

Preamble

Since the beginning of 2020, COVID-19 has spread all over the world. Based on their own national conditions, countries all around the world have taken different preventive and control measures to confront the challenges brought about by this rare pandemic to public health, the economy, society and international relations. In order to have a clear view about the ideas and mechanisms of different countries in response to the pandemic as well as the impact of such measures on the world structure, the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS) and PKU's Office of International Relations have been co-sponsoring an online Broadyard Workshop seminar series, titled "The Global Epidemic: Observations and Analysis by Diplomats."

At the beginning of the global spread of COVID-19, Japan was regarded as having excellent epidemic prevention and control. However, with the increasing number of confirmed infections in Japan, the relatively moderate prevention and control measures of the Japanese government increasingly caused controversy. At the same time, the economic crisis caused by the epidemic became increasingly prominent. It is clear that the delayed Olympic Games caused great economic losses because a large number of small- and medium-sized enterprises in tourism and service industries were negatively affected due to the decrease in foreign tourists. Domestic

demand and exports continued to be sluggish, with eight domestic car giants announcing a suspension of production. Japanese institutions and economists generally believe that the epidemic has damaged Japan's economy seriously. The economic cycle that continued to expand ever since Shinzo Abe came to power again, in December 2012, has now come to an end, and it is a foregone conclusion that Japan's economy will fall into recession.

Why were there ups and downs in the prevention and control of the epidemic in Japan? What measures should the Japanese government take to deal with it effectively in the future? What cooperative medical and public health projects should China and Japan strengthen? What role can these cooperative projects play in epidemic prevention and control in East Asia and even in Asia? Four experts and scholars were invited to the workshop to discuss the above issues from the aspects of politics, economy, society, history, culture and public health. The four experts and scholars were Cheng Yonghua, former Chinese Ambassador to Japan; Gui Yongtao, vice dean of School of International Studies, Peking University; Xie Zheng, deputy director of the Department of Global Health of the School of Public Health, Peking University; and Wang Xinsheng, professor of the Department of History of Peking University.

The 30th Broadyard Workshop
The Global Epidemic: Observations and Analysis by
Diplomats (II): Japan
April 23, 2020

The workshop was presided over by Prof. Qian Chengdan, director of the Institute of Area Studies, Peking University. Cheng Yonghua, former Chinese ambassador to Japan, delivered the keynote talk. Ambassador Cheng expressed his belief that the impact of the epidemic on international relations and the world economy is gradually expanding and will play a huge role in promoting the in-depth development of unprecedented changes. Various contradictions are intertwined in this turmoil, the principal one being the contradiction between China and the US. The Trump administration has been trying to divert domestic attention by attacking China to cover up its serious mistakes in dealing with the epidemic at the beginning of the year, while its actual intention is to win support for the upcoming presidential election. The recent contradictions reveal that the Great Game between China and the US is developing in an all-round and in-depth way. At present, China and the US have had different outcomes in their dealing with the epidemic, which will further intensify the contradictions. The control and prevention of the epidemic by East Asian countries and their interaction with China have been relatively good, which shows that the people in the region are self-disciplined and abide by

social public order requirements. At the same time, due to the cultural similarities between those countries and China, bilateral relations are generally stable and friendly. Judging from the spreading trend of the epidemic, China's two neighboring countries, namely Russia and Japan, deserve our attention, while India will be a worry to us in the future. In addition, the recent problems in Singapore, although also worrying, have been limited to a spike in infection rates among foreign workers, who are often living in crowded dormitories.

Ambassador Cheng first outlined the epidemic situation in Japan and the countermeasures of the Japanese government.

The development of the epidemic in Japan can be divided into two stages, he said. According to Japanese research, the first stage was mainly caused by imported cases of infection. Specifically, from January 15, when the first confirmed case was found in Japan, to February 3, a total of 12 cases were found, of which 11 cases had Wuhan travel history or contact history. Due to the clear route of infection, Japan quickly took measures to cut off the source and route of infection. From January to around March 20, the epidemic situation in Japan was generally brought under control and so developed only relatively slowly, with the total number of cases exceeding 1,000 on March 21. By mid-April, Japan experienced the second stage of the epidemic, which was at that time the peak of the epidemic. The main source was imported cases from Europe and the US. By April 18,

the number of cases had exceeded 10,000. As of April 23, Japan had confirmed more than 12,000 cases, of which 2,000 recovered and nearly 300 died.

The epidemic prevention policy of the Japanese government can be divided into three stages. The first stage was mainly to prevent imported cases. On the one hand, the Japanese government advised its nationals not to go to Wuhan or Hubei, and, as of January 29, it sent a total of five charter flights to pick up Japanese citizens in Wuhan. At the same time, foreigners holding passports issued by Hubei were prohibited from entering the country. The second stage was to prevent the occurrence of clustered infections domestically. On February 13, Japan found the first case of local infection with no history of contact with people from China, which indicated that the spread of the epidemic in Japan had changed, and relevant policies had to be adjusted. On February 25, Japan announced basic guidelines for its countermeasures against COVID-19, requiring the suspension of large-scale activities and the temporary suspension of classes in primary and secondary schools. In terms of testing, Japan adopted hierarchical diagnosis and treatment, i.e., if a patient had a fever of 37.5 degrees Celsius and above lasting for four days, he was instructed to immediately go to a clinic to consult a doctor, or go to a designated hospital. This was designed as a step-by-step and phased treatment measure. The third stage was to

comprehensively upgrade prevention and control measures. Since late March, the number of confirmed cases in Japan had increased sharply and Japan's response measures were upgraded. On March 28, the Japanese government issued a policy to deal with COVID-19 infection, specifically proposing that people should avoid "confined spaces, dense crowds and close contact with strangers." Prime Minister Abe on April 7 issued an emergency declaration that applied to Tokyo and other seven prefectures. The emergency declaration was extended to all of Japan on April 16, and later extended until May 6. Due to the delay in gathering up-to-date statistics, the number of confirmed cases in Japan was expected to rise in the following month.

Ambassador Cheng pointed out that, after WWII, Japan established a three-level epidemic prevention system consisting of peacetime epidemic prevention, crisis epidemic prevention and emergency epidemic prevention. After 1961, Japan took the typhoon disaster in Ise Bay as an opportunity to formulate basic law on disaster countermeasures and continuously improved relevant laws and regulations. Local governments also established relevant systems and material reserve systems for disaster prevention and mitigation. Reflecting on Japan's response to the epidemic, he said that Japan began to take measures to prevent community infection in February, but until around March 20, the focus was still on preventing imported cases, and the prevention and control measures for the cruise

ship “Diamond Princess” were not yet in place. In addition, the number of actual test objects was not large enough, and the system for tracking and detection of the infection source of patients and their close contacts was not yet complete when the number of infections in Japan increased, and 70% to 80% of the cases were caused by unknown infection sources.

Ambassador Cheng said that the impact of the epidemic on Japan’s economy was expected to exceed that of the 2011 earthquake, Lehman Crisis and the Asian Financial Crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that Japan’s GDP growth will drop to -5.7 percent in 2020 from 0.7 percent in 2019. From the perspective of epidemic prevention and control, it has been necessary for Abe’s government to issue an emergency declaration, but such epidemic control measures will inevitably lead to the risks of an economic downturn, business closures and increased unemployment. At present, negative effects have already appeared. On April 6, Japan’s government approved an emergency economic stimulus package worth 108.2 trillion yen (\$993 billion) to address the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, far exceeding the economic stimulus plan of about 56 trillion yen during the 2008 financial crisis. On April 16, the Japanese government decided to distribute an additional 100,000 yen to each national. Together with the two rounds of economic countermeasures since January, Japan has implemented three rounds of economic countermeasures to date

(April 23). In the initial stage, the funds were mainly used to support the production of medical protection materials such as masks, and to strengthen the inspection at border ports, and, in the later stage, they were used to protect the domestic economy.

In the process of fighting the epidemic, Japan also demonstrated its strength as a powerful country in science and technology. Prime Minister Abe stated at a press conference on March 28 that Japan had four kinds of domestic drugs for the treatment of those infected. At the same time, it was announced that Japan had developed within a two-month time period the world's smallest and lightest portable ECMO (life support machine). Shimadzu Corporation announced that the testing reagent developed by the company would be officially launched on April 20. Detection of virus infection takes only one hour, and the accuracy rate (negative and positive judgment) is 100 percent. Nagasaki University also announced that it had jointly developed with several partners a testing reagent that could show results in only 15 minutes.

In addition, AnGes, a new Japanese pharmaceutical company specializing in the development of new genetic factor drugs, jointly developed a COVID-19 vaccine together with Osaka University. It was announced that the vaccine would enter clinical trials from July and be put into use in September. In addition, Japan also developed some new instruments, such as an infrared thermometer with face recognition system and

memory function, non-contact sensing elevator floor buttons, and new building videophones. The new thermometer does not need manual management and automatically records the faces and daily body temperature of people entering and leaving a building. Once the body temperature exceeds a set limit on a certain day, the system can quickly prompt and record the information of the person and the people before and after him, i.e., track the person's close contacts.

In terms of foreign policy, the most important challenge for Japan is to postpone the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. At the same time, Japan is actively engaging in goodwill efforts on the international stage, carrying out cooperative diplomacy, and giving priority to promoting the coordination of relations between major powers in the surrounding areas. As far as the trilateral relations between China, Japan and South Korea are concerned, the three countries are jointly facing more complicated external situations and more uncertainties. The endogenous needs of the three countries' mutual relations are gradually being relaxed and are developing to be more constructive, autonomous and self-disciplined.

Next, Ambassador Cheng analyzed the interactions between China and Japan and their impact on Sino-Japanese relations.

After the outbreak of the epidemic in Wuhan, many countries provided support to China, among which Japan

responded the fastest. Japan's foreign minister was the first to talk to China's foreign minister, while the first batch of Japanese aid, namely one million masks donated by Japan's Ito Yokado to Sichuan and Hubei, arrived at Chengdu Airport on January 25. Japan's charter flight to evacuate its citizens in Wuhan was filled with masks, protective clothing, goggles and other materials mobilized from the Japanese government and Japan. Tokyo, Kumamoto and other places also used their emergency disaster prevention reserves to provide donations to China. Air China's representative in Japan reported that, in order to transport emergency reserves provided by Tokyo to China, Air China had sent two Boeing 747 cargo planes. Many netizens cheered Wuhan and China on the social media account of the Chinese Embassy in Japan. For example, when materials were donated from all walks of life in Japan, a line from a poem in the *Shijing* (Classic of Poetry), "Miles apart, close at heart; how can it be said that you have nothing to wear, my garments are there that we can share," was quoted favorably by netizens.

After its domestic epidemic situation became relatively stable, China also began, to the best of its ability, to provide support and assistance to Japan, where the epidemic situation was getting increasingly serious. The diplomatic departments of the two countries cooperated to carry out joint prevention and control to deal with the epidemic, maintaining close communication and holding several video conferences. The

Chinese government provided Japan with two batches of anti-epidemic materials, including various masks, protective clothing, masks, goggles, surgical gowns, and testing reagents. Disease control experts from the two countries held video conferences to exchange information on epidemic prevention and control strategies, especially information on the transmission route of the virus, prevention and control measures in different regions and populations, and the screening of antiviral drugs. Chinese nationals living in Japan provided free masks on the streets of Japan, which was widely praised by the Japanese people.

Ambassador Cheng expressed his belief that the interaction between China and Japan is positive. From a macro perspective, China and Japan began to have a more common understanding of the world situation and a more common language. Politically, both sides had a similar goal of maintaining the stability of Sino-Japanese relations. Economically, both China and Japan desired stronger economic cooperation. Both countries were willing to make further efforts and contributions toward promoting regional cooperation. In addition, the interaction between China and Japan helped the trilateral development of China, the US and Japan in a relatively more balanced direction. However, at the same time, China also sees the two-sidedness of Japan's policy, as well as the resulting unfavorable trends in the speculative swing of foreign strategy,

the transformation of Japanese corporate investment, the reorganization of the industrial chain and the game of international rules. Especially, as the trend of the US-led decoupling of global industrial chains from China is becoming more and more obvious, the US, Japan and Europe are likely to further join hands in the future, especially in seizing the leading role on issues such as WTO and WHO institutional reform, and strengthening restrictions on China in high-tech industries and other fields. In East Asia, China, Japan and South Korea have helped each other and interacted with each other during the epidemic. The three countries are culturally similar and economically closely linked, further deepening the three countries' understanding of the value of strong regional cooperation and accepting a common destiny. At a video conference of the foreign ministers of China, Japan and South Korea, the three countries reached a consensus and agreed to jointly curb the development of the epidemic, stabilize the industrial chain and supply chain of the three countries, and take the opportunity of jointly fighting the epidemic to continuously enhance the friendship among the people of the three countries.

After the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled, Sino-Japanese relations will still be characterized by simultaneous cooperation and competition. Problems do exist and some problems cannot be solved at the moment, but this does not mean that the relationship cannot develop, nor does developing the

relationship mean ignoring the problems. Facing the above situation, China should stay alert and calm, dialectically handle the relationship between problem-solving and development, and take the initiative to act, coordinate and cooperate, in order to promote bilateral development to drive the development of surrounding areas, and, finally, the development of the overall situation. Policy formulation should be based on solid research and scientific judgment to set reasonable targets, and any plan adopted should be feasible so as to maintain the sustainable and stable development of Sino-Japanese relations, Cheng said.

Ambassador Cheng opined that there was still considerable room for concrete cooperation between China and Japan, and made the following suggestions: First, cooperation in epidemic prevention and control must be strengthened. China and Japan are neighbors and have close ties. In 2019, the number of personnel exchanges between the two countries reached more than 11 million. It is necessary to strengthen cooperation in epidemic prevention and control, repair the industrial supply chain as soon as possible, jointly safeguard the stability of the financial market and ensure food security. Second, strengthen cooperation in the field of medical and health care and carry out exchanges and cooperation in telemedicine, new drug development, geriatrics and other fields. As far as gerontology is concerned, Japan has formed a complete legal system and set of guarantees relating to legal, administrative,

corporate and social and other aspects. As China's population aging rate is rising sharply, it is necessary to exchange experiences and cooperate with Japan. Third, strengthen cooperation with small- and medium-sized enterprises. China and Japan will work together to promote trade and investment facilitation and promote the process of East Asian regional integration. It should be said that the current positive interaction between China and Japan has, to a certain extent, made up for the weakness in the relationship between the two countries in terms of people-to-people bonds. Sino-Japanese relations dropped to freezing point in 2012, causing a huge impact on public opinion in both countries. Over the years, the relationship between the two countries has improved, but public opinion has not kept pace. The recent Sino-Japanese positive interaction has played a great role in improving the public opinions of the two countries. In the future, China and Japan should seize the opportunity of the current favorable situation, enhance mutual trust and strengthen value ties through cooperation. Finally, regional and international cooperation should be carried out to seek benefits and avoid disadvantages so as to further promote the sustained, stable and healthy development of bilateral relations, Cheng said.

Finally, Ambassador Cheng analyzed the very concerning trend toward divestment from China by the US and Japan. He believed that Japan's announcement of divestment measures in

early April was mainly based on the proposal of a private think tank on March 5. The pandemic will inevitably trigger all parties to adjust and restructure their industrial chains. The key is the fields, extent and direction of the adjustment and restructuring. It is necessary for China to take the initiative, improve the weak points and upgrade the quality of its industrial chain. For example, it is necessary to consider the adjustment of the upstream and downstream of the industrial chain, foreign exchange reserves and resource reserves, Cheng stated.

Affected by the global spread of the epidemic, as of the date of this report, Japanese enterprises have stopped production due to a lack of support from overseas supply chains. For example, Toshiba had completely stopped production in Japan, and several big auto companies have also been forced to stop production, greatly impacting Japan's economy. Japan stated it was prepared to allocate \$ 2.2 billion to help enterprises transfer their production lines out of China, which aroused heated discussions in the Chinese domestic media and among netizens. According to *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Japan's trade promotion departments conducted a questionnaire survey of Japanese-funded enterprises in South China in early April and received responses from 361 enterprises. Among them, 2.9 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively, were considering transferring or were already considering transferring but were now considering accelerating the transfer due to the epidemic

situation. Taken together, 8.3 percent of the enterprises were considering transferring out of China. The number one destination for those companies considering transferring out of China was Japan, followed by Vietnam. The same survey at the end of February showed that the proportion of Japanese companies considering transferring from China was 15.2 percent. In other words, the proportion had reduced from 15.2 percent to 8.3 percent. This comparison shows that, while the epidemic has impacted global production and consumption, China took the lead in getting out of its predicament and achieved significant initial results, making Japanese-funded enterprises more aware of the importance of continuing to invest in China. At the same time, according to the survey results, Japanese enterprises have made positive progress in work resumption in China. Among the Japanese-funded enterprises surveyed, 98 percent said that they had resumed production and operation. About 41.4 percent of the enterprises resuming work had a 100 percent operating rate, and 42.3 percent had an 80 percent to 100 percent operating rate. In all, more than 83 percent of the enterprises had basically resumed work.

During Junichiro Koizumi's term as prime minister, the Japanese government once proposed not to "put all its eggs in one basket" in terms of foreign investment. After Sino-Japanese relations fell into a grim situation in 2012, Japan also put forward the same policy, that is, to appropriately diversify

investment by investing outside of China. However, judging from the actual results of Japan's investment in China, Japan's major enterprises instead increased their investment in China. Japan's total investment in China exceeded 100 billion US dollars in 2014 and is currently around 120 billion US dollars. As far as the industrial categories of Japan's investment in China are concerned, the proportion of manufacturing and service industries is 7 to 3, while in terms of total global investment in China, the proportion (of manufacturing and service industries) is 3 to 7, which shows that manufacturing accounts for the majority of Japan's investment in China and the transfer of manufacturing is more difficult. As far as the trade structure is concerned, in 2019, Japan exported a total of 99.1 billion US dollars of "intermediate materials" (i.e., electronic machinery and spare parts) to China. In the same year, China exported 54.4 billion US dollars of electronic machinery and spare parts to Japan. The total trade in electronic machinery and spare parts was more than 150 billion US dollars, accounting for half of the total trade between China and Japan (more than 300 billion US dollars). This showed that the upstream and downstream of the industrial chain between China and Japan are closely linked. When making foreign investments, enterprises must fully consider the cost and quality of the available labor force, infrastructure, the upstream and downstream of the industrial chain, and the matching of parts and components, and, especially,

the best combination of factors such as market, in order to maximize benefits.

Regarding the issue of divestment by the US, the American Chamber of Commerce in China released a report on April 17, saying that their survey in March showed that 70 percent of the American enterprises interviewed in China believed that their business in China would return to normal within three months, and 96 percent believed that their business in China would return to normal within three to six months. According to the report, most US enterprises in China do not expect to withdraw from China in the short term.

Ambassador Cheng expressed his belief that there has been no large-scale epidemic-caused transfer of foreign capital to overseas. In particular, China has shown a strong emergency response capability during the epidemic, taking the lead in promoting work resumption, which has given international capital and foreign enterprises the confidence to continue to invest in China. At the same time, the quality of China's domestic workers has been gradually improving; the per capita production capacity, that is, productivity, is also improving; and its market scale is continuously expanding. Of course, some Japanese enterprises have also considered that labor costs in China have risen, leading to an increase in the investment cost of enterprises. In conclusion, the Japanese government's proposal to provide subsidies to overseas Japanese enterprises to

return to Japan, also known as relocation fees, is only one of the factors that companies consider. Those companies that need high added value and are oriented toward the Chinese market will continue to choose to stay in China or will even continue to expand their scale of production in China.

Prof. Wang Xinsheng from the Department of History of Peking University, mentioned the following points in his presentation.

First, Japan's epidemic prevention policy and its characteristics. According to public opinion, Japan was slow to act. Abe's government could not come up with any ideas, emergency measures were introduced slowly and only later extended to the whole country, and their implementation was lax. This was related to Japan's system and culture. Japan has local autonomy laws, and the power of the central government is limited. Prefectures exercise a high degree of autonomy in accordance with the decisions made by local councils. The central government and the local government are equal in law, so the central government cannot command local governments. Hiroshi Murayama, a columnist with Japan's *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, wrote an article for Chinese readers, pointing out that the post-war Japanese system was a reflection of the excessive power of the pre-war state. Under the system of local autonomy, the central government cannot issue orders quickly, nor can it issue orders to local governments to take actions. When asking

primary schools to suspend classes, Abe used the word “request” instead of “order” or “direct,” because of Japan’s political system.

COVID-19 is a “designated infectious disease” and must be treated completely, which highly impacts all available medical resources. From a global perspective, although Japan’s medical level is very high, if patients were admitted on a large scale and the hospitals’ medical staff were infected, the medical system would collapse. As a result, the Japanese government was not very active in testing, advocating that people with mild symptoms should be treated at home and go to the hospital only if their symptoms got too severe to continue treatment at home. This situation gradually changed, and the Japanese government eventually prepared more than 200,000 hotels for the isolation of patients with mild symptoms.

As of April 23, although the epidemic in Japan was still on the rise, it did not spread like the outbreak did in Europe and the US, which is related to the living habits of the Japanese. Spring is the peak period of pollen allergy, and, given the Japanese belief that it is unacceptable to transmit one’s cold to others, they have the habit of wearing masks. Japan has a good sanitary environment. The public bathrooms in parks are equipped with toilet paper and places to wash hands. The interpersonal communication of the Japanese is also relatively limited, which is conducive to the control of the epidemic. The Japanese

exercise self-discipline and obey authority. Although the government's decree regarding social distancing and other measures was not mandatory, there were still many people who obeyed it, and, therefore, the number of people on the streets has been still very small. The Abe government has been taking corresponding measures to strengthen the control of the epidemic. It is estimated that the epidemic in Japan will continue to develop steadily in the next one to two months. Although people have not always been happy with the Abe government, the support rate of Abe cabinet is still very high.

Second, the trend of Japanese capital. In an interview with the media, Michiaki Oguri, president of Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Shanghai, argued that while there has indeed been divestment, it was not aimed at China. The target of divestment has been limited, mainly medical devices and related medical service enterprises. The trade volume between China and Japan is over 300 billion US dollars, and 40 percent of the products made by Japanese enterprises in China are sold back to Japan. For example, Japan imports 70 percent of masks from China, and only 30 percent of masks are produced in Japan itself. The materials also come from China, but the epidemic has hindered the movement of people and materials. Therefore, Japan's divestment mainly involves medical devices and related products. It can be seen that private capital is primary in Japan, and most corporations do not necessarily behave in the way that

the government suggests they should. Meanwhile, the government has mainly targeted enterprises for whose products there is a special need, such as producers of medical devices.

And third, Sino-Japanese relations. Per Prof. Wang, from an economic point of view, Sino-Japanese relations should develop smoothly in the future. Japan is the country with the highest percentage of the aged in the world, with 28.4 percent of its population over 65 years old. This is a significant problem in Japan. Since 2005, Japan's population has experienced negative growth. In recent years, the number of deaths per year has exceeded the number of births by 400,000 to 500,000. This population structure indicates that its consumption capacity is shrinking. Developed countries such as Japan and the US rely on consumption for 60 percent to 70 percent of their economic growth. Therefore, Japan must rely on overseas markets. The biggest reason why Japan has improved its relations with China over the past two years is that China sought overseas markets during its trade war with the US. From this point of view, Sino-Japanese relations will be relatively stable in the future. Despite contradictions, there will still be development. Japanese newspaper editorials have expressed worry that China's economic problems would affect Japan. China and Japan are part of a community of shared economic future. With such a guarantee, Sino-Japanese relations will develop. As Ambassador Cheng said, Japan's diplomatic performance toward China after

the outbreak was remarkable, and, basically, there was no conflict with China. Japan has had good interactions with China during this epidemic, which has been providing good conditions for China and Japan to conquer the epidemic. Based on this, Sino-Japanese relations will continue to develop in the future, Wang said.

Associate Professor Gui Yongtao, vice dean of the School of International Studies, Peking University, pointed out in his presentation that, from a policy perspective, the main contradiction in the current international situation is the game between China and the US, or, to put it another way, the competition and even confrontation between China and the US. US policies toward China, especially in the field of public opinion, not only affects Sino-US relations, but also entirely affects international public opinion and the international environment that China faces. In this context, although Japan is an ally of the US, Japan has still shown its own characteristics in dealing with the epidemic, adhered to its own approach, and has not followed a certain country or a certain direction of public opinion, which is worthy of affirmation. Japan has not interpreted China's practices and views on epidemic prevention from a political or ideological perspective, nor has it interpreted the pros and cons of epidemic prevention from the perspective of competition among countries regarding which model or system is better, which reflects Japan's characteristics. When

confronted with a crisis, Japan's response has been practical. It has focused on uniting the views and interests of the majority, instead of viewing the situation from the abstract angle of ideology and values, and so it has not been influenced by extreme views. This has been the characteristic of Japan's position and countermeasures, Prof. Gui said.

As far as the bilateral relations between China and Japan are concerned, the epidemic has played a positive role in the constructive development of Sino-Japanese relations at the bilateral level, especially in terms of public opinion and national feelings. The volatile feelings of the Chinese and Japanese people are a long-term weakness in the relationship between the two countries. Public opinion surveys in recent years show that the negative opinion is still higher than the positive in the mutual cognition between China and Japan. However, judging from the development trend, with the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations, the feeling of closeness has continued to rise in recent years, showing a good trend on the whole. The mutual understanding between the two sides during this epidemic could be said to be realistic and full of emotion. Instead of beggar-thy-neighbor, each is helping the other. There have been two main factors for the improvement of public opinion between China and Japan in recent years. One is the increase in personnel exchanges between China and Japan and the increase in more objective, diverse and realistic views of

each other. And second, public opinion surveys show that young people in China and Japan have a more positive understanding of each other's country and society than groups of other ages, which also provides inspiration for us to observe Sino-Japanese relations and the direction of the development of mutual understanding between China and Japan. Therefore, in terms of public opinion, Sino-Japanese relations can continue to improve on the whole. Due to the impact of the epidemic, in the short term, the numbers of Chinese tourists visiting Japan and vice versa as well as Chinese and Japanese students studying in each other's country have been greatly affected, but the impact is short-term. We are already exploring how to conduct online academic exchanges and joint research with Japanese universities, Prof. Gui said.

As Prof. Gui pointed out, China is Japan's most valued market. Before the outbreak of the epidemic, the Sino-US trade war and the science and technology war had a great impact on Japan. In fact, Japan has not adopted a policy of fully following the US as far as trade is concerned. During 2018 and 2019, in order to cope with the possible negative impact of the trade war launched by the US, Japan signed trade agreements one after another with Europe and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) countries, reached agreement on the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and on Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

with TPP countries without the US, while also improving its trade and investment relations with China. In terms of science and technology, Japan is of two minds. On the one hand, Japan, like the US, regards China as a competitor in the high-tech and security fields. On the other hand, Japan is also worried about the impact of Sino-US decoupling on the global supply chain, and is even more worried that the impact of the Sino-US trade war and science and technology war will lead to a slowdown in China's economic growth, thus affecting Japan's market in China, Prof. Gui said.

Prof. Gui continued that an important effect of the epidemic is that all countries must pay more attention to public health, which is the national interest within the non-traditional security field. At the same time, all countries have to pay more attention to how to restore and stabilize their economies and economic relations with other countries as soon as possible. Although the future remains to be seen, the prospect that can be considered is that the political focus of various countries, especially that of Japan and China, will shift more to economic fields. In terms of security, it is possible to shift more from traditional military security to non-traditional security areas, including dealing with infectious diseases. In economic fields or the non-traditional security field, although there is competition among major powers, this competition is different from the traditional competition in the military field. It is not an either-or, zero-sum

game -- something that is quite different from the position and understanding of the US on relations with China. At present, there is a serious problem in Sino-US relations, which is, the US regards its competition with China as a zero-sum game, a win-or-lose hostile competition. Judging from the development of the epidemic, even if, objectively, there is competition, it is not a zero-sum game. There is still much room for cooperation in the fields of economy and non-traditional security. The effectiveness of the cooperation will naturally affect the direction of public opinion in the two countries and the entire international community, which is worth looking forward to.

Xie Zheng, deputy director of the Department of Global Health of the School of Public Health, Peking University, made a presentation from the perspective of public health. She argued that Japan's response to the COVID-19 epidemic has been characterized by volatility. At first, it was relatively calm, but at later stage a huge crisis erupted. Due to its low testing coverage, Japan may still be a country at risk for future outbreaks. In the 2019 WHO evaluation report, Japan's health system ranked first in the world in terms of performance. And, in the global health and safety index assessment released by Johns Hopkins University in October 2019, Japan ranked 20th in the world and China ranked around 50th. Japan does have a relatively strong health system, but there are several reasons why it has failed to resist the epidemic effectively, Prof. Xie said.

Japan failed to place health and safety at a very important position in its global health strategy, believing that infectious diseases and the like could be kept from entering the country. Japan's domestic policy in the field of health and safety was to strengthen border prevention and quarantine. Japan's domestic health system lacked experience in how to respond quickly to infectious diseases after their introduction.

Japan's natural weakness lies in the special characteristics of its society and demographics. For the elderly, especially elderly patients with basic diseases, the probability of COVID-19 symptom becoming severe is very high, which leads to a high mortality rate and occupies more resources. This is an inherent issue in a country such as Japan that has an aging population. In addition, Japan has a high population density. Social distancing is a very important strategy when dealing with COVID-19, which is relatively difficult for Japan, especially in huge Japanese cities.

Due to the top-level design of its health system, that is, the relationship between the central government and the local governments, the local governments of Japan have a high degree of autonomy. Japan is different from China and the US in that there is no special center for disease control and prevention, which in those countries is the core institution specialized in dealing with public health emergencies. It can quickly make unified arrangements for the national situation. Because there

are many natural disasters in Japan, its health emergency system is divided into three levels from the central government to the local governments. However, the central government has failed to upload and issue local government decrees well and its governance is relatively weak, Prof. Xie noted.

Judging from its medical and health resources, Japan's health system performs very well. The number of beds per capita is a very important index. Japan has more than 13 beds per thousand people, while China has 4.7 beds per thousand people. Therefore, Japan's medical resources are relatively rich, at least in terms of the number of beds, but the study of specific data will show that its medical resources have been mainly used for the treatment of chronic diseases. Certain long-term cases occupy more beds, the average hospitalization days are longer, and the bed turnover rate is low. The severity of COVID-19 mainly depends on the treatment of severe patients. Many countries have proposed that patients with mild symptoms or no symptoms should be isolated at home and not go to medical institutions, but severe cases must be treated in medical institutions. There are very few ICU beds in Japan. Even though medical resources seem abundant, there are few that can really be used in the epidemic.

Per Prof. Xie, testing difficulties are a big problem in Japan, and the privatization of medical institutions is an important reason. The main provider of medical care in Japan is mainly

private institutions. There are more than 8,000 large hospitals in the country. The ratio of public hospitals to private is 1:5. Besides hospitals, there are 90,000 clinics, almost all of which are private. The supply side has mainly adopted a liberal management philosophy, and it is impossible to force private clinics to provide public health services. Some private clinics were reluctant to carry out COVID-19 testing, because if many patients poured in, the probability of cross-infection in the clinic would be high, which would have a great impact on their income, Xie said.

However, it should also be noted that, in its response to the COVID-19 epidemic, Japan's existing health care system has certain advantages, and these might play a role later. First, Japan's high coverage rate of universal health insurance is conducive to reducing the economic burden of COVID-19 detection and later treatment. Second, Japan's graded diagnosis and treatment system is perfect, and the utilization rate of outpatient services is relatively high. If residents have symptoms of a cold or respiratory tract infection as in COVID-19 related pneumonia, they can use outpatient services first instead of going to large hospitals to avoid medical congestion. Outpatient medical staff can deal with patients with mild symptoms and encourage them to take measures such as at-home medical treatment. In addition, Japan's national health awareness is also very good, Xie noted.

On the whole, although the Japanese health system had some good features, it was still unprepared to deal with the crisis caused by COVID-19. The emergency health situation is completely different from the steady-state routine health system, and this is also related to the fact that, before the COVID-19 epidemic, there had never before been a public health emergency that swept across all of Japan. A non-normal and emergency health system is urgently needed for Japan. I hope the COVID-19 epidemic can push many countries, including Japan, to speed up the improvement of their health care systems, Prof. Xie said.

During this epidemic, with the worsening of the Sino-US relationship, common points of cooperation for Japan and China have increased. Unlike the US, Japan has no cultural conflict with China, which gives the two countries a basis for cooperation. Recently, the US refused to pay its WHO membership dues, and the Japanese Prime Minister expressed his opposition to this in his speech at the recent G-7 meeting. In other words, China and Japan have one thing in common, which is, China and Japan can still emphasize health cooperation in multilateral organizations despite the anti-globalization and unilateralism of the US. With regard to COVID-19, China can advocate the establishment of new principles for handling public health emergencies at sea under the rules formulated by WHO. Japan handled the “Diamond Princess” cruise ship incident well,

but there are still no guidelines for countries to deal with public health emergencies at sea. China and Japan can promote cooperation through multilateral organizations such as WHO. In addition to WHO, other cooperation mechanisms can be explored. For example, China, Japan and South Korea already have many cooperation mechanisms against malaria and MERS. In the future, cooperation under the auspices of multilateral cooperative organizations such as WHO needs to be strengthened. Japan attaches great importance to multilateral organizations. Making its contributions to WHO quietly, Japan has always been a firm supporter. Despite its large contribution, Japan, like China, is underrepresented in WHO. Both sides are willing to cooperate, have common problems and have a basis for cooperation, Xie said.

Regarding the production and supply of medical materials, both China and Japan are major manufacturing countries. Japan is a sophisticated manufacturing country and relies on global supply chains. Many current assessments agree that one of the most dangerous after effect of COVID-19 is the rupture of global supply chains. Sino-Japanese cooperation in manufacturing can be expanded. We hope that China's production and supply of pharmaceutical products and medical materials can go international, but there are deficiencies in product quality and specifications. Japan has experience in passing WHO pre-certification and China can learn from it in

this area, Prof. Xie noted.

China and Japan share global health concerns. The core of Japan's global health strategy is maternal and child health, which is believed to be an important starting point that can affect global health. China has gained a lot from Japan in this regard, which is the basis for cooperation. Now Japan's global health strategy has shifted to aging and universal health insurance coverage, which is in line with China's current demographic and social-economic transformation and development, Xie concluded.

During the Q&A session, the speakers and audience members followed up on the speakers' main points.

Question: Recently, the Western media have been making noises about suing China and demanding compensation. Australia is said to want to be the daring vanguard and organize an international investigation. What does this mean? Will Japan follow the US?

Cheng Yonghua: Recently, there has been much made of this issue. Besides the actions by the US and Australia, there have been similar voices raised in Europe. So far, there has been no prosecution of a sovereign country on such public security issues or major events in international rules. If we followed the logic of the US, considering that the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 led to the global financial crisis, should the US be sued? Is it necessary to prosecute anyone for AIDS or the

great influenza that swept the world in 2009? This is nothing more than the US trying to pass the buck to avoid taking responsibility for its own poor management of the epidemic within its borders. Will Japan follow suit? Although some right-wing scholars and politicians are clamoring for that, personally, I don't think the Japanese government will follow up. Sino-Japanese bilateral relations have already generally experienced their lowest point. The achievement of an improved and developing relationship has not come easily, and the Japanese government fully understands this. I don't agree that Japan has no autonomy in diplomacy and listens to the US in everything. Japan and the US have a security alliance, so, politically, Japan must choose the US from the perspective of grand strategy. If there is a hot war between China and the US, and Japan follows the US, the US will help Japan. However, under the current world pattern and situation, Japan still has relative autonomy or the right to act. For example, Japan will consider its own interests and will not blindly follow the US on the handling of its relations with Russia and Iran.

Wang Xinsheng: From a cultural and historical point of view, Japan generally does not take a leadership role in the world. From the perspective of international relations, the Japan-US alliance used to be characterized by "US dominance and Japanese obedience," but a turning point occurred in the 1997 Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation. Japan

began to increase its voice in the field of Japan-US security operations. At present, Japan has its own view of its relations with the US. If there is a particularly big conflict between China and the US, Japan cannot completely stand on the side of the US. The closeness of Sino-Japanese relations makes it impossible for it to do something against its will.

Question: Like Japan, Britain does not have Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) either. Only the US and China have clear CDCs. What has been the organizational relationship between the disease control system and the health system in Japan's response to the epidemic?

Xie Zheng: A comprehensive health system includes the medical and health system and the public health system. Take China as an example. China's medical and health system ranges from village clinics and township hospitals to county hospitals in rural areas, and from community health service centers, community health stations and secondary hospitals to tertiary hospitals in the city. At the same time, there is an independent public health system. Theoretically, the public health system is a hierarchical system with the CDC as the backbone. However, the public health system has no implementation bodies at the lowest levels. Under the CDC at the county level, real operations must still be carried out by the medical and health systems. The public health functions under the district CDC and county CDC must still be carried out by hospitals, while the

public health functions in rural areas will be the responsibility of township hospitals and village clinics. The state has divided public health services into 12 categories and more than 40 divisions, of which infectious disease prevention and control is but one. In theory, the public health system should be the responsibility of the government. The medical system may have both public and private operators. In other words, some work may be undertaken by the government, while some may be private, i.e., the medical system is a mixture of public and private operators. However, the public health system must be the responsibility of the government. Although public hospitals are public in name, they are responsible for their own profits and losses, and the government can order public hospitals to perform public health duties. At present (as of April 23), a large number of public hospitals have sent good doctors and nurses to support Wuhan. In fact, to a large extent, they are exercising their public health duties and are making no profit or even losing money. At present, this system seems to be very effective, at least in dealing with public health issues.

Xie continued that Japan and Britain are similar to some extent and they both have independent disease control and prevention systems. The disease control and prevention system in Japan is divided into central and local levels. At the central level, it is the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, which is only a

research institution and a government department, and has no practical command function such as what China's disease control and prevention system has. The above-mentioned institutions, together with local health clinics, form a public health system. Different from China, Japan's central government has been rather confused in formulating epidemic prevention strategies, and government decrees have not been so centralized. The central government's instructions to the local government are requests instead of demands, resulting in different final effects from China's. The disease control and prevention system of Britain is similar to that of Japan, but it has a strong NHS (National Health Service). All services are provided by the primary health care system. Specialized hospitals are relatively small in composition and size. The function of public health is also carried out through the NHS, and doctors and nurses are mainly responsible for primary health care. During this epidemic, the NHS faced great problems in providing emergency care, which also revealed the defects in the public health system outside the medical system.

Question: It is said that the US administration's declaration that it would pursue prosecution of China over public health and safety issues is actually a political calculation in the run-up to the upcoming presidential election. If Japan does not follow the US, is it also for political purposes in light of future domestic elections?

Cheng Yonghua: The mistakes in the responses of the Trump administration led to the uncontrolled outbreak of the epidemic in the US. Trump and Joe Biden are competing to show who is tougher on China, and they are doing this all out of election considerations. From an electoral point of view, on the whole, Japan will not blindly follow up and sue China. Judging from Japan's domestic politics, although the Abe government has been criticized for its ineffective handling of the epidemic, it has generally maintained a support rate of more than 40 percent, which is relatively stable in terms of Japanese internal affairs. Under the urgent situation of the epidemic, there is not expected to be any major turmoil in Japanese internal affairs. Abe's term of office will end in September 2021, and he must consider whether or not to postpone until next year the hosting of the Tokyo Olympics. Therefore, Japan will not actively follow the trend of the US even if there are some voices in Japan who advocate that.

Gui Yongtao: The basic characteristics of domestic politics are different in different countries. The politics of the US are especially confrontational. Actions such as suing China do serve election politics. Election politics ultimately depend on the attitudes of voters. It is worth observing whether voters' attention has been shifted by these politicians to hold China accountable. I am afraid that the Sino-US relationship will deteriorate further under the influence of this epidemic, and the

deterioration will accelerate in the election year. Generally speaking, the situation is not very optimistic. Japan has its own domestic election considerations. In Japan's elections, good relations with peripheral nations, such as with China, are positive factors to voters. Japanese rulers' accusing China and damaging its relations with neighboring countries may not be beneficial to election politics and may even be harmful. I am optimistic about Sino-Japanese relations and not optimistic about Sino-US relations.

Question: In Japan, the financial community has had great influence. The president of the Japan Business Federation has sometimes been called the "Prime Minister of the Economy." After Abe came to power, the influence of the financial community was weakened and marginalized politically. How much influence will the epidemic have on the political influence of the financial community? How much impact will it have on the LDP general election in 2021?

Cheng Yonghua: A common phenomenon in Western election politics is political donations. Enterprises donate money to the ruling party, both overtly and covertly, exerting influence on politics through various channels. During the years when the Democratic Party was in power, the influence of the financial community was weakened. After Abe came back to power, I personally think that the influence of the financial community on politics was restored. The Abe government established

various think tanks. The “Council on Investments for the Future” included old friends from the financial community and made suggestions according to China’s domestic trends at the beginning of the epidemic. As a result, the Abe government later proposed “moving expenses” (incentives to disinvest from China) but the impact of that was not significant. The financial community has increased its donations to the Liberal Democratic Party and its politicians, and its influence will naturally increase. On the other hand, Japan has also passed a series of laws to restrict the flow of funds, and opaque covert donations are restricted, thus limiting the influence of the financial community on politics. At present, the relationship between Japan’s regime and the financial community has been relatively stable, and it has been a relationship of mutual help and care. In terms of relations with China, Japan’s financial community generally holds a positive attitude toward China.

Wang Xinsheng: There is a historical evolution in process here. Since globalization, the Japanese financial community has invested a lot in foreign countries, especially in China. Junichiro Koizumi’s government specifically proposed that politics was politics and economy was economy. At that time, the financial community invested a lot in China and hoped that China and Japan would be friendly. Now Japan proposes that Japanese businesses move back to Japan and support “Abenomics,” which requires the support of the financial community. After Abe came

to power, Sino-Japanese relations have been recovering. I estimate that the influence of the financial community will increase in the future.

Xie Zheng: The testing rate in the early stage of the epidemic in Japan was relatively low. According to conspiracy theories, Abe's government kept testing rates low so as not to negatively affect the Olympic Games. Ambassador Cheng and Prof. Wang, what do you think about that?

Cheng Yonghua: Japan's testing rate was low. First, there were relatively few emergency beds in Japan's public health system. Second, there was a lack of testing kits. Although, in general, there were many hospital beds, the Japanese government's ability to mobilize the medical system was not as good as that of the Chinese government. Therefore, Japan initially called on everyone to monitor their symptoms when a fever occurred and to only find a doctor when they became serious. Japan did this to ensure that medical resources such as hospitals would not be overwhelmed. After late March, Japan adjusted its policy to expand testing capacity as much as possible. So far, there is no information that it was due to consideration of the Olympic Games.

Wang Xinsheng: At the beginning, the testing rate in Japan was low. There were two reasons behind this. One was the fear that the medical facilities would be overcrowded. And second, many hospitals in Japan are private and are not under the

command of the government. Those hospitals were worried that infectious diseases would affect other patients and cause problems to their operations, and that restricted them from responding quickly.

Prof. Qian Chengdan gave concluding remarks. He said that the seminar and discussion observing and analyzing the epidemic situation in Japan has been very successful. Ambassador Cheng Yonghua has given us an insightful report on the prevention and control of the epidemic in Japan, the impact of the epidemic on Sino-Japanese relations, and the future development of Sino-Japanese relations. The other participating scholars also made incisive presentations on the above topics from their respective research fields, which has helped us to better understand the epidemic and analyze the development of Sino-Japanese relations under the influence of the epidemic. In the future, PKUIAS plans to hold more academic activities related to area studies. Prof. Qian hopes that everyone here today will be able to participate again in our future activities.