conversation with a label. When many people regard Trump as an anti-globalist, they may confuse the concepts of “bargaining for better deal in international trade” and “opposing international trade,” which have subtle but important differences.

She cited the example of “Brexit,” which is widely regarded as anti-globalization, pointing out that the UK’s international trade volume increased in 2017, and that the UK opposed multilateral trade but was willing to negotiate separately with each country. What the UK opposed is not opening up but unfair opening up. Liu Yu agrees with John Mearsheimer, who once said that the withdrawal of the US from internationalism to isolationism is not necessarily a bad thing, because since the anti-terrorism wars in the 21 century, what the US has done in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria has not really help these countries. However, due to domestic political and international factors, the US cannot withdraw from liberal internationalism even if it has the willingness to do so. It may not be a big thing, but has an important symbolic significance. For example, there

has been no reaction to the Syrian chemical weapons incident so far. The US has to face this, and making a response involves the international credibility of the US.

Liu Yu believes that it is better to say Trump is adjusting the distance between US policy goals and its national capabilities than to say Trump opposes globalism. Since the Iraq war and the Afghan war, the US, as an “empire,” has faced the problem of excessive expansion. Currently, the US has begun a contractive strategy under the leadership of Trump, which is actually a rational choice.

## **Session II: The Political, Cultural and Social Foundation of the Trump Phenomenon**

Liu Yu gave a speech titled “Post-modernization and Nostalgia: The Cultural Conflicts Behind the Trump Phenomenon.” She discussed the right-wing populism which resulted in the Trump phenomenon from the perspective of American political and cultural changes. She opined that right-wing populism has not only risen in the US, but also in the overall Western world. If considering this rise to be a special phenomenon in the US, people will tend to simply find an explanation of it only from the uniqueness of the US. In fact, the refugee tide in 2015 and 2016 has ignited a rise in right-wing forces in Europe. Even in northern European countries, which are known around the world for their fairness, right-wing

populism has emerged. This shows that inequality is not enough to explain the rise of populism in the US.

Globalization has indeed led to massive unemployment among American workers, but it is not the main cause of the rise of right-wing populism in the US. A large number of surveys prove that there is no anti-globalism wave in the US. Even within the Republican Party, the proportion of globalization and immigration supporters is increasing, only that the proportion is not as large as that of the Democratic Party. Over the past 40 years, the gap between the rich and the poor in the US has increased, but Americans' dissatisfaction with the gap is shrinking. In terms of political consequences, "perception" is more important than "reality." It also means that the widening gap between the rich and the poor cannot serve as an explanation for the rise of right-wing populism in the US either.

Liu Yu opined that the post-modern transformation of Western culture which started in the 1960s brought about the cultural laceration between liberals and conservatives, which is the root cause of the Trump phenomenon, or the rise of the right-wing populism behind it. American political and cultural scholar Ronald Inglehart believes that in the process of the modern cultural society transforming into the post-modern cultural society, the post-materialism culture emerged and then brought about the "rights revolution," as Steven Pinker said. The rights-holders have expanded from white males to ethnic

minorities, women, children, immigrants or even animals. The scope of rights is expanding, from political rights to economic rights and higher education rights. In terms of homosexual marriage, the proportion of opposition has dropped significantly.

One of the consequences brought about by the rights revolution is the rise of right-wing populism. Since the 1960s, the right wing has been relatively stable, while the left wing, stimulated by the rights revolution, changed dramatically. Take the rate of support for immigration for instance. The support rate from the right wing is also rising, and the right wing is not increasingly opposing immigrants. However, the attitude of the left wing is dramatically moving toward support of immigration. This indicates that, driven by the rights revolution, the left wing has gone more and more extreme. But as for why the right wing is seemingly more extreme, it is not because of a change to their position, but because of the intensity of their opinion. The right wing expresses a historically moderately position in a hysterical way, while the left wing expresses relatively radical changes in a gentle manner. Data shows that the Republican Party hates the Democratic Party significantly more than the Democratic Party hates the Republican Party. In other words, the Republican Party is even more angry.

One important reason for the right wing's attitude having become more intense is a siege mentality. In the intergenerational structure of the US population, the support rate

of the younger generation to the Republican Party is getting lower and lower, so the future is not on the side of the Republican Party. Republicans have become more and more lost and anxious in the process of the transformation to post-modern society, producing a kind of nostalgia for an earlier America.

Zhao Mei, a research fellow at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, discussed the role of the media in Trump's election, making a presentation themed "The Rethink of the American Media Inspired by the Trump Phenomenon." She first talked about the debate between American columnist Walter Lippmann and educator John Dewey in the 1920s.

Lippmann published the book *Public Opinion* in 1922, which for the first time gave a panoramic description of public opinion and proposed two important concepts: one is the "pseudo-environment," which means that the information environment formed by mass communication is not the objective environment, but the environment that the mass communication creates for people through the selection and processing of news and information. Most of the media have a certain worldview, so the pseudo-environment is not the reappearance of the objective environment, and it is easy to distort the facts. Another concept is a "stereotype." People usually hold fixed, simplistic ideas and impressions about specific things. These two concepts reveal the dilemma of

democracy and public opinion, so Lippmann believed that the media should be headed by trained elites. Dewey did not agree with Lippmann's point of view. He emphasized the importance of citizen participation in *The Public and its Problems* which was published in 1927. The book also demonstrated the public's strong belief in relying on themselves to deal with public affairs. Lippmann advocated the elite rule the country, and Dewey insisted on mass democracy, but this involves the question of who is the public and who should be the leader of public opinion. In the modern new media environment, Trump's election reflects the impact of new media on political development. The public influenced the 2016 election with the help of new technology. The right-wing used new media to counter the traditional media representing left-wing elitism. They used the Internet to spread various types of information or even rumors to slander Hillary and helped Trump to win the election. Trump also repeatedly attacked the mainstream media for spreading "fake news." The New York Times published an influential column entitled "No, Trump, We Can't Just Get Along" after Trump was elected.

Chinese scholars should not only focus on the traditional liberal media, but consider the grass-roots right wing as an important information source and take into account the working class in Rust Belt states and the Midwest. The Brookings Institute noted that the mobility of American society has decreased, and the ways for people in lower economic classes to

rise have been blocked. Some books in the US have also noticed the problems of the US lower class, including Nancy Isenberg's *White Trash*, Robert D. Putnam's *Our Kids*, and J. D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy*.

In a lecture titled “‘The No-choice Dilemma’: Party Politics and the 2016 US Presidential Election,” Prof. Wang Xi from PKU's Department of History explored the institutional factors behind the success of Trump's campaign. The phenomenon of Trump challenging the pro-establishment camp as an outsider who claimed to represent the public interest, and paying by himself to campaign for the US president, is not the first in American history. Trump's election was brought about by many factors, and one factor that cannot be ignored is the unique electoral system of the US. Prof. Wang Xi coined the term “no-choice dilemma” to describe the problems faced by Americans in the most recent election. Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump did not represent a suitable choice for presidential candidates in their eyes, but if they did not choose one of them, they would face the dilemma of self-disfranchising.

If the no-choice dilemma was an occasional anomaly, its damage to democracy could be tolerated. But once the no-choice dilemma has become the norm and penetrates and manifests itself in the elections for the president, congressmen, state governors, and state representatives, then the democratic nature of elections will be greatly discredited. This would deprive

people of a considerable part of their rights. Such a dilemma is caused by the two-party system. But how was the two-party system formed? Political parties did not exist when the US was founded. By the end of the 18th century, there was a legitimate opposition system, that is, competition between political parties within the framework of the constitution.

After the emergence of party politics, the electoral politics of the US began to divide into political parties, which promoted the democratization of the US politics while at the same time brought about serious problems. American political scientist Leon Epstein sums up the problem as an electoral duopoly. Although election candidates can be those who are not from the two major parties, the winners usually only come from the two major parties. This is the product of the American constitutional system, including the unique winner-take-all principle during American elections.

Once a political party controls a State Legislature, it can control the state's electoral legislation, thereby guiding election results toward the most beneficial direction. This has led to the emergence of the "one party state" in which the politics of a state is controlled by one party for a long time. States which have not formed a one-party state are called swing states. After the two-party system consolidated, a third party was difficult to develop, and the two parties often create obstacles in the election system to prevent other competitors from appearing.



The key for Trump's successful election was his victory in five key rust-belt swing states.

Prof. Wang Xi used the concepts of the "Trump Party" and "Trump Party members" to explain that the Republican Party was actually "hijacked" by Trump. Although the Republican Party does not like Trump, Trump's articulated much of what voters for the Republican Party wanted to say but dared not. He mobilized a large number of formerly "silent" voters. The two parties have undergone a process of continuous reshaping since 1860. By being flexible, they have firmly controlled US politics, resulting in rigid elections and political parties becoming tools. The activities of political parties have centered around winning elections. When political parties becomes tools, the moral basis and ideology which democratic politics are supposed to represent, will disappear.

The descent of political parties into tools of elites provided an entrance for Trump to enter electoral politics. He joined the Republican Party and used the electoral advantage of the Republican Party to win the election.

Prof. Wang Xi raised several questions for scholars to think about. Do scholars need to change their understanding of American democracy? Is there only one definition of democracy? Is there only one form of democracy? Can democracy be repaired?

During the discussion session, Zhu Wenli asked a question

about the right-wing media, arguing that it is difficult to find a media outlet that can represent right-wing populists. Trump's Twitter may serve this role. Diao Daming questioned the "no-choice dilemma," and said that there were examples to prove that the two-party system could be broken out of at the state-level. Zhang Yi opined that some states are currently doing reforms on the electoral system to remove the drawbacks of the electoral college system. Prof. Qian Chengdan raised a question: Is a bizarre character like Trump a normal result or an anomaly of the American system? Liu Yu said that the degree of polarization of political parties is far greater than the degree of social polarization. The reason why the Republican Party insists on opposing abortion is related to concepts involving Christianity, and the scope for a flexible compromise is small, so it is difficult to find consensus on issue related to immigrants and homosexuals.

New Englanders in the past were passive liberals, and now New Englanders are active liberals. The average income of those who supported Trump is higher than those who supported Hillary Clinton, and they cannot be dismissed as "white trash." The electoral college system has a certain rationality and can protect the interests of small states. Otherwise, the election battlefield will be concentrated in densely populated areas such as New York and California, so that the demands of voters in remote areas will be ignored. Based on the history of the US, it

is normal for the US to see the polarization of its politics. Compared with the Civil War era, the reconstruction and the Oklahoma City bombing, the polarization of current politics is not that serious. The US is making reforms to prevent revolutions and mediate conflicts.

### **Session III: Analysis of Trump**

Prof. Zhu Wenli from PKU's School of International Studies, made a speech entitled "Trump-style 'Pluto-populism,'" analyzing the political changes brought by Trump phenomenon to the US. Trump is not a traditional politician who has a fixed political stance. He is usually evasive about or makes inconsistent statements about the three major differences between conservatives and liberals, which are abortion, guns, and homosexual marriage. Therefore, it is hard to traditionally define Trump on the left or right spectrum. At the same time, it is also difficult to generalize his political opinions as populist, because the economic status of lower-class white people is higher than that of lower-class ethnic minorities. On average, the economic status of Trump supporters was higher than that of Hillary Clinton.

Since the mid-1990s, with the advent of economic globalization, income distribution has been extremely uneven. "Pluto-populism" has risen and spread.

What does this term mean? On a global scale, there is a

special phenomenon in both developing and developed countries: billionaires becoming representatives of lower-class people, such as Yingluck Shinawatra in Thailand, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, and now Trump in the US. These rich people have some characteristics in common. They have monopoly industries such as real estate, mining and telecommunications. The monopoly is actually a monopoly of power. They are walking on the edge of power and need to have connections to consolidate their power. They accept economic globalization, are familiar with its rules, and good at distorting these rules for their own use. Trump is very daring to use prejudice to achieve his political goals. Although Trump has benefited from globalization, he is not a true supporter of globalization. Comparing Trump with Nixon, Nixon respected the rules, while Trump does not, and even overturns the rules. Like the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the current world is in an era featuring major changes in the international order, and such a transition is mainly due to Trump's election which is accidental and dramatic. The appearance of Trump is comparable to the racial problem before the American Civil War, and an unprecedented challenge to the US. However, there is still the possibility of solving the problem, and the solution is to replace the Trump's fake populism with true populism. There has been real populism in American history, and its rational ingredients have been absorbed by the establishment. The result, in fact, promoted American political

innovation, added vitality to the US and pushed forward the progress of American society. Take the students who advocated gun control some time ago, for instance. They represent the real lower class and provide the possibility of finding the solution.

Zhang Yi, a lawyer from the firm Gibson Dunn, gave a speech entitled “The Unique and Unduplicated Trump.” From Trump’s personal traits, Zhang Yi explains Trump’s destruction of American political culture, pointing out that it is a very special phenomenon. Zhang Yi said that the reason why he returned to researching the US was his anger with Trump’s obstinate characteristics. He opined that Trump’s decisions are chaotic without any inkling about their ramifications; he speaks carelessly and frequently abuses people, and is like an uneducated child. If this were not the case, his public statements would be consistent. It is very difficult for well-educated people to lie, but The Washington Post reports he has made false public statements more than 3,000 times. Trump is a bully that determines whether the news is true or not based on whether it favors him or not. As a businessman, Trump is self-serving and makes foreign affairs decisions using the thinking of a businessman. He judges US relations with other countries based on visible interests, and tramples on rules and tears up agreements. Trump faces many constraints in his country, but there are fewer restrictions on him in international affairs. As a result, Trump does not obey rules and does things his own way.

Regarding the prospects for future, Zhang Yi believes that Trump cannot be duplicated; people with such characteristics are rare, and it is almost impossible for such a person to be elected as a president. He thinks Trump will not be re-elected in 2020 for the following reasons. First, the demographic structure is changing, with the proportion of white people declining. Second, people's education level has improved, with university education continuing to increase. Third, the participation rate of women continues to increase, and the number of women who supported Hillary in the 2016 election was higher than that who supported Trump. Zhang Yi also said he hopes Trump won't be impeached, saying that this is a special historical period that Americans need to experience, and Americans should chose to reject Trump in the 2020 election.

Niu Ke, associate professor from PKU's Department of History, gave a presentation titled "Analyzing Trump from the angle of Rachel Newystad," examining the Trump administration from the perspective of presidential power. Niu Ke quoted Rachel Newystad's *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* to observe and analyze Trump's method of White House politics.

Presidential power is not a given power, but a power that requires effort and skill to operate. Taking the Cuban Missile Crisis as an example, Kennedy faced lots of difficulty when he exercised his presidential power. It was also difficult for Nixon

to handle White House politics and the Washington elites, and he was actually isolated in Washington. Trump, as a bizarre figure in American political history, faces difficulty in operating the presidential power in a sophisticated way, and lacks persuasiveness and skills to communicate with his staff. Therefore, it is difficult for him to achieve his political agenda in a short time. In addition, Niu Ke also talked about the quality of the elites, asking how there could be such a poor-quality president as Trump? The American political field saw many high-quality political elites in the 1950s, while after the 1970s, the quality of the elites fell rapidly. Previously, the US government and politicians were generally able to gain the respect and trust of the public, but gradually the credibility of both the president and Congress continued to decline, with the quality of politicians also declining. The standard of the political elite is “doing the right thing” rather than “doing things that are good for themselves.” A politician like Trump, who seeks nothing but benefits for himself, is really rare.

In the discussion session, Zhao Mengyang, a PhD student in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, shared her observations about the US right wing. She believes that the right wing has a very complex spectrum -- from mainstream conservatives, to evangelicals to neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan, and neo-Confederates. Their opinions are divided. The right wing is also widely distributed in the country. Beside the countryside, a

large number of them also live in cities, with a good education. She opined that both the far-left and far-right wings of the US are having increasing appeal to the public. Among college and university students, questions about the two-party system are increasing. Right-wing groups comprise not only lower-class white people, but also a large number of white people coming from both east and west coastal cities. Even in colleges and universities, there are a large number of far-right student groups.

During the discussion among scholars, Prof. Qian Chengdan believed that the concept of “pluto-populism” was worth further consideration. There is a Matthew effect (rich get richer and poor get poorer) of international scope caused by the disadvantages of globalization, which results in the serious differentiation between rich and poor within a country. But how can we understand the emergence of the “pluto-populism”? Is it because the counterweight to capitalism disappeared with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the strong divide between rich and poor led people to seek a new solution, leading them to the road of “pluto-populism”? Is terrorism in the Middle East also related to this phenomenon? Wang Lixin opined that “pluto-populism” is a very interesting phenomenon. Does “pluto-populism” mean plutocrats become the leader of populists or is it fundamentally different from other forms of populism? Zhu Wenli contrasted pluto-populism and populism. Trump, for example, does not really care about the lower class,



and only puts on a show of being a populist. Trump uses pseudo-populism to repress true populism. The solution to American domestic problems depends on those who have courteously stood aloof from politics but are now inspired to do something for their country. Zhu Wenli believes that the choice between socialism and the Nordic model still exists, and Nordic model supporters, including Bernie Sanders, advocate the redistribution of wealth without touching private ownership. In addition, there are also options being advocated by religious extremists and extreme nationalists. Perhaps the US will develop a model that has never been seen before. Everything is developing. Prof. Wang Xi said that based on his own experience in American colleges and universities, he has similar feelings with Zhao Mengyang, but the current political ecology is very different from that of the 1960s. At that time, social movements developed successfully, and the main reason is that the movements, with the African Americans as a foundation, were striving for group rights, so that they could unite tremendous strength. But now the claims of rights are very fragmented and lack political issues that can bring together enough people.

The workshop touched all kinds of deep problems of the US. Although discussion started with the Trump phenomenon, it was not limited to the Trump phenomenon itself, and was a successful academic seminar.