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The 18th Broadyard Workshop
Australian Perceptions of Asia:
Historical Origins and Real-life Paradoxes
May 13, 2019

INSTITUTE OF AREA STUDIES PEKING UNIVERSITY

Academic Bulletin

Moderator's introduction to the workshop

The British established the colony of Australia in 1788, which is now considered the year of Australia's founding. Since British colonists regarded Australia as an outpost, turning it into a white immigrant country became a political strategic goal of the UK. After the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, a "White Australia Policy" dominated in Australia. Although the implementation of this policy could not completely prevent the immigration and growth in population of Asians, non-whites in Australia were not only small in number, but were also unable to enjoy citizenship, suffering discrimination and suppression. The "White Australia Policy" affected the development of Australia's relations with Asian countries, and at the same time served as a legal protection and policy-making tool for the formation of Australia's perceptions of Asia. Although the policy was abolished in the 1970s, its pernicious effect is difficult to eliminate, and still continues to impact Australia's political ecology.

Some people regard Australia as a country that has been misplaced. It should have been a European country, but its location is adjacent to Asia. Different from Australia, which is sparsely populated but quite rich in resources, the Asian countries to the north of it are relatively less developed, with large populations and diverse religions, which has triggered white Australia's sense of insecurity and anxiety. The country's

conviction of the superiority of the white race, loneliness caused by its geographical location, and long-term dependence on protection by the big powers has made Australia reluctant to conduct equal exchanges with Asian countries and continue to hold prejudiced, discriminatory and confrontational attitudes toward Asia.

Australian political circles already began to have differing views of Asia in the middle of the 19th century. Relevant debates became increasingly fierce before and after the establishment of the Commonwealth. Continuous academic discussion around Australia's national security (ethnic security, territorial security, wealth security, etc.) and national attributes (a European or Asian country?) formed into different genres. No matter whether the topic was Australia's national security or its national attributes, scholars tended to regard Asia as a backdrop, a reference, and a basis for their arguments. Relevant research perspectives have exerted influence not only on Australian perceptions of Asia, but also on the government's policy toward Asia.

Australian studies in China was initiated at the beginning of its reform and opening-up. Thanks to the good academic environment in China and the continuous development of China–Australia relations over the subsequent 40 plus years, the number of people engaged in Australian studies has increased and the research field has been expanding. In this context, this

workshop, on the theme “Australian Perceptions of Asia: Historical Origins and Real-life Paradoxes,” has both academic and practical significance. Through their presentations and discussions, the participating scholars in this workshop will share the results of their in-depth exchanges on the above topics, which will help both academic circles and the public to gain a further understanding of Australia’s perceptions of Asia and the decision-making background, mechanism and motivation of Australia’s diplomatic and defense strategy.

Wang Shiming
May 15, 2019

The 18th Broadyard Workshop

Australian Perceptions of Asia:

Historical Origins and Real-life Paradoxes

May 13, 2019

Initiated by Prof. Wang Shiming from the School of Advanced International and Area Studies of East China Normal University, the 18th Broadyard Workshop (博雅工作坊) of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS), invited 14 experts and scholars from domestic universities and research institutes for in-depth exchanges and discussions.

Prof. Qian Chengdan, director of PKUIAS, pointed out that area studies is an emerging field in China. As China gradually embarks on the international stage and moves closer to the center of the stage, area studies has been put on the agenda at the national level. It is not only an academic issue, but it also matters for the development of the country. For many years, area studies did not receive much attention in China. During that time, we did not lack scholars engaged in foreign issue studies, but, due to the way that disciplines were classified, the overall study was divided. In April 2018, PKU established the Institute of Area Studies in order to integrate the strength of research on foreign issues scattered in the various disciplines at PKU and serve as a platform to help bring the level of area studies to a new height on the basis of existing teaching, academic and

research strengths.

He said that area studies means a comprehensive study of a country or region, which is not confined to a certain field. Therefore, experts and scholars from various fields should be involved. Since the founding of the Institute, it has established very good cooperative relations with many disciplines and departments, including science and engineering. In September of this year, the Institute will officially start the fostering of doctoral students. Through years of study, we hope to fulfill the requirement for the cultivation of academic talent specialized in area studies who are capable of both conducting academic research and practical work.

Hu Zhuanglin, a professor from PKU's School of Foreign Languages, made the first presentation, on the theme of "Australia in the US–China–Australia Triangle." He said that in the field of military and security, although Australia has mostly followed the US, the two countries have also had divergences on some issues. For instance, Australia pointed the finger at the huge casualties ensuing from America's bombardment of Vietnam in 1972; Australia expressed some reservations on the US's launching the war in Iraq, for which the US deemed Australia as being an unqualified supporter; and Australia and the US were divided on issues including peace-keeping in East Timor and the export of sulfur ore to India. In the field of economics, Australia has treated China as an ideal partner with a

big market and rapid developing economy. Australia has been willing to cooperate with China in multiple economic and trade areas, including APEC. However, at the same time, due to its differences with China in its political system and theory, Australia has had concerns about China.

In the China–US–Australia triangle, Australia has basically followed the US while maintaining a trading partnership with China. Australia believes that the US strategy toward Australia is a “carrot and stick” approach because the US, on one hand, claims Australia as its closest friend, and, on the other hand, exerts pressure on Australia to increase its military spending in order to ease the burden on the US. In regard to China, the US has raised tariffs on Chinese products, while also claiming that the US and China are both big powers and therefore should have a closer relationship. Therefore, in the eyes of Australia, there is no difference in the way the US treats it vs. how it treats China.

Concerning the recent Sino–US trade friction, Australia believes it is unfavorable to all three parties: China, the US and Australia. At the same time, Australia believes that the US’s abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership caused losses to its “partners.” Although Australia’s participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was opposed by the US, it eventually joined the cooperation framework. It can be seen that, for US–China–Australia relations, Australia recognizes the rights of the US and China, and does not want to

play the role of accelerating Sino–US tensions, but rather wants, as China does, to promote the formation of free trade in Asia.

The US attaches great importance to Australia in the scope of the Asia-Pacific region, hoping that Australia can carry out activities in the interests of the US in various fields in Asia. The Australian leadership also hopes to play such a leading role in the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, however, this goal is difficult to achieve because the Asia-Pacific region is too big, and it is difficult for Australia to become a regional leader, compared to China, Japan or India. To this end, Australia has changed its strategy to organize the ASEAN countries and hope to become the leader in Southeast Asia. This strategy has also been questioned by the outside world as well as domestically.

In general, there are different opinions within Australia on how to deal with relations with China and the US. Affected by the internal and the external environment, its strategy of selecting between China and the US has been questioned, and maintaining good relations with both sides remains its primary choice.

Shi Xiaoqin, a research fellow from the School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, made a presentation titled “Wars and Australia’s Perceptions of Asia.” She opined that war is the core approach to Australia’s self-identity construction. From being an outpost of the British Empire to participating in peace-keeping operations to the prospect of future US–China

competition, Australia has established a deep connection with Asia through wars and shaped its perceptions of Asia through wars.

War is an important way to shape a country's identity. Australia has shaped its identity by participating in wars, and then shaped "the meaning of Asia to itself," "the meaning of the world to itself," and its own orientation. The process can be divided into four stages.

Prior to World War II, Australia's identity was "outpost of the empire." On the one hand, Australia saw itself as an outpost of the British Empire, ready to play the role of "spearhead" at pivotal moments; yet, its isolated geographical location made it psychologically insecure. On the other hand, confined by multiple conditions, Australia's contact with Asia before World War II was very limited. At the end of the 19th century, many Pacific islands were occupied by European powers. Australia, which felt threatened, hoped to establish a buffer zone in Asia to gain psychological security. From the beginning of the 20th century to the end of World War I, Australia gradually took over Northern New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and the North Solomon Islands, as well as becoming the executive power of Nauru. After the outbreak of the World War II, Australia believed that it would be difficult for the UK to protect it. Therefore, it turned to rely on the US. Subsequently, the Australian army fought in Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and the

South Pacific, and gained more understanding of Asia.

After World War II, Australia's identity became that of "double outpost." On the one hand, Australia was still the outpost of the British Empire, especially in the global order led by the US after World War II. On the other hand, Australia's "Asian consciousness" was gradually awakening, and its relationship with Asia became closer. During this period, Australia used to refer to Asia as "our region." During the Korean War, Australia began to refer to itself as being "in Asia" to show that it was in but not a part of Asia.

Since the 1970s, Australia's identity has changed from seeing itself as an outpost to a frontier defense. In 1972, Australia's first national defense white paper proposed that the country should make a lean and efficient global commitment to maintain friendship with powerful allies and contribute to its immediate neighborhood. In terms of national defense, Australia proposed an independent national defense policy, which included reducing its involvement in foreign military affairs and reducing its dependence on the US, playing a major role in neighboring regions, and working more closely with "northern" friends. At this time, Australia placed itself within the Asian landscape, and its Asian psychological transformation was basically completed. The background that led to this phase of change was its "middle power" foreign policy and the strengthening trend of "regionalism" of the Bob Hawke and Paul

Keating governments in the 1990s.

Over recent years, Australia has had very heated discussions about its future strategy. Australia's latest foreign policy white paper suggested that China is the biggest and most fundamental and decisive factor in Australia's external environment, and how to deal with it would be a new challenge for Australia. Some analysts from its domestic strategic circles have proposed that the country should establish a northward defense frontier, expand construction in its northern territory, and strengthen its defense cooperation with Indonesia and other countries. At the same time, Australia has also switched its previous land consciousness to a marine awareness. Although Australia is surrounded by the sea, historically, it saw the ocean as merely something to pass through in order to participate in international affairs on different continents. After switching to a marine awareness, Australia intends to interact with Asia from the sea and regard the ocean as a link with Asia. Such a change is also a sign of Australia's awakening self-awareness and its anchoring in the Indo-Pacific.

Shi Xiaoqin pointed out that in Sino–Australian relations, Australia identifies itself as a middle power with a small military, a small country sandwiched between China and the US, a big power in the South Pacific, and a wealthy democracy. This identity is often viewed by Asian countries as Australia's feeling superior to other countries in the region. The contrast of the state

of mind between China and Australia is that of a developing country with a central government vs. a small country with a democratic government. Therefore, when Australia criticizes China, China reacts to it as confronting a rich democracy; when China criticizes Australia, Australia reacts to it as confronting an enormous socialist country.

The presentation by Prof. Zhou Fangyin, from the School of International Relations, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, focused on Sino-Australian relations. He opined that, in recent years, the “China threat theory” has gained traction in Australia, but China’s peaceful development has not posed a threat to Australia in terms of its security. From the perspective of national security and the economic and trade ties between the two sides, it is difficult to explain the development of the “China threat theory” in Australia. Australia’s doubts about China are mainly based on its concerns about the uncertainty of the evolution of the international order. In this respect, the influence of the US as an ally and China’s presence in the South Pacific region have also contributed to Australia’s concerns.

In terms of security, is China a threat to Australia? In fact, per Prof. Zhou, the answer to this question does not rest with China but Australia. He explained that the 2009 Australian Defense White Paper mentioned that if China does not explain its military modernization clearly, Australia should worry about it. The 2013 Defense White Paper made it clear that China’s

enhanced military power is not aimed at Australia, but is a natural and reasonable result of its economic growth. The 2017 Australian Foreign Policy White Paper pointed out that, although the international situation is undergoing great changes, Australia is still one of the safest countries in the world, and the risk for it to encounter military threats is very low. Generally speaking, although Australia has concerns about the enhancement of China's military strength, it does not believe China threatens its security, and its understanding of the changes in China's military strength is objective and rational.

From an economic perspective, does China pose a threat to Australia? In terms of trade, the bilateral trade between China and Australia has developed rapidly and both sides have relied on each other ever more deeply in recent years. However, due to the different characteristics of the two countries' export trade, China's dependence on the trade with Australia is more vulnerable than vice versa. In terms of investment, although it may have a negative impact on China–Australia relations, it has not caused further deterioration in Australia's attitude toward China. According to a poll conducted in 2018, 72% of Australians said that China had invested too much in Australia, compared with 56% in 2014. However, the Australian government has the capacity to control China's investment in Australia, so there is no need to be stridently anti-China merely due to China's investments. Moreover, China's investment in

Australia has declined continuously over the past two years. And from an economic perspective, if the Chinese economy meets problems, Australia will be one of the countries that is affected first. Therefore, Australia probably would rather not stimulate China for the sake of economic factors. From this point of view, the investment factor can only be regarded as a catalyst, which has been taken advantage of by some people to harm Sino–Australian relations.

A few developed countries worry that China’s strong demand for natural resources will ultimately drive Australia to be subject to China. This view is problematic. First, Australia is not worried about the rise in trade dependence because the dependence is mutual. China is finding it difficult to find alternatives to importing iron ore and coal from Australia. Second, the deterioration of Sino–Australian relations occurred after 2017. Before that, the two sides had reached a high level of free trade agreements, and Australia also joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Therefore, economic factors are not the reason for the deterioration of Sino–Australian relations. Third, despite the deterioration of Sino–Australian relations, the economic and trade relations between the two countries are strengthening. China and Australia have seen a long-standing trade surplus. According to a poll conducted in 2018, 82% of Australians believe that China is their economic partner.

The impact of China's rise on the international order is a fundamental factor in Australia's concerns about China. Australia believes that with the strengthening of its power, China will compete with the US for hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region or the Indo-Pacific region and will change the existing order. Out of concern for its own interests, Australia's 2017 White Paper clearly states that Australia should ensure the prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and that fundamental international principles not be undermined; it also states that the peaceful development of the entire region is Australia's most important long-term foreign strategy. At the same time, Australia also believes that China is challenging the US as the dominant force in the Indo-Pacific region since World War II, positioning China as a geopolitical great power capable of affecting Australia. In a sense, Australia's concern for the South China Sea issue is not for the reason that it threatens Australia's security, but that the issue may impact the security order in the Asia-Pacific region.

In summary, Australia does not want to see China dominate the economic order. It wants to maintain an open, free, and well-regulated international order and believes that it can benefit from it. There is a domestic view that China's rise in the future is inevitable, the US and China will co-lead the existing order, and Australia should adapt to this reality. This view has caused a big backlash in Australia, the leaders of which say that

Australia's acceptance of China's leadership is very dangerous. Therefore, concerns about the order should be a reasonable explanation for the changes in Australia's attitude toward China. On the other hand, Australia's performance also reflects its concern about its political autonomy. Although the view is somewhat exaggerated, Australia believes that, if no one can stop China, prospects for the future will be uncertain. Therefore, to improve China–Australia relations, we should not only analyze separated issues, but also consider more how to reduce the impact on the system.

Prof. Zha Daojiong from the School of International Studies, PKU, discussed the external environment of Sino–Australian economic diplomacy. He opined that the observation of Sino–Australian economic relations is very easy to confine to product trade, especially in the fields of commodities such as energy, minerals and agricultural products. But in Australia's foreign economic relations after World War II, the “security” factor caused by its domestic political and geopolitical planning has always played a role. In recent years, some practices of the Australian government's economic and trade policy toward China have begun to constrain the internationalization of China's product chain. Therefore, there is no reason to confine the observation of Sino–Australian economic relations to data phenomena such as GDP and trade volume.

Australia is a resource-based economy and is a world leader in the production of key mineral products. It is also the most promising oil and gas producer and exporter in the Western Pacific region, with excellent export conditions for sea transportation. Australia has a small population and relatively complete medical and insurance services. There has been no economic recession for 30 consecutive years in Australia, and its mining industry has continued to drive its economic growth for more than 160 years, successfully keeping the country from falling into a “resource trap.” It should be noted that the supplier has an advantage in the security level of the resource-based product supply chain. In Sino–Australian relations, China does not have the ball in its court only because it is the largest user of some minerals from Australia. Especially for rare minerals related to high-end manufacturing, you may not get access to them even if you have enough money.

From the trade perspective, China is Australia’s main trading partner. In 2017, the two-way trade between the two countries increased by 16% to 183.4 billion Australian dollars, accounting for 24% of Australia’s total value of trade. However, trade volume is only an integral part of the foundation of economic diplomacy, and 60% of this is due to China’s constant demand for Australian agricultural products. In contrast, Japan was Australia’s largest iron ore importer before 2005, but unlike China, Japan is Australia’s most important exporter of the

mining machinery that maintains Australian iron ore production capacity.

From the perspective of investment, Australia has established a review mechanism for Chinese-funded enterprises at the ownership level. The relevant review committee was established in 1976 and was not set up only for China. But the reason some countries felt pressured due to “China’s rise” after the Asian financial crisis in 2009 was the fact that Chinese-funded companies have begun to invest in foreign countries. The Australian Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB)’s ruling on several Chinese companies’ merger and acquisition cases in 2009 marked the beginning of Western countries’ giving unequal treatment to Chinese companies. It included the case of Shandong Ruyi Group’s acquisition of Cubbie Station and Aluminum Corporation of China’s extension of shareholding in the Rio Tinto Group. Policy discrimination against Chinese state-owned enterprises’ investment has become a regular practice, and Australia has played a model role for Europe and the US in this field.

There is a prevailing saying in the international community that Chinese-funded enterprises definitely have strategic motivation in investing infrastructure abroad. Such voices originated from Australia, and the government took full advantage of this consensus environment. For example, Shandong Land bridge Group, which invested in the Port of

Darwin, was accused of threatening the security of Australia. If it were really for security, Australia could choose to terminate the investment; however, the Australian side still needed the Chinese company to operate the port while at the same time blaming it. Another case is the State Grid's acquisition of Ausgrid in New South Wales, which was suspended on the grounds of national security. However, in fact, the entire industrial chain involved in the project was under the control of the Australian government, and thus posed no uncontrollable threat for Australian society.

Zha Daojiong pointed out that when studying Sino–Australian economic relations, we should avoid assuming that Australia must trade with China due to China's bulky demand. The fact is that Australia will constrain China at the source of some key commodities and products. How should we deal effectively with the impact of Australia on shaping the external environment of Sino-Australian economic diplomacy? On the one hand, China needs to participate in the discussion of relevant events, not just listening to one-sided opinions. On the other hand, it is necessary to trace back and analyze the major events in the economic and trade exchanges between the two countries in recent years, and expand the space for mutual recognition. In addition, efforts should be made to promote the participation of Australian-owned enterprises in Chinese economy. Meanwhile, China should treat Australian citizens of

any cultural background fairly in matters of education, people-to-people exchanges and consular services.

Liu Qing, director of the Asia-Pacific Research Institute of the China Institute of International Studies, mainly discussed the characteristics and future direction of Australia's Asian policy in the context of increased competition between China and the US. He opined that there is less room for maneuvering when Australia makes its China policy, and Australia has had to sacrifice economic benefits for security interests. Meanwhile, Australia is proactively seeking alternatives to both the US and China to expand diplomacy with Japan, India, and Southeast Asian countries. In the future, Australia will focus on promoting an Indo-Pacific strategy, create an Australia-centric geopolitical sphere, and increase its discourse power in regional affairs.

The impact of Sino-US competition on Australia is reflected in the fact that Australia is facing limited space for maneuvering between China and the US. Unlike previous balances focusing on security and economy, Australia now values security issues more and naturally stands on the side of the US in the context of increased competition between China and the US. The tightening of political relations with China has led to tensions in Sino-Australian relations. After President Trump took office, the US tightened the US-Australian alliance. In regard to economics, US investment in Australia has increased by 50 percent in the past three years, reaching more

than 1 trillion US dollars. China's investment in Australia is about 100 billion Australian dollars. In terms of security, in order to cater to the US competitive strategy toward China, Australia has linked its economic, diplomatic, and people-to-people exchanges with China to security and set related security issues.

Another impact on Australia of Sino-US competition is reflected in China's counterattack against Australia. At present, Australia's relations with China are at the lowest point since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Last year, Australia's new Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, said that he wants to resume relations with China, but did not come up with many practical actions. China's diplomacy toward Australia has entered a cooling period, with economic cooperation also declining. Australia is facing economic losses for the sake of its security benefits.

In addition, due to the risks caused by the rise in regional uncertainty, Australia has had to adapt to new regional changes. First of all, the Asia-Pacific order has undergone profound changes. With its economic growth, China's military strength and diplomatic influence have risen rapidly. The international situation in the Asia-Pacific region has shifted to favor China, and the regional rules and order have undergone new changes. At the same time, the US broke the free and open world trading system it established, which seriously affected Australia, which

relied on free trade. In the context of the US's reluctance to provide public goods and China's active construction of a new Asia-Pacific order, Australia faces strategic confusion and strategic anxiety.

The construction of an Indo-Pacific new order is also full of uncertainties. The new direction of Sino-US competition will extend to the ocean. The Indo-Pacific strategy is Australia's new strategy to assist the US in rebuilding the ocean order to resist the expansion of land powers to the ocean. In the US's Indo-Pacific strategy, the US has strengthened its deployment of the second island chain. Its rear base in the western Pacific has now become an outpost, and Australia has become more prominent in the US's western Pacific Alliance system. The US has increased its reliance on Australia and Australia needs to adapt to changes in the new US strategy.

Australia has positioned itself as a medium-powered country. It needs to actively shape the Indo-Pacific strategy and transform itself into the core of the Indo-Pacific strategy, from previously standing aloof from the world to becoming a geographical participant. To manage this new strategic change, Australia must face the increasing influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region, which also increases its uncertainty in shaping the Indo-Pacific order.

In terms of Asian policy, Australia has three options. In option one, short-term policies would give way to long-term

policies, and policies toward China give way to policies toward the US. In the short term, that Australia is moving closer to the US is in line with the logic of inter-state relations, considering that the US is currently more powerful than China. Australia's Asian policy is subordinate to the US's Asian strategy, and, accordingly, its integration into Asia (mainly contact and integration with China) should slow down. However, in the long run, the risk of uncertainty in the US will rise, and Australia will not rule out the possibility of moving closer to China. In option two, Australia would look for new strategic partners beyond China and the US, such as strengthening its security cooperation with Japan and India to hedge China's influence; economically strengthening links with India to find alternatives, and achieving economic diversification. In option three, Australia would focus on its Indo-Pacific strategy to seek for a strategic position as a middle power; taking the initiative on actions, including using the power of the US to consolidate its hegemony in the South Pacific region and using the power of ASEAN to maintain its own strategy as a big maritime power.

Guo Chunmei, an associate researcher at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, gave a presentation titled "The Geo-Economic Perspective of the Australian Perceptions of Asia." She opined that Australia's perceptions of Asia and its Asian policies are influenced by its historical culture, security awareness, and geopolitics, and are

more influenced by geo-economics. Since 2008, the global economic and strategic focus has shifted to the Asia-Pacific region, and Australia's perceptions of Asia have increasingly been affected by geopolitics, but the "ballast stone" role of geo-economy determines that Australia's existing Asian policies will not change greatly.

Australia is sparsely populated and rich in resources. Its entire history of economic development is a history of foreign trade or foreign investment. When the geopolitical environment was relatively loose, Australia's relationship with its traditional economic partners, such as the UK and the US, and with its Asian economic partners, experienced waxing and waning, which forced Australia to integrate into Asia. From the perspective of investment, Australia did not know the concept of foreign capital before World War II. This was because, at that time, British investment accounted for more than 70 percent of the total. The US did not become Australia's largest source of foreign investment until the 1960s. During the period that the UK dominated the Australian economy, Australia felt both racial superiority and national insecurity when facing Asia. Therefore, before the 1970s, Australia did not deal with Asia economically and was alert to Asia in its approach to security.

Australia's integration into Asia began with Japan. In 1961, the UK decided to apply to join the European Economic Community, indicating that Australia would no longer be its

economic focus; therefore Australia needed to find new markets. Although the US had close political and investment relations with Australia, the homogeneity of trade between the two countries was very strong. In this way, Japan became a choice. Although Japan invaded Australia during World War II, the establishment of the post-war US–Japan alliance and US–Australia new alliance bonded Australia with Japan. Japan entered a period of rapid industrialization in the 1960s. Japan’s lack of resources as an island-nation was in sharp contrast to Australia. Meanwhile, Australia also needed a new partner market, and the complementarity between Japan and Australia emerged. By 1966, Japan had surpassed the UK to become Australia’s largest export market, and afterward surpassed the US to become Australia’s largest trading partner, a status that was not replaced by China until 2009.

From the perspective of investment, Japan’s investment in Australia is in line with Japan’s consumer demand. In 1965, Japanese companies began investing in Australian iron ore. In the 1970s, Japanese investment in Australia grew rapidly and reached its peak in the 1980s. Until the early 1990s, Japan had been Australia’s largest source of foreign capital. After the 1990s, the bursting of the Japanese asset bubble led to a decline in its foreign investment. But due to its technological advantages, its investment stock was second only to the US and the UK.

Before the 1970s, Japan was the only economic partner of

Australia in Asia, and due to the Cold War, there were still barriers between Australia and its neighboring countries. Since the 1970s, with the collective rise of emerging Asian economies, Australia has accelerated its integration into Asia. The rapid industrialization of East Asian countries also resonated with Australia. With this background, Australia had to integrate into Asia, both in terms of trade and investment, and its relationship with other Asian economies has grown rapidly. At present, among the top 10 trading partners in Australia, nine countries are Asian countries.

The 21st century has also been called the Asia-Pacific century. The biggest factor that pushed Australia to integrate Asia during this period was China. The global financial crisis in 2008 exacerbated this trend, and the economic complementarity between China and Australia became apparent. China gave Australia its second mining boom and officially replaced Japan in 2009 as Australia's largest export market. Despite the many positive aspects between Australia and Asia, we cannot ignore the new problems that the Asia-Pacific century has brought to Australia, because the Asia-Pacific century has led to the great powers' intensifying struggle in this region, and Australia is facing an even tenser geopolitical environment. Precisely due to these new changes, Australia for the first time has to face the dilemma that its largest trading partner is also the largest competitor of its strategic ally, which has led to setbacks in

Sino–Australian relations.

On the one hand, Australia engages with Asia based on its own national interests, while on the other, it continues to largely comply with the US's demands. But in the eyes of the US, Australia is not a reassuring security ally; especially on some key issues, Australia does not comply with the US. From this perspective, Australia's diplomatic autonomy and independence have risen during the recent Sino–US competition. In the process of establishing the Indo-Pacific system, in addition to basically complying with the US in order to maintain the US–Australian alliance, Australia also hopes to bond with India and Japan to enhance its discourse power in the region. Therefore, in the long-term and complicated strategic competition between China and the US, the swaying nature of Australia's integration into Asia will also exist for a long term.

Han Feng, a research fellow at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said in his presentation that whether the Western-led regional order can accept the development and cooperation of the countries in the Asian region is a prerequisite for Australia's change in attitude toward Asia. It mainly involves four aspects.

The first is the history of Australia's founding. Australia's country-building process was very special, during which it acquired both independence and long-term dependency on the West. Australia is located in the South Pacific, but is more

concerned about Asia, mainly because of the “Asian threat” they face. From the ethnic conflicts in the early days of the founding of the country to the aggression it suffered during World War II and the threat of marginalization brought to Australia by the so-called rise of East Asia, the entire process was accompanied by the history of Asian culture and immigration. Against the background of the history and the threat of reality, Australia has always adhered to Western orthodoxy, seeking Western identification and protection, and possessing natural Western ideology and values.

The second is the rise of Asia. Australia’s neighbors are mainly Southeast Asian countries. Historically, the process of formation and colonization of Southeast Asian countries overlapped. Political independence and national independence were emphasized after the war. But this process was interrupted by the Cold War. Although traditional big power relations guaranteed the security for these colonial countries, they were based on the national interests of the great powers. After the Cold War entered a period of adjustment, the Southeast Asia region sought regional development in a neutral manner, while respecting the regional interests of the big powers. That is, it required the great powers to guarantee regional security and its member countries to freeze their alliance with the big powers. In addition, with the recovery of Japan, the Southeast Asia region formed an industrial division system centered on Japan, and thus

created the “Asian Miracle.”

Third, East Asia has been implementing an export-oriented development strategy. Based on the processing and manufacturing industry, it has gradually formed a regional industrial chain characterized by prominent labor-intensive advantages. But due to the relatively scarce raw materials and energy, Australia has had to join in the development structure of Asia. The share of East Asia in the Australian economic structure has always been a concern of Australia, and the rise of China has pushed this issue to an extreme. The Malcolm Turnbull government clearly stated that Australia’s economic structure should be diversified. In fact, former Prime Minister John Howard did propose to adjust the economic structure, but this was very difficult because the interests and the raw materials and energy exports are structural demands, and how to balance the “double-focus” is an important issue.

Fourth is the predicament facing Australia. First, after the rapid development of China’s economy and China’s deep involvement in regional cooperation, East Asia has become more sophisticated in terms of market, technology and capital, and has gradually formed as a base for world manufacturing. It demonstrated its structural toughness during the two economic crises, in 1997 and 2008. Second, upgrading from traditional industrial cooperation to traditional trade and investment complementing each other, East Asia eventually formed an

integration with its own characteristics. China has gradually increased its participation, surpassing Japan. Third, East Asian cooperation has explored a developmental approach that is different from the Western traditional industrialization path, and the scope of cooperation has expanded beyond the region. The Asian development path is getting farther away from the Western model, making Australia confused in the face of Asia.

In summary, it can be seen that whether the Western-led regional order can accept the development and cooperation mode of Asia is a prerequisite for cooperation between Australia and Asia. As a regional cooperative member, Australia gradually has been gaining a sense of belonging and confidence in regional cooperation. However, in regional cooperation, some countries still believe that Australia is a Western country, its participation and recognition of the region is insufficient, and it is not entirely an Asian member. In regard to this, Australia needs to find a relationship model that is acceptable to Asian countries and consistent with Australia's identity based on the balance of Western values, existing international and regional systems and its national interests.

Prof. Ding Dou from the School of International Studies, PKU, focused on identity politics and Australia's outlook on Asia. He opined that the mainstream media in Australia have long publicized the so-called Australian predicament, that is, that Australia is in a dilemma trying to balance its dependence

on US military protection with its commercial interests in China. This is essentially a reflection of Australia's anxiety regarding the politics of its identity. Therefore, we should not overestimate the possibility of Australia's being able to identify with Asia. And, vice versa, Australia may see the rise of populism similar to US President Trump's political behavior in the future.

Australia has seen economic development in recent decades and realized an economic leap forward, especially after the financial crisis in 2008. However, in recent years, the Australian economy has become stagnant, with its growth momentum mainly from traditional agricultural, mining and education service industries.

The first golden period of the Australian economy came from the UK. Through the cooperation with the UK, it upgraded its industrial structure. The agricultural products it produced were transported to the UK through cooling technology. Its funds were borrowed from the British bond market. After the war, Australia's industrial links with Asian countries got closer. However, in the new round of industrial revolution, Australia is completely backward in the fields of artificial intelligence, metamaterials and unmanned driving. Even with some original technologies and ideas, it is difficult to turn them into real technology.

In the short term, Australia's economy has been relatively good, but in the long run, Australia is likely to become one of

the largest developing countries in the world in the context of major changes in the world economy. It is very difficult for Australia to keep up with the US on geopolitical issues while at the same time finding its place in the world's industrial reform. Ding Dou opined that, for Australia, currently lacking in economic performance and with insufficient growth momentum in the future, it may have to participate more in China-based industrial chains. Once it joins the Asian development model, the traditional Western features it has carried will gradually weaken or even disappear.

From a political point of view, China's understandings of Australia stem from Chairman Mao Zedong's two conversations. In one, Mao defined Australia as "the second world," that is, a friend that we can keep. In the second, he stated his belief that Australia is a "lonely continent" with limited policy options. These two judgments have influenced China's long-standing view of Australia that "it would be beneficial if we could make friends with each other." But in fact, Australia should be regarded as the "51st state" of the US. In the Sino-US competition, China should abandon its illusions and realize that, during the next at least 20 years, it is an impossibility that Australia would stand on the side of China.

Ding Dou expressed his belief that Australia is discussing its perceptions of Asia based on its situation in Asia, which means that Australia is in the process of being Asianized, with

its population composition increasingly rich and its culture increasingly diverse. In this process, this may cause anxiety to the white population, which may lead to the emergence of Trump-style populist politics.

Prof. Pookong Kee of the University of Melbourne gave a presentation titled “From the Tyranny of Distance to the Paradox of Proximity: Australia’s Shifting Relations with Asia.”

He opined that, over the past 200 years, Australia’s contacts with Asia including China have experienced several important periods, such as the Chinese gold rush in Australia in the 1850s, the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia in the early 20th century, the abolishment of the “White Australia policy” and the recognition of the People’s Republic of China after World War II, the repositioning of Asia in the administrations of Prime Minister Hawke and Prime Minister Keating in the 1980s, and so on. Over the past two years, the so-called “China threat” theory has often been raised in Australia, which has cast a “shadow” on today’s Sino–Australian relations. But this “shadow” does not take into account Australia’s more than 200 years of history, and the so-called “China threat” theory is only a political slogan of Australian political parties.

The Tyranny of Distance is a book written by Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey in 1966. The book argues that the isolation caused by distance shapes Australia’s national

experience and influences Australia's history, identity and future positioning. Many Australian scholars consider this book title to be one of the most profound distillations of Australian history. In addition to *The Tyranny of Distance*, another influential magazine for Australians is *The Bulletin*. This magazine, which was founded in 1880, long used "Australia for the White Man" in its masthead, and this was not removed until 1961. The magazine mainly reflects Australians' perception of Australia and early Australian's sense of national pride. It was seen as the cornerstone of the development of Australian society and literary culture, and the Bible of its grassroots.

Since the 1970s, Australia's policy toward Asia has changed several times. In 1972, Whitlam abolished the "White Australia" policy and recognized the People's Republic of China; and in 1975, leader of the Liberal Party, Malcolm Fraser, who served as prime minister of Australia, accepted a large number of refugees from Indochina. During the 30 years after 1983, four prime ministers of the Labor Party adjusted the Australian policy toward Asia. Among the top five Australian trading partners, Asian countries accounted for three, and among the top ten sources of immigrants, Asian countries accounted for six.

Despite this, the diversity of current participants has led to Australia's "neighborhood paradox" in its Asian relations. In terms of political parties, there are internal factional struggles such as the left and the right in each political party. In terms of

government agencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other departments tend to be pro-Asia, while the Ministry of Security and the Ministry of National Defense hold a more conservative view. In terms of media, some highly concentrated commercial media, such as Murdoch Media, have always been conservative. Previously neutral media, such as Fairfax, also began to express narrow opinions on Asian countries due to operational problems. In addition, unions, think tanks, columnists, academics, NGOs, and community organizations also show complex attitudes toward Asia.

From the perspective of ordinary Australians, it can be said that they have different “emotional temperatures” for different countries. According to the statistics of the Australian think tank Lowy Institute, Australians had an emotional temperature of 85 degrees toward New Zealand in 2017 and 69 degrees toward the US. Of Asian countries, the emotional temperature for Japan was 71 degrees, and for China, it was 59 degrees. When discussing Australia’s relations with Asia and China, we should not ignore the feelings of the masses. At the same time, we can also see that they do not have any special recognition of or intimacy with the US.

Zhang Qiusheng, director of Australian Research Centre of Jiangsu Normal University, delivered a presentation titled “Analysis of Australia’s Perceptions of Asia from the Perspectives of History and Era.” He opined that the paradox

between history and reality of Australia's perceptions of Asia is not a new phenomenon or new topic. Rather, it has attracted attention and discussion in academic circles for over five decades. This topic again triggered attention in recent years due to China's peaceful rise, changes in the Asia-Pacific situation and the setbacks suffered in Sino-Australian relations. The formation and development of Australia's perceptions of Asia have experienced a historic evolution from simple to complex, from ambiguous to clear and from planar to multi-dimensional. Prof. Zhang explored the essence, connotation and trend of Australia's perceptions of Asia from three historic perspectives—ethnic culture, geopolitics and the immigration issue—and in this way shared his insights on Australia's contemporary contradictions, its inconsistent perceptions of Asia and how its policy toward Asia was affected.

Ethnic culture is the focus and the deeper-level part of Australia's perceptions of Asia. The perceptions since 1788 were born out of British tradition and rooted in British migrants. From the middle of the 19th century to the early 20th century, Australian's feelings of superiority regarding its ethnic culture were gradually challenged by the migration wave from Asia, Japan's expansion in the Far East and the national awakening of China and other Asian countries. The great concern and fear toward Asia caused by these shocks then formed its perception of Asia as a "Yellow Peril." From the early 20th century to

1960s, the “White Australia” ideology and related policy served as the core of Australia’s perception of Asia, and this was not abolished until 1972, when the Whitlam government came to power and diplomatic relations between Australia and China were established.

The World War II marked a new beginning for Australia to re-define its perceptions of Asia and rectify its “White Australia Policy.” World War II made Australia realize that sharing the same origin of ethnic culture could not guarantee having consistent state and security interests; Australia had to face densely populated Asia and improve its relations with it. From the end of the war till the 1960s, ethnic color in Australia’s perceptions of Asia was fading; however, this was overshadowed by the Cold War. Within the framework of the Cold War, Australia was only able to conduct limited economic and cultural exchanges conforming to common strategic interests with Asian countries that shared the same ideologies. Afterward, with the great changes to the Asia-Pacific situation and the normalization of Sino–Australian relations, Australia hastened its steps toward Asia. Since the 1980s, Australia has had to rethink and change its original ethnic culture while shifting its economic and trade direction toward Asia. In 1993, Prime Minister Paul Keating announced that Australia would no longer be a branch of the empire but would instead become a republic with a goal to integrate into Asia. Australia’s perception

of Asia is in the economic sense rather than in the cultural sense in that Australia and Asian society have long had differences in cultural values and barriers caused by the former's feeling of ethnic superiority. Such frictions between different cultural values affect the Sino–Australian political, economic and foreign relations on a deep level.

Geopolitics is another important factor that has affected Australia's perceptions of Asia and its post-war policy toward Asia. Australians worried about an invasion from Asia until the 1950s, with China, Japan and Indonesia deemed as potential invaders. To express their worry about their Asian neighbors, Australian policy-makers began to refer to what Europeans called the "Far East" as the "Near East," which was in line with the general ideology of taking Europe as the center, while at the same time insisting on Australia's sense of closeness to Asia. The use by policy-makers of the term "Far North" to refer to Japan's position in the north of Australia—emphasizing the word "far"—helped to ease people's anxiety regarding state insecurity.

Australia's passive adaptation to the geopolitical view has had a serious negative impact on its post-war diplomatic strategy toward Asia. Early Australia established a negative regional defense strategy; however, as the Cold War pattern in Asia was formed in the 1950s, Australia began to worry that the development of a communist movement in Asia would pose a

threat to it, and so they switched to establish a frontier defense strategy. The mistakes of Australia's Asian strategy caused by the deviation of geopolitical views were not rectified until the early 1970s. Gough Whitlam adjusted the geopolitical view guided by Cold War ideology and established the view that "Australia will not face serious threats for at least the next 10 years," improved relations with China and withdrew troops from Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore, ending its history of regarding Southeast Asia as Australia's frontier defensive outpost and marking the beginning of Australia's pushing forward a positive Asia-Pacific cooperation strategy focused on regional peace.

The third perspective is the issue of immigration. In a true sense, the Australia-Asia contact is generally believed to have begun during the middle of the 19th century, when Asian immigrants, mostly Chinese, flocked to Australia to participate in the Gold Rush. Early Australians came to understand Asia through those first Asian immigrants, thus immigrants played a crucial role in the formation of Australian perceptions of Asia and the establishment of early Australia-Asia relations.

The immigration policy became Australia's basic national policy. Over more than 100 years, no matter which party was in power, a "White Australia" policy highlighting racial discrimination dominated, affecting Australian government's policy toward Asia and the normal development of

Australia–Asian relations for a long time. In 1973, the Australian government abolished the “White Australia” policy, opened its door to Asian immigrants, and formally proposed a multicultural policy, which aimed to build a multicultural immigrant country and treat Asia and Asian immigrants with a “tolerant and open” attitude. Australia’s relations with Asia then entered a new historical period.

The evolution of contemporary Australian perceptions of Asia has had profound historical causes, and those perceptions of Asia as well as the Asia-Pacific situation have changed over time, especially after the Cold War, China’s peaceful rise and Trump’s coming to power. First, changes took place in Australia’s cultural values, which are at the core of Australian perceptions of Asia. Second, the geopolitical outlook is constantly changing due to changes in the world pattern and the Asia-Pacific situation. Third, the issues of immigration and overseas Chinese are still affecting Sino–Australian and Asia–Australian relations. The main influencing factors on Australia’s contemporary contradictory and divided perceptions of Asia include real economic interests, geopolitical security (how to “survive in Asia when the region is lacking a strong US presence”), and the confusion of national positioning (if the tone of Australia’s policy toward Asia in 1980s and 1990s were described as “facing” and “integrating,” then the tone of that policy in the 21st century could be described as “swaying” and

“choosing”).

Zhang Qiusheng opined that Australia’s contemporary contradictory and divided perceptions of Asia and Asian policy are mirrored in the regional power’s recognition and judgment of its own strategic environment. The basis for Asia–Australia relations and Sino–Australian relations is still stable. There are no direct conflicts involving core security interests between Australia and China, which coexist in the Asia-Pacific community with a shared future. In addition, Australia’s national positioning and interests also determine that China and Australia have much space in which to cooperate. Therefore, although the two countries have encountered setbacks in cooperation in recent years, in the long run, there is cause for cautious optimism for the development of Sino–Australian relations in the future.

The presentation by Prof. Wang Shiming, from the Institute of International Relations and Regional Development of East China Normal University, also focused on the changes in Australia’s perceptions of Asia. He opined that an analysis of changes in Australia’s perceptions of Asia could be based on two angles: the change in observational perspectives and the change in Australia’s sense of space in its perceptions of Asia. The former has experienced three stages: the UK’s observational perspective, the US’s observational perspective, and Australia’s own observational perspective. The latter refers to the influence

of geospatial and other spatial changes.

In terms of the UK's perspective, institutionally, after the establishment of the federal government in 1901, Australia naturally became a dominion of the British Empire, with its internal affairs managed by itself while its diplomacy and defense were managed by the UK, so there was no need for Australia to establish embassies or foreign institutions overseas. In regard to ability, Australia had no ability to establish foreign agencies overseas because that required a lot of manpower, technology and funding. In addition, Australia believed that the British Empire could guarantee its security. Before the outbreak of the Pacific War, Australia had no overseas institutions. At the time, some policy-makers suggested that Australia needed to understand what was happening in the outside world and that it was necessary to set up overseas institutions, to which the UK did not object, with the preconditions that Australia could only have its counselors affiliated with the British embassy in the relevant countries, and that official documents and letters sent to the Australian federal government must first be read by the British ambassador. At this stage, Australia's outlook on the world was greatly influenced by the UK.

After the Pacific War, Australia observed the world through the US perspective, which involved Australia switching from relying on the UK to relying on the US, and the formation of the Australia–New Zealand–US alliance. In 1908, the US Great

White Fleet visited Australia. At that time, Australia made a prediction that the US would sooner or later replace the UK as the biggest power. The outbreak of the Pacific War, especially the bombing of Darwin, accelerated the process of this transformation. Australian Prime Minister John Curtin said in his New Year message in late 1942 that Australia's willingness to turn toward the US was welcomed by the US; however, the US was not willing to form an alliance with Australia as it believed that it had no obligation to assume defense responsibility for the Pacific. However, Australia threatened not to sign the security treaty unless it provided for an agreement on an alliance. The outbreak of the Korean War pushed forward the signing of the treaty on the Australia–New Zealand–US alliance. For Australia, signing an alliance treaty with the US was a major victory for its post-war diplomatic defense strategy. The establishment of the alliance also required that Australia curb its foreign decision-making in deference to the US during this period, with no room for choice.

Afterward, Australia started to observe the world from its own perspective, impelled by several driving factors. First, the US established diplomatic relations with China, but did not inform Australia in advance. This was regarded by Australia as a “betrayal” of their alliance relations. Second, the UK joined the European Community in 1973, which shocked Australia. Third, from 1949 to 1972, the Australia Labor Party was always the

opposition party, and proposed many new ideas, including internationalism and independence emphasized by Whitlam. These factors drove Australia to observe the world from its own perspective.

From the perspective of spatial change, Wang Shiming said that Australia was the outpost of the UK during the British Empire. Although Asia was geographically close, it was still regarded as an area outside the scope of the British Empire. Therefore, Australia believed that Asia was not important and they did not need to understand it, thus creating a vague sense of space. During the Pacific War, Darwin was bombed. Prime Minister Curtin wanted to order back the Australian army, which was then fighting in the Middle East, but this was rejected by Churchill. For the first time, Australia felt that it was not a European country and its interests were not in line with European interests; therefore, it must have its own interests. Subsequently, Australia formed an alliance with the US, during which time it considered Asia as a part of the Asia-Pacific region. Australia did not have a clearer concept of Asia until the 1970s, and then it began to turn to Asia, face Asia, and integrate with Asia. This process was influenced by various factors, such as geostrategy, economic and trade interests, and national development.

Kong Tao, an associate professor at the Institute of Social Science Survey at PKU, made a presentation titled “Australia’s

Perceptions of Asia through the Lens of Australian–Indonesian Relations.” She analyzed the complex Australian–Indonesian relations from the perspectives of politics, economy, immigrants, development aids, education and regional cooperation, which mirrored Australia’s perceptions of Asia.

Before its independence in 1945, Indonesia was the colony of the Netherlands. As a large archipelago with several thousand islands, Indonesia has a vast territory. With the fourth largest population in the world, Indonesia is also home to the largest population of Muslims in the world. It is also a member of the G20 and has the largest economy in Southeast Asia, and is widely expected to become the fifth largest economy in the world by 2030. Contacts between Indonesia and Australia began with the interaction between the Australian aborigines and the islanders of the two countries. Formal exchanges between the two sides could be divided into the following stages based on the changes in Indonesia’s domestic politics. The first stage was from 1949 to 1966, which paralleled the timeline from Indonesia’s independence to the stepping down of Bung Sukarno. At that time, Indonesia’s economy had collapsed under the unstable political situation. After 1966, Indonesia experienced 30 years of rapid economic growth, along with development in all areas of society. In 1999, affected by the Asian financial crisis, Indonesia’s economy and politics suffered again, which was followed by democracy and decentralization

and a slow recovery of the economy. In addition, the independence of East Timor also had a major impact on their relations.

The importance of Australia–Indonesia relations is reflected in several aspects. First, Indonesia is an important trading partner of Australia. The two have many agreements on free trade. Indonesia is Australia’s largest tourist destination country, with about 1 million people traveling to Indonesia every year, most of them going to the island of Bali. Australia assisted Indonesia a lot. Before 2015, Australia invested approximately 600 million Australia dollars every year in Indonesia’s education, health and infrastructure. Every year, hundreds of students from Indonesia go to Australia to study for master’s and doctoral degrees. Many of the middle- and high-level management staff in Indonesia have an Australian education background, which has had a positive impact on Indonesia’s foreign relations policy.

Due to the importance of bilateral relations, there are many experts in Australia studying Indonesia in detail. To some extent, Australia’s understanding of Indonesia in some respects even exceeds Indonesia’s understanding of itself. Based on broad interactions, their relations are impervious to minor fluctuations, and they have been able to find solutions when encountering problems and build trust and cooperation at a deeper level. For example, when Australian drug traffickers were executed in Indonesia, the relations between the two countries grew tense;

however, it did not shake the foundation of the relationship. In other words, through interactive research and personnel exchanges, the two sides have formed a consensus or found a more sustainable way to understand each other, build trust, reduce suspicion, promote cooperation, and form a more balanced relationship between countries, not just simply establish a relationship based on temporary interests.

Dong Ting, a lecturer at the School of International Studies, PKU, analyzed the impact of technical factors in Sino-Australian relations, taking the submarine cable as an example. In 2018, Huawei signed contracts with South Pacific countries such as Solomon Islands to lay a submarine cable, but it was questioned by Australia, saying that the project was related to Australia's national security. Since then, the project has been taken over by Australia. In part, given the tense political relations between China and Australia at that time, this incident ended by being interpreted mostly as another anti-China move by Australia.

How is it possible that Australia could successfully block a Chinese company's engagement in a cable project with a foreign government with only a vague and broad excuse of "national security"? To what extent is this excuse reasonable? Is there any reason for Australia's concerns? How will Sino-Australian cooperation in the field of submarine cables be promoted in the future?

Submarine cables are considered to be vital infrastructure in that they carry over 90% of global cross-border information traffic. In recent years, with increasing demand by consumers for bandwidth, the number of newly laid submarine cables in 2018 hit a new high in history. Submarine cables are very important for Australia. Due to the difficulty of using land-based cables, almost all domestic and international traffic in Australia depends on submarine cable transmission. However, due to special geographical constraints, it is difficult to establish trans-Atlantic or trans-North Pacific submarine cables. The high dependence on submarine cables greatly impacts Australia's domestic economy. Some analysts say that an Internet disconnection for one day would cause Australia a loss of 1.5 billion Australian dollars.

The unique geographical pattern combined with the period of opportunity for the rapid development of submarine cable concerned Australia. Historically, after the first completion of the trans-Atlantic submarine cables, in 1866, the UK began to deploy cables around the world, covering almost all of its colonial countries, except trans-Pacific areas. Australia then proposed to establish a trans-Pacific submarine cable that would, at a minimum, connect it to Canada, so as not to be isolated from the entire communication network. However, it took 20 years for the completion of the trans-Pacific submarine cable, which affected Australia's development for a long time.

Australia holds a positive attitude toward promoting multilateral engagement in the submarine cable safety issue. The International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) was originally an organization similar to an industry alliance. Since 2000, it has opened the door for membership applications by governments of countries. But to date, besides the founding country of the UK, only Australia has joined. APEC is now increasingly promoting the issue of the submarine cable security, but behind it, it is all about Australia's motion. Australia's laws on submarine cables is also the most complete in the world, with three layers of legal protections, including setting up reserves to protect the waterway routes and establishing a strict review process for entry points ashore.

Putting technical factors aside, though it would seem difficult for China and Australia to cooperate in the field of submarine cables, in actuality, the possibility for it is huge. China and Australia now are connected only by a SEA-ME-WE3 (SMW3) submarine cable, which is vulnerable to damage. Whenever it is damaged, it takes several months to be repaired. Moreover, the cable transits through Indonesia, which frequently experiences tsunamis, so the condition of the submarine cable is very bad. Therefore, there is the possibility for Australia and China to be directly connected. In addition, the layout of Australia's own transnational submarine cables is not ideal, with all its exit points concentrated in the direction of

Japan and the US, all the entries of the cables concentrated in Sydney, and no trans-Indian Ocean submarine cables. Once any problems occur in certain sea areas, all the submarine cables there may malfunction.

At present, the only problem for Australia is that it still has to rely on other countries in terms of technology. Although China has relevant technology, its rules and regulations related to submarine cables need to be improved, as well as the government's participation in international organizations related to submarine cables. Therefore, besides the understanding of Australia's perceptions of Asia, an improved understanding by the two countries on the ecosystem of technology may benefit their cooperation and bilateral relations.

During the discussion session, the participants expressed their views on the above-mentioned presentations.

John Zhang, Senior Advisor, Office of the Assistant President of the Upper House of the NSW Parliament: Australia is indeed worried about changes in the international order, because China is the first non-Western cultural and non-English-speaking big power in contemporary times. The Australian Labor Party and Liberal Party will worry about what kind of impact would be brought to the international order by a strong China. I think we should view Sino–Australian relations within the triangular relationship of China, the US and Australia, or at least within the framework of Sino–US relations. At

present, many problems between China and Australia have been caused by the US. Australia's radical performance in Sino-Australian relations can be attributed to its worries about the US's retreat in Asia, which thus means that the US can no longer guarantee Australia's security. Also, due to the same reason, Australia has convened with Japan and South Korea to promote the construction of an Indo-Pacific strategy. Seen from the current stage, the conservative forces in Australia are unwilling to see the Australian government abandon its alliance with the US in any respect.

Shi Xiaoqin: From the military perspective, Australia is less worried about China, but if one day the US withdraws from the Asia-Pacific region, this concern will escalate. Currently, however, there is no indication that the US will withdraw from the Asia-Pacific region because the US will compete with China in this region for a long time, and the geographical location of Australia, described by the US as a "gateway country," is quite important. Especially after the establishment of the Indo-Pacific War Zone, Australia is at the center of the zone, so that the US will not give up Australia.

Hu Zhuanglin: Australia is not concerned that the US will not protect its security militarily. Instead, it worries that the US has too much control over it and will not allow it to do business with China. Australia knows well that it cannot change China's policies, so it has to expect the US to make changes on this issue.

In addition, Australia, which lacks a large labor force, needs to employ a large number of Chinese to develop its economy. Many high-tech industries employ Chinese overseas graduates. Therefore, Australia has begun to adjust its China policy in the past two years. Former Prime Minister Turnbull proposed the concept of frenemy (both friends and enemies) in 2018 when describing Australia's relationship with China.

Wang Shiming: Regarding Australia's middle-power strategy, Australia has quite few diplomatic partners and has not established diplomatic relations with many countries. Its relations with India have been relatively loose for a long period of time. Australia's diplomatic relations concentrate in the Asia-Pacific region, and its strategy aim in this region is to become a regional power and thus deal with China. In the current international situation, if Australia does not follow the US, it is impossible to become a regional power. In addition, in regard to Sino-Australian relations, the role of the media cannot be ignored. Whenever Sino-Australian relations become deadlocked, Australian leaders would blame the Australian media for it. Therefore, we must have a serious attitude toward these issues when conducting academic research.

Pookoog Kee: Some scholars may not notice that apart from the different policies between political parties, the leaders of political parties are also very different. The positions of government leaders and political parties may not necessarily be

in line with ordinary Australians. According to the opinion polls of Australia's professional institutions in recent years, Australians think that New Zealand, instead of the US, is their closest country. The US's ranking is lower than Japan, while China's ranking is higher than Indonesia. So when we discuss Australia's politics and society, we should notice that Australia has a very diverse society, and we should not observe it from only a single angle.

Prof. Wang Shiming concluded the meeting, saying that with more people engaged in Australian studies in China, the field's academic influence is gradually improving. He hopes the domestic academic circle will pool more experts in Australian studies to contribute to the development of Sino–Australian relations.